United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Paula S. Biren
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PREFACE

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PAULA S. BIREN
November 17, 2005

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Paula.

Answer: Good morning, Joan.

Q: It's really lovely to see you here.

A: Thank you, glad to be here.

Q: Tell me what your name was at -- when you were born. Well, what name they gave you.

A: That bad?

Q: You [indecipherable]

A: Cause I didn't like my name for a long time.

Q: Oh, you didn't?

A: Okay, it was Pawa Sara.

Q: Pawa?

A: Sara. P-a-v-w-v-a, Sara, S-a-r-a, Szmajer is my last name.

Q: And how do you spell your last name?

A: S-z-m-a-j-e-r.

Q: And when were you born?

A: I was born on the seventh of April, 1922.

Q: And where?

A: In Lódz, Poland.

Q: So let's spend a little time talking about your family and h-how you were raised, and what it was like to live with your parents and your sister.

A: I am the oldest one, my sister is six and a half years younger, so I was the only child for six and a half years.

Q: So that means you have an only child perspective, almost.

A: Ob-Obviously.

Q: What did your dad do?

A: My dad was a journalist in a Jewish newspaper that a group of young men got together and formed a cooperative, and it was a daily Jewish newspaper.

Q: And was that -- that was his profession, to be a journalist?

A: Right. Actually, what they did, it was -- at that time it was right after the first war -- war, and of course I was not there and don't remember anything of that, just by stories.

Q: Right.

A: My father was, to start with, a very active leader in unionization right after the war. And he helped to establish the union of printers in Lódz. Now, a [indecipherable] statement is that Lódz was the second largest city in Poland, Warsaw was the capital, Lódz was the industrial city, and it was called the Polish Manchester. And the -- really the only industrial city in Poland, which meant that it was also a city of social and political ferment. The union -- uni -- birth of the unions, the workers movement etcetera, and I was born in that atmosphere. A big city coming into being as a substantial industrial city, in a Poland that was mostly, or only agricultural before. The city -- the population of the city consisted of sort of three parts. Pol -- Poles, Jews, and Germans. The industrial trend was coming from the west, so the Germans were a very important element, establishing all kinds of industrial complexes, but the main thing how this textile business came to be, is through -- I don't know th-the name would it be -- for people working at the loom in their own apartments. So they would be home workers, and when you -- when I was

going to school, from my home to my school, I would pass many homes where on the first floor you could hear the click of the looms, one after another and you saw men sitting in the loom and working. That -- that was the basic thing, what built, you know, industry in Lódz. And then of course, the -- were the big manufacturing things and Germans, it was mostly in German hands, big, you know, big stores, and big commerce, led mostly by Germans and Jews and Poles. So it was a three part city that lived pretty much in peace til the war broke out.

Q: What was your home like? Wa -- did your mother work, by the way?

A: No.

Q: No. So she was home?

A: Yes, she was home, she was a homemaker. My father worked, and that is how I sort of learned first hand from my mother about feminism. She never used the name, neither did I, but looking back when I got in touch with my feminism in modern times here, in America, I was recalling that where I -- where I got it from. And I don't know, life was good, and I knew that. Why? Because I was very observant, and I was, you know, had many friends, and visited, and revisited. And also each time when I went to another home, my mother was drilling me, what did you see, what was the furniture, who lived there, etcetera.

Q: Really?

A: So I had to pay attention to all that, to give mother a report. So -- but I also saw the relationship, you know, in the homes, and I always came back and ti -- this time that the relationship were the best in my home, between my parents and between my parents and children. But i -- so what she was saying about her life was sometimes she got very a -- not sometimes, very often, she was very angry. She was also very laughing and singing, you know, so all -- all emotions were just on the surface. And she would say, when she was angry with my

father a little too much, I would say, “Mother, what do you want? Don’t you realize you have the best husband, and I have the best father?” She says, “I realize that, but look at his life and look at my life. He gets up, I fix breakfast, he eats, he gets dressed. I see that he’s properly dressed and go -- he goes to work outside, for fun. What do I do? I clean, I cook, I clean, I cook, I shop and clean and cook. And I would like to work, I would like to be in the outside world.” So I said, “Why aren’t you?” Because I cannot. You know, she was the daughter of a pretty well to do -- a construction -- a builder, he was building houses. And before the w -- first war, they were quite well-to-do. After the war I saw a lot of paper money around, bags of paper money, and I knew that that’s where the money went. You know, there was a total wipe-out. And she says, “I could not work, my father would never let him, it would be a bad mark, if he -- his daughter, Shlomo Gavcewicz’s daughter would work? Never. And now, since I am married, if I would work, that would mean that your father is not capable of supporting a family. So I cannot do that, it would be hell. That’s my life. But you, you will be different. You will get all the education so that you can work, and life will be different for you.” That was my mother.

Q: It’s very interesting. How -- do you remember about how old you were when you had this kind of a conversation?

A: Oh, about 10 years.

Q: About 10 years.

A: Nine, 10 - 11.

Q: But she didn’t seem to say this with a lot of bitterness, it was just very straightforward.

A: Not at all. Straightforward. And about bitterness and anger, I -- you know, particularly when I became a physician and I learned from families for women and I notice that the biggest characteristics of women’s upbringing was don’t be angry, cover it, don’t be a -- and I -- at first I

didn't understand, but then I understood that those were the messages in this culture that families gave to girls. Anger is for boys, and for you, be nice and sweet. So, I remember then, you know, how my life -- when I was angry, Mother never stopped me, only let me -- let me fume, then at one point she says, "Okay, you're angry. How long -- how long will it last?" That stopped me. In other word, you can get angry, it's okay with me, but don't overdo that.

Q: Right.

A: So that -- that was --

Q: So you must have been very close to her. Somewhat --

A: I was, yes.

Q: -- yeah.

A: And -- and without knowing, really, because she was not a doting mother. For that I had my grandmother, her mother, you know? My grandmother's lap was always open and I can jump and be there, and she would cuddle me and hug me. My mother did not acknowledge any of those things. It was all talk, but no close physical contact.

Q: Really?

A: Other than, you know, there was a habit of kissing the hand of mommy and daddy when I went to school.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. On -- as good-bye.

Q: And when you came home, the same thing or not?

A: No, not.

Q: Only the -- only good-bye?

A: O-O-Only the good-bye, yes.

Q: So your mother was not physically affectionate, it was your -- your grandmother.

A: No, not physic -- no, that's right, that I got from my grandmother, but mother always -- yo -- it was a subject to talk with me, explain and ask give, you know, encouragement, to give reports, to observe and so on.

Q: And was the grandmother your mother's mother?

A: Yes.

Q: And was she living in that house with you as well?

A: Yes, we were living together, yes, yes.

