United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Paulette Nehama
June 24, 2003
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Paulette Nehama, conducted on June 24, 2003on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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PAULETTE NEHAMA
June 24, 2003

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Paulette Nehama, conducted by Margaret West, on June the 24th, 2003, in Bethesda, Maryland. This interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's post Holocaust interview project. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A.

Answer: My name is Paulette Moudzoukos Nehama. I was born in Volos, Greece, on September 12, 1933.

Q: Let's talk first about your family. So, tell me first about your parents.

A: My parents was -- my father was Anselmos Moudzoukos, and he was born in Volos. And my mother was Thalia, Levi was her maiden name, Moudzoukos, and she was also born in Volos. My parents were first cousins, which makes the whole family thing very interesting. They got married in 1921, and they had two children, my sister, who was born in 1923, and myself 10 years later, who was born in 1933, as I said.

Q: How unusual would it be for cousins to marry first cousins?

A: I haven't heard of anybody else, but it's certainly something permitted in the Jewish religion. This was the first time I heard of first cousins getting married.

Q: And did your parents come from some other region, or had they -- did they come from families settled in Volos?

A: Well, their -- their parents were from Halkeela, which is in Emvia. When exactly did they come to Volos, I'm not sure, but they -- all their children were born in Volos.

Q: And were they Sephardic Jews?

A: No, they were Romaniot, which means they were Jews from very, very old time, who settled in Greece. They didn't come from Spain.

Q: And tell me about what you know of their -- they -- they obviously knew each other all their lives.

A: Right.

Q: But what you know of their -- of their marriage, how old were they, how they settled. I mean, where they first lived, and so on.

A: They got married when -- when mother was 22, and my father was 23. They settled in Volos, so that's where they lived all their lives. They had a small house. They were very close to the family, and those there is still in Greece. Families have houses very close to each other, sometimes a three level home, and each family has one level. So they -- they lived there. My grandparents had built a factory, and this was a textile factory. It was finished in 1906, and about 1920, I think the factory, the grandparents retired, and my father and his brother took over the factory in Volos, which was called Leviathan Moudzoukos, and company.

Q: Now, were there other similar companies in Volos?

A: There were three other factories in Volos. One was also a textile factory, and one was a hardware thing. My father's factory was by -- there was the largest. It had -- it produced material, they called it cashmere, which was material for men's suits, and women's clothes -- means women's suits. And they imported the yarn from England. And it was nationally known, and internationally known.

Q: Now that could not have happened were it not for Volos being a port.

A: That is true, yes.

Q: Now I had assumed that it would be a factory, I knew it was a textile factory, assuming that it was using yarns from the plain of Thessaly, but really relied on imported good.

A: Right.

Q: Did the other factory -- textile factory use imported basic materials?

A: I'm not sure.

Q: And was there competition between the two?

A: Yes, but I think my father's factory was much, much higher both in production, and in exports.

Q: How many people would be employed in the factory?

A: Between 900 and 1200. And they were running three shifts, the factory never stopped. And the legend has it that there is a big chimney, which is every morning at five o'clock he would go off to wake up the workers, to come to work. This was nice alarm clock.

Q: Oh, a --

A: So the whole wallas knew, and it's said that the chim -- the Moudzoukos chimney i-is ringing, must be five o'clock.

Q: Yeah. So it would be a -- a chime from a tower?

A: No, it was like a big, huge -- like a chimney -- huge, and it will go on, like woo, woo, woo.

Q: Well, does that mean that your name would be -- your family name, Moudzoukos would be widely known in that region, or in Greece generally?

A: In that region, definitely, and in Greece. Not all over Greece, but it's well known.

Q: What about the tailors that would make up the -- I mean, we-were you manufacturing the fab -- the cashmere, but also tailoring it?

A: No. No, the tailoring was done elsewhere. People will buy yards of material, and will have other seamstress, or a tailor, who would make suits.

Q: And does the company continue?

A: No. Unfortunately, there've been many mishaps after the war. First of all production stopped because we couldn't get the material from England. There were no -- there was no way to do that. Then we had to go into hiding, and the factory closed because also the Germans took over. And they destroyed some of the machinery, and some of it became barracks for the troops. So there was no way the factory could operate. After the war it was in very bad shape, and there was no money to start it over, but somehow the bank gave us a loan, and we started, but with half or a quarter of the people, and the production was very limited. So it was kind of limping for a war -- a while. Then, for several years it was a real, real struggle to -- to make it go. Material was difficult to get, and general the economic conditions were too bad. So finally the bank repossessed it, and that was the end of that factory. It became a warehouse for grain for the whole region, and now they have made it into technical schools. There's a gimna -- gimnasium, which is like a high school, and also technical schools for the rich. But the interesting thing is, they kept the façade, which was in -- it was, I mean architecturally it was a very -- it was the thing of the time. The roof was kind of slanted, and that they kept, but they also kept the name, and they call it Moudzoukos Technical Schools. There's also a bus stop called Moudzoukos stop.

Q: Let's go back to the beginning, we jumped -- we jumped ahead to follow the history of the company, but --

A: Right.

Q: -- let's go back to your parents time of their marriage, and then your sister's birth.

A: Okay, my father was working with his father in the factory. My mother was a homemaker, and a socialite. Her role was to have teas for the ladies, she did a tremendous amount of volunteer work in Volos. She worked in the orphanage, and another kind of -- of -- what call this, and I always remember that she had teas in the house, and all these ladies will come, and there were beautiful things like cakes and cookies, and that we have to dress up, and come and say hello to the ladies, and curtsy, which I didn't like. And so she was a busy lady.

Q: Y-You mentioned -- you sa -- you said socialite, but in fact she was involved in lots of good works.

A: Oh yes.

Q: So there was --

A: Yes, it was a social life that she had, very social. And that was expected more or less of the women of her stature, because we were quite wealthy. We had a maid, and a cook, and we had sa -- I had a nanny, and later a governess. So -- but my mother always supervised them, everything was absolutely perfect.

Q: Would she be -- when -- when you were a child, would she be fairly constantly in the home, or part of your life?

A: She was there most of the time, yes. When I would come home, I would go with my nanny to the park, or swim in the summertime, but she was home at lunchtime. And when I would to go bed, she would be there. My parents took trips to Austria. They often traveled to Switzerland and Austria. So there were extended periods of time that they were not there. But my grandmother was there, and of course, the household staff, and my sister, who was older, and I was relying on her.

Q: Well, both sets of grandparents would be close by, is that right?

A: Well, I never met my father's mother, she died before I was born, but my mother's mother lived with us.

Q: So it really was a home with a great deal of stability and so on.

A: Oh yeah, there was plenty of stability, absolutely.

Q: Now, what do you remember of your early childhood, and of your relationship with your older sister?

A: Well, my older sister was like a mother to me, because she always took the role of discipline me. And I always wanted to be where she was. If she had friends over, I wanted to be in that group. And she didn't want me to be there. Her friends were marvelous, they would ask me to come and stay, and talk to them, but she didn't want me in there. She -- she was caring, very caring for me. But she was an older person to me at the time. You know, she was 21, I was 10, so that makes a big difference.

Q: What -- who were the people that you were named after, you and your sister?

A: My Hebrew name is Esther, which is my maternal grandmother's name. My maternal's -- yeah, grandmother's name. The name Paulette, I think, comes from Paulette Goddard, my mother loved her. She is the actress, and she just adored that woman. So I think that's why she named me Paulette.

Q: And would you be known by Paulette all your life?

A: I was -- my name was Pauletta in Greek. Sometimes they would call me Paulettiki, which means little Paulette, and sometimes they still do, when I go to Greece. They call me Paulettiki. But mostly Paulette.

Q: And your sister's full name, and where that would come from.

A: My sister's name is Yolanda, and we call her Yola. Her Hebrew name -- I mean, she is named after my paternal grandmother, her name was Santhi. Well, the English translation will be blondie, which is kind of funny. But -- but she was called Yola.

Q: And naming you after grandparents, was that a -- a tradition --

A: Yes.

Q: -- among Romaniots?

A: Right, it's a tradition. And you name children even when the grandparents are not dead. In the Ashkenazis you don't do that. In the Sephardic and Romaniots tradition, you can name children after living grandparents, or living uncles or aunts, yeah.

Q: Now tell me of what you remember of the -- of your earliest childhood.

A: Well, I remember it was wonderful. I -- I loved the house we lived, we had a beautiful house, and a wonderful garden that smelled wonderful because we had such nice trees, like lemon trees and orange trees and beautiful roses. So it was always very pleasant to be outside, and be there. I had friends, lots of other children. My governess, who spoke French, and I had to speak French with her, would take me to the park, and there would be other children there, and we would play all sorts of things. In the summer I would go swimming every day. We would take little train from Volos, which would go up to the mountain of Pilion, but it would stop at the beach called Anaboros, and we would get off. There were -- the wagons were regular wagons [indecipherable] there were two of them that were opened, so it was like a coach, and that's where I sat. And I loved it, because I could se -- see, and I could see everything.

Q: And would you be swimming in the sea?

A: Oh yes, yes, it was gorgeous. I never wanted to get out.

Q: And you mentioned your governess speaking French with you, but what languages -- what would be your mother tongue, and what languages did you -- do you know?

A: Greek was what we spoke at home, but also we spoke French, because my mother has been educated in Switzerland, in Lausanne, and she wanted us to learn French. So we spoke French at home with my mother, and with the governess. So at the age of five I was very fluent in French. These were the only two languages I spoke. Of course, now I know English.

Q: Would your mother's education in Lausanne be the reason that your parents would go to Switzerland and Austria on vacations and on trips?

A: I think there was business going there, one of the reasons they went. They had business with I'm -- I'm not sure with whom, but there wa -- they were business trips combined with -- with pleasure.

Q: What do you remember of your family's religious practices? Did you go regularly to the synagogue, was it -- did you keep kosher in your home?

A: No, we did not keep kosher. I don't think we ate pork, but otherwise we ate everything. I went to the synagogue with my mother on special occasions to take oil to the synagogue. This was a practice that is a good deed. You would take oil to the synagogue for the lamps, because there were no candles. And I would go with my mother. But I did not go to services. My father would go.

Q: Wo -- would your mother go also? Was it just the children who would not go, or would -- would it be only your father?

A: My mother would go to the high holidays with my father.

Q: And then would you have special observances of the holidays in your home?

A: I remember Passover. But we also celebrated Greek Easter, as well. We were always invited to someplace where they were roasting a ham, which is a very traditional kind of thing for Greek Easter. So we were very much part of the whole community.

Q: Do you remember in these -- I know that you were really a very young child then, but what are your earliest memories of whether you felt you were primarily Greek, or Jewish?

A: I think I felt Greek all along. I started feeling Jewish when I joined the Brownies, and ma -- I must have been like six years old, probably, or maybe younger. And the meetings were on Saturday, and I remember my grandmother said, “That’s bad. You don’t go to meetings on Saturdays, because you are Jewish.” But I insisted, and my mother didn’t think it was terrible, so I did go. But when we were asked to bring a needle and a thread, because we had to learn how to sew a button, and I actually had forgotten to bring it, and the -- the leader said to me, “Where is your thread and button?” I said, “Well, I don’t sew on Saturdays.” So I claimed my Jewishness, and of course, she couldn’t say anything.

Q: Yeah. Would there be other Brownies who were also Jewish?

A: No, I was the only one.

Q: And do you remember whether your early childhood friends would be -- would be Jewish friends, or would there be a real mixture?

A: Actually, they -- I don’t remember any other Jewish friend. No, maybe one, I remember one. It was mostly Greek Orthodox.

Q: So your life was thoroughly integrated into the society?

A: Absolutely, yes. My father was also president of the Jewish community, so -- I mean, we did have very strong Jewish component in the family, we just not very religious, let’s put it this way.

Q: And the employees in the Moudzoukos family, they would cover the local spectrum, they wouldn't be more Jews employed than -- than the Greek Orthodox?

A: No, I don't think so. Yeah. A lot of them were immigrants from Asia man -- minor. They had emigrated in Volos, in fact my father was instrumental in building homes for them. And he employed a lot of these people in the factory.

Q: What countries would they have come from?

A: Asia minor, Turkey.

Q: Turkey?

A: Yeah.

Q: And they would have moved west for economic reasons? For je -- to improve their -- their lives?

A: Well, yeah, I'm sure they moved west, but also I think their -- their lives were threatened, so that's why they left.

Q: Mm-hm. I -- I -- I was just wanting you to fill me in on what was happening historically that would have meant they moved to Greece.

A: Well, I think Yamala the Turk came, and of course, a lot of people had to -- to leave the area. Although he did make many changes in the region, but one of the changes was that he has -- foreigners had to -- to leave. And there was a massacre also, at the time. So people hoo -- ran for their lives.

Q: Your home life really would have been, I'm guessing, very comfortable, if not lavish in these -- in the years of your early childhood.

A: That is right. It was very comfortable, it was very steady and predictable. And it was lavish. My parents would give big parties, there was -- there were always a lot of people around. They

were very well known, and it was like, you know, a constant stream of people coming through our house, or going places. I was a child, and of course, children were not to mingle with adults, so I didn't participate in all these kind of things, but I remember the excitement. What I remember was that my parents bought a summer home in -- in Calanilla, which is part of the Pilion mountain, but it's down by the sea. And we would go there for weekends, and I remember that we packed the food in big baskets, and then went -- we would get on the train, and then the -- the man who was taking care of the estate would come on his buggy and horse, and pick us up from the train station, and take us back to the -- we used to call it villa, to the villa. And that was one of my favorite times. I just loved it there.

Q: And you -- you'd go there through the summer months, an -- and for how long? You'd stay on a Saturday night?

A: Yes. In -- in the summer we stayed for a month, or two, or maybe more. Maybe we went in the winter, I don't remember, but it was short period of time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, you mentioned that you would not go to the synagogue except to take oil. Would your sister, who was older than you have had a Bat Mitzvah, or any kind of formal training in her Jewish faith?

A: No. First of all, girls were not Bat Mitzvahed until much, much, much later in Greece, so this was unheard of. So there was no particular training, there was no Sunday school as we call it, or Hebrew school. The training was at home, basically.

Q: And what would that training be, and who would it come from? You mentioned your -- your grandmother before, complaining of you going to Brownies on Saturday. But would she be the -- the person who would sort of teach you what you knew about the Jewish faith?

A: Well, it was -- I think a combination of things with my grandmother, it was my parents. But I remember my grandmother was quite s -- had very strong opinions about things, and she would always say that you know, this is not Jewish, this is not the Jewish way. But she had no formal education either. Actually, she went up to fourth or fifth grade, and -- but she had a very strong feeling of who she was.

Q: But that would be normal at the time, I suppose, even for privileged women, not to have a great deal of education, is that right?

A: Yeah, that's true, but she was also a sickly child, so -- in her younger years. She -- I guess if you were sick you didn't go to school, it was as simple as that. So that was it. Her mother died when she was very young, she was like three or four, and she was raised by her brothers, and her sister, who was my other grandmother, and a bit spoiled.

Q: She might have been a great reader, and have educated herself, I don't know.

A: Ah --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number one, side B. We'll continue talking about your grandmother. I assume that you had a very close and loving relationship with her.

A: She used to say I was her favorite grandchild, of course she had three. But I wasn't very happy with her, because she always mingled a lot in my life. And I slept in the same room she

did, we had one room, and we shared it, and of course I wanted to have all my toys out, and every night I had to put them back. And this will interfere with the story I had in my mind. I would take my dolls and everything else, and set them outside -- and there was a story [indecipherable] I had imagined. And she would make me put them back, and I didn't like that.

Q: Now ya -- and your sister did not have to share a room.

A: No. She had all the privileges of the firstborn.

Q: I'm wondering if any -- if you have any special -- you must -- memories of these early years. You mentioned it as a very happy time, but are there particular things that evoke wonderful memories, and I'm thinking of foods, or smells, people, pieces of music.

A: Yes. Food was a very important part of our lives, and there was -- there were season things, I remember. You could not go to the grocery store and buy tomatoes in the wintertime. First of all, you -- you had to go to the grocery store, or to the produce store and buy things, so there were several stops to buy all these things. What I remember, we had women who worked in that household from the mountain of Pilion. And their parents will come to visit, and they would bring these wonderful baskets of cherries, or fresh strawberries, or figs. And they smelled so good, they were just wonderful, and I always loved it when they came to visit with their daughters, and they would bring all these fresh fruit.

Q: Can you get the same quality of fruit from the same mountains today?

A: Oh, I don't know. Probably yes, but I don't know, I haven't been there for a long time, so I can't -- but I also remember the -- the way they came, they came in little white baskets, or bamboo baskets. And they were covered with fig leaves, so the fruit will stay moist. And it was very, very attractive to look at this.

Q: And you'd have special foods for high holidays, but I suppose there'd be other Greek holidays you'd also celebrate.

A: Yeah, I think -- I don't remember particularly celebrating Christmas, but it was like a gathering, like a family gathering, all people will come, and we'll have a nice meal. I don't know whether we had turkey, I don't remember that. New Year's Eve, or New Year's Day was always special. It still is in Greece. You exchange presents on New Year's Day, so that was fun. Easter was one thing. Tha -- that was basically -- yeah, there were special foods. There was always some wonderful kind of desserts, and other things that my mother -- my mother was an excellent cook. I mean, she was terrific, and I loved everything she ate -- everything she made, I mean. What I remember also, there was a hierarchy, you know, in my house, so when we sat around the table, the food was passed by the maids, first to my grandmother, then to my mother, then to my father, then to my sister, and I was always the last one to be served. So I remember I always liked chicken livers, so -- you know, there was -- the chicken liver was gone, or -- by then. Or I wanted something -- I always wanted something that I didn't have, because I was the youngest. I ate more slowly, so sometimes, you know, the table would be cleared, and I would still be eating. Things like that. So I had a very s -- a very good sense that I was the youngest, and I had to compete with everybody.

Q: Would there have been, though, responsibilities that fell on your older sister, that you were perhaps freed from?

A: Well, she -- she was, I guess, older, and they were expecting more from her, you know. They didn't expect much from me, other than to be a very polite, very well-behaved child.

Q: Yeah. Now, what about school? How old would be -- you be when you started attending any kind of school?

A: I was six years old, and I went straight to first grade. There were no pre-schools those days. And loo -- when I went to first grade, a month later the Italian war broke out. And school was dismissed for awhile. The male teachers were all gone to war, and from then on it's a whole different story, because we had to leave Volos. Our house was taken by the navy, because it was just facing the sea, just about a block from the sea, and it was a good observation point. So we had to leave, pack our things within 24 hours, we had just finished arranging the whole -- whole household, we had just moved to this apartment. And I still remember the wax, and the clean and shiny place. And we had to leave, and put our things in storage, because the Italians were coming.

Q: And how -- how old exactly were you then?

A: I was six years old.

Q: Do you have memories of your parents attitudes or moods at the time? Did you -- I mean, they would probably shield you from some concerns, but do you have any memories that suggest the wonderfully happy times were over?

A: Yes, they did shield me, they were very protective of me. I was very anxious about this war. I remember when I went in school the day the war -- we heard the -- about the war, all the children -- the older children anyway, were telling us that people get killed in the war, that men leave their homes, and go to battle, they get injured. And I was very worried about my father. So when the principal told us that there would be no school that day, and they didn't know if there was going to be school the next day, I ran home crying, asking my mother if my father was going to be the -- in the war, if he was going to be in the army. Well, my father was 40 -- 42 I think then. So my mother calmed me down and reassures me that this wasn't going to happen, and that I

didn't have anything to worry about, we'll all be together, we'll be fine. There may be a war, but we'll be safe. And that was something that I remember very vividly.

Q: And what -- what month and year was that?

A: That was in October of '40, 1940. School had started September, 1940, so it was almost a month later.

Q: And what happened in the next years?

A: The next years -- I remember we -- we stayed -- we moved to Agria, which is a suburb, or it's one little village by the sea, not far from Volos. It's one of the first villages of the Pilion mountain, but it's down very low, by the sea. We moved there. It was also my grandmother, my aunt, who had come from Salonika with her sons, and her husband. So, it was all of us. Now that's --

Q: Now, this would be your --

A: My --

Q: -- oh, the aunt?

A: My sisters -- my mother's sister. Her son Raymond was 11 months older than me, so he was a good companion, great. I made him played with dolls. He -- he was very accommodating. He was a great guy. So anyway, so we moved to Agria, we rented a place, and we stayed there for, I don't know, the whole summer. Then we returned to Volos, but shortly after, they started bombarding Volos, being a port, this was a prime target. And I remember the bombs falling, and having to run into the shelter. I was quite scared at time. Then we would come out of the shelter, and we will see all sorts of disasters.

Q: Who was doing the bombing, and tell me then about the s -- the shelters.

A: Okay, the -- the bombing was by the British. The shelter was at the basement of the building, and I have a feeling if the building collapsed, you know, we wouldn't be that safe there, but everybody thought they were. So everybody who lived in that apartment building would go there, and also people from the outside, if they happened to hear the siren, that people had to go hiding, and they would come, although they didn't live there. And would stay as long as -- as long as we heard the siren again, which meant that the danger is over, and out you go. Inspect the damage.

Q: Yeah. So y-you would go and take food and bedding with you? What do you remember, or would you go there so fast that you would simply head there with your family as fast as you could?

A: I don't remember taking nothing. Maybe a blanket, possibly. You had to run fast, there was nothing to take, because these things don't last a tremendous amount of time, as far as I remember. I think maybe an hour, maybe two. So that was it.

Q: Let me go back to the -- to place what was happening in the context of the second World War. Why would the British have been bombing the port of Volos, the third largest port?

A: Well, I think it was -- it was a protection from -- from -- na --

Q: So at this time your life was beginning to change. And then what happened?

A: Well then, it was a worry. There were curfews. There were precautions taken, you could not have lights at night. We had to put panels with black -- dark paper -- with black paper at the windows so no light would fall through. You couldn't go out past six o'clock or seven o'clock. So things started changing, people were more anxious. When the Italians came, I was fully aware that they were the enemy, and although they were not particularly terrible to Jews, they were still an occupying force, and I was very patriotic, those days. But I also remem -- remember, that was

in ’41, when there was a famine, and I remember it very clear. We did not particularly suffer from lack of food, although we didn’t have the kind of food we used to have before the war. But when we got food, my mother will hide it, because Italians wi -- would raid the house and look for food. And she would hide things in -- I remember in a great, big pot of gardenias. She would put potatoes, or something, I forget in a pot, or sacks of flour in a big pot, and then put soil, and gardenias on top. Or other things. But I remember they would come and lift the mattresses, and look under -- under the mattress to see if there was anything hiding in there.

Q: And they’d be assuming that you were a well to do family, and might be the very place to have food.

A: Yes. People were really hungry those days. I would see people fall in the streets from hunger. Children. I sti -- I still remember children looking anorectic, you know, this pale, yellow, a green color almost. And just walking and collapsing. It was terrible, absolutely terrible. As I said, I don’t think we -- we were hungry, that -- as to not having food, but we certainly didn’t have meat. We didn’t have eggs, which was a constant supply in the household. We had a lot of beans and chick peas, vegetables, whatever vegetables we can get.

Q: Would you still be sitting down rather formally, with the maid serving all of you according to your hierarchy, even with simpler foods?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So the -- the staff with your family would in fact be fortunate -- perhaps more fortunate than their families in the -- in the mountains, in perhaps having more food.

A: Well, I think the people in the mountain didn’t suffer that much because the earth produced, and many of them had also animals they could slaughter. They had chickens, lamb, whatever. But it was the people in the city that couldn’t find food.

Q: And the cause of this famine in Greece, was that because ships could not get through to the port?

A: I think it was mostly because the Italians were taking all the food, but I'm sure that also, you know, supplies couldn't come, yes.

Q: So suffering was really quite considerable?

A: It was considerable, not only in Volos, but also in Athens and other parts of Greece, yes.

Q: Now are there any other things you remember during that period of Italian occupation that be -- the famine, but were the Italians taking any measures against the Jews?

A: No, the Italians did not take any measures against the je -- Jews. First of all, in 1940 through '43, it was just the Italians. It was in '43 that Italy capitulated, and then the Germans took over. No, there was absolutely nothing. I remember there was a big, sort of a club that my father used to go there, and my mother, and occasionally sh -- I would go, which wasn't far from my house, called Exorise thekey, they had the restaurant there, there was a movie theater. And the Italians have taken this, and I guess they lived there, but there were also Italians outside guarding the place, and every time I would pass by, the Italian will say to me, bambina, bambina, and would take candy to give me. Will reach in his pocket, and show me the candy, and I would just walk past him, you know, I just didn't want to have anything to do with him. And so, you know, me -- I mean -- but I -- but I remember some things. I remember a man being beaten with a gun, with the back of the gun. I don't know what he did, but I remember that an Italian was really beating him up. This was --

Q: And that would have -- you -- that was something you observed in the street, or --

A: Yeah, it was in the street, yeah.

Q: And I'm assuming in your attitude, you'd have taken your cue from your parents, but the -- the Italians would be hated as the occupiers?

A: Yeah, of course, yes.

Q: And then everything changed when the Germans occupied -- moved into Greece in 1943.

A: Right. Volos was under Italian re -- you see, Greece was occu -- was divided in three parts. It was the German sector, which was mostly Salonika, and in the north Athens, Volos, were under Italian occupation, and then Macedonia, and Face were under Bulgarian occupation. The Italians were by far the mildest occu -- you know, occupying force. But I -- we left Volos in 19 -- in the spring of 1943, before the Germans arrived, and we went to Athens. So I never saw Germans in Volos.

Q: And why did your family move to Athens?

A: Well, I think because -- you see, in '43, nothing much was happening yet, but there were rumors about Salonika. My father was a very well informed person, and saw that probably something was going to happen. So he wanted us to be safe. We could not hide in Volos, everybody knew us. Although people were wonderful to us, and very friendly, and very willing to put us up for as long as we needed to. We still were -- everybody knew us, so there was no way of -- of hiding. Of course, there were the mountains, the mountain Pilion that a lot of Jewish people from Volos went to. But that wasn't safe either for us, because as I said, we were quite well known, so Pilion wasn't that terribly far. That's why we left and went to Athens, where we could be somewhat anonymous in there.

Q: Do you remember your parents ever talking about the -- the Jews in Salonika, and I wondered what they knew, and I wondered what they shared.

A: Well, they didn't share anything with me. I was quite young at the time. But I was told that we had to move almost like two or three days before to move, that we were going to Athens. And this was a place I always wanted to go. I always thought of Athens as the magnificent city. So -- but then when I realized that we were not coming back to Volos, it wasn't just a trip, I started thinking differently, and getting a little anxious. Not much was explained to me, and as a result of that, my imagination was wild. I would think all sorts of things, and of course, I couldn't discuss them, because it was like this is for the good of us, or this kind of thing. There kind of answers were -- actually didn't give me much to go with. I think --

Q: Did that -- did that make it worse?

A: For me it did, to a certain extent, because I could never get a straight answer of what was going on, and I knew a lot was going on.

Q: And were you noticing -- do you have memories of noticing a changed mood? Fear on the part of your parents?

A: Yes, yes. I can see the change of mood, I can see the worry. I mean, I could sense it, but I couldn't discuss it, yes.

Q: And you were -- you were 10 then?

A: Right. When we left Volos on that sleek, little cargo boat, with forged papers, actually, to -- to go to Athens, I was 10.

Q: False papers. Now, who would have supplied them, and would you have had Greek Orthodox names, and so on?

A: That's true. We had different names, Greek Orthodox names. And my name was Paulik Sanny. And they used to call me Polly, and sometimes I would forget and somebody would call me Polly, I wouldn't respond. I guess the -- the police would issue false identity card, because

when we went -- we left Volos on this little, tiny boat full of sacks of flour and many rats, we -- the boat broke down, and we had to stop for a couple of nights in -- in the cape. There is -- you see, Volos is like a gulf. The very tip of the -- of the gulf is called Trikery, which is a lovely little place, but we had to stay there for about two or three nights until another boat will come and pick us up, and take us to Evian, and from there we went by car to Athens. So the whole trip took about 10 days, maybe a week, but I think it was more like 10 days, because boats were unreliable.

Q: And which members of the family would be on this boat with you, and did any of your household staff leave with you?

A: Yes, my parents, and my sister, and I. My grandmother -- maternal grandmother, my Aunt Julia, who is my mother's sister, with her husband and son, and one of our household persons was with us.

Q: And who -- who was that?

A: I think her name was Penny.

Q: And would she be a -- a maid, or a cook, or a governess?

A: Well, I guess she was everything. A little bit of everything, but she was very devoted to the family, and she said if the family was going to leave Volos, she was coming with us.

Q: And was she Jewish?

A: No, no. She was one of the girls from the mountains. She probably wanted to go to Athens.

Q: And whatever discussions went on be -- prior to this plan being made, you were not -- you were protected, and you were not privy as a -- as a young child, or a 10 year old.

A: No, I certainly wasn't privy, but I could see, I mean, the house is being dismantled, things are being moved to storage spaces, or some things are being shipped, and other things were given to

friends or neighbors for safekeeping. We didn't recover any of that, like paintings, or carpets. So I knew that we were moving. To me it was a little bit of an adventure, to be -- being on a boat, and the boat breaking down, and all that kind of stuff. I didn't particularly like to sleep on sacks of flour, and I was afraid of the rats. There were a lot of rats there.

Q: What do you remember of your -- of your sister's attitude?

A: I think my sister was taking care of me. She would always make sure I was fine, and I wasn't too close to the edge of the -- of the boat, or I was -- I was -- well, she would talk to me, but --

Q: Did she seem -- do you -- well, wonder if you even know if she was troubled.

A: I'm sure she was troubled. Now, how much troubled, I don't know. I think she was protective of my parents, so I think she tried not to show her anxiety much.

Q: The -- this was -- I mean, it was a plan that obviously -- I would think obviously, talking to account that your father was full of concern about what was likely to happen. Do you -- do you remember if he ever thought of -- of leaving Europe, or -- or going somewhere much farther away, leaving Greece? He would be a man with contacts, and so on, in other European nations.

A: I never discussed this with him, but I have a feeling he would never go anywhere other than Greece. I think --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number two, side A. You're telling me that your father never considered going anywhere beyond Greece.

A: No, I don't think so. Although he never discussed it with me. I think --

Q: Anybody -- was there anyone you knew who considered fleeing to the United States?

A: I never knew of anybody who came to the United States at the time. Some people went to Palestine, or Turkey.

Q: And who were they?

A: There was a friend of mine who was a little younger, and her family. And they went on a small boat, and unfortunately they left them -- there were other people with them, but they were left on a -- on a rock. Supposedly the boat had trouble, and the man went up to -- went to fix the boat and never came back. And they were picked up much, much later, by another boat. But they stayed on that rock for maybe a week or so. So there were incidents like this, you would hear all over the place.

Q: And did they return to Greece, or did they continue on their way?

A: They returned to Greece, and they went into hiding in Greece, yes.

Q: And let's go back to the move to Athens, and tell me about your life there, prior to going into hiding.

A: Okay, so we moved, as I said, we came on these two different boats that took about 10 days to get to Athens, and normally the trip is like two days at the most. In Athens my uncle, who was my father's younger brother who lived there, had found a place for us. It was an apartment at -- we had one floor, my aunt and grandmother had another in the same building. And we went

there. It was spring, so I didn't go to school, because school would have been over pretty soon. And I guess we were trying to -- to get acquainted to -- to the city, and to -- to find our way around. There wasn't much we were doing as far as I was concerned. My only playmate was my cousin, who was 11 years old -- I mean, 11 months older than me, and we were constant companions. I don't remember having friends, or being encouraged to -- to make friends. Since I didn't go to school, of course I couldn't meet other children. Then, in September of 1943, we went into hiding. And the events prior to this, I remember them very clearly. I had the mumps, and I was in bed, and the dining room was adjacent to the bedroom. So my -- all my aunts, and uncles came and they were having meetings with my parents in this dining room, and I could hear them whispering. I could not make out any words, but I knew something very serious was going on. And obviously they were planning where each one was going to go, what they were going to do, and it was like a big family meeting. My sister was in that -- in that meeting. Occasionally she would come out and check on me, to make sure I was all right, or put some hot pads on my cheeks, which was the normal treatment. And then she would go back in the room. And when I would ask what is it that -- why are you all in there, and she would say, "Well, we -- we just need to discuss some adult things. Don't worry, everything is fine." And but of course I worried, because I knew everything wasn't fine. So I remember that very, very clearly.

Q: What had triggered this -- what had triggered the plan, and the crisis, if you like?

A: I think the fact that they were hearing more and more things about the Germans coming to Athens, and I think it was about the time that Italy capitulated, and they probably knew that if Germans come, they would probably treat the Jews the same way they treated them in Salonika. So some advance thinking, at least to have the plan, and if you need to use it, you use it. It was necessary to do that time.

Q: Was there any leadership coming through the synagogue, or the Jewish community, do you think, to help people deal with this? I mean, did all families begin to make plans at the same time?

A: I don't know for sure, but I have a feeling they probably did. Some decided the very last moment to go somewhere, because this is something you don't want to believe that this going to happen. It's pretty unbelievable. So most people denied as wildly exaggerating, or this isn't going to happen to us. But people with advanced thinking, and people who know about the world, I guess, don't leave things to chances. And my father was one of these people.

Q: Meanwhile, you were living under false names in Athens, but would your -- would neighbors know your real identity, or would you keep very much to family, and not be mixing much with people who were not close to you?

A: That is true. I don't remember mixing much with other people. We didn't have neighbors -- actually, there was a lady but i -- who lived in the same building, but I think she was also Jewish. And we pretty much stayed with the family. I don't remember venturing out much -- I mean, not -- we were free to come and go, but I would always go out with someone, I would never go out alone. But there was no -- no particular friends that I remember at that time.

Q: Now, from the time of these whispered meetings, when you had the mumps, to the time when you left the apartment and went into hiding, how much time went by?

A: Probably a month. Because we went into hiding in September of '43, and the meetings must have been like a few -- a month, or maybe two at the most, before.

Q: And what preparation -- obviously the planning was going on, but as a child, do you have any memory of the activities going on in the apartment? I mean, was there packing of valuables, or anything that you remember observing?

A: I don't think we have any valuables, because I think a lot of the furniture was in there, in the apartment when we arrived. It wa -- I don't think it was our furniture, I don't recall. So this probably was a -- a furnished place when we arrived. As far as clothing, I think we took whatever we needed, which wasn't much at the time. Maybe some books. I took my favorite doll. I was a big doll person. And I guess that was it, but no utensils, or anything else, because when we were into hiding, we lived with other families, not Jewish families, Greek Orthodox families, so they had their own household.

Q: And when you left Volos, and came to Greece, you'd already taken a huge -- or made a huge change in your standard of living. I assume that the apartment in Greece would be much more sparse, you'd left all your possessions and so on behind.

A: Right, yeah. They all went into storage. As I said, some things went to friends or neighbors for safekeeping. A lot of stuff we did not recover.

Q: How -- they would simply not -- they'd have disappeared, or they wouldn't -- friends and neighbors would not honor the --

A: Either they would move away, or some people even denied of -- I remember there was a painting that was the favorite painting of my mother's, and this woman denied that she ever had it. And it was an outright lie. So, things like that. I don't remember if we sold things. I can't recall that. But I remember when we arrived in Athens we didn't have much. It was a big change, definitely.

Q: Let me go back to the woman and the painting. It's a -- m-m-maybe -- maybe it sheds light on something. Obviously to have left a cherished possession with her, she would have been a trusted friend. I -- I wondered was that -- her not honoring that trust later, what did that mean?

A: Well, I think it was a devastating thing to find that you cannot trust people, on top of everything else that's happening. At least there were people you could count on, and you cannot count on them. And you really don't know to whom you can turn when things are bad. I think that was the story in the -- the experience. How can she be so blatant, and say, we didn't get it, they didn't give it to us.

Q: And then wa -- when it comes to going into hiding, you had to know that you could trust the people that you were going to be with. What do you know about the -- how the family split up, who you stayed with.

A: Okay, first of all, my father had found this place through a friend, a very good friend of his. He had baptized the oldest child, by the name of Many Babella, and he knew the family well. So he had talked to them, and they had agreed to take us. Of course, families could not -- families could not be together if there were more than two, three people, because they could be easily spotted, and they had to disperse. My father went to some other family, and my mother and I, and sister, went to Calivare, which is a suburb of Athens, to this wonderful family of a couple, the name was Pavella. And they had three children, a 15 year old, and one girl who was Kate, she was 10, as I was, and a younger boy about six or seven, called Dimitris. My mother, sister, and I shared one room. So the three of us shared one room, my father was elsewhere, and we had our meals with the family, I was playing with the children, who were about the same age as I was. I wasn't going to school, and my excuse was that I had appendicitis. And I wasn't supposed to go to school. This was what I was telling the children. Of course, they all wanted to see my incision, and there was no incision. Basically, I liked these kids, and they were just great, they were warm, and would play all sorts of games, and we had a great connection. My mother would communicate with my father once a week by telephone, and this was like a coded message.

When the news were bad, the message was, the patient is very sick. When the news was better, it was that, well, the patient is doing better. So, this was a pre-arranged kind of code for them to communicate. My sister became good friends with the sister of the woman who hid us, the family there. She had a bakery right across from where we were. And my sister would go there sometimes, and also Adhero will come to -- to the house. She was very warm, and caring, and often will bring cookies from the bakery.

Q: I -- I wanted to clarify your not going to school was really because your -- you were more effectively hidden if you didn't.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: And then -- well, loo -- let's go ahead.

A: Yeah, I couldn't go to school, because that involves being outside, and being in public. The -- the fear was that somebody may recognize us. Same thing for my mother and sister, we couldn't venture very far other than across the street to the bakery, because although we had left Volos, where we were very well known, and in Athens we were more -- more unknown people, it still the possibility that somebody would recognize us, and mention our names, and then everybody will be in great peril. Of course, the family that hid us was in danger by hiding us. These were wonderful people. He worked for -- the man of the family worked for a Greek newspaper, so he could bring home news of what was going on. His wife was also a very good housekeeper, caring for the children, and very nice, and my mother and Dasseia became friends. And even after the war they would see each other. And there was great respect for each other. So there was -- there were good feelings there, and a good connection. As I said, we couldn't go out, we couldn't do things that we normally used to do. But maybe for my mother this was a big loss, but for me it was fun because there were children to play with. At some point, I think it was probably

around December, which was like three months after we went into hiding to the Pavella family, my father joined us. I guess he had become very lonely in the family he was with in Athens, and he decided to come to be with us. Of course, this was with the agreement of the family we lived in. But shortly after, I remember it very clearly, one evening, Adhero, the -- the wife's sister, who had the bakery, came running to the house, and saying, "You must leave immediately. I heard from somebody that they know you are Jewish, and you are hiding." We used to tell, or the family used to tell that we were relatives, because sometimes we would be out in the yard, and people would ask, who are these people? They say they were relatives. And this man, who happened to be drunk, and he was in a tavern, in a Greek tavern, he said, "Don't get fooled, these people are not relatives of the Pavella family, they are Jews, and they are hiding." So it was heard by everybody who was in that tavern, and Adhero happened to be there. And she ran and told us to leave immediately. Well, the first one who left was my father, because he was in greater danger. And he walked from Calivare to Athens with the man of the family, Milanos Pavella. He wouldn't let him go by himself. He took him on foot. And the next night, all three of us, my mother, my sister, and I, when it became dark, we also left with him. He came back, of course, after taking my father to a friend's house in Athens. He came back and took us to -- to Athens. Now this is about, I don't know, probably -- I remember walking for a long, long, long time in the night. I don't know exactly how far it is, but I'm sure it must be like six miles, 10 miles from Athens. So it's a long walk for a 10 year old. And we had put scarfs on our heads, and tied them so people wouldn't recognize us immediately. So when we go to Athens, we immediately went where my father was, at the friend's house. Now these were very good friends, who were notified, apparently, when this incident of somebody saying that we were Jews occurred. And they were looking for a place for us to go. But until they found a place, we

couldn't stay together, because they were in danger. So my sister went to a friend's house, one of her friends from Volos, that family lived in Athens, and they took her. And I went -- they took me to somebody's house in Athens, and all I remember, it was like a mansion, a huge place. And there lived a man in a wheelchair. I think he was an old man, but here again [indecipherable] wrong, being 10 years old -- and a woman who was taking care of him. I don't think she was a relative, I think she was a caretaker. And I was left there for 10 days by myself, not having communication with my family, not knowing what was going on, not knowing these people. I think this man didn't talk to me, or if he did, it must have been one or two words, or maybe he couldn't talk. I remember the woman feeding him, spoonfeeding him, so obviously he was pretty sick. And I was desperate. I was totally lost. I didn't know what happened to my parents, I didn't know if they would ever pick me up. But the woman, the caretaker of this man was a very kind woman, so when I would cry, she would try to comfort me, or tell me stories, or all sorts of things, just to make me feel good about it. Well, in about 10 days, my sister came, and she said, "We have a place now. I'm ga -- I'm here to pick you up, to take you." I don't know if she had called before or not, I don't recall. But I took my little satchel of things, a couple of changes of clothe -- clothes, and my doll, and said good-bye and left. And we went -- we met again at this friend's house, and we went, I think in installments again, my father went first, or we went first, to the second house, where we spent about seven months. This was in Kipserly. It was the family of Andonis Vayas, who was an officer in the navy. And they had -- he and his wife had the little girl about three years old. And I think there was a grandmother who was deaf, and also lived in the house, but we hardly saw her. She stayed in her room for the most time. Anyway, so it was a new adjustment. We had a very large room for the four of us, so there was like a -- a screen put in the middle, so on one side where my parents were sleeping, and on the other side was my

sister and I. We were sharing the other side of the room. And we were closer to the street, it was on a street level, and closer to the street. I slept on a cot. And I remember at night I would hear the Germans patrolling, and I could hear their boots going by my window. And I would stop breathing. I was so petrified, because I thought they were coming for us. And I would pull the blanket over my head, and stop breathing, I -- until I couldn't -- I couldn't do it any more, and I had to breathe. So then slowly I will pull the blanket off my head, and I would listen very carefully, and by then the steps with the boots -- because I knew -- I knew they were boots, would disa -- have disappeared, or they would have gone away, or they were far, so I knew we were safe. This was my biggest fear, that they would come and get us. Here again, I didn't go to school. My father tried to teach me some arithmetic, and I think I had two books, "Robinson Crusoe," and another one, which was a rather gloomy book called, "The Orphans of Scotland." And it was nothing but -- you know, five orphans, or maybe more, whose father was in prison, and how they got him out of prison in a basket, and things like that. But it was a rather sad book, if I remember correctly. Then I got hold of a children's magazine heyou -- I think it was a weekly magazine. I don't know who gave it to us, or how I got hold of it, and it had wonderful stories, and this was very nice for me too, to read. Other than that, think my imagination went wild, because I used to play in the backyard, and all I would do is pick up bamboo stick, and pretend it was a gun, and was shooting all the Germans. And we were free, I thought, by me doing that. Games like this. Occasional I will play with a three year old little girl. But that was about it. The backyard had a fence, and the next house was also a two story house, I think, and in the balcony there was a little girl who would be out practically every day, and playing with dolls, and other toys. And I would go next to the fence, and we started talking. And she would always invite me to go to her house to play. But of course, I knew I couldn't, so I would find all sorts of

excuses that I couldn't go. But one time I couldn't bear it any more, so I jumped the fence. On our side of the yard, the fence was reasonably manageable, I could go over it. But when I jumped, it was very high on her side. I'm glad I didn't break a leg. So I jumped the fence, and went to her apartment and played there for awhile. Of course, nobody in my family knew that I left the house. But when it was time for me to go back, I just couldn't climb the fence, it was too much. So finally I decided I had to go around the corner, because this house was around the corner. So I came, and rang the doorbell, and of course the woman opened the door, and she was so surprised to see me. And my mother came, and she was absolutely pale when she saw me. I got a good spanking for that, I remember. I wasn't supposed to -- to leave the house, especially not telling anybody. But it was that urge to be with other children, to be able to play, to be -- to have a normal life like any other child that made me do that.

Q: Now, at first when you were rescued by your sister from the elderly man, that must have been simply wonderful, to be reunited again.

A: Oh sure, that was.

Q: And I am guessing that was the hardest experience, is that right?

A: Yes, it was a very hard experience. It was a hard experience because I've never been alone with strangers. I was -- I didn't know -- I had the feeling that -- oh, I was afraid that maybe my parents were taken by the Germans, and I couldn't see them again, or they wouldn't come back for me, or they would leave me there forever. That was the feeling. It was a sense of abandonment, but I'm sure they had no other choice to -- to send me any place else, I mean, I don't know what went on, and how it was decided for me to go to this man's house. Obviously not everybody is willing to take a 10 year old under such circumstances. You know, 10 year olds talk, and jump fences. So they are dangerous. But it was -- it was a very sad time for me.

Q: Do you think that that's stayed with you, any of those feelings?

A: Well, I think the fear of abandonment has stayed. And at different times I have felt it quite strongly. Also, I think at times when I think a child being left alone, although there were people --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is tape number two, side B. The -- I want to go back a moment and ask for more information about the two families that you stayed with --

A: Oh.

Q: -- or three, in fact, if you count the elderly man.

A: Well, after the second one, yeah, we went to a third one because the -- my father was taken by the Greek Nazis -- Greek SS, as they used to call them. They were watching the house in -- the third house, and -- no, actually, the second house in Kipserly. And one day they burst in, pretending they were people from the power company, and they wanted to read the meter, but they came in with guns, and they were asking for Moudzoukos. And they took him, and fortunately he had money on him. He had British pounds that were all sewn around his west -- waistband, and he paid them. And they told him that he and his family had to leave within five hours, and they didn't guarantee his safety, or anybody else's safety. So when they came to get my father -- panic-stricken my mother, and my sister, and me -- my sister went next door -- here again, she jumped from a terrace to the next terrace, where there were people that had help us find this house as well. And this was in -- somebody in the -- I think in the Supreme Court, or -- he was in charge, anyway, and we knew them. So she notify them, and they notified another friend, who immediately came -- nearby there was a market, and he was watching the house to

see the activity and what was going on. And as soon as they brought my father back, he came in the house and took us to his house. And from there he found another place for us. So I think we stayed overnight, or maybe a couple of days, until a second hou -- a third house was found. And that's when we moved again.

Q: And all these families that were taking you in were Greek Orthodox families?

A: Yes, they were Greek Orthodox families, they were also compensated financially. Because there were expenses, you know. We had to eat, and they had to eat. And of course, there was some danger in there. So they were being compensated.

Q: I mean, were they richly rewarded, or was it -- or do you feel it was simply that you were allowed to make a contribution for real costs?

A: I don't know the answer. I have a feeling that at the time, it was just for expenses, but I know that after the war, they were very much helped by my father when things started going much better. Because I remember this navy officer who would come often, and ask for a loan, or things like that. And then my father would forgive the loan. So probably it was after the war, but I -- I don't know for sure.

Q: I also assume that they were taking very great risks. What would -- if they had been found to have been sheltering Jews, would their lives be in danger, as we -- as well as the other side of that is that your lives were in their hands.

A: Absolutely. They were very courageous people to do that, and they were great human beings to be able to -- to help somebody else at such a risk, yes, because if anybody was found to be sheltering Jews, could be shot, he and his family. So, it was a great danger to have Jews in the family.

Q: What did they give as their reasons?

A: Their reasons for what?

Q: For -- for sheltering you, would they say this -- you would do it for us, or this is just common human decency?

A: Yeah, I think that that was the main thing, that this was common decency. I remember Pavellas, the first house we went, when he learned that this guy said something about us being Jewish, and hiding, and you know, he came to notify us. She said, "You know, the -- the Nazi may come and take them." And Milanos said, "Over my dead body." So he had a very sense -- a very good sense of protecting us, of not letting anything happen to us. That's why he dro -- he -- he walk with my father from Calivare to Athens, and the next day he walk back again with my sister -- my mother, and my sister, and myself. So, I mean, he was a man who would take it very seriously that this was the lives of people that were under his care, and he wouldn't let anything happen, I mean, as far as he could control that.

Q: I-It does seem very na -- I mean, he was doing the right thing, but it also seems to me admirable, because his own children were placed at risk in -- in acting morally, and so on.

A: Right. That's right, yeah, yeah.

Q: Now --

A: Also -- also, the children did not know we were Jewish. Only the eldest daughter, Many, who was 15, knew. She knew. But the children also -- the family had to sacrifice, they had to give up a room. You know, I mean this was a very small house, it wasn't a huge place, it wasn't a mansion. So they had to give up a room for us to stay. They had to share the bathroom, they had to -- to share the kitchen, or whatever. So they made sacrifices as well.

Q: Tell me what day to day life would be like with the Pavellas. I mean, would you -- would you all eat meals together, and would you do chores in the house? Like who would clean the bathroom, and what do you remember about the daily life at that time?

A: For me, it was a good time, because I had company. I mean, it was great to have the children, who were fun children to be with. The chores were like sitting -- setting the table, or things like that. We all had dinner together, we all ate together. I think the cooking was done by my mother, and by Desseia. Desseia would do the shopping, or sometimes Milanos, the father, would do the shopping. And they would take turns cooking. And as far as cleaning, I think we were responsible for cleaning our room, making our beds, doing the laundry, or setting it out, I don't remember, in those days you were just washing, you know, by hand. So I think things were divided that way. For me, I remember I would wait impatiently until the children will come home from school, because that was the fun time I could play with. During the day my mother tried to engage me in teaching me how to embroider, or how to sew, and I had no interest whatsoever in any of these sedentary activities. Plus my eyes were not very good, so I couldn't concentrate on a little hole there for hours. I -- I -- I may have had one or two books, but basically I think I had a vivid imagination and I would make up stories. And when the children will come, I will tell them stories, or they will tell me jokes, and this kind of thing. We didn't go out, but yet had a huge yard, and that was nice, because we could play outside.