Q: So you had a lot of access to --

A: And grandfather, it was the -- my grandfather's property. It was a s -- a four story building, apartment building and we lived there together in a large apartment, and my grandfather was a good guy, he always watched as I was coming from school, with whom I am coming home, etcetera. But ne -- also, no physical closeness. Only grandmother was th -- was for that. Grandfather I always had a good contact, I could talk to him, he would ask me things, but no physical closeness.

Q: And what about your father? Were you close with him?

A: Very close.

Q: You were.

A: Very close, yes, ver -- we were very close. I was the first one, the only one for a long time --

Q: Right.

A: -- and he was always watchful. He would make homework with me, and help me out and he would read to me. And when I was a little older, nine, 10, he would bring me books. And, you know, working in a newspaper, there were always books b-brought in by publishers, and so on,

so he would bring me samples of those books. And they were pretty advanced books, Polish history, and the bloody Polish history of -- you know, Poland had a very bloody history. It is a country that is between Germany, Russia, Austria, the Hapsburgs, the Prussians, and the Norse. And though there was a part of history, there was the golden age of Poland in Middle Ages, where Poland was quite potent and -- militarily, and was attacking the neighbors, and also is known for having the first university in Krakow, in Europe. So it was a pretty -- you know, pretty acknowledged country, but bloody history, you know? Like we had the significant that I remember, and there were books written, the Norse i-invaded, you know, the Swedes, the Vikings, Middle Ages, invaded Poland and run down the whole country and the beautiful books that the author got a Nobel Prize, part of the flood when the Vikings flooded the whole country. And the atrocities and interrogation and punishment. The underground places where they kept the people that they -- you know, the invaders, bloody killings and so on. So I was exposed to that really very early, so I knew history very well.

Q: Did your father understand what your mother was si -- telling you about being independent?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: And he appreciated that?

A: Oh yes.

Q: It was okay?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: But not for his wife?

A: No, that was part of the culture.

Q: That’s culture.

A: Both of them would not dare for my mother to work.

Q: Right. But it was okay for that to be --

A: I had -- I had the new generation.

Q: Uh-huh, it's interesting.

A: Different.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you eat lunch together? Did your father come home for lunch?

A: It depends, you know, he worked shifts, you know, the ol -- the p -- the whole group worked shifts. He was a printer by -- by trade, so I remember him working this big linotype -- this big, mechanical machine came from America, and you know, I saw him working, and I -- I was fascinated by that. He also set types, he also wrote editorial. You know, there was -- everybody did something of the same thing.

Q: I see.

A: I don't -- so -- but they worked shifts, so I don't know how it was lunch. When I was going to school I would take lunch and dinner was always early, two o'clock, three o'clock, that was the main meal. We ate together, so everybody was at the table together.

Q: So maybe that's what I mean. I'm calling it lunch and I shouldn't, I should call it dinner, because --

A: That's -- that was at dinnertime.

Q: -- you had supper --

A: That's right.

Q: -- later.

A: Yes.

Q: So your dad would be home for the dinner.

A: When he worked that way, yes.

Q: When he worked that way.

A: Yes.

Q: Was that -- w-was -- was that nice, the dinner, the conversation? And were you included, or were you really considered a kid, so you should be very quiet?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I was included when I wanted to say something, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: I-It was a nice time.

Q: And your grandmother and grandfather were --

A: Separate. They --

Q: Separate?

A: That's right. We lived in one large apartment --

Q: Yes.

A: -- but there were separate households.

Q: That's interesting.

A: And actually, you know, so they -- my grandmother was cooking for her husband, my grandfather, and in earlier years there was, you know, my aunt was there, and my uncles. There were three -- five children, including my mother. And then they got -- slowly they all got married and left home. So they was separate -- cooked separately, so it was a separate household.

Q: In addition to being interested in history, what other interests did you have as a kid? Did you like school?

A: Oh, I loved school. To go -- oh, grade school, and high school, I loved school. My biggest interest was natural sciences.

Q: It was?

A: Zoology, and bi -- bot -- botany.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, mm-hm. And I remember, every summer we went on vacation in the country, you know? That was a habit, a custom, not only for the rich by -- but middle class as well, and maybe lower, too. You would rent a cheap place, or more expen -- whatever your finances were, in the country, which would be maybe 50 kilometers, 30 kilometers outside the city, and spend the summertime, which was a long time, it was two and a half months. School was out. And my father would come for weekends, and we stayed, you know, children, very often there was extended family, cousins. So that was a wonderful life. And each summer, after summer, I would come home with loads of samples of leaves and -- pressed leaves, ple -- pressed flowers. Preserved salamanders and snakes, and -- you know, things like that. My father taught me how to catch snakes and preserve them. That was for my classes, you know.

Q: So you caught live snakes?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And then you killed them?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Uh-huh, okay. And then you --

A: And salamanders.

Q: And salamanders.

A: And frogs, yes.

Q: Really?

A: So I was, you know that -- every summer. That was my -- my doing. And catch butterflies and kill them and make shows of different butterflies. It was fun. Very busy summers.

Q: I can see that. And then you would take them to the class, and --

A: Oh yes, I would take them to school, and show off, and [indecipherable]

Q: So you did a lot of work for the teachers, actually, without knowing it.

A: Oh, I didn't look at it like that --

Q: Right, I understand.

A: -- I was just showing what I did during my summertime.

Q: And the -- the other kids, you told me you were friends. Were they as interested in school and study as you, or --

A: Some were.

Q: Some.

A: Yes. And then there were some kids as we got older, got interest very much in the social issues, which was a burning question in Poland in those times between wars. You see, to our right was Russia, that just became Bolshevik Russia, and that was a big experiment, and we couldn't stop talking about it. You know, kids. Grown-ups, too, but it was a forbidden thing to even think about. Ye -- Communism was forbidden by the Polish reactionary government, and other governments, you know, it was a sort of a new things, and so that was all discussed in hush with friends, so I had some friends that were very interested in the question as was I, and I was reading to no end, all the, you know, chief writers of Communism, Socialism. And I know that

was not against what my father was thinking, but we nev -- it was unspoken because if you were caught and went to -- the thing was that the kids that were then caught in the -- this Communist spirit, and infiltration, you know, there was infiltration from Soviet Union by youths, too, and you could hear murmurs, you know, when we were going out of school by Friday, come to the meeting, come to the meeting here and here. And we knew that was Communist meetings, but you didn't dare to think about it because you could get expelled from school, and kids were getting expelled from getting involved in Communist cells. But the curiosity at that age is so strong, that I could just not -- you know, put it together aside. So we had couple kids that were on the same wavelengths and we would read and discuss, and discuss, particularly about w-what is -- how -- what are the best way to edu -- to bring up children. And you know, part of the Communist agenda was to -- to -- to put a wedge between parents and children and took away ch -- take away children, often to -- for separate education and so on. And that was dangerous stuff, you know, at home to talk about. But we talked nevertheless, and what we think, what would be better, there was endless discussions. And then one time -- this friend of mine that was mostly knowledgeable said, look, there is a meeting such and such a day, such and such a place, I have a friend and he wants us to go, a-and participate there. So I said, "You know, Stephanie, it's dangerous." "Oh, who cares, come on, let's go." I said, "Okay, we'll go." So we went, and that was the friend that took us there, and it was in the Polish section of town. Actually, it was in the section of town that later was turned into the ghetto for Jews. So we were in there on a little, small, apartment, you know, very high up, and there were people around the table. It was cold, it was winter, it was bitter cold. And there was a little iron stove that was giving a little heat, and a lot of people, and so we were sitting there. And you know the saying is that poverty s-smells. That was just my experience, the poverty stunk there. It was so poor. People were from the very,