Q: What about clothes?

A: Oh, you had just not too many clothes. You just wore the same things over and over. I mean, you washed them, but I didn't wash them, my mother washed them. But there were no new clothes, I mean, probably she would take the here -- sometimes I would get my sister's things, and she would hem them. But there was a 10 -- 10 year difference, so you can imagine that her

clothes didn't quite fit me right, even if the hem was put up. So my biggest -- my happiest thing when she got engaged, was that I would have a new dress. That was a big thing.

Q: What do you remember of your -- of your sister and your mother's state of mind at this time? I mean, it sounds as if for you, when you were at the Pavellas, it was not a difficult time, perhaps because you -- I mean, it was difficult in the sense that it was -- you couldn't go to school, but that -- maybe I'm wrong in saying it was not difficult, but not painfully difficult like the time when you were abandoned and alone.

A: Right. You're right. I'm sure it was very difficult for my mother, first of all because my father was elsewhere, and for my sister, because she was older, and she could understand the dangers, and whatever was going on. So, since I didn't know that much about what was going on in the world, you know, I wasn't particularly worried. I was worried about my father, and I wanted my father to be with us, and I was told he eventually will be with us, but that was about it. I -- I didn't feel deprived, although, you know, food was not really -- it was difficult to get food. So I remember some of the dishes, it was like cabbage with rice, and carrots. And to this day I make it, and I think exactly of -- of that time. I loved it, it was great dish. You know, I mean, meat, eggs, fish probably were not available that much, and they were expensive. So, you know, when you have a large family to feed, it's considerable. But yes, it wasn't a painful time for me. It was more of a -- of an interesting time, or a fun time, I would think. But the other two places we went, it was a more painful time, because number one, I lost the children, you know, I -- I didn't have my friends any more. So that was a big loss when we left. And they -- I was asking Many when I saw her a couple of years ago, how was it for them when we left? And what did their parents tell them? And she said they missed us terribly, because we had become very connected. The second house, the Vaia house, I was -- I was upset most of the time because -- a little bit of it

was boredom, a little bit of it was inability to go out and do things. Just -- I felt stagnated, there wasn't much to do. But I knew that everybody else was trying very hard to -- to put a good face for the other person, so I was trying to be cheerful, so my parents won't get upset.

Q: When you spoke of the code language between your parents, first of all, would there be a phone in the home at that time, or would your mother have to go somewhere to make that call?

A: She would have to go to the bakery across the street, at a time where the bakery wasn't crowded, like two or three o'clock in the afternoon, which is siesta time in Greece, to call around that time. Occasionally, I was allowed to talk to my father, but here again it was very brief, and it was like -- I was told never to mention names, like his name -- well, his name was Daddy, but never to mention my sister's name is Yola, or things like that. And he would ask me how are you, are you a good girl, or you know, things, very brief kind of things. And that was about it.

Q: What did -- what did you know about the treatment of the Jews by the Germans then?

A: I didn't know anything. My parents probably knew what happened in Salonika, but I had no idea. I was kept very safe from information of that sort. And since my parents were not together, and they couldn't discuss it openly, I couldn't hear anything.

Q: Would you see mistreatment of Jews in the streets, or do you know of family members observing beatings, or killings?

A: No, most of it is what I heard. I actually saw a German kicking a man outside my window in the second house where we were. I could hear the screams, and the shutters were always halfway closed, and I could see this -- hear this scream, so I looked outside, and there was a German soldier kicking a man -- to me it seemed like an old man -- many times. I don't know if he was a Jewish man or not, but I remember feeling very angry that he was doing that. And then my

mother came and pulled me away from the window, so I don't know what happened. But I kept on thinking about this man for a long time, and I still do.

Q: Do you attribute your survival to these families? I assume that you do.

A: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: And how many -- how widespread was this? Do you -- do you have any sense of the numbers of families who would be sheltering Jews? Was it extremely rare, or was it very common?

A: No, I think it was common. People -- you see, Greek people are very kind, and very hospitalble -- hop -- hospitable. So to them, hiding somebody in need was not extraordinary, although it is extraordinary, it was you're a human being, I'm a human being, we have to help each other, because if I were on your side, I would expect that you would do something like this. So it was -- they were very generous people to do that, I mean, and very kind. Very kind.

Q: I wondered if -- if it's known, of -- later, do -- do you know of any families that -- where the -- the Jews that they were hiding were discovered, and what actions were taken against these sheltering families?

A: I don't know of any. I don't know of any.

Q: And at this time, how would you get news? You were -- you -- with the Pavellas you were getting it through Mr. Pavella's newspaper, but would there be a radio in the home? Would you listen to -- to news programs, or would your mother get the news in code from your father?

A: My mother would get the news about the Jews in code from my father only for a short period of time when my father was separate. But then he -- he came to live with us, and then the second house, and the third house he was with us, so we were all together. It was primarily the men of the family that would go out and hear things, they would bring newspaper. I think there was a radio. I think radios were not allowed, certain stations were not allowed, and you had to take

your radio so it would be sealed, as they used to call it. But I remember hearing some news. There was a small radio, and I remember my father putting his ear practically on the radio to -- to listen. I don't know if it was BBC or whatever, but he would listen.

Q: What -- what do you mean sealed, when --

A: Well, they used to block certain stations, so you couldn't listen to all those stations. And these were the stations that would give you news, propaganda, and all sorts of things. You know, just kind of controlled the -- the stations you could use.

Q: Now, at this time do you remember knowing anything about resistance fighters?

A: Yes, that I knew, and quite often my imaginary games including me being a resistance fighter, because that bamboo stick that I carried on my shoulder was primarily killing Germans, and often it was being a resistance fighter, just fighting for freedom.

Q: So th -- th -- those were the heroes, rather than the sheltering families?

A: Right.

Q: Well, how did this period of hiding come to an end? What happened, and also how old were you when you no longer needed to be in hiding?

A: Okay, the -- the liberation came in 1944, October '44. So I was 11 years old. We were hiding for four -- 13 months, or a little over 13 months. The news came, I think from the radio that we were free, October 12th, in Athens, later in other places, going north, as the Germans started retreating. It was -- I think it was the radio, but I also think that the man of the house, of the third house, came and said, "The Germans are leaving, we are free." And I remember my sister and the -- the daughter of the household, her name was Maria, she was older than me, but she was closer to my sister age, and they were dancing. So we listened to the radio, and I think some people also came to announce the freedom, that we were free now. They didn't know we were

Jewish, but they came to say the Germans have left, or are leaving. And it was going to be a big celebration downtown in Athens. So my sister and Maria were going to go, and I wanted to go with them. I was crying to go with them. They wouldn't let me because I was too young. And apparently a lot of crowds were there, you know, so they could have let me go get a sense of what was going on, but anyway, they -- I couldn't go. So I stayed home with my parents, but Yola, my sister, and Maria went, and they came home about 12 o'clock, and they was telling us it was such a frenzy, it was wonderful, everybody was jumping and laughing, and it was -- it was great.

Q: And did things change very quickly? I mean, what -- what happened next? Would it take awhile to pick up the pieces of your old life?

A: Yes. For one thing we were free, but we had no place to go. We didn't have -- we couldn't go back to Volos because we didn't have a house there. The factory was not working. Here again, good friends came to the rescue. We -- I think in about a week my parents were able to rent an apartment in Athens, and friends lent us furniture, like folding cots, and folding tables, and folding chairs, and mattresses. I slept on a mattress. I remember there was only one bed where my grandmother, when she came from her hiding place, slept. Everybody else slept in cots, or on a mattress on the floor. And we were reunited with my grandmother, my Aunt Julia, and Raymond my -- my cousin. But his father was taken to Bergen-Belsen, so he wasn't with them. He eventually returned to Greece.

Q: Now where -- where was he take -- I mean, where was he when he was captured?

A: He was hiding someplace in Athens, I'm not quite sure where. But he was a Spanish citizen, so he had a sort of better treatment, as they called -- you know, the Spanish citizens were treated

differently, the Jewish Spanish -- he was Sephardic -- were treated in a -- a little lenier way, let's say, were taken to Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Now, that's interesting to me, so w -- you mean, the Sephardic Jews who were rounded up, generally were treated differently?

A: Only the ones who were Spanish citizens. If they were Greek citizens, no. Because Spain was trying to negotiate with the Germans to get the citizens back, or to have a better treatment, and somehow they were able to, up to a certain extent, not really, but they were a little more lenient.

Q: So he was taken to Bergen-Belsen, wa -- wa -- what -- what did you ultimate -- ultimately learn? Ha -- was it -- it -- of his experiences?

A: Well, he didn't talk much about his experiences there, other than he'd say it was a horrible time. I actually don't know his experiences there, but I thought he was a much sadder man than I knew him. He was quite a happy man before, and he wasn't -- he was very subdued, I thought, when he came back.

Q: Would he have been working in -- as a -- doing sort of slave labor, or --

A: Yeah, I think they did slave labor, right. But they were not cremated. I mean, they didn't go to the crematorium.

Q: And do you -- do you know what his relationship with his family was like afterwards? I mean, was he a --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- was he a man whose spirit was broken, when he returned, really?

A: I think he was okay. I think he was all right with the family, yeah.

Q: You would -- you were 11 when you came out of hiding. What are your memories of what it was like in those next years, when you'd be 11 - 12 - 13, and then tell me how you think, subsequently, this period in hiding has changed you.

A: Okay. We came out of hiding, and I was kind of lost. They tried to enroll me in public school, which was not far from where we lived, and I think it was almost -- it must have been like maybe fifth grade at the time. I should have been in fifth grade, but I skipped so much school that I really didn't have the skills any more. I remember the class being huge. There must have been like 70 children in that class, and I was taught a little obs -- I had no idea what they were talking about, I didn't get any particular attention to -- to something. So I was very unhappy, and eventually, I don't know how much later, my parents put me in a private school with a much smaller, you know, smaller classes, more attention from the teachers, and things like that. At the time we didn't have money for private schools, and I know that my father's sister helped for me to go to private school, I know that. So it was something very generous of her to do. And I did like the school, it was -- the co-owners of that school were both British women, very regimented, very disciplined, but basically it was a very, very good school, and it still exists in Greece. So once I were -- I was there then, I was able to -- to feel my way a little better.

Q: Mm-hm. What's the name of the school?

A: Hill, H-i-l-l.

Q: And I wonder if looking back, you think that you were -- in the period in hiding, living in a fantasy world as a protective measure? I mean, you spoke about your imagination and your games. I mean it -- have you thought about this, whether -- whether the rich imaginative fantasies were in fact helping to shield your -- your spirit, or your psyche from what was going on?

A: Oh, I'm sure about that. I think there was a lot of anxiety I felt, because I would pick up, you know, what the adults, and the other people around me felt. And although I didn't show it, I was always a very private person as a child, and some of it was encouraged because I wasn't supposed to be saying things to others. I mean, to my family I was supposed to say, but --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number three, side A. You were talking about the concern that you would give the game away, blurting something out as a child.

A: Yes, I think that was the fear. And I think that's why my parents weren't telling me too many things, let alone that they felt I was too young to -- to be burdened, and worry about things like that. But I did worry. I mean, I was a very sensitive child, so I could feel the moods of everybody. I mean, I could see my father -- I would enter that part of the room that he -- my parents had in the second house, where it was divided by a screen, and he would smoke constantly. I mean, the room was so cloudy, it was hard to see him, because it was one cigarette after the other. And that worried me. Not that I knew that cigarettes were not good for you, but his -- his mood, his pensive mood, the heaviness was there.

Q: What do you think that the impact of -- of that was on you, developmental -- I -- I ask this question just because I've heard discussion of it. Sometimes childhood is robbed. You were forced to be adult too soon. Or sometimes I think other survivors have said that it's -- that they've remained a child longer, and been slowed in their normal maturation, because they were bearing these burdens.

A: I think that was more of the case with me. I think even after we were liberated, we were very burdened because we had no money, we had lost the factory at the time. We had no furniture. So we had to start life from the beginning, to pick up the pieces. And I think my parents were very concerned that they were -- they didn't want -- I don't know about my sister, but they didn't want me to be unhappy, and to have a bad childhood. Here we had everything, and they had planned for everything, and here comes Hitler, and you know, he turns your life upside down. So I think they tried to shelter me, maybe a little too much, but I think I didn't grow up as fast as I thought I would have liked to.

Q: And you spoke about schooling, but as -- as you -- as your teens went on, what would be -- how did schooling progress, and other things? Would there be -- would there be any extra curricular things, or were times too hard to have piano lessons, and art lessons and so on?

A: Okay. Schools progress normally except I had a great difficulty in school. Part of it was I didn't have the skills to study, or I couldn't even do arithmetic. Things that you learn in third grade, I had skipped second, third, and fourth grade, basically. Because also, during the Italian war, school was a [indecipherable] you know, whenever. It was -- so it was very hard for me. I didn't know the basics, let's put it this way. But I got up. But I always had this feeling that I was lagging, I was behind. And this was a very uncomfortable feeling for me. I was ashamed of it, that I didn't know as much as the other children knew. My greatest extra-curricular activity was joining the Girl Scouts. You see, I always loved the Brownies when we were in Volos, as I said before, but as soon as Metaxess, who was a dictator, Fascist, decided that the Girl Scout movement, and the Boy Scout movement had to cease and all children should joined Apon, which was the youth organization. But Jews were not included, so I could not participate. So I always felt so hurt, because of that. And after the -- after the liberation, and when things started

falling into place slowly, my goal was to become a Girl Scout. I was dying to. We didn't know any troops, any Girl Scout troops, how do you go about it. But I made sure I found out where the headquarters were, and I wrote a letter to the region officers there, a wonderful woman, by the name of Mrs. Sareefee, and I told her that I was a Brownie when I was little, and now I'm out of hiding, and I want to become a Girl Scout. And she wrote back and -- a very warm letter that I read, and read, and knew by heart, because that was the letter I had under my pillow. Every night I read it. And she told me that troop number 21 is not far from where I live, and my mother could get me there, and they used to meet on Saturdays again. And sure enough my mother took me, and she met the leaders, wonderful women. And it was from then on I was -- my life was nothing but the Girl Scouts. It was the most wonderful experience for me to be with this group.

Q: Now why do you think that is? I mean, did it, perhaps, address your strengths?

A: Well, it addressed my strengths, it also addressed my need to -- to be included, to be with children, to be with other people, to be doing interesting things. To be going on outings, like excursions, to do service work. And I was very, very welcome. To this day, I go to Greece, and I see friends that I made in my Girl Scout years. I meet them there. They write to me. In fact, they send me a yearbook lately. Every February -- 22nd of February, it's considered the day of thinking, they call it Thinking Day. It was the day that the re -- the Baden Powell, and his wife Olivia, when they formed Girl Scouts, they would correspond with other people, and they had set this day as the Girl Scout day, thinking of each other. So it somehow kept it, and many of these friends gather in somebody's house, and they always send me a card, and they sign their name that they remember me. And I think it's a wonderful feeling, to -- to know that these years were so important. I later became a -- a Girl Scout leader. I was pretty good at it. I was leader taking Girl Scouts camping in service areas that we called -- Greece had earthquakes, and the senior

Girl Scouts, above -- above age sic -- 17, I think, or 18, would go and help the village, and the people after the earthquakes, and I was the leader there. So they were wonderful years. I just love them.

Q: So the Girl Scouts was really a saving --

A: It was a [indecipherable]

Q: -- thing in your life. What about your sister, and when you came out of hiding, how would she resume her education? Or -- or did she feel she'd finished it at that time, cause she was --

A: Well, she had finished high school before that, so she didn't go to -- to higher education. She may have helped my hu -- my father at times with secretarial work, or something like this, but no, she didn't go any higher education.

Q: Was she a good student in school?

A: My sister? She -- yeah, I think she was, but except she -- she had too many interests, so sometimes she would be very naughty, as the principal said. You know, she -- she likes boys, and she liked other things to do. You know. But basically I think she graduated all right. [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, so she got into -- into trouble?

A: Yeah, at times, yeah. But then I left the Hill School, and I went to the American college, which is a high school in Greece. It's a very good school, extremely good school, and it was -- it was very hard for me, because I entered in the seventh grade. I had to pass exams, and -- to be admitted. And it has been an extremely wonderful experience being in that school. Very strict school. Academically very high standards. That's where I learned English. I had wonderful teachers, that they were not only teachers, but very caring for the children. And I still see them when I go to Greece. They're in their 90's. One of them died last year, and she was 103, and I

used to go and visit her. And this gives me also a routine of what was I like then, because I left, and I came to a country that nobody knew me, other than my husband, who didn't even know me that well, after a week's flir -- you know, courtship. So it gives me such a good feeling to be rooted again, talking to my teachers, talking to my old friends, the people who knew me. They knew who I was, and what I was, and how I was. It's a very good feeling.

Q: Now, how old were you when you met Isaac, your husband?

A: 24.

Q: So a lot of time went by from the period we're speaking about until the time --

A: I met him.

Q: -- when you met him. But so tell me what went on in those years. You continued with your education, were you then working?

A: No, what I did, I finished high school, and then I went to a school of social work in -- which was part of the American college, it's called Pierce College. And it was what they used to call apple division. So there were three schools, school -- school of commerce, social work, and literature, so -- so I chose the school of social work. Before that I had become a volunteer Red Cross nurse, and I used to -- I mean, I had six months training, and then I had to be at the hospital for two months every year, taking different shifts, and I enjoyed being a nurse, volunteer nurse, but it was great. So -- I keep on jumping -- so after I became a social worker, I worked -- at the time I was doing academic work, I also had field placements in different places. One was in a community place with refugees, the other was in a -- in an adoption center. It was a place called Mittera, and there were primarily children from unwed mothers, and many of their children were being adopted [indecipherable] with American families, or other families. So I was the social worker trainee. And that -- that was a great place, I liked that place a lot. I tried to

convince my parents to adopt a baby from there, but it didn't work. And after that, you had to pass exams again, because all social workers were employed basically by the ministry of social welfare. So there were a lot of people who were welfare workers, and were going to villages, distributing welfare checks, and taking care of these type of things. There were social workers who were working in a hospital, sort -- other kind of agencies, there were no private agencies that would hire social workers. So I worked in a -- in a hospital at the beginning at the children's hospital, and later in a public hospital as a discharge social worker, discharging people, and making arrangements for them. And then I met Isaac. Oh, before I met Isaac I also belonged to a little Jewish club. It was a Jewish youth club where I met Sam. Sam is Isaac's brother. And we became very good friends, both with Sam and his then fiancée, Evelyn. And we were a group of about, you know, we were groups, several groups. We used to go on excursions, or places, different -- to the movies together, but we moved in the group. So I was dating at the time a young man, who was part of that Jewish club, and this was a nice time. I think the adults were very pleased that we had this club, and I think partially they financed it, because they wanted all the young people to meet other Jewish people. And in some cases it worked very well, because quite a few of these people married, you know, other women, men, that belonged to this club, and that's how they met.

Q: Now, who did Sam marry?

A: Sam married Evelyn Maraka.

Q: Who he met in this group?

A: Yeah. Actually, I knew Evelyn from my school. She went to the same school I did, to American college, but she was in one or two classes younger than I was. So I knew who she was, yeah.

Q: And then when they married, that was when you met Isaac?

A: Right. Isaac -- Isaac had come to -- from the united -- he lived in the United States, and he had come to Greece for Sam's wedding. And that's where I met him, the first time actually I lay eyes -- eyes on him, it was at the wedding, and I didn't particularly think he was attractive, or -- I didn't particularly was impressed with him, just by looking at him. But then I think a couple of days later, my sister had some friends over, and this friend of hers said, "We cannot come, because we have a guest, my cousin from the United States is here, so I cannot come to dinner." And Yola said, "Bring him over," you know, "it will be fine." So I was invited, and my parents were invited also, to Yola's, but my parents were not feeling well, so they didn't go, so I went. And that's where I met him, and I said, "Well, he is kind of interesting guy." You know. And things moved very fast from there.

Q: Well tell -- tell me the story, a -- a -- actually, in interviewing your husband, I -- I know it from --

A: Ah, okay.

Q: -- one perspective in the museum tape, but --

A: Uh-huh. I'll be interested in hearing his version. Well, I had broken up with my boyfriend like a week before. And I had bought two tickets for Isaac Stern, there was a recital in Athens. And I was still kind of lamenting the fact that I would have to either sell the ticket or go by myself. So after I met Isaac at my sister's house, and we talked about all sorts of things, and he was telling me about his interest in music, I thought about asking him to come, but girls didn't ask boys out those days. And I wasn't sure whether I should do it or not. Anyway, I thought about it, I went to work in the hospital, and I thought about it, and thought about it, and I said, "Well, what difference does it make?" I want him to come. So I called him, and I said, "Listen, I have an

extra ticket for Isaac Stern, are you interested?" And he said, "I -- am I interested. I would love to go." So that's how it happened, I met him, and we went to the theater, we listened to Isaac Stern. During intermission Isaac tells me that he knows Isaac Stern from his college years, where he was directing the concerts at the University of Illinois, and he would like to go and talk to him. So he left me there, and he went backstage. And of course, when he came back, I asked him if he remembered him. Yes, he remembered him, I think. Anyway, we went out after the concert, we had coffee, we had ice cream, whatever. And then the next day, either he called me, or I called him, and I think it was very shortly after, I think I saw him for the whole week. He said to me, "Do you know, in English, when somebody says I want to talk to you, do you know what it means?" And I said, "Yeah, it means that somebody wants to talk to you." Well, he said -- so he was trying to explain to me what it meant, but all of a sudden he says, "I would like to ask you to marry me." And I was ah, what? You know, I just couldn't believe it. But he -- he asked me, and I said, "Yes, yes, I will." Right away. I didn't even think about it. I was very attracted to him, and I thought he was extremely bright, he was very knowledgeable. He had a great knowledge of music, which impressed me very much. He was very handsome, and he was an interesting guy.

Q: So it was a whirlwind week.

A: Yes, kind of. And I -- I remember [indecipherable] a teacher that I met in the street, and she said, "How are you, what are you doing?" I said, "I just got engaged." She says, "Really? Tell me about it. How long did you know the man?" I said, "A week." And she looked at me and said, "You, Paulette, this conservative person, got engaged in a week? That can be possible?" It was. But somehow I knew that this was the guy. But I think in retrospect, you know, if any of my daughters would come and tell me they know somebody for a week, and they want to marry this

person and go to Australia, let's say, or someplace far away, I would think they would have to have their heads examined.

Q: But you were right?

A: I mean, it -- it didn't fit my pattern, I would always think things through. I was -- in a sense my teacher was right, I was conservative. I was never -- it wasn't I wasn't spontaneous, I was spontaneous, but I wasn't -- I wouldn't do things at the spur of the moment. And this one was very incongruous with -- with my way of doing things.

Q: Well, I think in affairs of the heart, perhaps one -- you know, at once.

A: Yeah, I think I knew. I think I knew.

Q: And when I said you were right, I didn't mean that you were right to think your daughter's crazy, it -- it was just that time showed that your -- you were judging wisely your feelings.

A: Yeah, I trust my feelings. I think I -- I have a good sense of what I need, and what my feelings are, and I think I have intuition, in a way, or maybe a feeling of what's right for me, and what's not right for me. Not always, but most of the times.

Q: And you had -- you had a lot in common. Looking back, do you think that was why you could make a decision so quickly? Just that your -- you both had had -- had suffered in different ways during the war. You had the same -- you both were Jewish.

A: I don't know. I can't answer that, because I n -- first I said yes, then I heard about all the war stories. Although I did know some from Sam, his brother, and -- but I don't know if this was a determining factor or not at the time, because I didn't think it through. So I can't tell. But also the fact that he was Sam's brother kind of gave me a feeling that, well, you know, I make this decision -- this decision, but he can't be that bad, I mean, I know his brother. And maybe my parents felt that way, too, because they knew Sam. Sam worked with my father at the Jewish

Central Committee. And he had high respect for Sam, and Sam for my father. So, I mean, he probably thought, who is this guy who is gonna take my daughter to America, you know, to the United States? But I think there was some kind of a feeling that he is a solid guy, and I think that helped.

Q: What was the reaction of Sam and Evelyn, and your parents?

A: When we got engaged, Sam and Evelyn were on their honeymoon, so they didn't know about it until they came back. They had just been married. And they were thrilled. They were very happy, very happy.

Q: And you -- in a sense you've already explained that your parents knew Sam, and therefore --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- blessed your plans.

A: Oh yes. I think they were -- they were happy. And you know, after talking to him, my mother found him very charming. My father found him extremely knowledgeable. It was the time of the Sputnik, and my father was so interested about that Sputnik, but knew nothing about what was going on. And, I mean, the fact that somebody could explain it to him in such wonderful ways, was very impressive. So I think he was very taken with that.

Q: And then, how did you make plans?

A: Okay. A-Also let me tell you that since we got engaged, I would receive huge bouquets of flower every single day, to the point that we had no place to put them, because you know -- and there was always a note from Isaac, you know, with every delivery of flowers. And that was very nice. So to get back to your question, when did we make plans. I think it was understood that I would come to United States. At that time, I was applying for a scholarship to come to the United States to study. And I had applied to Barnard College, and I forget what else. But I had a

couple of colleges. And Isaac told me that if I come as a student, I cannot stay in the United States. So we went to the American consulate to get some advice, and they told us that indeed, I could not -- I could get the scholarship, but I -- even -- I couldn't get married in the United States and remain in the United States. The Greek visa was oversubscribed. So I think it was something like 10 years of waiting, or something like that, which didn't thrill me. And one of the suggestions was that maybe I can go to Canada, and get married in Canada, and then for Isaac to apply for me to come from Canada to the United States as a spouse. Because Canada had no -- no quota. So we thought about it, and thought about it, a-and we thought it might be a good idea. My -- there was a family that we knew who had gone to Montreal. This was my brother-in-law's -- Yola's husband's cousin. And they had moved from Athens to Montreal like maybe two years before that. So Freddie, my brother-in-law, wrote to them and told them the situation, and asked them if I could stay with them while all the paperwork was being done. And they said they would be very glad to have me there. So that's what happened. A friend my sister's, who was working for HIAS, the Hebrew Immigration Society, said to me, "You know we are going to speed things up for you. Why don't you get your police report, your health records, and everything else you need, and we'll send them to the consulate in Montreal. So after you marry, the -- all your -- all that your husband has to do,"-- [indecipherable], "all that your husband has to do is to -- to apply for you to come to United States, and this will save you a lot of paperwork over there." I said fine. So I did all this preliminary work, and Linda sent everything to Montreal. So I left in April of '58 for Montreal. It was -- didn't hit me until I was on the plane, and I said to myself, where am I going, all by myself, to somebody I don't really know. I just wanted the plane to come back. But the plane kept going. And eventually I re -- I reached Montreal, my friends were there to greet me at the airport. And this was a family that they had two children, a

six year old, and a baby. And I shared a room with the six year old, and also the mother -- his mother lived with them, in a small apartment in Montreal. So Isaac came I think the next weekend, or two weekends later to see me.

Q: How long was it since you'd seen Isaac in Athens?

A: Oh, it was -- let's see, we got engaged in September '57 --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: -- a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number three, side B. You were telling me about being reunited with Isaac.

A: Yeah, so we went to the airport to pick him up, the family and I. And I couldn't wait in the waiting room, I was so anxious to see the -- see him. So I went outside, you know. Apparently when the plane landed, you had to walk outside into the -- into the terminal. So I see him coming, and I was freezing there, it was so windy, and so cold, but I was waiting there to see him. And he was wonderful. It was really wonderful.

Q: Removed all your doubts.

A: Yes, yes, it was -- it was nice.

Q: And then you planned to marry in Canada, shortly after that?

A: Yes. Isaac was married before, for a short period of time. And we had to -- to go to Toronto for him to sign some papers for the final decree, which we did. And I think shortly after that he dis -- his divorce papers came through. And we went again to Toronto, and we got married by a Justice of Peace. I was all dressed up, not in a wedding gown, but in a very fancy, elegant dress that's -- my parents made me at a very great attag -- couturier, as we used to call it, in Athens. And the question was, do I wear a hat, or do I not wear a hat. And Isaac said, "If you wear a hat,

I'm not going to marry you." So he doesn't like hats, or he didn't like me wearing a hat. So I thought well, okay. So we were just the two of us, there was nobody, and you had to have witnesses for the wedding. So we -- they told us that we can go out in the waiting room and ask two people to come inside and become our witnesses, or go to Eton, we -- which the department store across the street, and [indecipherable] everybody will come, you're two young people in love, you know, people love stories like this. Anyway, at the waiting room there was another couple. It was an older couple -- I mean, older, I would think probably in their 50's. And they were going to get married also. So we made an agreement, we would sign -- we would be witnesses at their wedding, and they would be the witnesses in our wedding. And that's what happened. I had to repeat in English, and my English wasn't that good at the time, you know, that's -- I do marry him, and take care of him, for better or worse. And that was it. At the time -- the more I think about that now, the more I think how I missed my family not being there, and not having anybody. And many times I go to weddings, and I cry my heart out. And I wanted my daughters to have nice weddings, with lots of people, and friends, and family. Because I feel that I just -- was a big loss for me not to have anybody. But on the other hand, at the time, I -- all I wanted was to get married to Isaac. And to me, that was because there were a few obstacles, as I said, to -- to bypass the immigration laws, to -- to come -- I mean to -- for him to get the divorce papers, and all this kind of stuff. So these were like little setbacks that kept me wondering would I ever be able to marry this man. And that's all I wanted at the time, but there was some feeling of not having the people that mattered most in something so important in my life.

Q: And the waiting in Toronto with the family would not be easy, I assume.

A: Well, okay -- well, so we got married, then we went to Niagara Falls, this was our honeymoon. And -- okay, so we went for our honeymoon to Niagara Falls, we stayed about a

week, and then Isaac returned to the United States, and I returned to Montreal. I wasn't happy at all. The family I lived with, as I told you, had two children, so in order for me to be busy and think less of Isaac, Sonia gave me full care of the baby. He was about six or seven months old, little Eddie. So she would say to me, "You need to practice, you take care of him." And I would say, "Well, I've never take care of a baby, what do I do?" She said, "You'll find out. Just don't let him fall." And I was taking care of him completely. I would take him for walks, I would take him out. We'd play together. It was wonderful to -- to have a little baby there. Anyway, meantime -- it takes a long time -- Isaac applied for me to come to the United States as a spouse. And at some point he said to me, "You know, you have to go to the consulate and tell them that -- find out why is it taking so long." Well, it was taking longer than we thought, and eventually I went to the HIAS office, to the Hebrew Immigration Society, and saw a social worker there, who got interested in the whole thing, and she made several attempts to find out what was going on, and I think eventually what happened is Isaac had applied for me to come to the United States by the name of Nehama, as his spouse. The papers that were sent from Greece, by HIAS were under the name Moudzoukos. So the two things were never put together, Moudzoukos and Nehama were two different persons for them. So they never figured it out. It was only after desperation that Isaac went to his congressman in New Jersey where he lived, and talked to him, and the next day I get a phone call from this social worker, and she said, "Guess what? You're going tomorrow. We have everything ready for you, the visa is ready, come to the office." And of course, it was wonderful, because it had become to be a big, big problem, you know, six months -- it was six months it took for me being by myself there -- I mean, it wasn't by myself, but still, I was very anxious to start my life, and for Isaac to be in the United States. So, in November, first day it snowed in Canada when I was there, I said good-bye to my friends, and boarded a

plane, and came here, in New York, and of course, Isaac was a -- waiting, and he already had rented a house in Lake Hiawatha, which at this time I couldn't even say the word Hiawatha. And I would think, my God, if I get lost, how am I gonna say where I live? I mean, this is not the place to take me. You should take me someplace where I can pronounce, or I can even say it. So it was -- the house was all taken care of. I mean, he had arranged it, and fixed it, and he had a lot of his furniture there, but decorated very nicely, painted it, just took good care of things. And then it was, how do I live here, and what do I do, and it was a bit hard. It was lonely, because I didn't know anybody, although I met two good friends of his, and their wives were marvelous. They would come and pick me up and take me to lunch, or take me places, and they tried very hard to -- to make me feel comfortable. But a couple of months later, I -- oh no, I started going to New York, I would take the bus from New Jersey and go to New York in the day time, and started going to the museums, and just getting a feel of the city, and I loved it. And one day, I think Isaac had gone to San Francisco on business, I was looking in the newspaper, and I saw that there was a position open for a social worker that -- to deal with adoptions. So I called, and made an appointment, and took the bus, and went to -- and indeed, it was the International Social Service in New York, that was looking for a social worker, take care of Greek adoptions. I knew all the social workers in the International Social Service in Greece -- I no -- in Athens. I knew them very well. And to me this was like a glove that fitted perfectly well. So I told them I was interested in the job, they said they thought I would be perfect for the job, but they have to communicate with the people in Athens, and get references from there, and everything else, which they did, and then they called me, and they said, "My goodness, I mean we never heard anything as good as this. When can you start?" So I got the job, and I had to commute, of course, every day from New Jersey. It would take me like an hour almost, on the bus. And it was very

exciting, I was very excite -- I didn't know what I was doing, but it was very exciting. And I liked the people work there, very well, very much. Then I got pregnant with Sarah, and commuting wasn't the best thing for me. I had the threatening miscarriage, and the doctor said to me, "Well, all I can tell you is, what you want, the baby or the wor -- the job?" So I decided I wanted the baby, and that meant I had to stop working. There was no other way to get to New York early in the morning, so I stopped working. And I was sad about that, because I just felt I had reached the point where now I'm able to -- to live in the United States, to work, to become part of it. So it was a bit sad. But of course, having a baby was wonderful.

Q: You had done your training.

A: That's right, I have done my training with Eddie, and I went to his 25th birthday, in Canada.

Q: Oh, and when was that?

A: In the 70's, I forget. Well, '57 or '58 plus -- '78 -- about '78, I think? Something like that.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. We had gone for a visit to Canada with the childr -- two of the children, Sarah was in college, and it was Maya and Nicole that came, and Isaac and I, we drove all the way up there, it was his 25th birthday. It was nice.

Q: By the way, would you have had any photos of you in that couturier wedding gown?

A: No, because the most horrible thing happened. I had my camera, and I asked people to take pictures of us because we were going to send them to Greece, you know, here are the newlyweds. And something happened to the film, and no picture came out. Absolutely no picture. It was devastating not only to me, but also to my parents, who were saying, "Send us wedding pictures, where are the wedding pictures?" So I don't have a single photo of that.

Q: So you have lots of photos of Sarah as a baby.

A: I have photos of all the kids, yes. Sarah as a baby, I used to send them to my parents. When Sarah was six months old, I took her to Greece, and that was great. It was -- because I can now understand how my parents felt, of me being so far away, and not being able to see me, help me. Here I go through pregnancy, a baby -- a brand new baby. If you were -- if I were to live in Greece, you know, they would be with me, or helping me in every step. And here I was totally, totally, totally alone. And it must have been extremely difficult for my mother, especially. My father too, I'm sure. You know, the United States wasn't just available that much those days, tickets were extremely expensive, telephone calls were extremely expensive. So this is not like the kind of thing you do now, like I call my sister every week. But st -- you know, he -- it's not a major expense, but those days it was.

Q: What was happening in your sister's life, at the time when you came to the United States?

A: Well, my sister was married and had a son, he was -- Maurice was about 10 at the time. Then in '73, her husband died. And she hasn't remarried since.

Q: So your parents, just at the time when you had left, they would be seeing a lot of your sister?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, they saw a lot of my sister. And they lived nearby -- near each other, so you know, they would see each other, yes. Then there were financial difficulties, the factory wasn't going well. My father started another factory in Athens, which was in -- in yarn. Factory produced yarn, not material -- not cashmere any more, in order to supply Volos, the Volos factory. But that didn't go very well, and there were really financial problems, and constant problems with the bank, and the creditors, and this and that. So eventually -- his health was bad, he was diabetic. His health became bad, and financial conditions had changed, and so he lost the factory again. So that was very hard for them.

Q: They needed -- they needed you with Sarah in your arms.

A: Right. And I think the fact that, you know, we had to leave again -- we stayed a couple of months in Athens with Sarah -- was probably harder for them, because now they had experienced their grandchild, and was taken away from them again, you know.

Q: Now how did you choose Sarah's names -- is that how you pronounce it?

A: Sarah. I used to say Sarah, and when Sarah went to the fir -- to first grade, she came home and she -- I -- I said to her, "Sarah, wash your hands, we're going to have lunch." And she said, "My name is not Sarah, it's Sarah." So she had become Americanized. And -- so Sarah is named after Isaac's mother, who perished in Auschwitz. Maya, her second name is Thalia, which is my mother's name, who also died, not in the Holocaust. And Nicole middle name is Julie, after Julius Hoffman, Dr. Julius Hoffman, who is the psychiatrist who delivered her at home, in my home, because she came too fast. So everybody has meaningful name.

Q: I guess -- w-we haven't even -- we haven't even talked about Maya and her birth. Perhaps you should give the full names and dates of birth of all three of your daughters.

A: Sure. Sarah was born in New Jersey, on January 28th, 1960. When she was almost a year old, we moved to California, to Santa Monica. And then in '62, the end of '62, we moved back to Washington. Actually, we moved to Washington, and remained in Washington since then. Maya was born in Washington in -- on September 17th, 1963. And Nicole was born on May 14th, 1966, at home, before I had time to go to the hospital. And that was a big commotion.

Q: Yeah, you should -- you should tell the story.

A: Tell the story. Well, it was a Saturday, thank God, so Isaac was home. Now, my neighbors had told me that if I go to labor, I would call them, and they would take care of the older girls. So when I woke up in the morning, the water broke, and I found out I -- I had contractions, so I-I timed them, and they were about 10 minutes apart. So I woke Isaac up, and said to him, you

know, “Take care of the kids. Just give them breakfast or whatever, and I’ll go take a shower.” Actually, I did call my doctor, and told him that I was in labor. And he said, “Oh, 10 minutes, okay. When the contractions are,” -- this was like early in the morning, like eight o’clock, or maybe earlier. “When the contractions are about five minutes apart, come to the hospital.” And I thought, five minutes apart, that’s a little too -- too close, but I didn’t say anything, he was the doctor. So I went to the bathroom to take a shower, and I had some very strong contractions, so I said, I better lie down. I don’t think I should take a shower. So I lay down, and then things started happening very, very fast. I mean, there were no five minute contractions between the 10 minutes. And I’m feeling the baby is coming, and you know, what can I do? I can’t make it to the bathroom, I can’t -- so I called Isaac, and I said to him, “Throw me a towel, I’m having a baby.” So Isaac took the towel -- I had taken a shower at ni -- the night before, and threw me the towel -- gave me the towel, and he was in a total panic. So he looks out of the window, and he sees my neighbor and good friend, and psychiatrist, Dr. Julius Hoffman walking his dog, and reading his paper. So he opens the door, and he calls Dr. Hoffman, and he said, “Jules, Jules, Paulette is having a baby, what do I do?” So he run to his house, which was next door, left the dog, came in -- I don’t know if he washed his hands, but came in and the moment he came in, the baby was halfway out. So he delivered the baby, and he told me it was a girl. I heard her cry once. And Isaac called an ambulance -- oh no, he called the doctor, the doctor said, “My goodness,” you know, “when did that happen? Bring her to the hospital. Call an -- an ambulance and bring to the hospital immediately, I’ll meet you there.” So meantime, when Dr. Hoffman took his dog back, he told his wife, “Paulette is having a baby.” So she was alerted, and she came. And I had called another neighbor, who had told me she would take care of the girls, and when I said to her, you know, “I-I’m in labor, and I’ll go to the hospital, do you think you can

take care of Sarah and Maya?" She said, "Sure, but how close are you, because I can hear you breathing very hard." I said, "Oh, I -- you have plenty of time." She said, "I'm giving my children breakfast, do I have time?" I said, "Yes, you do, come afterwards." Well, she was here very fast, because she said she had a feeling she couldn't wait for the children to have breakfast. So the two women are here, and Dr. Hoffman, and the ambulance came. The -- of course, you know, they check the baby, and me. They put me on the ambulance. And as we are going out the door, all of a sudden I said, "What happened to Sarah and Maya? Tell them to come here and see their new sister." Isaac had forgotten about them. He shoved them in her room, and she -- he said to him, "Stay there, and don't move." So when he opened the door to see the two, to tell them to come out, both of them were huddled one next to the other, sucking their thumbs, poor things. I mean, they were -- so m -- I asked to see them, so they came as I was going out the door on the stretcher. I told them I was fine, and they looked at the baby. And I told them that my neighbors, Mrs. Hoffman, and Mrs. Grossman's going to take care of them. Daddy would be back, I'd be back in a couple of days, and I'll talk to them on the phone. So off we go, an -- in the ambulance, and I don't hear the baby crying, so I think she's dead. I was very worried. So I kept telling Dr. Hoffman, "I can't hear the baby cry." And he said, "You want me to pinch her? She will cry." I said, "No, don't do that, but is she alive, or is she not?" "Yes, she's alive, she's breathing all right." So I go to the hospital, the doctor meets me right there at the entrance, he takes me down [indecipherable] emergency room. He checks me out, he says, "Mrs. Nehama, you are in perfect health. It's Mr. Nehama who needs to be hospitalized." Isaac was in the ambulance with Dr. Hoffman, and he was holding the baby, wrapped in a yellow sha -- the yellow towel. We have that towel, I gave it to Nicole. But then I couldn't see the baby, because they put her in isolation, in the intensive care, just to check her out. And I thought she was dead. So I keep asking,

"Where is my baby, where is the baby?" They said, "She is fine, she is fine." I said, "I want to see the baby. I want to get up to see the baby." They wouldn't let me get up, although I was fine. Well, finally in the afternoon they let me get up, and I went by the nursery and there's a woman who is sitting there -- standing there in front of the big window, and she said to me, "Did you have a baby today?" I said, "Yes, how about you?" "Yes," she said, "I had it at home." I said, "I did, too. Have you seen your baby?" "No," she said, "but I think my baby's over there." And then I looked, and the nurse brought Nicole, or I pointed, and she brought her, you know, from the window, and somebod -- then in the evening I had her, and she came to the room, they brought her. But it was a little worrisome, not being able to see her. So those days you stayed in the hospital about five days. So everything went well, thank God she was fine. Last day of discharge the doctor got us, all the women, all his patients were about to be discharged, and he gives them instructions what to do, and what not to do. So he introduces every single woman around this -- around the room, and he said, "And this is Mrs. Nehama, who sneezed and had her baby on Saturday." He used to call me the do-it-yourself girl. He was funny. But then I heard all sorts of stories. I was at the grocery store one day, and I wrote a check, and the cashier said to me, "Thank you, Mrs. Nehama." And the woman behind me, she said, "Are you Mrs. Nehama?" I looked at her, I didn't know her. I said yes. She said, "You're the woman who scared my husband to death." I said, "I don't know your husband, who is he?" Well, she says, "You don't know him, but you scared him to death." I said, "What did I do?" She said, "Di -- didn't you have your baby at home?" I said yeah. "Well," she said, "when you had the baby, I was seven months pregnant, and my husband wouldn't let me get out of the house for two months. He would call me every half hour. He was so scared I would have the baby in the house. You changed my life." So, there were funny things.

Q: It sounds like a -- it's a great story, and it's just a wonderfully happy time.

A: Yes.

Q: Because it really shows the story that by then you had built a life here, and a community, and a family.

A: That's true, that's true. I mean, life wasn't easy. It was lonely, for the most part. It was hard. I had missed my folks, you know, a family, although there was continuous communication, letters, and gifts, and all sorts of things sent back and forth. It was still not here, so everything I had to do as a person, and as a wife, and as a mother, I had to figure it out, and do it myself.

Q: In -- in sort of creating -- composing a life for yourself, what do you think was the hardest?

A: Loneliness. Just having to do everything by myself. But also, knowing that I could manage it, I could struggle, but I could do it, and that's rewarding to know, that I have succeeded in doing that. I mean, I went to school here, I went -- I got my Master's degree, I got a job. I got a job in New York, as I was starting in International Social Service, when I was barely here, in the United States, so I -- you know, nobody shown me what to do, or how to do it, I -- I just had the motivation to -- to do it. I was very lucky, because I think many times things fell on my lap, like this job at the International Social Service, it fitted me like a glove. It was very familiar territory for me, working with adoptive cases from Greece.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number four, side A. We're talking about the challenges you overcame.

A: Right. There were many, many challenges. But I wanted to have a full life, and I wanted my children to have a full life. And I was constantly trying to fi -- find ways to -- to learn. I'm also in a great profession, that I can go into seminars -- I'm a social worker, I have a Master's degree, and, you know, go into seminars and talking about different issues, it was great -- great for me, because I could s -- find out, and work on things that were concerning me in many ways. So --

Q: Now, Isaac would have been very engrossed in his work, which was fascinating work, but it would mean he'd have less time to be supportive.

A: That is true. He also traveled a lot during the years he worked for the Apollo project. He was traveling practically three days out of the five. So that was fine, it was a very intense program for him, very exciting problem for him, but there wasn't -- and there wasn't that much time available for -- for doing things, although he did try to help. Later on he would drive Nicole to piano lessons, or things like that. But I think I was doing most of -- of the work in the house, and the responsibility with children.

Q: Did you set out with clear ideas of how you wanted the children, the girls to be brought up?

A: You never have a clear ideas when you are not a mother. So you go with the flow. I wanted my children to be whole people, not to be one sided, just geniuses, and educated, and scholars, but lacking in human -- human affairs, let's say, and compassion, and things like that. So I wanted them to be capable, responsible for themselves, autonomous. At the time they were

supposed to be autonomous. And to have connections, not to be alone, because I was so alone, I think.

Q: What about wanting to give them some religious upbringing? Was that important to you, going to synagogue, and teaching them about their faith?

A: I was conflicted at the time. You see, when I came out of the Holocaust, I was sort of afraid to be identified as Jewish, and to -- for people to think that I was Jewish, I wasn't sure how it would play, so out of my own anxiety, I didn't really pursue for them to go -- for us to be members of a synagogue, or to be identified with Jewish causes at the time. Now I regret that. I hoped -- o-or I wished that things were different, and my attitude would have been different. And -- but it's a little too late, I mean, for me anyway, to teach them. But certainly they did get some religious things from -- celebrating the holidays here, the high holidays, and things like that. On high holidays we would go to the synagogue. But I don't think it was enough, I really don't. But I had a real fear at the time, of being identified a Jew, although I knew it was almost like being a kryptal Jew, because I would never deny that I was Jewish, or -- or I was married to a Jew, but there was a lot of anxiety about that, until I finally realized the Nazis are gone, you know, you have nothing to be afraid of at this point.

Q: Can you think of any anecdote that explains that? Th-That illustrates your concern?

A: Yeah, my daughter Maya was a swimmer, and she used to belong to the swimming team -- swim team of the Jewish social -- I'm sorry, Jewish Community Center in Rockville, in Maryland. So she used to practice on a regular basis, and also they had races, like they had events, they would go to other Jewish centers for -- to compete. So every time there was a race, the -- they would get a badge, and it was be sewn in the back of their jacket, or their sleeves, or t -- Maya had quite a few things on her jacket, and she was very proud of it, and I was very proud

of her, because she was a good swimmer. And I remember once, after I had sewn a badge on her -- most of these badges would say Jewish Federation, or Jewish this, or Jewish that. They had the Star of David. So they were definitely very Jewish badges. She was going to go out with a friend to the mall to buy a present for another friend who had a birthday. So the mother of the other friend was going to drive them there, and pick them up. And it was a cool day, and Maya is ready to go, the car is waiting in my driveway, and she's wearing this jacket. And I said to her, "Maya, you cannot wear this jacket." It was full of badges. And she said, "Why? It's cold out." I said, "No, Maya, you have to put a different jacket." And I literally sta -- stood in front of the door, because I wanted her to go change her jacket. My feeling was that how can she go to a public place, and be seen as being a Jew? I had this feeling that she would be lynched, that people will say horrible things, that people will do harm to her. And that was unbearable to me, that my child will be hurt because she was Jewish. But basically, what that was saying is, I was Jewish, and I was hurt because of that, when I was a kid. So that was very difficult. Of course, once I realized what I was doing, I let her go. But she could not understand it at the time. I explained to her later, when she came back. But I remember s -- having this fear. I actually saw her being hurt. And that was unbearable.

Q: Had you experienced any anti-Semitism that led up to that? Or -- I -- I understand that may -- essentially it was a scar from your wartime experience, but I wondered if you'd experienced any anti-Semitism in the United States?

A: In the United States, no. I have not. In Greece, when I was in school, sometimes kids would tell me I crucified Christ, and I didn't have a recollection of doing that. So, I -- I would tell my mother that that's what they told me, and she -- she would say, "Well, don't listen to people like that," you know, "people will say bad things about Jewish people, but it's not true." No,

basically I didn't, but it was primarily of what I've heard, what I've read, that had caused me to -- to think in those terms.