very poor population, sitting, and there was this guy, and this guy just came from Russia. Communist, propagandist, and was talking, and everybody was hushed and listening. And he was talking what a great country Soviet Union is, how things are good, how poor people are doing well, how the regime is taking care of poor people, etcetera, etcetera, and of course they all listened and loved it. And, okay, so we went -- you know, that was after that, went home and I had all kinds of -- they were really not mixed feelings, I understood very well why this guy looked and was received like a -- as a prophet. You know, smelling the smell of poverty, and the posture of those poor people, you know, the babushkas and so on. I said, well they are looking for a prophet. They have it so bad that I am not surprised that they are looking for that. But then I said, you know, as for -- later on I said, well, it's not my life. I am not part of it. He da -- you know, he cannot speak to me, he did not speak to me. And that was it for me, you know? The contact with Communism, and the aura of paradise, but I understood that. So that was this episode of my life.

Q: How old were you when you went to that meeting, do you think?

A: 14 year -- 13 - 14. But we were engaged in serious --

Q: Serious discussion.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: So you were reading Marx, you were reading --

A: Hm?

Q: Were you reading Marx and Engels and --

A: Oh yes --

Q: -- Trotsky?

A: -- sure.

Q: You were?

A: Yes, and I thought Marx was great, and Engels was great. Oh, no question about it. And I had the books and I didn't have them open, but I knew my parents did see them, and they did not tell me don't read them.

Q: Don't read them.

A: In other words, learn everything you can.

Q: Right. Was -- was there any political discussion in school, or not?

A: No.

Q: No. Not [indecipherable]

A: No. Forbidden. And then another interesting thing. This guy whom -- my friend who brought my friend and me to the cell, Communist cell, was in ghetto later. I had no contact with him, nothing close, but I knew who he is. And one day he was arrested in the ghetto for killing his mother and keeping her body in his place, and using his -- her ration cards to get bread.

Q: So he could get two rations. Wow. So something about the --

A: Is there a correlation or not? But I say, well, okay. What can you say? You know, that -- that was just something to -- to note about people.

Q: Now, your father was a Bundist?

A: I don't think he was a -- officially a Bundist, but a Bundist's, you know, perception.

Q: [indecipherable] uh-huh.

A: He was not a party man.

Q: I see. And your mother --

A: No, no.

Q: -- agreed, but she was not --

A: No, not involved in any party.

Q: So did you discuss politics with your parents? I understand you didn't discuss the Communist stuff.

A: Yes.

Q: But did you discuss politics in other ways?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes.

A: All the time. My father was in -- at the newspaper.

Q: Right.

A: Right? And he al -- always was bringing news from the -- from the first sort of thing. And there was always a lot of discussion about anti-Semitism in the government, and what they are doing. And the big discussion was in the Parliament about the Jewish question and the way that Jews, they killed the animals. You know, for food, what do you call that?

Q: Oh, Kaszrut rules, you mean?

A: Kaszrut -- ritual killing.

Q: Yes.

A: Right?

Q: Yes.

A: And if the government wanted to do away with special way Jews were killing their animals. You have no idea how much time was spent on that in the Sejm which was the Congress, and my father knew it from the news coming year in, and year out.

Q: Amazing.

A: Anti-Semitism was just unbelievable.

Q: I think we have to change the tape and we'll continue the discussion in a few minutes.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Paula, I just want to go back a little bit. What kind of a school did you attend? Was this a regular public school, a mixed public school, or not?

A: Well, it was considered a regular public school, but it also was clear that the public school was segregated into -- aro -- along the line of sex and relig -- religion. So I was attending a girl's school for Jewish girls.

Q: And so would there be a girl's school for Catholic girls?

A: Yes.

Q: Huh. Were your friends mixed in your neighborhood? Were you with Catholics as well as Jews, or were you primarily with Jewish kids?

A: We lived in a mixed neighborhood. See, there were Jewish neighborhoods, but we lived in a -- a-and some Jews not, but the majority lived in Jewish quarters. But we lived in a mixed neighborhood. So my best friend was a Catholic girl next door, which was a Catholic family, a -- with five children. And I was the only child, so I was there a lot. One of the girls was my age, Jadwiga, and we were best friends in both homes. And it was a wonderful friendship. Every year I will spend that Christmastime in their home at the Christmas tree, and you know, Santa Claus coming, I was part of it. The only thing I couldn't do was to eat there, because we -- m -- respect Kaszrut, y-you know? So --

Q: So you were kosher?

A: Kosher, yes. So -- mixed kosher, but still kosher enough that I could not eat any non-Jewish home. But other than that, you know, I was part of their home, and it -- it was wonderful. They were wonderful people. He -- Mr. Wojkowski worked on the railroad, and he was sort of a chunky guy with big whiskers, you know, like that, oh. Lovely man. And his wife was a chunky

woman, she cooked, you know, with big pots and so on. So -- I -- I -- I loved being there, a-and it was great. Two things. In their home, on one wall, there was a big portrait of the -- o-of -- of Mary, and it was the black Mary of Matka Boska Czestochowska. Matka Boska, mother of God, from Czestochowa. And that was a holy part where some -- this portrait, this mother of Jesus saved Czestochowa, stopped in Czestochowa, which was a western border city, stopped the influx of the Vikings. Her portrait stopped the Vikings.

Q: Okay.

A: Imagine?

Q: Yes.

A: So in very -- homes that respect that, it was her portrait with a red light on top of it that burned day and night. And I was so scared of that portrait. I remember that, cause there was a such a powerful black woman, you know?

Q: Right. That's a very big symbol in Poland, isn't it?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it being a Catholic country, you had on holidays, eastern and other, you would have people marching in the street with the holy -- holy pictures, and singing. It was part of life. The bad part for -- of that life for Jews was like that. Every Easter before the holiday, there came a priest with a bunch of holy water, and he was going -- it was a four story building, from top of the building to the bottom and sprinkle -- sprinkling holy water and saying pray -- prayers. When he was coming, Jewish people had to stay indoors. We could not get out. Okay? That was the anti-Semitism from top, right? Also, before Easter there was always, every Easter, there was a story written up in papers, spoken, that the Jews caught a Christian boy, killed him and used his

blood to bake matzohs. And that day, Jews were beaten up all around the city, just for the sake of beating Jews. So that came with the holidays as well.