Q: And when you were responsible for bringing your daughters up, did you talk a lot about your own wartime experiences, going in hiding and so on, or did you feel it was hard to discuss such things?

A: I didn't talk much about it. I -- it was hard for me. It was much, much later that became comfortable talking about it. It was something I -- I knew had to happen, but I had to move on. And there were so many painful situations that I didn't think I wanted to tell my children when they were young. Course, now they are older, so it's a different story. But when I think about my grandchildren, I think, you know, how at the age of six or seven or eight, they can hear these stories. Of course, you have to modify -- fy them a little bit. I was talking with my grandson Max, who is six, and he was coming here because Isaac was being honored by the Holocaust Museum to light a candle. One of the six candles for Day of Remembrance at the rotunda at the U.S. capital, on je -- what was it? April 30th, 2003. So Max and his mother came. The others were too young, the other little boys. And Ian and Maya came. And I was asking Max why is he here, what -- what he's going to see or hear, or why did he come. And he said to me, "Well, because I know that Grandpa was with the partisans, and he had a gun, and he fought the Nazis, and I know that you were hiding in an attic." Now how did he get the attic I'm not sure, but -- because I was never in an attic. I was in small rooms, but not in an attic. "And -- and some people really hid you, and you couldn't go out, you couldn't go to school, and that must have been real nice." He really liked the fact I didn't go to school. So, I mean he is six, so -- I mean, he could absorb some of it.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now, I'm guessing that you're much more sensitive than -- than many others to any kind of prejudice or injustice. D -- when you came, do you re -- do you have memories of thinking about the racial situation in this country?

A: [indecipherable] even when I was in Greece, I would read things, and I like poems that were written by ba -- black people. One of the poems was, but I am black, but oh my heart is white. And a -- I was always fascinated by -- by that, how people put such values on people they don't know, or put such -- they're so prejudiced about things they don't know. And people are people, you know. They're just good people, and bad people, and not so good people. But it has nothing to do with color, or religion, or the shape of your eyes, or your skin color, or your hair color, or anything else.

Q: Did you become an American?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you have a naturalization --

A: Yes, yes. I became an American because I wanted to vote in the elections of -- when was it. He was Goldberg -- who was it? Humphrey, I think.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Right?

Q: Hubert Humphrey.

A: Hubert Humphrey, I wanted to vote for Hubert Humphrey. Yes, I did. And Sarah came to the ceremony.

Q: Was that very moving? What were your feelings?

A: I had mixed feelings, I must say, because part of the oath is that it tells you you have to abandon your country, and I still felt very Greek. So I wasn't quite ready to abandon my country, but I did not -- I did want to become an American. So, for awhile I struggled with that, and s -- once, Isaac -- somebody -- we were at the gathering, and somebody said to me, "Paulette, where is home?" And I said -- without even thinking, I said Greece. And Isaac looked at me, and he said, "I can't believe you. Greece is home? You live here. You've been living here for 20 odd years." And it was -- it was strange for me that he would get angry with me for feeling that way. But I think it was the fact that, you know, I had lived there, I had made connections there. I spent my childhood there. Now that I have grandchildren however, and I have roots here, I feel differently. I feel now I belong here. And it's strange, but I still love Greece.

Q: Do y -- it's not possible to be a dual national?

A: I suppose it is, if you don't serve in the army, or something like this. But I don't see, you know, what's the purpose.

Q: Besides, my question was cause I wondered if you found it deeply moving to become an American, and in fact, tell me what that means to you now, now that you have grandsons, and roots.

A: Oh, I think it's wonderful. It's -- it's a wonderful country. I think the freedoms you find in this country, you don't find them anywhere in the world. The fact that the place is so diverse also is -- to me, it's very interesting, and very nice. But it's mostly the personal freedom, of being able to say you're Jewish for instance, you know, which sometimes I couldn't say it in Greece, although there were no people to hurt me, you know, this kind of thing. Or to do things. Sometimes we take this freedom a little too far, I think, but there's no other country, I think, that's -- freedom is the most wonderful thing to have, and you can find it here. Also there's

another thing. You have opportunities in this country, and if you are willing to work hard, you can do things. Like for instance, I went to get my Master's degree when I was 49 years old. And I remember discussing this with a friend, and I said, "Well, you know, I have grown-up children, they'll be going to college pretty soon. I'm 49. I don't know if I can manage to -- to go get a Master's degree, and he said -- she said to me, "Paulette, if you want to get a Master's degree, go get a Master's degree. You're going to be 49 whether you get it or not." And I never forgot that. And I thought, if I lived in Greece, and I was 49, there wouldn't have been a place for me to go and get a degree, even if I wanted to. Even when I was talking to my friends in Greece, and I would tell them I'm going to college to get a Master's degree, they would think I was sort of well, maybe she's a little cuckoo at this late age, you know. And to me this was wonderful.

Q: Where did you go to get it?

A: I went to Catholic University in Washington.

Q: Now, when it was the time of your daughters to decide on careers, and pursue sort of advanced education, what do you think they gained from you? You -- you know, even in going back to school at 49, you were something of a role model, I would think.

A: Yeah, I'm sure that that was important in their lives, you know. Actually, Maya and I graduated the same year. It was funny to have graduations within a couple of weeks apart. You know, I'm going to school, my mother is -- is studying for exams, I can't talk to you now. Yeah, I think it was a role model, but I think they were -- they would have gone to school anyway, because they were motivated, all of them, and they wanted to go to college, and have a career. So I don't think it was the only model they had.

Q: Were you ever affected by the feminist movement?

A: Yes. I was affected by the feminist movement, but this is a traditional household, so a lot of the things that were going on were not totally, totally accepted. I wanted my daughters to be women who could decide for themselves, who would have a voice, whether it was in a job, in a marriage, or in wherever. I wanted them to be treated equally with men, not to be discriminated upon. I wanted more for them than I wanted for me from the women's movement. And I think they are pretty much with it.

Q: Do you think they see themselves as children of survivors?

A: I know Nicole thinks so, and probably the others do too. There were times that this was difficult for them, because I remember when there were occasions that -- for instance, holidays were difficult in this family, because holidays is something that you have everybody around, and not everybody was around. So it was always a feeling of loss, not necessarily, you know, a joyous holiday. Things are mixed bags, often. So I remember once, one of my daughters said, because I was trying to explain that, you know, both Isaac and I had difficult life, and she said, "Oh Mom, I'm so tired of -- of that. Let's have the holiday and enjoy it," or whatever, you know, like okay, you had it, but why about us? So I think she was -- I -- I forget which daughter it was, but I think, you know, to a certain degree they tolerated the difficulties, because they were part of the [indecipherable]. I don't know that they're -- I think Nicole is more closer to that than the others. Sarah is too. Well yeah, I think she is. She knows the difficulties up to a certain point, but then she chooses not to linger on those things.

Q: Why do you think Nicole is more affected?

A: Well, I think she stayed in this house longer, probably. She is married to a Jewish person. She has children, and -- boys, and she wants them to be Bar Mitzvahed, and for them to know about

our lives, a lot. And maybe the fact that she went to a Jewish camp, day camp, may have had something to do. So, who knows?

Q: When you spoke of that holidays being difficult, not everyone was here, course your family was not here because of the -- you separated fro-from -- by, you know, vast distances.

A: Ocean.

Q: And of course, Isaac lost his -- his mother, so their -- a grandmother had died at Auschwitz, and their uncle Nehama. Is that what you're thinking of, the -- the actual, you know, family members lost?

A: Yes. Mostly family members. But you see, in the past, when there was a holiday, all the family members will gather around, s-some relatives would come. So it was a Bible kind of thing. This time, I mean, you go through the motions sometimes, but you feel the lack of these people. And Passover is a difficult time. Isaac often reads the Haggadah from his father's Haggadah, which is in Ladeeno. Has both Hebrew, Ladeeno, and Greek. So he reads passages that he remembers his father read on Passover. And every time he reads them, you know, I get a chill in my back. It just -- just, you know, brings tears to my eyes. And I remember my father reading -- not Ladeeno, but you know, presiding over the Seder, and I know the last time I saw him it was Passover, because he was sick, and I had gone to Greece, I had taken Nicole with me, who was about three. Sh -- he had not seen her -- grandchild. So I took her with me. And he was quite sick, but he sat at the Seder. And I knew it was the last time I would see him. He died shortly after. He died in October of 1970. And -- but his [indecipherable] he -- he was dress up, he put his clean, nice, press shirt. You know, he was very presentable. And [indecipherable] and my sister was there, her husband, and Maurice, my nephew. So you miss these people, who were much a part of your life.

Q: And the essence of those holidays, I guess your daughters are right, is the -- the family gathering.

A: Right, right.

Q: And your -- and it's not there. I interviewed someone called Susie Schwartz, and she spoke of the -- her wish that there'd -- were another grou -- term for survivor, just because she -- she felt that she had been in hiding in a farm building in Holland, and her problem was simply with the fact that the -- the common stereotype, or presumption is that survivors survived Auschwitz, when in fact there are many different --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- shades and grades of suffering, and so on.

A: That is true. I mean, for a long time, I did not consider myself a survivor. I consider myself that I lived through the war. And the Holocaust, and the hiding was part of the war. I remember I attended a workshop once in one of the conferences. It was the American [indecipherable] Psychiatric Association to which I belonged. And there was something on -- about survivors of the Holocaust, and I attended that, and the first thing I said is, can we make a distinction, who is a survivor? Because they were talking -- I mean, it was very blurred to me, who is a survivor, and who is not? So they said everybody who survived both the camps, and the war, and the hidden children, everybody was -- they lumped them all together. And to that day, I never thought I was a survivor.

Q: But you think differently now?

A: Yes I do. Yes, I do.

Q: And it may be that with -- I don't know whether you have any thoughts about how -- when you have reflected more. You may feel differently.

A: Well, you see, the word survivor implies to a certain degree that you were a victim. And I don't like to feel victimized, but I was victimized, and so was my family, and Isaac's family, and a lot of other people. So it's not an approp -- an inappropriate word to use. But I don't like the label of being victimized, because that kind of sets you in a mold, and in a pattern, that sometimes you can't come out of it, and I don't want that to happen. In other words, I survived, I made it, I'm healthy, both physically and mentally. And here I am. I'll be 70 years old in September. It's not a small achievement, I think.

Q: And you have a wonderful family.

A: Yeah, got a great family.

Q: But -- but what are the special -- out of your experiences, what would you have other Americans learn from what you have seen and experienced?

A: Well, I like people to -- to know that things like that can happen if we let governments, dictators, crazy people, do all sorts of things, and we do not do something about it. That's -- we -- the world belongs to everybody, and people are responsible for the world, and I think that we have a responsibility to -- to speak out, and not to let things happen, and to do our part. I don't know, maybe that's a little -- but I do feel that, you know, I mean I want my friends to know that my life was different from theirs in many ways, and I think the ones who do know, respect it very much.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: -- of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number four, side B. I'm jumping to a new question, do you think that you were much more protective of your daughters because of your own experiences? I mean, you mentioned that one

incident with -- with the jacket, but I wondered if you were more fearful in -- in other ways, and in general?

A: I probably was, and I was aware of it. So I tried not to inflict this on my daughters, because I didn't want them to become fearful people. And -- but I did have a lot of anxiety about it, their safety, a lot of it. I just wanted to make sure that they were just okay. Well, more than okay, actually. So, I remember Maya had got a new job, a summer job in one of the ice cream stores. I think it was called Swensen. It was in Bethesda, an ice cream parlor, so she was a waitress there. And she would come -- I mean, the -- the job -- the store closed at 12, they had to clean up, and I guess she would come home one or 1:30. And I remember saying that I didn't feel this was time for a young girl, driving by herself. And Isaac, who is very reasonable at times, tries to put reason to everything, tried to convince me that, you know, it didn't make any difference whether she came home at 12 or at 10, or at nine, because, he said, "She's going to be in the car. What difference does it make what time she comes home?" And I said, "Well, what if she has a flat tire? Where is she gonna find help at 12 o'clock at night? You don't know what can happen." But he said, "That can happen at nine o'clock as well." You know, this kind of thing.

Q: Now, were you -- were you mostly in agreement about disciplining the girls, and other child rearing practices, or did you have strong disagreements?

A: We had some disagreements. Isaac was very strict, I was more lenient. And that created some difficulty there. But it all turned out good, finally.

Q: It takes awhile before you -- you can see, I'm sure.

A: Right.

Q: Now, one thing we didn't talk about was the family in Greece that sheltered you, provided a haven, and your maintaining ties with them, the Pavellas.

A: Mm.

Q: How closely have you kept in touch, and did that go on constantly, or has there been a -- a reunion and a visit in recent times?

A: Well, for awhile after the war, we saw them periodically, like a couple of times a year, maybe more. Then we saw them less often, I think, because they moved. And then I came to the United States, so I had no idea where they were, and there was no other contact. But I did find out through a friend with whom I was talking about the Holocaust one day when I was first in Greece, and I -- I gave her the -- I told her -- she asked me where did I hide, and with whom, so I told her the family was Pavella. And that was about it. Then the next day I get a call from this friend. She said to me, "I didn't want to tell you yesterday, but you're going to receive a telephone call from Many Pavella." I said, "What?" She said, "I didn't want to tell you yesterday, because I wasn't sure it was her, but I know the woman. We work together." And she apparently called her, and ask her if they were hiding a family by the name of Moudzoukos. And she said, "Yes, we were hiding them." And she said, "Do you remember Paulette?" And she said, "Paulette, Paulette? No, that was Paulexani." That was my name, my false name. And anyway, she was very excited that I was in Greece, and wanted to talk to me, and see me. But my friend, you see, didn't want to disappoint me if this didn't pan out, if -- you know, it wasn't the same person. And so the next day I got a call from Many, who was just ecstatic, she was very happy. She wanted to see me, and she wants me to go to the house. Unfortunately she was leaving for -- she was going to be out of the country, and by the time she would have returned, I was leaving for the United States. But we kept in touch by corresponding, I sent her pictures. And then the next year I went to Greece, my sister and I went to visit her. We got in touch with them, and we visited them. And then in '97, I believe, or '98, Many came to the United States. She apparently

studied in the United States, and I had no idea she was in this country, she went to Purdue University, and I had no idea where she was. And anyway, she was being honored by Purdue, so then she decided to make a tour around the United States, and see some of her friends, and when she found out we lived in Washington, of course I insisted that she comes and stays with us. So she came and stayed for a few days. And it was wonderful. We remembered all the past stories, and you know, our parents and everything else.

Q: Do they -- did you learn new stories from them?

A: Actually, not too many new stories. What I wanted to know from her is what it was like for them to hide us, and what it meant to them. And that's what I got mostly. But she was the only one who knew we were Jewish. The children, the other two, Booly and Dimitris did not, because of their age. So she was worried, of course, about you know, when we left in such a hurry. And they were told that we went with some relatives or something, not clear answers, you know. So there were so many questions, because you wouldn't get straight answers from adults. I think at my age anyway, and the younger a -- the younger children, Booly and -- and Dimitris's age. Because I think people were afraid that, you know, children go to school, talk -- I mean they went to school, I didn't. They talk to friends, if a friend repeats something like this to a parent, and the parent is suspicious, and then, you know how it goes. I mean, you had to be careful.

Q: Well, children might place the families at risk in their sort of innocence of the dangers, but you also suggest that for you as a child, not knowing may have heightened your anxiety.

A: Yeah, absolutely. Even to this day, when I don't know something I get very anxious, extremely anxious. Knowing is power, you know. So I remember some years ago, I had cancer, and when I heard the diagnosis, it was devastating. And then when I pulled myself together, well the doctor explained to me I wasn't going to die from it, I got all the information I could possibly

get. And I couldn't stop reading books about cancer. That was all I read, because the more I got, the better it was for me to ease my anxiety, although some of these books were telling you just horror stories about all what can happen, and it may have not been my situation, but you know, predicting that if this is this, that's what happens. So Isaac said to me, "I will forbid you reading another book about cancer." He had it.

Q: But in fact it was what empowered you.

A: Yeah, it did. That's what helped.

Q: You know, I'm going back to your -- your role as a grandmother now, and your feeling that you want grandchildren to know about your lives. But a -- have you thought also of what it seems they should know about your family's history in Volos, and the -- the contribution that Jews made to the life of Greece over many centuries. I mean, will that be part of your -- I mean there's -- would seem there's a proud heritage that was brought to a somewhat -- you know, a-abrupt and difficult stage.

A: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think that children should know, because this is part of their heritage, as you said. And I think when people know their roots, and they know their own life, about -- I mean, they know about their parents, their grandparents, and if they know further than that, and about their communities, they are better -- they have roots. They have better rooting, I -- as they call it, which I think helps them as human beings, because they feel connected. You know, they feel the connection there from way back.

Q: You and Isaac had many commonalities in building a successful marriage. Did you have any reservations when one of your daughters married somebody who was not Jewish, and m-maybe had -- you mentioned a British son-in-law. Di-did that give you cause for concern, or really -- or not?

A: A little bit. At the beginning I was a little concerned, but I liked the man so much, and I thought he was such a good s -- man for my daughter, that this should not be an obstacle, if, you know, everybody was willing to cooperate in that factor. And I remember -- so they had a dual ceremony. It was at sen -- what's it called? Saint Columbus Episcopal -- Episcopal church. But there was a rabbi present, so the two, the rabbi, and the priest -- priest, right?

Q: Yes.

A: Both had a part of the ceremony, and I was reminding to my daughter that nobody trying to outdo the other. They were very equal in their thing, and it was really a wonderful thing to have that, because it honored both families. And obviously David's family, you know, felt that there should be an Episcopalian marriage, and we felt that it should be a Jewish wedding, but we didn't want this thing to become a -- a problem for them. So they handled it very nicely, very nicely. But I remember passing that church often, and saying to myself, how would I feel when my daughter gets married here? And then I decided that I had to visit the church. I had to go inside, and sit inside, and get the feel of it before the wedding. Because I didn't want to be breaking down on the day of the wedding. And I did that a couple of times. I went and sat. And I became very comfortable. It was fine. And this is a very good marriage for them. He is a wonderful guy, great husband, wonderful father. So I have no reservations whatsoever. And I remember, i-it was the first year they were married, and it was Christmas, and they were coming here, and Maya said, "Can we have a turkey?" Because Christmas was always such a big thing for David. You know, it was the first time he was away from his family, to a new country. I mean, things were difficult for him as well, and I imi -- immediately, you know, empathized with him, because I came from a different country, and I was in a different place, no ma -- no matter how much you love your spouse, it's still something you miss. And of course I made the turkey,

and -- and he was so happy. He is a great guy. And my other fellow, my Mike, Nicole's husband. Nicole's si -- Mike is Jewish. He is terrific. His parents had -- live in Evanston, in Illinois. He is from shi -- from there, too. He grew up there, went to the same school Nicole did in Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin. He is terrific.

Q: Well, we'd be remiss now if we didn't mention Sarah's recent marriage.

A: Sarah's, yeah. Sarah's also -- she is not married to a Jewish fellow. I'm not quite sure yet about this relationship. It's very recent.

Q: Yes. Now, let me just finish up by asking about looking back, what do you feel are your greatest sorrows, sadness?

A: Now you make me cry. There was a time that was very hard for me here. Raising children, Isaac was working very hard, felt kind of isolated, although I did have friends. And I had missed Greece. I missed the blue skies, and the blue sea. And I missed my family. The great sorrow was my mother's death, my father's death. And certainly, having gone through the Holocaust is a great loss, but it's also a strength that you gain as a child, or as an adult, because you went through horrible things, and you know that you can survive things. You can live through many difficulties. And I'm a very patient person, and persevere. But life is worth living. Life is wonderful. No matter what happens to you, there must be something in your life that is good about your life. Life is precious.

Q: And then the greatest joys?

A: The greatest joys are my grandchildren. I mean, they're -- I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have them. And what an addition to my life and Isaac's life has been. I have to tell you about Ian. When Maya announced that she -- Maya and David came here, and they told us they were expecting a baby, I was sitting on this chair, and I jumped up to the ceiling from joy. I was so

happy. The next day, I was diagnosed with cancer. And it seemed to me like why now? Here I am in heaven. I'm so happy, I'm going to have a grandchild, my first one. Why am I gonna have cancer now? I mean, I could have had it last year, two years ago, five years ago. Why now? It was just terrible. But then, after the shock, I decided that I had to lead beca -- to live because I wanted to see that -- that grandchild. And I wanted to see Maya go through her pregnancy and be there for her. Nobody was there for me when I was pregnant, or when I had children. I wanted to be there for her.

Q: It's a good way to close. I want -- want to thank you.

A: You're welcome. I thank you, too.

Q: So Ian helped you?

A: So, I didn't know it was Ian. We didn't know it was going to be a boy, and it was going to be a -- but, I was thinking of this grandchild constantly, and I wanted to be well, both for my daughter, and my grandson. And I remember Isaac said something very nice. Shortly after the diagnosis, I said, "I don't understand, why is this happening now, that I'm going to become a grandmother? I want to live to see my grandchild." And he said, "You will live to see this grandchild, and many more to come." And that was such a nice thing to say. I remember when I was doing -- I was in radiation therapy, and it was very close to Maya's delivery, I would s -- asked the rad -- the -- the doctor there, the radiologist, "Can I take time off when my daughter has her baby?" And for the moment she thought it was an out of town daughter, so she would say to me, "I can't let you stop radiation. It doesn't work that way. You have to be here every single day except the weekend. If your daughter has the baby the weekend, you're gonna be lucky." So finally I told her that my daughter lived here, and I had to be there. And she said to me, "We will make every effort. We will schedule you for six o'clock in the morning. We will schedule you

for 10 o'clock at night. Whatever suits you, to help you out, so you can go see your grandchild." But he was born the day after I finished radiation. I think he timed it very well. I was free, I was happy. I wasn't radiating anything. And it was just great, was the greatest day.

Q: Your -- were telling me about returning to Greece.

A: Yeah. Now I return to Greece every year. My sister lives there, and I have lots of friends, and a nephew, and now he is a father, and about to become a second time father. So my friends date from the Girl Scout days, from high school. And I have two wonderful teachers that are probably in their late 80's or 90's that I see. And every time I see them, it's such a warm reception. Last year I was in Greece, and they invited me to have coffee at a little coffee shop, two of them and a -- another good friend, who was also in the same school I was, but she was also in the Girl Scouts with me. So actually she's the first one I call when I go to Greece. And we were talking about all sorts of things, and then I said to them, "How do you remember me from my school days?" You know, I was 15 - 16. And it was such a warm feeling for them to talk about me, that they thought I was a very sensitive child. I -- I had a lot of humanity, one of them said it. And that this was very apparent. They both knew I had survived the Holocaust. Although I wasn't terribly good student, I was good student in some of the -- in their class I was a good student. One taught -- taught history, and the other taught psychology. So I was very good in both classes. I wasn't good in math. So, I mean such encouragement that I was really a worthwhile person when I was there. And I kind of needed that, to hear it, that what was then, what is now. Because sometimes there's such a big gap between this ocean. And then the one who is a historian, she sent me a Christmas card, and she said how happy she was to see me in Greece, and that she always remembers me with great affection. And that what she remembers is, here again, my

humanity, and she wishes my grandchildren have some of that, and that's the best wish she can give me, which I think it's very nice.

Q: This interview continues on tape number five, side A.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Beginning Tape Five, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama, on July the eighth, 2003. This is tape number five, side A. We were talking about your humanity, and I wondered to what extent do you think that was innate, or whether you were -- you had a deeper understanding because of your suffering of difficulties when you were in hiding.

A: I think the sensitivity was there from the beginning, because I remember it was, even as a very young child, I was sensitive to other people. My parents were very humane, both of them, so this is something I grew up with, and I saw it. But certainly, living through the Holocaust, and hiding, and seeing how people suffer, and deprivation that was going around, whether it was food, or clothes, or lack of freedom, this thing certainly had a major role in my life.

Q: Tell me the kind of -- we -- we talked about this to some extent before, but are there any stories or vignettes that you can share about that time after September 1943, when you went into hiding?

A: Oh sure. One thing I remember very well is I think I told you about jumping the fence to go play with the little girl next door. Another vignette at that house -- that was the second house we were hiding, in Kipserly. My sister and I were sharing a room, it was actually a big room, and was divided as I said, with a screen. My parents were on one side, and my sister and I on the other. My sister used to tell me about a boyfriend she had. She was 10 years older, so she had a

boyfriend, and she loved him dearly, and of course, she couldn't see him. And she was telling me how much she missed him, and these kind of things. So one day I saw the corner, there was a -- a florist, somebody who was selling violets, actually, not a florist, he was selling violets. So I had a little bit of money my father had given me just to keep it, just to -- to make me happy. I couldn't use it anyway, since I wasn't going out, but once again I went out to the corner, and bought her a little bouquet of violets and brought them to her. And to me this was something to tell her that don't be so sad, you know, that here are some violets. And I remember she was very, very happy about that. She wasn't happy I left the house to go and do these kind of things, but it was something I remember with great fondness. Unfortunate, she doesn't remember it now. And that's -- that's a little sad for me. But I remember thinking, how can I -- what can I do to make her happy.