Q: So how did this affect you as a young Jewish girl growing up, since you have -- you were living in a mixed neighborhood, your best friend is Catholic. Does this provoke a kind of conflict in you, or this is just the way it is? I mean, I ca --

A: That's life.

Q: That's life.

A: So at home there were alls -- always -- the oy veys, and who next, and who will be beaten, who will be killed, and be careful on the street, stay home, don't expose yourself and things like that. Between me and Jadwiga, we had -- we were all very curious girls, and all through the year, we would walk on the street and have heavy discussions, mostly about religion.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. So the point of it was, whose religion is best?

Q: That was the point? And?

A: The end result. So we would bring up our arguments.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my argument, it is the oldest religion, look how many years, 5,000 plus years, da da da da, we gave the Bible, we got Moses and -- and her was again about Jesus and so on, and so on. And then we play on the street, that was just part of the routine. And then when she or I would run out of arguments, I don't -- I didn't know what to say any more to counter, I said wait a minute, I will be back, and run to my mother. And she did the same when she ran out. We would run to our mothers and ask how to continue our discussion, and come back.

Q: But this was not an argument. You weren't --

A: We had -- it was a discussion.

Q: It's really a discussion.

A: It was really a discussion.

Q: Did anybody win in the end?

A: I'm sure if she once, I wa -- you know --

Q: Both of you si -- but it never -- it didn't affect your relationship?

A: No.

Q: No. It's interesting because often that kind of a conflict you don't want to have with somebody, so you avoid the discussion, but not you folks.

A: Ha -- we had very smart mothers.

Q: Yes, I guess you did.

A: Both of us.

Q: Right.

A: That, you know, knew how to continue our discussion --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- between us without getting hostile.

Q: Right.

A: Cause they could have, if they wanted to --

Q: Oh yes.

A: -- they could -- they could have interfered that way.

Q: Right.

A: But no, they just gave enough material to keep talking.

Q: Did you ever want to be not Jewish, before --

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no. And then to -- the only son -- you know, that I think there were five girls and one son, Tadek, Tadeusz, was a nice guy. And Christmas time, of course, I was there, sitting in the circle, and then yo -- Santa Claus was coming and giving things and so on, and so I was part of it. And then one time, I probably was six years old, seven maybe, Santa Claus is coming and does the same thing, and I looked at him and I said, who is he? And I say in the moment, "Tadek!" And they all broke out laughing, because I -- you know, it was the first time that I --

Q: That you realized.

A: -- that I realized who Santa Claus is. And then later when I was thinking about it and laughing, I said, well, if anybody should be Santa Claus, Tadek is fine. I like him, he wa --

Q: You like him, he was good. Did they ever take you to church, or did you ever take them to synagogue or was that also si -- you just didn't do that, right?

A: You're kidding. No.

Q: I -- I guess I am. You didn't do that.

A: It was forbidden. I tell you that this was so forbidden and such a touchy subject that I didn't know the real -- realize that til late -- lately. The idea was that I was told -- excuse me -- was when I pass a church, I should run quickly and be gone. Don't look, just pass it quickly, and that's it. I don't understood -- I -- I don't think I understood that commandment, you know, not to be there.

Q: Right.

A: I don't remember why it was lately that I understood that.

Q: You mean you had forgotten that you were told that?

A: No, I remembered it all the time. Cause somebody I -- you know, cause a -- a -- in my life here, I was in Catholic church or Protestant ch -- numerous times, on occasion of my friend's different traditions, you know, weddings, birth of a child or something like that.

Q: Right, right.

A: Funerals. But I -- you know, somebody asked me so why -- why was it such a -- such a -- you know, anathema to avoid the church? And I -- I think it came with the realization how much anti-Semitism is connected with Christian religion. That it, for the 2,000 years since the death of Jesus, Jews were accused of killing him, and encouraged by the church to hate Jews and kill Jews. And it still goes on, til now.

Q: But that wasn't your consciousness as a kid. You -- you knew there was a problem with being Jewish in some way, certainly on these holidays when you knew you had --

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: -- right? But in general this was not -- this was not an every day feeling of yours, or was it?

A: If not every day, very frequent.

Q: It was frequent?

A: Beating Jews was on the agenda. Plus, you know, that news that my father was bringing about the Congress fighting Jews. Now, the ritual killing of animals, you know what that is, i-it -- it depends on the humanitarian point to kill the animals in -- animal as quickly and p -- as pain free as possible, which means that the guy that is killing, using the knife, is looking for a artery in the neck of the animal and cuts the biggest artery, one or two on both sides. So that the death come quickest. And the government said no, don't do that. It is a Jewish -- Jewish thing. We kill it differently, which is not so humanitarian according to Jewish thinking -- Jewish ritual thinking.

Q: Right.

A: So, you know, I heard about -- you know, the -- the war against Jews really, the fight against Jews from top to bottom. Killing on the street --

Q: Mm-hm. Was it typical for most of Poland, or was this more in Lódz that -- that the schools were segregated by sex and religion? Was this typical at the time?

A: That was typical.

Q: It was typical.

A: Yes.

Q: So that you and your friend -- and obviously when you're walking, you're going to walk to separate schools.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And then you come together later.

A: Right.

Q: Did that bother you?

A: That was it --

Q: That was it.

A: -- that was life.

Q: Were you worried, as a young Jewish girl?

A: No.

Q: No. You figured you were okay, that this was --

A: I was okay, I was protected by my parents --

Q: Parents, right.

A: -- life inside was good, life in school was good for me.

Q: Would you have considered yourself wealthy?

A: I wouldn't know what you're talking about --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: -- if you ask me then.

Q: You -- you lived in a comfortable place.

A: Right.

Q: You were at -- you had good food.

A: Yes.

Q: You had clothes, you had a -- a rabbit's fur coat until they got you a cloth coat, yes?

A: Right.

Q: So you were f -- you were comfortable?

A: Absolutely, very comfortable.

Q: When Hitler took over in Germany in '33, when the Nazis come in --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- do you -- you hear about it, cause you're father's a journalist, you know.

A: The radio was on all the time --

Q: It was.

A: -- with his speeches, with Hitler's speeches.

Q: So you're 11 years old, so you really become conscious of what's going on?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And is Poland then becoming more radically right at that time as well, so there's more Fascism in Poland at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: So it becomes worse in Poland as well?

A: Right. And there was also big discussion about it, what's happening, what should Poland do --

Q: Right.

A: -- with the idea, you know, is what is happening there, and I think the resolution day came for is to -- to go to the right and to meet Hitler halfway, sort of be friends with Hitler --

Q: Right.

A: -- to avoid what may happen, which they did not avoid anyway.

Q: Right. Do you remember before the war, in '39, that there's any discussion about we've got to get out of here, they're going to do something? There is discussion.

A: And how. A lot of people got out. You had to have a lot of money, and you had to consider running away from your life.

Q: Mm. It's a terrifying thing, isn't it?

A: It became terrifying more and more as -- after '33. The relatives that we had in -- in Germany, in the Saar, my father's mother, my grandmother, and one of the daughters, Erna, who at that time was married and had one child, and couple uncles emigrated to s -- to the Saar, Germany. That was for -- I think that was in 19 -- 19 -- maybe '30. That was for economical reasons, because the depression in Poland was very bitter, and Germany, [indecipherable] and Germany had it better. So for economic reasons they moved. Now, when Hitler came, the question was -- they were under Hitler, we were still free. What do they do? What does the family do? So, I think even before '39, part of the family m-moved to Palestine, at that time, you know, Israel was not existing --

Q: Right.

A: -- but to Palestine. And my father approved of that, you know, get out of Germany. Then, you know, a year or two passed, or so, and they could not establish themselves. Econ -- economy in

Palestine was horrendous and they could not make it. So they went back to Europe, and my father was so mad. They should have stayed, do you know what's coming, don't they see what is coming? They went to France, not to Germany, and lived in France. So that what my father thought about, you know, moving --

Q: [indecipherable] different.

A: -- but for himself and so on, there was not the urgency, there was not the money and there were Mother's parents, aged parents that -- Mother was very reluctant to sit -- to separate herself from. So there were endless discussion, nothing happened. Then we got a -- eventually what happened to the family that went eventually to friends was that my aunt was taken from the street of Paris to a death camp. My uncle and the three boys, my cousins, with whom we were corresponding, were lucky enough to escape and stay in Switzerland. Because many were turned away, Switzerland was -- was not very kind. And they were interned in a camp for Jews --

Q: In Switzerland?

A: -- in Switzerland throughout the war. So the positive side was they survived in relative okay condition, the negative that they were treating -- treated like criminals in Switzerland, in camp. So that was this part of the family. Now shortly before '39, people were running away on foot to Russia as a way to escape Hitler. Many Jews did, and the question was, why don't we? I was the one to instigating into -- who was instigating a run. Don't you see what's happening? We cannot stay here. Run. My mother says, if you want to run, go. It would be okay with me, but I cannot. Here are my grand -- my parents, I cannot leave them, so I won't go. And my father too, there was a reluctance to leave on the simple premise, that's my home, that's my country. I don't want to run. Who can force me to run? And I don't have enough money, and beside they were news too, that people that invested money in running, to -- making plans to go to South America for

instance, we later find out that that was a lie, the offices took money and got -- transferred the Jews to Gestapo. So there was no firm belief that you can really run, because you may lose everything and your life anyway. So that was the decision, to stay.

Q: Did you think a war was coming?

A: Hm?

Q: Did you think a war was coming?

A: We didn't think, we knew it's coming.

Q: You knew?

A: Yes, we knew.

Q: So when you all s -- when your father said to his relatives, why are you leaving Palestine, you know what's happening --

A: That's right.

Q: -- he -- that's what he thought?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And you thought so too?

A: We took Hitler's "Mein Kampf" literally. Hitler was still talking on the radio and me -- we I mean, my father and my mother and a bunch of other people believed that that is his plan and he is following it. There was no discussion that he will stop, unless friends in England will intervene, which they did not, they brou -- broke the pact with Poland.

Q: Right.

A: They supposed to stand by Poland and they broke the pact, and they didn't.

Q: And did you -- did you also feel that there was a particular vulnerability to the Jewish population, to you and your family because of what you heard from Hitler?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Absolutely.

A: We believe in that.

Q: So there's no question.

A: There's no question. In our mind there was no question. Particularly that -- I think that was '38, Hitler led -- Hitler ran out jew -- from Germany, Jews that were not German citizens, that were Polish citizens. There were a lot of Jews from Poland that were in Germany, and they were not citizens. He send them back to Poland. And we were in touch with those Jews, particularly in Lódz, you know, we knew there was a bunch of young Jews coming, so we got, you know, our group got in touch with those guys, and they were telling us what's happening in Germany, and about Hitler's pra -- plans, and to take it seriously. So for many ways, we knew to take him [indecipherable].

Q: Right, right.

A: I don't know how it was in United States, but we to -- we knew it's coming.

Q: Yes.

A: There was no question.

Q: Let me change the subject for a minute, because I realize I've forgotten about your sister.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Your sister was born in 1926? Four years, or si-six years?

A: No not -- six years.

Q: Six years.

A: Right, [indecipherable]

Q: So she was born in '20 --

A: Eight, eight.

Q: Eight. 1928.

A: Mm-hm, yes.

Q: How was that for you when this new littler person comes --

A: Pretty horrible.

Q: It was pre --

A: I did not --

Q: You didn't approve of that.

A: I didn't order her.

Q: No?

A: No. She just came. So it was pretty nasty.

Q: Did your mother try to explain to you what was going to happen? Or did she just -- your mother got bigger and she arrived.

A: Yeah, so -- oh, she -- it was talk, she let me feel her belly.

Q: Right.

A: She was -- my mother was pretty open, and --

Q: Right. [indecipherable]

A: -- you know, sort of down to earth. And that it's coming, but we didn't know of course, who. They wanted -- my mother wanted a boy, but -- probably both parents wanted a boy, they had a girl already.

Q: Right.

A: But the sister came and here she was, and I had to adjust. It was horrible. And I was so mad because later on, you know -- my mother didn't expect me to raise my sister or do much for her,

really, she never did. I have to say, she was a wonderful mother. My father had chronic TB, you know, which was endemic in -- in -- in Poland. And so he would get attacks, you know, of some bleeding from the lungs. And she never expected me to serve as a nurse or do things. She was -- that was her duty, and so on. A-And about my sister, too, that was her child and so on. But then when my sister was walking, going for a walk, she would ask me sometimes to take her for a walk in the neighborhood. I protested, but I took her. My friends loved her, she was a cute girl. It was pretty horrible.

Q: But you were not happy to have this child around?

A: No, I was not happy.

Q: What was her name? Her name was?

A: Dora -- Dorka, Dorka diminutive.

Q: Did you ever like being around her?

A: There's a story.

Q: There's a story? It's a long story.

A: No.

Q: No. Okay.

A: It was so -- a-and then with homewo -- I was an excellent student, my sister was not, so my mother asked me to -- to help her with homework and so on, and my sister offered me all kinds of deals I couldn't resist. If you help me I'll wash the dishes for you, and things like that. It was not pleasant, you know, really. But she was growing up, and then we sort of parted ways, you know. She had her life and I had my life, til we were sent to Auschwitz.

Q: So in Auschwitz --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And then it changed.

A: It changed.

Q: Why don’t we take a break.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Paula, we'll get back to your sister and this change of relationship under these --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- horrendous circumstances. But let's talk about the beginning of the war some. The war finally -- you -- you're all expecting this to happen. You expect the Germans to cross into Poland.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So it's September, 1939. What do y -- what do you remember about those first days in the war? What -- what picture is in your head?