Q: What happened to the boyfriend?

A: Oh I think they got together after the -- after the war was over, but then it didn't last very long. I think he had another girl or something like that. I don't know the details, I don't remember the details, but I don't think it lasted very long.

Q: So flowers would be one of those things that -- one of the pleasures that you would not normally have, but what about food during those -- that time in hiding?

A: Well, I don't remember particularly being hungry, but I don't remember having a variety of foods. Vegetables were usually the main thing, once a week maybe meats, or maybe not. Eggs occasionally. Lots of legumes, lots of beans and chick peas, and things like that, which were basically the staple. Now after the war was over, we had coupons, and we could only buy food with these coupons. We had to go to the grocery store, and depending who -- the number of people in the family, they would give us a certain amount of food. Among them, a powdered

soup which we used to call American soup. It was powdered soup that had dry -- I mean, dry vegetables in there, and I remember there was barley, because I liked these little things that looked like rice, but they were not rice. And you would simply add water, and boil it, and cook it. And this was basically her main thing for quite awhile. Then other things we ate was Spam, also we could get it with a coupon, and what else? Oh, we ate potatoes instead of bread, because we didn't have bread. So it was like a small potato per person, and the soup, and that was a meal.

Q: And did the soup come from the United States?

A: Yes, I think it did, that's why we called it American soup, yeah.

Q: And were potatoes part of the Greek diet, normally?

A: Oh yeah, sure. Greeks eat potatoes, lots of potatoes. But the sizes of the potatoes were small. You couldn't have two potatoes if you wanted to, because there was a ration, so [indecipherable]

Q: And how long did that, the coupons, the rationing last after the war?

A: Well, almost immediately after the war, in December of '44 was the civil war started. So it went on for two, three months, at least in Athens, near the villages, and up north it certainly lasted much longer. So for that period of time, it was -- I mean, food was scarce.

Q: If we go back to hiding, are there any other stories that come to mind? Any other memories?

A: The other memory which came actually a few days ago when I was driving. It was something in the street, something like a trash bag, or something, which I couldn't determine from -- from far what it was, but there was definitely something there, I was thinking I must avoid this. I thought for a moment it may be an animal. It -- it reminded me that when a German was shot by Greeks, there would be a roundup of the neighborhood, and they would take all the men above 60. And I remember one day we her -- heard the shots, and we couldn't determine what it was. But we looked from the window, and at the intersection -- the -- the house was almost in the

middle of the block, there was something in the middle of that intersection. We couldn't tell whether it was a person that had been shot, and it was there, or anything else. And my sister offered to go and look. And I remember my terror of having her go to look, and what if she were caught? If the Germans were around there, and would catch her? And to this day when I see something in the middle of the street that looks bigger than a little something, I always have this image in front of me.

Q: Do you remember whether it was the body of a person?

A: It wasn't a body, no. It was some kind of trash, I think, that has been kicked in the middle of the street, of the intersection. But I mean, the agony, because we knew what was coming next.

Q: And did -- did those -- w-were there often roundups of that kind because the Greeks retaliated against the Germans?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: And what -- what did you know of the behavior of the German troops in Athens towards the Greeks. I mean were they -- did they -- did they behave well, or were there all sorts of horrors committed by them?

A: Towards the Greeks?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, I didn't see the horrors, except occasionally when I saw a German kicking an old man outside my window. But I knew that there were things going on. At times my parents will talk, and they will ti -- try to protect me, or talk somewhat in code, so I wouldn't understand, but I could figure things out, and put things together, sometimes with great imagination, but personally, I mean, I didn't see any other horrors, other than what I heard. But, I mean, the

Germans, everybody was afraid of them, because they knew that from one moment to the other, they would wrap things up and take people away, and off they go.

Q: Were there stories that your sister would share with you, or did she protect you as your parents did?

A: Oh yeah, I think they all protected me. I was an overprotected child. They all protected me, and in turn, I think I -- I was trying to -- to protect my parents and my sister by not complaining, not whining, not -- not asking for things I knew I couldn't have. So I was trying to -- to be rather quiet about things, because I knew they were upset to begin with. I mean, I could tell.

Q: What was the impact of that on you, do you think that -- in your relationship, wa-was there any, particularly?

A: Well, I think my mother always was saying that I was -- I had a wonderful nature. But I was very much -- I remember once there was the end of the war, it was right the days before that -- the end of the war. We were still in hiding, but the atmosphere w-was such, because everybody was expecting something was going to happen. I think the news we had heard, and the man of the house had come and was saying well, things are going to change in a day or two. There were rumors. All of a sudden we were sitting in the garden I remember, it was a -- a nice day, and I s -- I burst into tears, out of nothing. I mean, I started car -- crying and sobbing, and nobody could understand what happened. My mother thought a bee stung me, or you know, something happened. And I just couldn't stop crying. So finally I remember the woman who was hiding us saying to my mother, "What happened to this child? I mean, she never cries." And my mother said, "Well, maybe she has gone through a lot, and that's as much as she can take." So -- but I was always keeping things inside, and not expressing too much. First of all, I was told not to talk much, because they didn't know to whom I was going to talk, and what I was going to say. So

this was instilled in me, and I understood it, that I shouldn't talk much. And this carried on, also, past my hiding years, because many times I remember I was always observant, but I wouldn't talk much. And people would say, well is she here, is she participating, or what? So, it has carried to many, many years, yeah, even now sometimes. I mean, I may be in a group of people, and I may have my own thoughts, but I'll be the last one to express them. If I'm asked specifically, I will. But I wouldn't jump in.

Q: You'd learned to be guarded?

A: Yeah, yes I did. Yeah.

Q: Now, when you were in hiding, would there be any visits from old friends, or members of the Jewish community, or would it be very much an isolated time for your whole family?

A: The only time I remember somebody coming was the second house -- in the second house. The person who had found that house for us, he was a -- a former general, but he -- he was retired, or maybe he was not, but anyway, he used to come periodically to see us. And when the Germans came -- I mean, the Greek SS came to get my father, he was -- he who was -- it was my sister who notified him, and after they brought my father back, after he paid them handsomely, we went to his house. He came and took us. Again, he didn't -- he took my father first, and then he took -- I don't know if he came back for my mother, myself, and my sister, or if we went ourselves, but we went and spent a couple of nights there, so he could find another house for us to stay. So he was the only one I remember visiting, nobody else.

Q: I just wanted to make sure that we've got the order correct here. So you -- you were -- these were the moves you had, you were in one place, and then when there was a threat, and your identities were at risk, you moved to the second place, and in between, you had the two weeks with the elderly gentleman, and his housekeeper?

A: Right, right.

Q: And it was really two main places of hiding, except --

A: There was a third one.

Q: Aha. Tell me about that.

A: Yeah, well after the second house, when the Greek SS were watching the house, and they burst in one day, saying they want the people to -- to measure the -- the gas, or something like that -- and got my father. They brought him back several hours later after he paid them. He had some gold coins, gold pounds sewn around his waistband, and that's why they brought him back, but they -- they warned us that we had to leave within an hour, or two hours at most, because they couldn't guarantee anything. When my father was gone, my si -- mother and my sister decided to notify this friend, this general, and my sister jumped over the terrace, to the next house, who was a -- also a family friend, a judge. He was a judge, I believe he was in the Supreme Court, but I'm not sure. So he notified them, and from there they called this general, who came to -- there was a market, a big market near the house we were staying in Kipserly, and he went to that market, so he could see the house. So he was pretending to look at the eggs, and to make sure the eggs were okay, you know you usually look at them in the sun to see whether they are rotten or not. And -- so he was pretending to look at eggs, and so he could see whether there was anybody coming or going in the house. The moment he saw they brought my father in, and when he saw these guys leave, he came to the house, and he took my father to his house. And then, either he came back for us, or we went back, within -- it wasn't within walking distance, but we definitely walked it. And then th -- this family found another place for us. We stayed with them I think two nights. There were two children there, and -- a boy and a girl, and the parents.

Q: Now who was it who took your father for questioning?

A: The Greek SS. Greek SS.

Q: And they were --

A: They were working for the Germans. They were paid by the Germans. And of course, if they would bring Jews, they would get paid more. So their job was to find Jews in hiding.

Q: What do you know about the -- how many of them there were, and to what extent they collaborated with the Germans? They obviously could be bribed.

A: Yeah. They collaborated with the Germans. They -- they were not that many, but the ones that were -- were -- certainly afterwards some of them were sent to prison for life. A couple of them were executed. Others left the country. They couldn't survive in the country any more, having done what they've done. So --

Q: Do you know what condition your father was in when he came back? Was he very shaken?

A: Oh my God, he was shaken, absolutely shaken. Absolutely shaken. And of course, having even the money he had, you know, that left us with very little money. The -- the rest of the money was -- some other coins -- I mean, not coins, pounds, British pounds, gold, that my mother had sewn around her bra, and my sister had also sewn around the bra. I was too little to have a bra, so they couldn't put any coins on me. Besides, they didn't trust me. So, you know.

Q: So throughout that time in hiding, the whole time the other three members of the family always had this money on them, hidden in their clothing.

A: Right, right. Yeah, that's right. And I remember my mother sewing it so elaborate, and so carefully, you know, so none of it will slip out. It was like individual little pockets for each -- for each pound. I still have one golden pound my father gave me years later because I was asking if

he could give me one I wanted for a souvenir, and I'm never going to cash this. I -- I just wanted to keep it.

Q: What about jewels? I mean, was there anything else that they sewed into their clothing, or indeed had with them? We talked about possessions --

A: Right.

Q: -- but I wonder what other valuable things --

A: No. I think the jewels were either given away or put away. My mother had a diamond ring, which was her engagement ring, but she wasn't wearing it. So I don't know where she kept it. But that one I know she -- she had, because she always thought she can sell it. She didn't sell it. There were no other jewels.

Q: Do you know what happened to these things we talked about? Some of the paintings, some of the possessions like the painting that was not returned, but I mean, was jewelry or other possessions every reclaimed by the family?

A: I don't remember. I remember my mother had the pearl necklace which was short, but it was what women wore those days. And I have it now. And that I remember was one of her precious things. My mother didn't wear an awful lot of jewelry. So maybe she gave a few things to friends for safekeeping. I don't remember having safe deposit boxes those days, and things like that in banks, you know. So, I -- I'm not sure how much was saved.

Q: Did your father talk about what had happened during that Greek SS questioning? Course, he may not have shared it with -- with you.

A: Yeah, I could hear again my sister and my mother talking, and also the man of the house, Andonis, but here again, I was sent out of the room, as usual. Story of my life. So, I could -- even though -- I mean, I could hear a little bit, but I couldn't hear very clearly what happened.

Basically they told him that they wanted money, and un -- unless they had money, they were going to bring in the -- the SS. Was as simple as that.

Q: And luckily he had enough to pay them off.

A: Luckily he had, yeah, he was a little hefty around the waist, so that took a few extra pounds. I mean golden pounds.

Q: And then that day, he moved to the friends house.

A: Yeah, we went to the Padzopoulus house. So -- and I'm sure it was very dangerous for them. And I remember how shaken the lady, Mrs. Padzopoulus was, for us being there, for what happened to us. She wasn't sure whether a -- anybody had follow us on the way. I remember the dinner. Obviously she hasn't planned for four more people. She had zucchini stuffed with rice, which is a common Greek dish. And she had put one zucchini per person for the two men, for my father and her husband. Half a zucchini for herself and my mother, and a smaller zucchini for the children, the three children and my sister. But I remember that half zucchini, with a lot of tomato sauce around it, in a large plate. And it was just about a bite, or maybe two bites, three bites at most. And that was it, there was nothing else. I mean, people didn't have a lot of stuff. So --

Q: And these people were all Greek Orthodox Christians --

A: Greek Orth -- right.

Q: This family and the judge you mentioned next door?

A: Right. Yes, yes. And of course the family we were hiding with, the Viyas family, yes.

Q: And then they found -- you were with them for a night or two, and then moved on to a new place.

A: To a new place in the -- the region of Gizzi. And there was a family, there were the parents and one -- one daughter. She was younger than my sister, so she must have been about 18. 17 - 18, some like that. Very nice people, all of them. I remember the -- the mother, Mrs. Catina, she was so good to me, you know, because I -- I was always the youngest, so they all thought -- were treating me very nicely, all of them. So she would make something special, like maybe she would make a little cookie, and give it to me, but nobody else will have it, or things like that.

Q: Do you know how common it was for sheltering families to have been discovered, and their lives put on the line through what they were doing?

A: I only heard of one family, that they had been taken to prison, but they had not been shot, or something. But I know it was something that everybody feared, because that was well known that can happen. But I personally don't know of anybody other than this family.

Q: What would -- what would a day be like at this stage in hiding? I mean, do you remember whether anybody sort of tucked you in at night, or told you stories? How would you pass the days?

A: Tucked me in -- I think I would say good -- good-night to my parents. Well, by then I was like 11, right? I would say good-night to my parents and give them a kiss. I always did, that was a ritual, a good night ritual, and good morning ritual, too. It -- I think sometimes my sister will give me a kiss and just make sure I was tucked in, but not always. But she would look after. Tell me stories, no, I don't think anybody told me stories, including my grandmother. When I was much younger, I wanted her to tell me stories, because everything I heard was that grandmothers tell stories to their grandchildren. And my grandmother -- my grandmother wasn't educated, she had gone up to six -- to -- to fourth grade, but she was a very intelligent woman. She would say to me, "Well in the summer you cannot tell stories, because your clothes smell. It's too hot." So

that didn't register very well with me, but anyway, she said it, I thought it must be true. Then in the wintertime, you know, grandmothers tell stories by the fireplace. Well, it was too hot to be near the fireplace, so she couldn't tell any stories. Things like that.

Q: Would there be any observing of Jewish rituals? I just wondered if your parents at this time might seek solace in rituals, or religious observances, or whether in fact they'd be so frozen through anxiety, they may have been unable to do anything very much.

A: Exactly. I think that was the case. They may have been praying privately, but you couldn't say anything about being Jewish, anything that would just even give the slightest suspicion even to the people you were hiding, you know. The people that were hiding you, actually, although they were kind people, and they knew you were Jewish, you couldn't do anything -- or at least we. I can't say for everybody else. But the thing was that you don't do anything to -- to arise any suspicion, or to make things different, so people will say oh, they are doing things differently.

End of Tape Five, Side A

Beginning Tape Five, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number five, side B. Your parents also at this time, or most of this time in hiding, could not speak in confidence. I mean, you were sharing quarters. They could not even whisper together, I assume, at night, and say how do you think Paulette is doing, or what --

A: Well, I was asleep, so I couldn't hear if they did, other than the time that I could hear the German words out of my window when my head was covered with a blanket, I was -- I was asleep the rest of the time.

Q: I was just thinking of the fact that they would really -- there'd be little --

A: Little privacy --

Q: -- privacy for them to confide.

A: Yeah, probably there was little privacy. But you know, I would go out in the yard, the backyard was rather secluded, you know, there were trees around. So whether they talked then or not, I don't know.

Q: Do -- have any other memories come to mind?

A: Yeah, I remember the two of them, my father and mother were playing cards, they were playing pinochle. I remember them both smoking so much, the room was so foggy because of all that smoke. Was one cigarette after the other. Those days we didn't know much about cigarettes, you know, but it certainly did something for them, because they were so anxious. My mother took -- my father didn't have much to do, because the man of the house was -- you know, had gone to the base, he was in the Navy, as I said before. And my mother would help with the cooking, or she will do the cooking, the woman will do the shopping. So my mother was a little more busy than my father. Now you asked me before how I would pass my day. I remember my mother tried to teach me how to embroid, and my mother was excellent in embroiding. She has done beautiful pieces, and I have some of her pieces, which I treasure. But I just didn't have the patience to do that. I mean, I couldn't sit quiet, and just trying to put a little -- my needle in the little hole there, and get pleasure out of it. It was the most boring thing for me. So I wasn't particularly interested. And a little bit of knitting was more to my liking. But I wasn't very good at that too. So these things didn't really attract me, or just, you know, give me any particular pleasure in doing. So most of it, as I said, I had two books that I've read, and then I got ahold of this weekly mag -- I think it was either weekly or monthly children's magazine, which was called, The Development of Children. But they had some wonderful stories in there. So I read -- some of them were a continuation, you know, so you would wait for the next. I think, now that I

think about it, I think Mrs. Padzoupolus would send me this magazine -- the woman whose house we went after they got my father, the general's house. Somehow her children had it, and then after they would read it, they would -- I don't know how I got it, because I don't know whether they mailed it, whether the man of the house would go to their house and get it, I have no idea. But I know that I had it, and it was wonderful, because it was like a four page little newspaper, you know, that I could read from the beginning to the bottom, and it was -- it was good. I knew some of these things so much by heart.

Q: You know, you would be 11, but you -- you spoke -- you have spoken often about your dolls, and were you still playing and fantasizing a lot with your doll or dolls?

A: Oh yeah, I had a doll that her name was Ellie. It was one of these plastic dolls, but you know the ones that they break, you know, lo -- those days we had these dolls, how did they call them? We used to call them bone dolls, but often their legs will come off, and -- or their hands will come off, and then there was a piece of elastic collecting the two. I had an uncle who used to fix them beautifully for me. And this doll, she -- she didn't have hair -- I mean, her hair was like part of the -- of the material the doll was made, that she had like two braids on the side. And she was small, very small. And -- but my mother and my sister had made me clothes for this doll out of very small pieces of things, or -- I remember a little blue jacket with a little white handkerchief, you know, in the pocket. And I just loved that ra -- I loved dressing my doll, and playing with her. Yes, I -- my doll was -- probably saved me, it was my companion, my confidant.

Q: Would this doll fit in your pocket? Was it really tiny, that small?

A: No, it wouldn't fit in my pocket, maybe it was a little bigger than my pocket, but not tiny - tiny. However, I had this doll with me, somehow it survived. And I kept it, it was on my bed after the -- the war was over, and I got married, I brought it to the United States, and I had it with

me in California, and one day Sarah opened the drawer and got it, and she dropped it, and the head broke, and that was the end of Ellie.

Q: So th -- so that that doll was very important?

A: Yes, that doll was very important. In fact, now I remember. After we left the first -- first house, and before we went to the second one, when I stayed with this older gentleman, they came to pick me up -- my sister came to pick me up, the couple that helped us find the second house gave me a doll, but I didn't like that doll at all. She was very ugly. And I remember saying thank you, you know, and -- but I never played with that doll, never. I-It was -- it -- it wasn't a -- a beautiful doll, you know, something that appealed to me at all.

Q: Interesting.

A: Yeah. I mean, here you think, you know, a child -- here I'm giving a child a present, she doesn't have anything, and I just didn't like that doll.

Q: I wonder what was going on that you hadn't bonded with that doll.

A: I don't -- she was a rag doll, and I didn't like her face. I didn't think she -- I didn't like her face. Who knows, I liked my little Ellie. But Sarah took care of that, my daughter Sarah.

Q: Now tell me more about your sister. Maybe you should remind us of her full name, because we haven't mentioned her by name for a while.

A: Yola, her name was Yola.

Q: What was her full name?

A: Yolanda, but we call her Yola. Of course, during the occupation, she was Yanna, like Joanne. My name was not Paulette, it was Paulexani, they used to call me Polly, or sometimes Sandy. So everybody had a different name, and different last name. So I got used to the Polly.

Q: Would your -- your real names ever pop out, or -- or y --

A: No, never, never. Once, actually, come to think of it, my sister and I had gone for a walk. It was dusk, and as we were walking, we encountered a friend of mine with her mother, from Volos, who called, “Yola, Yola.” And we -- Yola just pushed me, and she said, “Don’t answer, keep walking.” So we kept on walking as if we didn’t know them, because if somebody else was around, you know, it would have been -- and her daughter who -- who was my friend, unfortunate she died, she remembers that, and i -- she told me, she said, “And I told my mother, don’t call them, they don’t want to be recognized.” But it was, you know, such a -- a wonderful thing of seeing somebody you know, and you don’t know what’s happening to these people, you immediately say hey, you know?

Q: And they would not be Jewish?

A: No, they were not Jewish, no. But they were friends from Volos, yeah.

Q: And other times it could have been such a wonderful meeting.

A: Exactly. So even if you knew anybody, you didn’t ne -- have these freedom to -- to greet them, you know, to embrace them, to -- to recognize them, you know. You had to keep going, as if they were strangers. It was terrible.

Q: What was life like for your sister after the end of the war, and have you talked about how each of you were -- I assume you do, about -- feel that your lives were affected by this experience?

A: Oh there’s no doubt our lives have been a -- affected. Obviously they’ve been affected differently. Yola was 20 at the time, I was 10. So you know, she had a better grasp of what was going on. And my parents included her, while they didn’t include me, in all sorts of preparations, or you know, discussions, because of her age. I think when the war was over, I think Yola, who -- who got married in ’46, was -- that was shortly after the war. But still, you know, the remnants

of the deprivation were still with us. So she -- she just wanted everything. She wanted the nice house, and lot of clothes, she -- she just felt that she didn't have those things, and she had to make up al -- for all these things. So -- and I -- I just didn't particularly care. I was a little bit of a tomboy. There were difference. I mean, we're different people. Our personalities are like day and night. So --

Q: And there -- there could be factors, and I wonder if you've talked about the fact that you were -- you were younger, and you were protected, but you've already talked earlier about your anxiety over what you didn't know, and your sister would have a slightly more active role, because she'd be involved in the planning. And she'd be protecting you, so --

A: Right, right.

Q: -- she'd be a caregiver to some extent.

A: Yeah.

Q: Which, either role could be more damaging.

A: That's true. I mean, she -- she definitely protected me and she treated me like her little sister, you know. So I didn't have to know everything, but I think they probably thought the less I know, the better off I am. From my perspective now, if -- I mean, if any of my grandchildren were involved in a situation, I would have the same concerns about telling them everything, you know, I mean, at this age. Although they are much younger, they are six and seven, the older boys. So, you know, you're -- but I think they could have said a little more, at least from my perspective, to -- to calm me down. The fact that don't worry -- that you say don't worry, everything will be all right, will -- will be okay, wasn't enough to -- to make me stop worrying, because there was nothing concrete. The don't worry, it's a very vague kind of thing. Don't worry, but what if, you know, something happens, or what if that happened. The only thing,

surprisingly, that gave me a lot of comfort, was a plan we had to escape, particularly from the second house in -- in Kipserly. This was the house that had that fence, the one I jumped to go to this little girl's house to play with. And I remember we had a plan in place that should the Germans come, they would certainly come from the front, or -- we could all go to the backyard and jump the fence, and by then we would be to the next block. So by then we could run or do something. How -- we never put that plan in effect, actually we never need it -- needed it. But it gave me comfort that there was something we could do, something concrete that I was involved in, because they -- they told me what to do, and in fact we had a little bundle of a few clothes, you know, that we could take if we had time. But the thing was that we had to leave right away, and jump the fence, and that will take us through the yard of the next people, to the next block. So --

Q: Did you keep that bundle ready?

A: Yeah, that bundle was ready. That bundle was ready always. Couple of changes of clothes, and that was it. Maybe my doll, I don't know. No, my doll wasn't in there, because I always had it with me, yeah.

Q: And where did you keep the bundle? I mean, was it at the end of your bed?

A: It was under the bed, yeah. It was under the bed.

Q: Interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your sister s -- eagerly went on with life and --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- indulging her love of clothes as elegant as could be put together.

A: Yeah, yeah, she -- she is a beautiful woman. She always dressed very elegantly. I mean, her husband was very willing, when he could, to get her the best things. So she became a very well-dressed lady, you know, and I think she got a lot of pleasure out of it, yeah.

Q: And brought pleasure, to be fair.

A: Right, right.

Q: Now, when did she meet her husband, and tell me about their wedding, and I -- and -- and the impact of that on family.

A: I think she met him through -- through a friend. Freddy was the cousin of the friend who took me in when I went to Montreal. I remember when I got engaged to Isaac, I lived with a family in Montreal for six months, until my visa was ready for me to come to the United States. Well, Joe Calderone was the name. His mother and father were friends of my parents. Joe was a cousin to Freddy, okay? So Yola was very friendly with Joe and his wife, his current -- I mean his wife, and you know, they used to -- to be together in gatherings, and that's where she met Freddy. And they made it in '46, which was still very shortly after the war, and you know, I mean, things were not that well yet, you know? We were still -- had financial problems. The factory wasn't -- was just beginning to -- to work. But it wasn't producing what it did before the war, certainly not. And -- but yeah, everybody was very happy. When she got married she had a wedding gown, and -- and I was happy, and I told Freddy that I'm glad that he is marrying my sister, because I can have a -- a new dress for the wedding. So he always remembered that, he thought it was really cute.