A: Well, you know, before the war, there were all kinds of rumors coming from northern Poland. You know, Gdansk -- y-you know the name of the city, Danzig German, Gdansk, Polish. It was a -- a very sore spot between Poland and Germany. Poland in s -- Danzig -- Gdansk and Danzig, both countries thought it belongs to them. Finally, after the first World War, there was this agreement that Poland got a little bit of corridor, because Poland wanted some access to the sea, Baltic Sea. And if -- if Gdansk become Danzig, you know, Poland would have nothing. So they agreed to a small corridor that would lead to the Baltic Sea, so that both countries had access, and that Gdansk, or Danzig -- Poland will have access to -- to Gdansk to use it as a port. They were building another port, Gdynia, but that was later. Okay, so that was sort of a sore spot between the two countries, and a sore spot to erupt. The news came that Polish troops crossed into Germany across this small corridor, and germa -- Germany was ready to attack. What turned out later that the troops -- Polish troops were Germans dressed in Polish uniforms. So they provoked that, and they attacked. In Lódz what did we do? Well, we knew they are coming, and we developed, you know, sort of on the street, some defense. We will be watching or walking the

streets, particularly the youth, and I was part of it, and watching for signs of airplanes coming, German airplanes at-attacking. So we were watching -- you know, walking around the blocks for a couple days. And then finally the news came on the radio that the German are on Polish so -- soil, and they are coming. So what I remember about that? I was there -- we were there, my grandmother and my mother. I think Father was at work, and my mother burst out crying. And she says, "I won't make it, not a second time. Lived through the first World War, it was horrible, I won't be able to make it." And to me it was, my God, if Mother says that, I am doomed as well, I cannot take it, I cannot do anything like that without my mommy. So that was it. So we were still marching and watching, and watching and reporting to the elders. Nothing was happening, and then all of a sudden we ha -- we heard some bombs falling. But Lódz did not suffer from the bombing. It was, you know, here and there [indecipherable] nothing was happening, and one day the troops were marching in. And the Germans were in. And we were still waiting. We were ating -- waiting, and pretty soon the Germans started to paste orders on the w -- on the street walls, you know, the special walls when you put -- what do you call it when you put news?

Q: Posters?

A: Posters. About, you know, some orders what not to do, times and so on and be home, etcetera, etcetera. And was a di -- probably the worst thing then that happened in those moments was that Polish -- Polish neighbors, particularly the -- there was a Polish couple that was taking care of the building, you know, sort of administering cleaning and so on. And some others started -- began to go to Jewish neighbors and taking out things, furniture, etcetera, etcetera. Sort of unprovoked, nothing, it was the Pole that started the war with the Jews. And I remember I was so furious about it. We had a neighbor, another neighbor who was a middle-aged woman, a businesswoman, she was a widow, and she and her son were running a little factory, they were

making cardboard boxes. And she spoke perfectly German and so on, and I talked with her and I say, “What do we do, Mrs. Kronenburg?” And then I say, “Well, let’s do something.” And she says, “How about you and me will go to the German quarters and report our neighbors, they are robbing us?” I said okay, and Mother said okay, she didn’t want to go. And that Mrs. Kronenburg spoke German very well. I spoke German too because German was second language in -- in -- in high school, foreign language. So we went to the German commando, very innocent, you know, and we asked to talk to the chief, and we tell him such and such, with disgust, that we are being ro-robed -- robbed, and that -- is that legal, is that how it should be? And he says no, it should not be. So he s -- asks an officer to come with us and stop the rob-robbery from our neighbors. And the officer came with us and talked to the neighbors that were robbing. Then they not [indecipherable]. So we were very proud of that.

Q: Little did you think what would happen there.

A: Oh my God, the chutzpah that we had, right? I mean, not --

Q: Yes, yes.

A: -- innocent.

Q: Right.

A: Then there came the announcement about Jews, pertaining Jews. All Jews had to wear a star -- the stars of davi -- David, and restriction of being on the street, and more and more of that. And then pretty soon, as they settled in, you know, sort of, in Lódz, atrocities started to -- catching Jews on the street, taking them to the Gestapo for beating, interrogation. Slugging Jews with beards on the street, where mobs were hanging around, and enjoying -- the Polish mobs, and enjoying that. That was September, and the announcement of the ghetto, where the ghetto would

be, and that by April everybody will have to be there, moved out. School, we did not start, you know, it was September, I supposed to be in high school, you know?

Q: Right.

A: 12th grade. Did not start, it was closed.

Q: Was that true for non-Jewish kids, for the Gentile kids as well as for the Jewish kids, there just was no school? Or you didn't -- do you --

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I know it was for Jewish kids.

Q: Right. And the school were used then as sort of office space to make lists of Jewish population, we were sitting and making lists of people, this quota, this quota, that quota. And of places in the ghetto, design ghetto, of the houses, house numbers, street numbers etcetera, where -- where people were sent. So for good while, you know, kids were -- me among them, were busy doing that.

Q: So they had the kids who would have been at school being s -- pupils --

A: That's right.

Q: -- doing this --

A: That's right.

Q: -- logistical work.

A: Yes, yes, right. So -- okay, so the atmosphere was totally changed. Fear, unex -- unexpected can be expected any time, beating, arrest, sending here, there, we didn't know what was going on. After all, the -- within six days the German army occupied the whole Poland.

Q: Right.

A: The total country. And as we were joking but not so happily about the Polish army that had beautiful officers, you know, famous for their sitting on the horses, the officer on the horses in corsets and handsome, and [indecipherable]. And the tanks, the German ca -- tanks, took them pretty seriously and didn't -- all that they wanted with themself. No defense, no defense. It was occupation, and what can I say, i-i-it was -- it sort of was unimagabable -- the unimagable was happening. A-A state of being nowhere, being nothing, and who knows? And nothing good coming.

Q: Oh, that's for sure, that you knew.

A: Yes, so, we know that.

Q: Did you wear the star?

A: Hm?

Q: Did you wear the Jewish star?

A: Sure, yes.

Q: You did?

A: Yes.

Q: And did your little sister have to wear?

A: Sure.

Q: Yes. So everybody did.

A: Yes, yes. And then it was something like that, and the family -- Mother's sister lived in Warsaw, and Warsaw was still free, and then already we knew that Warsaw will be treated differently than Lódz. See, the Germans in-incorporated Lódz into the Reich, they changed the mi -- map, and that became part of Germany, and got the name of Litmannstadt. Warsaw was the free territory, it was just occupied -- a territory. And we were thinking maybe we should go to

Warsaw. So the plan was for me and my -- a cousin that lived next door, a little older than myself, that we will go to Warsaw, and bring some stuff there in preparation for the families to go there. Well, so we went, and I didn't look very Semitic, and neither did she, but we were wearing the stars anyway, but we had some babushka, you know, around ourselves, and went to Warsaw. Uneventful. We made it back and forth, forth and back. So I saw my -- my aunt there, and her son and husband. And they were at limbo just as we were. So I deposited some stuff that, you know, we could use when we come, and -- and that was it, I never saw my aunt again, you know, and I don't know what happened to her, but she didn't survive and neither did her husband or her son, a little boy at that time. And we came back, a-a-and that was that. And pretty soon -- soon we were transported into the ghetto.