Q: The first new dress in how long, do you think?

A: Oh, four years, five years, some like that. I used to get Yola's dresses, and my mother would hem them, but you know, there is a 10 year difference, so you can imagine the hem was like

another dress almost, plus she would take it in, and my dresses were always kind of loose, and hanging, and I never liked them.

Q: That makes me think of the -- a question about how would your f -- parents dress in the time in hiding? Would they maintain very dignified style of dress, even though clothes would get shabby and well worn?

A: Oh yeah, I mean, I remember my father always wearing a vest, a shirt and a vest, of course no tie in the house. And my mother always wore a -- a housedress, or a skirt and blouse, some like that. We didn't have a lot of clothes with us, so when -- since we didn't go out, you know, we didn't need to have anything. Now that we're talking about clothes, there's something else. After the war was over, and I think it was after the civil war in '44, there was help that had come from the United States, you know, in -- relief. And among them, there was what we used to call UNRRA, UN -- United Nations Relief Agency. And they were distributing clothes. So I needed a coat, and my mother took me to get a coat. So we looked through the different bins, or thing, and she came up with a brown coat that was down to my ankles, really long, and I didn't like it, but it was wool, and it was warm, and she wanted me to have it, because it was winter. I cried, and cried and cried, because I just didn't like this coat. I wanted something else, but everything else was either too small for me, or too big for me and [indecipherable]. So finally I ended up having that coat, but here again, she had to hem it to make it approximately my size.

Q: What -- what a contrast. I think of the -- the daughter of the head of the c-cashmere making factory.

A: [indecipherable] having -- having -- a friend of mine tells me a wonderful story which brings tears to my eyes. She was two years old when she and her parents went to a concentration camp. She -- the parents were Spanish citizens, so they went to Bergen-Belsen. Now when the -- which

was supposedly a little better treatment than, you know, the other camps but still, was a concentration camp. When the war was over, and they came out, they went to -- to France, or to Italy, I think, to -- to a center until they will be relocated. So -- no, to France, I think they went. And they had coupons to go buy clothes, to department stores. So her mother, and Lola's -- and my friend Lola, went to a department store to get clothes. And as they were going up the stairs, there was a mannequin of a child with a blue coat, and she fell in love with that little blue coat. So they talked to the saleslady and they gave her the coupon, and she brought out a very dark looking coat. And the little girl said, "I don't like this coat, I like that blue one." And she said, "No, this is not for you." And she started crying. Then the manager came, and he said, "Why is she crying?" "Well," she said, "because she wants that coat." "Now that coat costs a lot of money. The ones we have set aside are these." And they were the ugliest things you could think. I mean, dark colors for little kids, and things like that. So he said, "It's all right, the little girl can have the light blue coat." So he took it off the mannequin, and put it on my friend. And I thought it was such a moving story. And she was happy.

Q: It is a wonderful story.

A: Yeah. I mean, here comes humanity, you know? I mean, it's these tiny little things that make the difference.

Q: Now your sister -- I just wanted to get a sense of her subsequent life -- her husband died young.

A: He died at the age of 60. He died in 1973, of colon cancer. He worked with my father. I think I told you that they tried to -- to start another factory in Athens that made yarn, because they had such difficulty bringing yarn from England, and they thought it would modify, I mean, what they produced. So this factory -- I mean, he was able to -- to get some partners, and he did go for

awhile, but then, here again, it was difficult, and hard to get materials and things like that, so the factory wasn't going very well, and Freddy decided to -- to work elsewhere, which was a big shock for my father, because he was counting on having his help. So -- but they didn't quite agree on how to manage the factory, and Freddy went elsewhere. So -- but he worked with my father until -- I think when I came to United States in '58, he was still working with my father. He probably left about 1960 -- in the middle of 60's, something like that.

Q: Did that remain a rift between them?

A: A little bit, yeah, yeah. A little bit. It was very disappointing to my father because he thought that with hard work -- you know, my father was always somebody who would come up under horrible circumstances, and Freddy saw no -- no future to -- to this factory. So I don't know who was right, or who was wrong. They probably both were right, from their own perspective, you know? [indecipherable] cause a lot of pain.

Q: How old would your mother be at the end of the war in 1945?

A: She was 45 years old. She was born in 1900, yeah.

Q: And tell me about -- let's talk about your mother.

A: Okay.

Q: We haven't really talked about her since, except as she -- her life is sort of interwoven with -- with yours. We did talk about her activities and charitable involvement in Volos, before, but --

A: [indecipherable] she was quite a lady, yeah.

Q: -- but tell me more.

A: Well, my mother was a very quiet person. She was the eldest of three daughters, Julia and Anna. And I think she was quiet, but she was also a little bit like me, or I was like her, you know. She was very sensitive, but not very outgoing. But she had a tremendous warmth, that people

remember her. And everybody says, even now, that she was a grand dame, like a lady, a real lady. There's another vignette that I have to tell you, because that describes her. Many years ago, Yola and I went back to Volos. And we went around the place where our house was, which doesn't exist any more, has become apartment buildings. And we were walking through the neighborhoods, it was the first time I went back to Volos since I left Volos, since I came to the United States. That was in the -- '74 - '75 -- 1974 - '75, approximately then. Yola had been to Volos before. And I think there was a lecture also, that we wanted to go. So I was telling Yola that I always remember my mother will take me to a pastry shop called the Swiss. And I always remember the owner there, you know, talking to me, and giving me a little piece of pastry, or a cookie, or something. So Yola says, "Well, we're gonna go that way anyway, so let's stop." So we went, the sign still says the Swiss. And we go in, and the store is the same, nothing has changed, you know, it's a narrow store, you know, the -- you know, all the pastries, and all the breads there, and it's a fairly young man, a young man who recognizes Yola and says, "Yes, I remember you, you were here before." He is the son of the owner. And he says, "Well, my father comes here every day. He is 90 years old, and he sits there." In -- in the corner is this old man, you know, asleep on a chair, and with his cane. And he goes -- [indecipherable] "Here is my sister who lives in the United States." "Oh," he says, "I have to tell my father." So he goes over and he -- he wakes his father up, and he says, "Father, you know who this is?" And he says, "This is the Moudzoukos daughters. This is Yola, and this is Paulette." And the man -- for a moment he was trying to wake up. He gets up from the chair, shaking, and he embraces me, and he starts crying. He says, "I remember you. I remember your mother, what a lady she was. I remember bringing you here." I mean, it was such a moving moment. And then in the evening we went to the lecture, and this woman recognizes Yola, and then she tells me -- Yola says,

"This is my sister, Paulette." Says, "Oh Paulette, I was thinking of you a few days before." She is a photographer, a professional photographer. And my mother, once a year, or twice a year, she used to take me to the studio to take my picture. In Greece there is, before Easter there's a carnival, it's the four weeks of carnival. So children have parties, and they get dressed up in all sorts of costumes. So every time I would have a costume, my mother would take me out to have my picture. And this woman tells me that she is moving her studio from where she were, to a new place, and she was going through old negatives, and she found some of the negatives of me, and she was wondering wha --

End of Tape Five, Side B

Beginning Tape Six, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number six, side A. We were talking about the photographer, and her photos, and -- that she'd come across in Volos.

A: Oh. Yeah, so she was wondering what happened to me. She knew I had gone to -- to the United States. So she said to me, "I will send you the negatives, because there's -- some of them you may want to have them, you know, I don't need them any more. These were from 1930-something. But I never got them because I was leaving the next day, and she didn't send them. So I never got them.

Q: To what extent -- I want to hear more about your mother, but to what extent have you kept in touch as a family with Volos?

A: We have a cousin in Volos, who is the president of the Jewish community there. His name is Raphael Freseese. And he is related -- he is third cousin, I think, or some like that. He is related because I think his grandmother was married to my grandmother's brother. I think that's the

relationship, and I remember his grandmother, a nice, wonderful old lady who would always bless me to become a bride, for her to see me a bride. Lovely woman. So, anyway, he has written a book about the Jewish community of Volos, which he send me, and I correspond with him occasionally. Actually, the holidays I sent him a card, he sends me a card. I spoke to him on the phone a couple of times when I was in Greece. When I go to Volos I see him. I think it was in 1975, or '74, there was a letter came from the Jewish community, they were going to have a 50 year reunion of the Jewish community of val -- of Volos, of the people who left Volos, because a lot went to the United States, a lot went to Israel, or other parts of Europe, or Athens. So they were gathering everybody to go for this reunion, and I went with my sister. And it was -- it was such a nice thing. The first thing when you entered there, you know, they had pictures of all of Volos, the old Volos I remember. And there are pictures of my father, my grandfathers, the -- my father and grandfather was the president, my gra -- yeah, my grandfather, his father, the president of the Jewish community. So there are prominent, big pictures of them, right on a panel. The factory is very prominently displayed, since he was one of the biggest employers there. And then the connections. You know, people remember me as a little kid. I mean, I left Volos when I was 10. Here I'm an old woman, I mean, grown up woman, you know, married with daughters of my own, and th-th -- there is that warmth, you know, of -- of the then, to the now. It comes through, it just comes through. So we had a wonderful two day affair, because then we -- the next -- they had the Shabbat dinner. The women had cooked, and it was at the synagogue, it was service of course, and then the dinner. And the next day there were service Saturday morning, and then they took us by bus to a place to swim, and then to have dinner, and then we went to one of the villages up in Pilion. And at night there was a reception. So it was a very nice connection.

Q: How diminished was that Jewish community? I mean, would it have -- would it be half the size of what it was, or a third of the size?

A: Oh yeah, right now there are about a hundred people all together. Yeah, hundred -- 110 at most. It wasn't a very large community, but I think about 27 percent of that community perished. And then, after the war, the ones who returned, returned to practically nothing, and they -- they left Volos because there was hardly anything for them left, or to do. There were not jobs, so a lot of them left to go to the United States, or to Israel, or to Athens. So -- but that Jewish community is so small, but so connected. It has excellent relationship with a larger Volos community, there is mutual respect. Recently there's been a memorial that has been done there, and I mean, people live together very nicely.

Q: More so than in Athens, do you think?

A: I think so, because it's a smaller place, you know, and they know each other. There's great respect for each other, yeah.

Q: Did your parents -- they continued in Athens after the war?

A: Yes, we continued living in Athens, but we would go to Volos in the summer, because the factory was still there, and my father was, you know, working there. And in the wintertime he would commute from Athens to Volos. Once when we were in Volos, one summer, he -- he got a heart attack, and then he wasn't able to work for awhile. And I remember Freddy came to -- to Volos -- my father started -- helped start a -- build a -- a small airport in Volos, because Volos had no airport. So the first plane that landed was a tiny, little plane that had Freddy, and a cardiologist, and Yola. They came to look after my father. So it landed on -- the first plane that landed in that airport, isn't that interesting? And it was tiny plane. Then a few days later, Freddy remained in Volos to take care of the factory, and everything, and Yola and I left to go to -- to

Athens, because she had a child by then, she had Maurice. And I remember my first flight, you know, in this tiny little plane, and the pilot is totally incompetent, and I thought he was going to land in a roof in Athens, or someplace, I mean, he is going that close. It was such a tiny little place, I mean, I was really scared.

Q: And that would have been what, 1949, or something like that?

A: That was either ’40 -- let’s see, she was married ’46, it was probably ’50, 1950 - ’51. Yeah, because her son was born 1950, yeah.

Q: And your father tried to get the -- was it Leviathan-Moudzoukos factory going again --

A: Uh-huh.

Q: But that didn’t -- ultimately did not work out?

A: It worked for a short period of time, but he -- the much more diminished -- wa -- first of all, the machinery was all destroyed, you see, and they had to replace that, or part of that. The machinery was German machinery, and it was brought from Germany before the war, so this was very good machinery. It just didn’t have the -- the means, the financial means, you know, to buy new machinery, to get the whole thing started. It was very hard. But my father was a fighter, you know, he wasn’t -- a very kind man, very kind man. He couldn’t stand people being hurt. He was a very good employer, and I hear that now from people, that he was an excellent employer. He was also involved in city affairs, I mean he was in the city council, he was in the Jewish community, of course, he was -- he was a pillar of the society.

Q: And now let’s go back to your mother, and continue to tell me her story from the 1940’s on.

A: Okay, well the world was hard for her. Living in other people’s houses was hard for her. My father wa -- my mother was always very clean, her house was always very orderly. She had excellent taste. So for her to be at somebody else’s house, it was very difficult. She -- I mean, she

had no other choice, you know. And before we went into hiding, during the Italian occupation, when we had lived in the villages of the mountains of Pilion, here again we were renting a room, or two rooms from somebody else's house. So that was hard for her, too, you know, to be in a village, here is this lady who is -- she wasn't spoiled, I want you to know, I mean, she was -- she was a woman who had a good life, but she wasn't spoiled. So, you know, these things did take some toll, I think. But I think the hardest thing for her was when we lost the factory, a lot of her -- of friends, who at least appeared to be friends during the good times, just disappeared. And that she never forgot, that was a trauma for her, that the friends that she had helped, and friends that she was counting on, and has been to their house, they have been to her house, kind of discarded us because they were not -- they didn't have money any more, for awhile. So that really traumatized her.

Q: They weren't really friends.

A: That's what I kept on telling her, because she used to say to me, "Don't count so much on your friends." And I would say, "What? My friends are wonderful." You know, this kind of thing. She'd say, "Well, they are wonderful until things change."

Q: So that she lost some of her faith in humanity?

A: Exactly. I think she did. The war did that, her friends did that. And it was a constant struggle, yes.

Q: How important was she to your father, and to his state of mind, did he count on her utterly? Was his mood dependent on her support? What was their relationship like?

A: Yeah, I think my mother catered a lot to my father, because he -- he had diabetes, so she always took good care of him. I mean, she would -- those days they used to weigh things, because you know, you have to eat a certain amount of carbohydrates, and a certain amount of

protein, I think. But this became her responsibility of taking care of him in this way. And she would weigh everything. I remember he loved cherries, so the season of cherries would come, and they would count like eight cherries on the little plate, and he would say, “What is this, eight cherries? Bring the bowl of cherries here.” And she would freak out, say, “But these are weighted.” You know, so it was like the joke, we weigh things and he -- he would sneak a few other cherries, you know, from the bowl. So yes, but he did count on her support. She was very supportive of him, she was always there for him. I mean, they had a very close relationship. But she begun to get depressed, and I think she had great difficulty overcoming this depression and slowly with every more d -- every difficulty that came along, it was harder for her to come on -- to overcome this. So I guess she slowly started withdrawing, and withdrawing more and more. Then she had -- her appetite was diminished. She also had a problem with saliva, she couldn’t produce enough saliva to chew her food. And I don’t know if this was the result of a dental procedure that she had, or not, I -- I -- I’m not quite clear, I don’t remember, actually, at this point. But she -- she had lost saliva, so she couldn’t chew her food, and it was very painful. And she started losing a tremendous amount of weight. Then she was put on medication and on some vitamins, and things like that.

Q: And what ti -- at what -- what age would she be -- or what -- in what years was this taking place?

A: I think -- the depression, you know, was -- was -- it was there but not very prominent in the 50’s. I think towards the -- the end of the fift -- probab -- probably after I left, I think things got worse, because also the difficulties with the factory became much more. There were a couple of clients who had big orders, and they cancelled them because they had financial problems and couldn’t -- couldn’t do it. So that, of course, affected our financial situation. So, I think she got

tired, and she just didn't want to fight any more. And I left in '58, so I'm sure that my leaving was something, you know, difficult for her. She always hoped to be able to come and visit me, and see me in my new place. She wasn't able to do that, my father's heart condition and diabetes were not doing too well, plus all the financial difficulties, you know, couldn't -- they couldn't afford the trip. It was that simple. So I think that certainly made her upset, and unhappy, in addition to everything else.

Q: Did she see lots of -- of your sister, Yola?

A: Oh yeah, yeah. Yola was always there for her, and she used to take her to doctor, or take her places, you know, and things like that. So yeah, Yola was always there. And of course, Maurice, her -- her little grandson who was there, who was a great pleasure to her, yes, much.

Q: I wish you'd had wedding photos for her.

A: I wish that too, I think she -- she was upset, and I was upset I didn't have any wedding photos. But I took Sarah there when Sarah was six months old, and she just -- that was in 1960. Sarah was born 1960. And she just loved her. Sarah was a very feisty baby, very, very light, very small baby, but my goodness. A friend of mine who had her baby with Sarah, we put them both in a playpen. She said to me, "I thought my child was retarded compared to yours." Cause she was moving, she was in constant move and action. And she was just great, and I think that did a lot of good to her to -- to have her there. But then we left, we came back to United States, so here she was left empty handed again. So that was hard for her. And she freaked out when I -- I said to my mother, "I'm going to send a case of Gerber baby food for Sarah when I come." And she said, "What? You're going to feed your child food from the can, or from a jar? Is that what you do in the United States? We never did things like that." I said, "Well, everybody here uses this kind of food for babies." "No," she said, "when you come here, we're gonna cook for the baby.

We're have -- I bought a meal, I'm gonna mush everything." So she cooked for her, everything was hand -- I me -- puréed, and prepared the way she knew how to do it, yeah. That's it.

Q: The best.

A: The best. She -- right, the best. She was a great caretaker, great caretaker. She was -- they had fun with Sarah. They borrowed a playpen, so we will put her in the middle of the living room, you know, and we'll enjoy her just playing around. And that was great for them. I'm -- I'm so glad that she saw at least one gr-grandchild, because she died in 1962, so she had not seen Maya and Nicole. My father saw all three, because a year after my mother died, I went with Maya. Maya was a year old then. And also my grand -- my nephew was being Bar Mitzvahed, so we went. So he saw them. And then when he was quite sick I took Nicole, who was about three. And he saw Nicole, too. So he saw all three grandchildren. It's hard when you're that far away, yeah. My mother died in 1962, and by then she was quite broken, quite depressed, quite desperate, I guess, so she committed suicide. Which was a terrible [indecipherable]

Q: How did she -- how did she die?

A: She committed suicide, she took an overdose of something called belladonna, which is -- it's a stimulant, a heart stimulant. They don't use it any more, because it's so powerful. I was in the United States, so I learned it from the unites -- here. And I was not able to go to the funeral, because we lived in California at the time, Sarah was a baby, she was like two years old, I mean she was -- I couldn't leave her with anybody. And so -- we didn't have the money also to -- you know, to travel from California to Greece. So, it was -- you know, when I went back in '63 with Maya and Sarah, Sarah was three, three and a half, and Maya was one at the time, or before one. She celebrated her first birthday in Greece. That was like a year and a half after my mother had died. Everybody came to the airport, my sister, my father, and my aunts. Friends of mine came,

and my friends told me later that they wanted to be there to greet me because they knew that since my mother wasn't there, they didn't want me to feel the void, which I did feel the void. But you see, I lived in her house -- actually it wasn't the same house that I left to come to United States from, because after my mother died, and my father moved to -- to a smaller apartment near my sister. So I've never been to this apartment before, but I was still looking for her. So it was like I was grieving for her, two and a half year -- one and a half years later, where everybody was finally coming to terms a little bit with it. And it was a very awkward kind of situation because it -- although it wasn't the same house, this was the same furniture, the same pictures, all these kinds of things. And she wasn't there, you know? It was -- it was a difficult visit, yeah.

Q: Your -- your grief would be greatest and theirs was beginning to heal, I suppose, by then.

A: Well, I didn't begin to heal like 20 years later.

Q: No, I meant that the --

A: Oh, the other people?

Q: -- you'd -- you'd not been able -- such a pity you'd not been able to be with them to grieve together.

A: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Q: And then they would be coming to terms with losing your mother at that time when you went back and were confronting it perhaps most fully.

A: Right. That's right, yeah.

Q: What was going on in her life when she died? I mean, were there -- was it just a gradual sliding into greater depression, or was there something else that wer -- was happening that made her feel she didn't want to go on?

A: Yeah, I think it was a gradual depression. I think -- I think that she saw no future to anything. You know, I think depression -- and we are talking about clinical depression, we are not talking about just having the blues, it -- if it's not addressed, that's how it -- it ends up. And those days, you know, people didn't understand depression, I think they don't understand depression even today in many ways. Greece is not a -- a place where people, you know, understand these kind of things. Certainly nobody in the family understood the enormity of it. I think she did see a doctor, who maybe put her on antidepressants or something, but that was shortly before she died. So, it was not a long therapy before that. You know, she just didn't have -- she had lost the -- the zest for life. Everything seemed to be just enormous for her, even if I would say, well, can my friends stay for dinner, and this was a friend she knew, and somebody, you know, she didn't have to particularly make something special, it seemed like it was too much for her. Or they had to move from one apartment to the other because the lease expired and this man was raising the price. And that was a tremendous thing for her, to -- to have to move again. To -- to pack, to organize. I mean, she had moved many times in her life, so things become enormous all of a sudden. I mean, the slightest thing becomes enormous. And I think she just couldn't deal with any of that any more.

Q: Did she talk about her -- I mean, did she leave a note, ho -- I mean -- how do you know that she committed suicide?

A: She left a note -- well, first of all, you know, all these pills were missing from -- from the bottle, and the bottle was next to her bedside. Her -- she left a note, but it wasn't found until a month later, or something like this, which was a note left to my father and to my sister. And basically she was telling my father that, you know, what are we waiting -- I mean, what does life have to offer us any more? We -- our children are married, they are taken care of. You know,

there's nothing really to hold us here any more. And another thing she was telling Yola is to take care of me, because I'm her little sister, yeah.

Q: So sad, depression, and --

A: It is sad, yeah. I was reading her last letter to me a couple of days ago, which I received in California after she died. Because she died April 11th, and I think this was written like the eighth of April. And I was trying to di -- I've -- I've read that letter many times, because I'm trying to -- to determine what is in this letter that I could have deciphered that she was suicidal. And there is nothing in that letter that -- all she says is that now she's eating a little better, she has a little more appetite, that Yola takes her to the doctor, that she is glad I'm not there to -- to -- to see all the difficulties my father is going through -- she's still protecting me. And she talks a little bit about the future, like, you know, send me a picture of Sarah or something like that, which is, you know, like looking forward to something, right? Although she says in the note that there's nothing to look forward to. Maybe three days before she had not decided to end her life, who knows? But I've read -- I've read that letter over and over trying to -- I've taken -- it took me a long time to come to terms with this, I'd say 20 years. It's a long time. And as I said, I'm in a wonderful profession that I can have access to all sorts of material. I've gone to s-seminars, to workshops, I mean, conferences. And I always, for a long time, when I was trying to resolve this, I was getting into workshops that had to do with suicide, because there, you know, I mean there is a variety of workshops, and some of them had to do with suicide. Aftermaths of suicide, survivors of -- of people who have suicided. Professionals who survived the suicide of a client. You know, all sorts of things. So, i -- I was almost like drunk when I was getting all this material, which I have really read, and studied, and thought about, and worked at it. And you know, i-it's something that sticks with you. It doesn't -- it's -- because it's not a -- a natural

death, it's not a death that, you know, like somebody gets old and dies. It's just horrible to deal with. So --

Q: How have you come to terms with it?

A: I think by going to these workshops, and by -- by reading a lot. I didn't talk about it for almost 20 years, so that was, I think -- then I decided that I needed to go to therapy and resolve it, so that's what I did. And this woman was extremely helpful. We talked a lot about my mother. She asked me, because I was telling her I was --

End of Tape Six, Side A

Beginning Tape Six, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number six, side B. You were telling me how you found out.

A: Okay. I had an aunt who lived in New York, and I think my brother-in-law called her to call Isaac, because they didn't know our telephone number in California. And she called Isaac at the office to tell him. They didn't call me direct to tell me. So Isaac came home early, and then he asked me to sit down next to him, and he said, "I have to tell you, Mother died." And when he said Mother died, I thought he was talking about his mother. And I'm thinking, why is he telling me his mother died, she died, you know, in the Holocaust. Why now he tells me this? I know, and I said, "I know." You know, like I was trying to figure it out. He said, "No, not my mother, your mother died." But he -- he said nothing about suicide. He told me that she died, and you know, it was something I just couldn't grasp, I just couldn't get in my head. So it took me a couple of days to absorb it. Then I got a letter -- then I called home. And I think it was -- you know, your mind gets kind of blocked in situations like this. Because I called, and it was after the funeral, so I spoke to my father, and my father said, "We lost Thaliki," -- Thalia was my

mother's name. Thaliki is like a diminutive. And he said, "We lost Thaliki," and here I'm thinking, you lost her, why don't you look for her? You know, why don't you go find her, call the police or something. I didn't tell him that, but that was the thought that went through my mind. So it was -- it was very differ -- difficult to be that very far away. And then my sister sent me a letter, I asked her to -- to tell me what happened, and she sent me her -- a long, long letter, with all the details, which I brought it to therapy, and wrote it -- I mean, read it there. And that was quite earthshaking and w -- and I was trying to avoid reading that in therapy, and -- because the letter is in Greek, so I told my therapist I cannot do it, it's in Greece, you want -- Greek, you don't understand anything. Said, "That's all right, you will translate." Which of course I did. It was a very hard session, she cried, too. Yeah.

Q: And the distance would be so -- so painful, I think.

A: Oh, it was terrible. It was -- it was hard, because you know, I couldn't communicate other than a letter that used to take 10 days to arrive. And phone was not so -- you know, nowadays you can call, and it doesn't cost that much. Those days, I mean, phone calls to Greece were very expensive, and I think we talked a couple of times on the phone, I spoke with my father, with Yola. And everybody there were thinking how am I gonna cope with being alone here, and not having a support system. So that was -- then on top of that, two days later, Isaac came to Washington because he had an interview with Bellcom. And this was prearranged of course, and that interview was important, so he left and he came here. And while he was gone, I got a call from a teacher of mine who happened to be in New York. She had no idea my mother died, but she called me just to say hello, and to say how are you doing. And I'm saying to her -- she's calling from new -- from New York, and I'm saying, you know, my mother died, and there are tears coming down [indecipherable] poor woman, I mean, she didn't know what to do over the

phone. So -- but that's -- it was a point of connection with somebody I knew, that I could tell some. Yeah.

Q: Which you needed so desperately, I -- I think.

A: Right, right, yeah, yeah. Right.

Q: You must have thought about this a lot, but do you think there was any connection that we can draw between the Holocaust and your mother's sufferings, hiding, losing almost everything, and her depression and death, or do you think that perhaps -- no, you tell me.

A: Well, actually, I don't know, because there are a -- a lot of people who -- who went through the Holocaust and did not commit suicide. So, you cannot pin it just on that. I think there are many factors that go into something like this. It's not only one thing. You cannot say that it was just because of that, but certainly it has played -- I mean, the war and the Holocaust have played a major part in her lowt -- outlook to life. So, you know, it's not one thing, but it definitely did have something to do with it, yeah. But here again, there are lots of people who have gone through difficulties, or maybe even harder things, and still are alive. So, part of it is her make-up, I think. You know, there isn't a single answer. There is no single answer, and that's the hardest thing in dealing with that, that you can't find an answer to say, well, I'll pinpoint that this was it. There isn't. It's a combination of things.

Q: Now you told me about therapy when -- and -- and reading the letter from your sister telling you of your mother's suicide, but what was it that helped you come to terms with it? Was it just accepting it?

A: Yeah, sure. That it was her decision, although this is not a decision I would choose for myself, because I don't want to leave this kind of legacy to my children. But here again, I'm a different person, other factors go into my life, so who knows? I think time has also something to do with

it. Education about the subject has a lot to do with it. And I really have researched the subject in any possible way. I once thought of running a group of people who survived the suicide of someone. And then I decided maybe I wasn't ready to do that, because i have to be a little more detached from it, and I didn't feel I was that detached yet, when I wanted to do the group.

Q: Tell me about the areas that you have focused on in your work. We really -- we've really, in these hours of interviewing, we talked about your early work in Athens, and we've mentioned here and there your social work, but we've not addressed it in any detail. We talked about your interview too, when you were -- before having your first baby, when you might have returned to doing more work then, but so we -- le -- let's go back and have you pick up how you resumed your career, as the girls were growing up.

A: Okay. Okay, well, as I said, I worked for the International Social Service in New York for a short period of time, a few months, which was a job I liked, and fitted me like a glove, it was perfect, because it was dealing with Greek adoptions, and people I knew from Greece I had to communicate with. Anyway, well after Sarah was born, I did not work any more. I -- and after the other children were born I stayed home. I was involved in Brownies, and maybe school activities and things like that. Actually I did work in the evenings, when I think Nicole was in kindergarten, for Garfinkels -- part time -- this was my part time job. And it was primarily because I needed to do something, and I needed to do something very part time. But I -- I could start exploring other things. But I always wanted to go back to social work, because this was a field that always interests me. I mean, I'm interested in people, and their lives, and what makes them tick, and what's -- how they conduct their lives, what's in their lives, what influence their lives. So, I had a Bachelor's degree from Greece, from Pierce College, which was an American school. And I knew I couldn't do very much, but when Nicole went to first grade, I -- I thought

seriously of getting a job in social work. And somebody told me about the Jewish Social Service in Rockville, that they were looking for a social worker at the department of aging, I think. And I called, and verified that indeed they did need somebody, asked me to send my resume, which I did, and they called me back, they wanted me to go for an interview, which was terrific. Well, I did go to the interview, but I went a day earlier than the interview was scheduled, like I was not anxious, I guess. And then I realized when I'm there, because the receptionist looks at [indecipherable] says, "You know, I don't have you down for today. I think your interview's tomorrow." I'm protesting, I said, "No, no, it's today at 10 o'clock." And then I realized I'm wrong, but then I'm thinking if I tell them I'm wrong, they'll never hire me. So anyway, the assistant director who was to interview me, Marty Moss was his name, he -- he said to me, "I thought this interview was tomorrow, but anyway since you're here, I have 10 minutes because I have to go into a meeting. Let's just discuss a few minutes of what is available, and what you can do [indecipherable]. And maybe we'll have to have a second interview at one time." Well, he's telling me that the opening is at the Department of Aging in the Jewish Social Service. Now, I know nothing about aging. I've never worked with older people, I don't know what to do with them. I want to work with children. Anyway, I said okay. And then I get a call from the chairperson of the Department of Aging to go for a second interview. And I'm thinking, do I really want to work with older people? I'm not sure. But anyway, it was an entrance. So I think the question that really, she asked me, was -- I had done some volunteer work for the Jewish Community Center, we were doing some kind of a woman's day, and I had chosen the older women, and I had done, you know, some -- a presentation about it, and gathered material, and we had the show, a -- a fashion show for older women, you know, because we felt they were neglected in the fashion, things like that. Which went very well, actually. And I was telling her

about that, and she said, “You’d be perfect for the department”. And I’m thinking, you don’t know -- I don’t either, I don’t know anything. But anyway, they hired me. And I was excited, and I thought well, I’ll learn. If I don’t like it, I can always leave. So that was how I started, and once I started working with older people, I just loved it. I found it so rewarding. You know, here I was, always wanted to work with children, and now I’m finding the other end of life more interesting, actually, and very rewarding. So it was great, it was a great team to work with. It was a good a -- very good agency, very good camaraderie and professionalism. And I enjoy every minute of it, and I stayed there. I think I started in ’74, and stayed until 1990. That’s a long time. And while I was working there -- I always wanted to do therapy, and I had taken some courses, and then while I was at the Jewish Social Service, the -- my department chair said, “Paulette, you’ve got to get your Master’s degree. You are doing things that Master’s degree social workers are doing, but we can’t pay you as a Master’s degree social worker.” So finally I thought about it, and thought about it, and I’ve never been to an American university, I was 49 years old. So when I told a friend, I said, “I’m 49, how am I gonna go to school?” She said, “You’ll be 49 whether you go or not, just go.” So finally I talked it over with Isaac, I said I would need a lot of help. This was a time that Maya had started driving, and she said, “I’ll help, I’ll help, I’ll do all your [indecipherable] driving for you.” So everybody pitched in and I did go to school. They accepted me as an advanced standing student because of my experience with social work. They waived ce -- certain courses the first semester, and they waived field placement the first semester, because I was still working for the Jewish Social Service part time. So my first year was much lighter than the other students here. Second year was harder, I had to -- to quit working for the Jewish Social Service, because I couldn’t handle everything, because I did have a field placement, and I had an excellent supervisor. It was in a psychiatric clinic, a community

psychiatric clinic in Witten. And I got excellent experience, I had a wonderful supervisor, Meedul Shore. And of course I had the classes, you know, I had to go to school, and plus the family. Sarah was already in college, Maya and Nicole were home. So it was hard writing papers, I've never written a paper in this country. I mean, I've written papers in Greece, but they were different. It was a little hard, because as I said, this was a new experience for me. I didn't even know how to use the library. I had to ask how to use the library. It was a lot of work, an awful lot of work, but I loved every minute of it, because I felt I was doing it because I wanted to do it. And I graduated with a Master's in 1991. And I went back to the Jewish Social Service, and -- but at the time they had a part time job only available, and they said, "Come, it's part time, if something opens as full time, we'll get you as full time."

Q: I was just going to ask your -- your Master's degree is in -- is it --

A: Social work

Q: -- social work at Catholic University?

A: Uh-huh, right, yeah. 1991. And while I was working for the Jewish Social Service, my supervisor at the community psychiatric clinic, called me one day, and he said, "You know, there is a psychiatrist who is looking for a social worker to work for him to do intakes. Are you interested?" And I said, "I'm interested, but I'm not leaving Jewish Social Service." So he says, "I'll have him call you." So he calls me, and he says he's looking for a social worker to do his intakes. Intakes are, you know, you -- you g -- see the person for the first time, you collect all the information, and then you give it to him, and then he determines the treatment and this kind of thing. But it's an elaborate process, I mean, the interviews have to be quite long, and to understand the problem, and this kind of thing. So when he called me, I was leaving for Arizona the next day. It was one of Isaac's retreats. So I said to him, "I'm leaving for a week." He said,

"Send me your resume, and then we'll talk when you come back." I came back, he said, "Come and see me." So I went to see him, we -- he decided to hire me. So I was working for him part time, and I stayed with him 11 years. I was working both at the Jewish Social Service, and with him. His name is Aaron Burger, he is in Silver Spring, very nice man. So that was a very good experience, too, because he is a good supervisor also, and a very good -- good friend, also, he became.

Q: Ho-How would you split your time, how many hours would you work at each place?

A: Well, since I was working half time at the Jewish Social Service, actually I would go -- I would work one evening for him, and I would see four or five people, once a week. Then I would, on my days off from the Jewish Social Service, I would go to his office, and see people. But he also gave me some people from -- for treatment, some cases that didn't require his skills, you know. And then, when I quit Jewish Social Service in 1990, because Isaac was retiring, and I -- we were thinking a lot about traveling to Europe and all that kind of stuff, I left Jewish Social Service, and continued working with him for -- until after Ian was born, and then I told him I wanted to spend time with my grandson. And that was it. Which he fully understood, and -- because he has grandchildren of his own. And I'm friends with his wife, and his daughter, we became quite good friends. So --

Q: How did you feel about your career?

A: I love my career. And now I'm working -- for awhile I didn't work, after I left Dr. Burger, but then I worked for -- also part time as a contract worker for a company called Aging Network Services, which is located in Bethesda. They've been in business for 20 years. It's run by two social workers, and they needed a Master's degree social worker to supervise social workers who do care managers, and do care management. Coordinating services, and seeing families, and this

kind of thing. And I'm still with them, very part time, but I love doing it. I mean, I -- I do enjoy my career, my career is just the best career for me, anyway. It's great. Once I was thinking that I may want to change careers at times, because sometimes people's problems become too big, and you wonder how good you are at it or not, in helping. But I think this was a phase I had gone through, so I decided to take a catering course, cause I love to cook, and I thought well, maybe I'll do that professionally. But I did take the course, I got the certificate, I enjoyed the course, but I haven't opened a catering thing. Isaac wasn't too happy for me to do that.

Q: Maybe you'll -- well, you must have thought about this, but it almost seems as if all these different strands, or yarns, life experiences come together to make you -- or to equip you to do one thing very well. And maybe you've -- maybe you've -- maybe you see that.

A: Right. I think, you know, your past experiences, I mean your history, your past history informs your present, right? And I think I am who I am because of my past experiences, and my make-up, of course, but yes, I've learned through my experiences. And I think my work relates very well to my experiences of other people. Because somebody was asking me what are the major things that you understand about a client. And I said, "I understand culture, and different culture. I understand suffering. I understand hardships. I understand moving away from a country, and from family, and going to another country and starting to make a life there. I understand loneliness, lonesomeness. I understand raising children, I understand having a husband and working with him, and you know, with his difficulties, and all that kind of stuff." So I understand these things. Somehow I -- they come instinctively now.

Q: You're still -- your -- you're not in regular employment at the moment, but you are still d -- doing what seems to be very important work, still arranging, and organizing, and making things

happen. I base that on you having mentioned getting performing artists t-to perform regularly for the elderly.

A: Seniors. Yeah, this is volunteer work. I mean, my work for the Aging Network Services is -- is paid work. I'm a member of WPAS, or Washington Performing Arts Society, the women's committee, and the women's committee has several subcommittees. And one of the committees I co-chair with another woman, is called Enriching Experiences for Seniors, that started about 10 or 12 years ago. And what we do is we bring local artists to senior centers, nursing homes, assisted livings, recreation centers for senior adults. What we do is just we coordinate these things. You have to coordinate the center, find the activities director, the date, coordinate the artist, and the days they are available to do this kind of things. And also provide the volunteers from the women's committee who go to audit the performance, because this way they give us feedback on the artists and the interaction between the -- all the people and the artists, so we'll know whether to hire them for next year or not. This is a free program to the community -- I mean, the seniors don't pay anything for this. WPAS has a budget for the senior program. And that's what I do in addition to working for the gala, which is a [indecipherable] event, fundraising event, or the auction, or the embassy adoption program, which is another women's committee program, where embassies adopt school, and the -- for the semester, or for the year, and the children study about that particular country. And I usually choose Greece. So the children -- the school that chooses Greece, and the embassy, I'm the liaison between the two of them. So we go -- the representative for the Greek embassy, or the other embassies go to the school, talk to the children about it. The children study about Greece, and work with the teachers, we work with the teachers, and then at the end of the semester, they put up a presentation, the embassy invites them for -- for cookies and juice, or whatever. And they give a presentation to

the ambassador, or the staff members of the embassy. And then we take the children to a Greek restaurant, so they can taste a little food. These are sixth graders, they are 12 years old, and they are wonderful. This -- I mean, 50 embassies participate in this -- in this program, and it's a fantastic program for teachers and children. The teachers love this program because the children learn so much through that program about the other countries. And it's very educational, it's a fun program, it's just great. So I love doing Greece, as you understand. Last year there were -- the Greek embassy was between ambassadors, so they didn't have time to participate in the program, so they were not there. So I did the embassy of the Bahamas, which was also a nice experience, you know, and I went to a school pretty far away in someplace -- I think it was northeast Washington. And the wife of the ambassador came to the school, they had -- they invited the children to their embassy of the Bahamas. They had the presentation, they provided lunch at the embassy, from the whole class. It was a good experience. I mean, to -- to -- somehow I feel that, you know, just doing Greece every year kind of limits me to other countries, because people tell me wonderful things about the embassy of Israel, you know, and Thailand or other countries. But I love Greece, so I'll do anything to promote Greece, and to -- and teach children about it. There is so much. And next year it's going to be an important year because of the Olympics, so --

Q: Have you ever thought about the similarities between your mother when she --

End of Tape Six, Side B

Beginning Tape Seven, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama. This is tape number seven, side A.

A: Seven. You were asking?

Q: You d -- I was -- I was thinking back to your mother in Volos, and her community activities, and thinking of things that you are doing in your new community, maybe following in a family tradition.

A: Oh sure. They're different things, but yes, the sense of community was very strong in my family, and giving to the community. My mother volunteered, there was a Jewish organization in Volos, a women's organization, she volunteered that -- there. She volunteered at the orphanage in Volos. There was an orphan -- not a Jewish orphanage, an orphanage in Volos, and sometimes she would take me with her. And I loved going with her, and talking with the children there, but I was also petrified that if my mother and father were to die, I would end up in that orphanage. I was so scared of that, of them dying and me being in the orphanage. And I remember when I had this visit in Volos, when it was like the 50 year reunion I was telling you, Yola and I had taken a taxi to go to the Jewish cemetery, because our grandparents are buried there. So as we are passing, the driver -- the taxi driver says, "And here is, on the left is the orphanage." And I said to him, "Stop!" And he scratches on his brakes, and he stops the taxi. And he said, "What happened?" I said, "Stop, I want to see this orphanage." It seemed so small to me. I said, "Is this the same orphanage that was here?" "Oh yeah," he said, "nothing has changed. They just painted it, but it's the same thing." It looked so tiny. I mean, I remember it like a big place, with a big yard. It's -- it's so funny when you see things as an adult, and how you see things as a child, yeah.

Q: What has happened to all the family members? Tell me, as we wind down to a conclusion about your -- your m -- mother and your father's siblings, and where they are now, or where the f --

A: Yeah

Q: -- what happened to the family?

A: Okay. As I told you, my parents were first cousins, so my father was the second child, and first son. There were five children in his family. His mother was the eldest of seven children. My grandparents had seven children, two girls. First one, my paternal grandmother, last one my maternal grandmother, and there were boys in between. So there were five children in my father's family. Abusta was the eldest, my father was the second, there were two girls, and Saould, or Sauld was the youngest, who was born in 19 -- I think he was born 1909, or 1910. So he was like an afterthought. He was much younger compared to the other siblings in the family. Well, none of them are alive. They all went to hiding in different places. My fourth aunt, the fourth child in the family was the only one who survived until 1976, I think. She came to the United States. She was adopted by an uncle, the brother of -- of her mother, who was married, and they couldn't have any children. So Connie used to go to their house, and they had her there, and they played with her, and they loved her, they absolutely were in love with her. And they decided to come -- to go to Teriester first. So they asked if they could take her along. And they did, and then they decided they wanted to come to the United States. I mean, the uncle, and his wife. So they went back to Greece, and I don't know if it's an official adoption, whether there were papers of adoption taken. But somehow it seems like the family, or the parents, anyway, decided to -- to let her go with the uncle, because they felt she will have a wonderful life in the United States, and not in Volos. So she came to the United States, and she didn't know she was

adopted until much, much later in life. She was an adult, I think, when she found out about that. She got married, and had a son, whom I see, Bob Guburbon. My aunt died in, I think, ’70 -- let me see, no, she must have died in ’76 or ’77, yeah, in Florida. And her husband died a few years later. I see her grand -- h-her son, often. This aunt, Connie, send us care packages after the war was over, with food, with clothes. She would send fancy party clothes for me, and they looked so funny, because you know, I mean, here I didn’t have any clothes, and I had a -- an organza dress, old dress. And she would send some cans, I mean, chocolates. And she once sent shoes for my father. I remember they were so huge. I mean, my father was a tall and big man, and these shoes were tremendous for him. I mean, he couldn’t wear them. And she sended a teddy bear for me. So I always remember her, you know, for doing these things. Of course, I met her when I came to the United States. But I mean, she had never met her siblings. She was in touch with them. I don’t know if she was in touch with them before the war, but after the war, I mean, she came through with sending care packages. And then, of course, they were corresponding with -- ‘scuse me -- with my father, and he was the one who would tell the news, you know, t-to -- to his sisters. And my Aunt Julia corresponded with her, because Julia had come to the United States to visit her son who was studying, and has seen Connie. Now, my father’s younger brother, Saul was hiding in somebody’s house, I think the name was aseema -- Aseemomeetees. And there were two daughters and a son, maybe two sons. And he fell in love with the oldest daughter, and she with him. Saul was a handsome, beautiful man. And after the war was over, they kept on seeing each other, and dating each other, and they wanted to get married, but of course she was Christian Orthodox, and the rabbi wouldn’t marry them, she had to convert. So she took all the lessons that she needed to do to convert. But then there was a little detail which I don’t remember now, and they decided they were gonna go to France, and get married in Paris. So

they did go to Paris and got married, and came back to live in Athens. And she knew more about Jewish holidays than any of us did. My mother didn't know them, and she would call -- Deena, was her name. Deena would call my mother and say, "Do you know that today is," such and such a holiday. My mother would say, "Oh, really?" I mean, we observed the big holidays, but not the little ones. And Deena knew everything. And -- but unfortunately, a few months later, in 1950 -- I think they married '49, or beginning of '50 -- or '51 I think it was, he got cancer, a brain tumor. And they went to Paris and he had surgery and died. It was terrible. It was devastating. He was 40 or 41, very young. A life, you know, just got done so young. And of course Deena was totally, totally devastated. Now, many years later she remarried, but she divorced, this marriage didn't go that well. Then many years later she married somebody who was living in the United States, in Florida, so -- a -- a -- a Greek, but I think he -- he was Greek American, or someth like that, and he went -- they -- they lived in Florida. She couldn't stand it, she didn't like Florida, she didn't like America. So she divorced him too, and she went back to Greece, and now she -- she lives alone. When I go to Greece she comes and sees me. She -- she is very warm, very lovely. I went to -- to volunteer nursing school at the Red Cross in Greece with her sister, her younger sister. So we were both volunteer nurses at the Red Cross hospital, and we took the classes together. So I haven't seen her sister for a long time, but Deena, she was a lovely, lovely woman, yeah.

Q: Sad story that she --

A: Yeah.

Q: Well --

A: It's sad. It's sad that they were -- sad for her. I mean, here it was the love of her life, and he died almost -- less than a year after they were married. And for the family, you know -- I mean,

for my father it was devastating. Actually, Saul was a very rambunctious young man, and when he was -- I think at the age of 13, he came to live with my mother and father, because he had diabetes, and somehow wouldn't adhere to any program, and my grandmother had very hard time controlling him, or managing him. So her blood pressure would go very high, and they were very worried about my grandmother. So my father said, "Let him stay with us." And somehow my mother was much more able to -- to work with him, and he loved my mother, he absolutely adored her. And he stayed with them, he lived with them.

Q: So you were -- he was very close to your family anyway.

A: Yeah, right.

Q: And do the -- your -- your father lived for many years after your mother's death --

A: Eight years. Eight more years, but he was a broken man by then. I mean, he wa -- her death was devastating to him. His health started -- well, his health was not so good before that, but it started deteriorating. He had the heart problems, he had diabetes, which was from a long time before that. He had arteriosclerosis, which started manifesting, you know, and some -- some brain damage, you know. Forgetfulness, and stuff like that. So -- and he wa -- he was bitter. He was bitter. Not too many friends came to see him. So he was again like he was a forgotten man, he was somebody special and very much sought after in his younger years, because of his position and his powerful connections and everything else. And then now that he needed to have a lot of people around him, you know, they will come once in awhile to visit, and that was about it. So he -- he was lonely, very lonely.

Q: And your sister would -- the -- the burden of caring for him would fall on Yola?

A: That's right. This is something that I really regret, because I was so very far away, and you know, I couldn't do much. She took very good care of him, and she was like the care manager,

you know, did everything for him. Took -- would visit him every day, will talk to the doctors, make arrangements with doctors, and things like that, yeah. Yeah, she was -- she took excellent care of my parents. And I think she resents it a little bit that I was so far away and could not help, that she had to go through that by herself. And maybe my job of taking care of older people, has something to do at some point with my need to take care of my parents. You know, lots of unconscious things go around. Can't decipher every single thing, but I'm sure my choice of work is not incidental, you know, it's medi -- meaningful, and it relates to my need to do something I didn't do. You know, I mean, they needed care, and she was there for them, I wasn't.

Q: I wonder to -- to what extent you see the period in hiding as a formative influence that in some ways has shaped your life? I mean, what -- to what extent do you think that's -- that is so?

A: Well, I think it's in balance with my life at this point. I think it's -- it's one experience that I wouldn't have had if the war had not happened. I think my life would have turned out to be totally different. Carefree, you know, affluent. Totally different life. But I certainly don't regret my life. I think it was a good life in many ways, because it brought me to the point I am now, close to 70 years of age, where I think I have become a very strong person, a very compassionate person, a person who cares about people. A person who -- who enjoys life. I mean, I remember a friend of mine once, who has a house at the beach, had invited me, and then we decided at the spur of the moment to go to a -- to an orchard, or to -- to a farm nearby, and pick up peaches. And I remember giggling, and just laughing, and enjoying picking peaches. And she looked at me, and she said, "Paulette, I never knew you would get such a thrill out of something so simple, you know, such a very simple kind of thing." Incidentally, when we were, during the Italian occupation, I used to go and pick up fruit, you know, climb the trees and pick up peaches, or cherries. And of course I would eat the cherries, and I got sick, because I would love them, and

you know, then my stomach will hurt. So maybe that reminded me a little bit of that, but it was such a pleasure to do things, to do anything. I mean, I love being outdoors, looking at the blue sky, and -- or watching children, see them grow. That's the biggest joy for me.

Q: I think we've come to the end of our --

A: Okay.

Q: -- hours of interviewing --

A: That's [indecipherable] thank you for [indecipherable]

Q: -- and -- and really, on behalf of the museum --

A: -- appreciate --

Q: -- yeah, but I'd like to -- like to thank you for --

A: And I thank you, too. Thank you so very much. This has been just wonderful. I appreciate it.

Q: And this now concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Paulette Nehama.

End of Tape Seven, Side A

Conclusion of Interview