Q: Did you think that you and your family should have moved to Warsaw, or you didn't?

A: I had no opinion, I didn't know what to do. Ni -- nobody knew.

Q: I see, so -- so all you were doing was transporting these things --

A: That's right.

Q: -- in case someone made the decision.

A: That's right, in case we would go there --

Q: Right.

A: -- to have something there.

Q: Le-Let me ask you a small question. What about your friend, your Catholic friend? The war comes, and Jews are clearly segregated in some very significant way, what happens with that family and you?

A: Very soon after the Germans came, there were many arrests. He was -- Mr. Wojkowski was arrested one of the first, and killed. Why? He was working for years on the railways. Railroads

were the most important thing -- way of transportation in Poland for the Poles, and was to be for the Germans. Though the German had airplanes by that time, it was different. But that was very important for the Germans, to destroy the railways. So they took all that knowledge -- knowledgeable workers, and shot them out. And Mr. Wojkowski was killed. And then the family moved out to somewhere, they had relative in the country, so they moved in the count -- you know, to the country.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Since we mentioning that, it was after the war, in Lódz, when I was back in Lódz and going someplace, that from far away I thought and then I knew that I saw one of the sisters, Wojkowski sisters, not Jadwiga. A-And -- and you cannot imagine what was going in my mind. I did not want to approach her, because I thought, what if she asks me the question about my family. And I have to tell her I survived and they didn't. I couldn't face up to that. So I let it by. That was [indecipherable] friends.

Q: So you never saw them again, I think? No? No. So you were hard on yourself.

A: Hm?

Q: You were hard on yourself, weren't you?

A: I felt it was all my fault.

Q: Yeah.

A: What didn't I do? How comes I am here, and have nobody to show up that I supposed to save. Protecting my sister. So that what -- what happened.

Q: Did you -- did you see brutality bef -- before the ghetto, did you see the Nazis on the street, or the Poles, taking Jews and beating them up, did you see that?

A: Oh yes.

Q: You did?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: That must have been extremely difficult.

A: We saw those pictures. We heard about those pictures on radio, what's happening in Germany, so we were not surprised, you know.

Q: But the brutalization must do something to you, especially as a kid, when you first see it. You're not -- you're not used to people being brutal like that, even if you see photographs, right? I mean, I don't know exactly what it does, but it must do something, to -- cause violence has a -- a -- I don't know, is a -- is a -- a level of violation about it that's so powerful, it seems to me, especially for a young person.

A: Tell you the truth, I don't remember.

Q: Mm.

A: We knew that was happening. We saw mostly from the far. I was not exposed close by to the brutality like, you know, dragging Jews by the beard, you know, the --

Q: Right.

A: -- Orthodox Jews, and beating them. I did not see it from close by, I have to say.

Q: Mm. Let me ask you another question. Before the ghetto was actually formed, the head -- what they called the -- the elder of the Jews, it was decided upon, and it was Rumkowski.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Had you heard about him before the ghetto, as head of the orphanage? Had you heard anything?

A: We knew he was the head of the orphanage, and then he became a member of the Jewish Committee --

Q: Right.

A: -- and then he became the Alteste of the ghetto, but I didn't --

Q: And that was it.

A: -- have any close relationship --

Q: You didn't [indecipherable] right.

A: -- of people close by to him.

Q: Right. Do you remember your parents talking about why is he being made head of a -- head of the Jews? And this is what you -- no. Right.

A: I am sure there was talk like that.

Q: Yes.

A: But it was talk subdued by the feeling what's happening, the end of the world.

Q: Right, right.

A: We have no power, we -- we -- we are totally dependent now on Hitler and his promise to kill us. Tha-That was the essence, he is going to kill us.

Q: So you believed very early?

A: Certainly m-much earlier than Roosevelt did.

Q: And earlier than when death camps are actually in existence?

A: That's right.

Q: Right. So does -- do you have nightmares?

A: Oh, I used to.

Q: As a kid?

A: No, not as a kid.

Q: Not as a kid, after the war.

A: After Holocaust.

Q: After the hol -- after the Holocaust.

A: Yes, uh-huh, yeah.

Q: So it doesn't happen at the time?

A: No, not now. I -- I think that is the best thing that psychotherapy did for me. I was able to sleep again. If nothing else, it did much more.

Q: Yes.

A: But that was the biggest thing, that I can sleep now.

Q: You can sleep again.

A: And sleep well.

Q: Right.

A: Not plagued by nightmares.

Q: During this beginning period, do -- do you remember feeling scared all the time? I'm trying to figure out ho -- you know, what it's -- what it's like on a daily basis. Would you feel scared when you see a German soldier, or --

A: N -- that came much later.

Q: It came later. So not in the beginning.

A: Not in the beginning.

Q: How do you find out you're supposed to go to the ghetto? Is there a poster that says Jews have to be --

A: Oh yes, it was on poster, that at such and such date, all Jews have to be transported -- transport themselves to the ghetto, to -- a-and says what streets there were -- you know, w-what quarter, that means.

Q: And it was Baluty, right?

A: Baluty, yes.

Q: And how do you pronounce that, Baluty?

A: Baluty.

Q: Baluty. And that was where you went when you were younger, to this cell, it was in that area, when you went to that Communist discussion.

A: That's right, it was in that area, yes.

Q: It's the same -- same section.

A: Mm-hm. The poorest arna -- area in town.

Q: Area of -- of -- in the town. And did you know where you were going to go? H-How was it decided where --

A: They formed a department of housing. Jews were in charge of it, and the Jew -- the housing department had lists of the streets of the houses and how many square feet were available in each apartment or room. And they were assigning people, people working in that department were assigning customers that came to the -- to that place, square feet, the street number, and the -- the house -- you know, the street number, and the place they will live. So it was -- and I worked for that department for a few years. And I was, you know, giving people places to live.

Q: So how did you decide? You'd say four people have x number of square feet, and so this is available, you go here?

A: That's right.

Q: Was there corruption in this process?

A: I'm sure. Not among my level.

Q: Yeah, yeah. But at some level.

A: Mm-hm. At the highest level.

Q: Because the conditions in this area are awful, in terms of just ordinary sanitation. In terms of water and toilets and baths and -- there's practically nothing.

A: That's right.

Q: Right?

A: Mm-hm. There was a water pump, usually in -- in -- you know, on the plat -- I mean, on the yard.

Q: In the yard, not in the --

A: No.

Q: Not where you were living.

A: No. Amazingly enough for all that squalor and density of population, the sanitation was pretty good. The -- the reason -- the number one reason was clear, the Germans were very interested not to start an epidemic in the ghetto. Because they -- in the center of the ghetto, they had their offices, the German had their offices, and they did not want to be exposed to a th -- epidemic. So what they did, you know, they had good sanitation department, and the street was smelling -- stinking with chlor any time of day or night. They were pouring chlor, you know, o-on the street, on the what do you call. So -- and on the toilets, the outside toilets, chlor, etcetera, and keeping thing clean. It was amazing.

Q: But it stank.

A: Oh, chlor is better than --

Q: Chlor is -- yeah -- yeah, better than whatever else it would -- but that's quite amazing because the circumstances in that area are --

A: Absolutely.

Q: -- just awful.

A: That was amazing.

Q: Now, do you remember the day that you moved from your house -- apartment --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- into the ghetto area, that you left your things?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Did you --

A: You had to pick what you will take, and that was not much because it was a limited ti -- you know, amount of things that you could take with yourself. And then you walked with -- I don't -- somehow I -- you know, in my mind is that we were schlepping it on what you ca -- call?

Q: A wagon?

A: Wagons. Or was it still snow, that we could use --

Q: A sleigh?

A: The sleigh? Maybe. April, so it was before -- March, it could have well been we schlepped it on sleighs and to -- to the -- where we were assigned to go.

Q: Do you remember what you took, since you were -- it's 1940.

A: Right.

Q: So your --

A: Personal things?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't remember what. But you see, one thing was that I took my best personal things to Warsaw.

Q: And left them there.

A: [indecipherable] myself, what did I do, you know, I am here, and -- and so there was not much.

Q: Not much.

A: Not much.

Q: Did you take something to write with?

A: Oh, I am sure I did.

Q: You must have had something --

A: Yes, yes, I am sure --

Q: -- so that you could do that.

A: -- yes, that I brought my stuff.

Q: And did your parents take any furniture?

A: You couldn't take furniture.

Q: Nothing?

A: No.

Q: So you're going into a situation where whoever's left has left their things and you're going to be there with that.

A: Something.

Q: Something.

A: And I think we probably took some chairs, some little stools --

Q: Right.

A: -- some little something. Nothing big you could take.

Q: Nothing big. Is your grandmother and grandfather also going?

A: Right.

Q: And are you going -- there's lot of people on the street [indecipherable]

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- it was awful.

A: [indecipherable] you know.

Q: And are there --

A: A procession of the dispossessed, going to the ghetto.

Q: And are there people watching on the sides?

A: Poles?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't remember, but who cared? You know, it's --

Q: Germans? Do you remember Germans guarding you in some way, or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: You're seeing it, aren't you?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was a procession.

Q: Who is holding your sister? Are you holding your sister's hand?

A: I don't re -- probably not, I was doing the heavy work.

Q: You were --

A: I was the strongest.

Q: You were the strong one. And you're si -- 16? No. No, you're 19 years old. No, 18.

A: 17, I think, yes.

Q: 17 - 18, it's 1940, February 1940, so --

A: '22, yes.

Q: Wow. I think we have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: You lived where in Lódz, what street?

A: You mean before the war?

Q: Yeah, and then -- and then when you went to the --

A: To ghetto.

Q: To the ghetto.

A: Let's see, my street nu -- street name is a very long one. It's 28 Pulk Strzeliow Kaniowskich.

Q: You're kidding me. That's extremely long.

A: I know, crazy. It was after the first war. You have to understand, Poland was divided and not free for a few hundred years. It was the first war, and after the war that Poland become independent again. So they were honoring their troops. [indecipherable], that is 28 Battalion of Kanioski shooters rife -- riflemen.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Okay, that probably were famous in the -- one battle or another. That was -- the street was named in their honor. But it was a hell of a way to tell where you lived.

Q: Yeah, especially for a young kid.

A: Right.

Q: But you moved to -- when you moved into the ghetto, th-the name of the street's really short.

A: Well, our street was Zytnia.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Zytnia means grain, wha -- what -- zhitto, rye, what e-else do we have? Rye grain --

Q: Wheat?

A: Wheat. Wheat Street.

Q: Wheat Street.

A: Zytnia.

Q: Hm. Had you seen this before you moved in? Did you know what it was going to look like?

A: I don't think so.

Q: You don't think so.

A: We were given the address and --

Q: And you went.

A: -- we moved. It was empty.

Q: So how many rooms did you have?

A: Pardon?

Q: How many rooms?

A: How about one?

Q: One.

A: Isn't that enough for you? One.

Q: One small room?

A: Right.

Q: For you --

A: Four people. My grandmother and grandfather had another room on the same floor.

Q: On the same floor?

A: Right.

Q: And is there a bathroom on that floor? I knew you were going to look at me like that. There's -- there's nothing.

A: Outhouse.

Q: Outhouse.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Water? No, no water.

A: No water. Pump downstairs.

Q: But downstairs, so you pump the water to bring it -- so h-how do you get food? What -- what do you do for food? Is there a sm -- anything to cook on?

A: No, we --

Q: No.

A: -- got the ration cards, and so you had a prescribed amount of bread for a week per person. Then you had stamps to get -- to go to the grocery once, whatever, and get supplies for those stamps, which were minimal. And that's it. Vegetables would come to the ghetto every few weeks. In wintertime they were frozen. So you ate frozen vegetables, a-and that's it.

Q: So there's very little hot meals that you're getting?

A: Hot meals?

Q: Hot meals?

A: Well, you cook. You know, my mother was cooking, so she was -- you know, the women were -- that were cooking, the housewives were very ingenious in providing some meals, cooking all things possible, like making sardines out of beet leaves. You didn't taste that, okay.

Q: No.

A: But you roll this, the beet leave --

Q: So it looks like a --

A: So it looks like a sardine, you sauté it a little bit and sprinkle some salt or -- and it's good. When you're very hungry, everything is good.

Q: Everything is good.

A: And we were very hun -- it was unbelievable hunger. I remember, you know, Mother was scolding me once because after a year or two I look in the mirror, and I said, “Mother, now I look as I want to look.” I was close to being a skeleton, you know? I said, “Mother, isn’t that nice? I am so thin.” And for awhile I really thought so.

Q: You really thought so, yes.

A: Yes.

Q: And she was aggravated with you?

A: Oh yes. Mm-hm.

Q: Did she get very thin?

A: Yes. Everybody.

Q: Everybody.

A: People were dying on the street --

Q: Right.

A: -- from hunger.

Q: When -- when you first move in, I understand that Rumkowski and the council began to take over certain things, sort of -- I don’t know what you want to call it -- nationalizing it for the ghetto and for his -- for his group. So there are schools --

A: He established a monarchy.

Q: Right.

A: Where he was the ruler, and he has a council to help him. He established a school of which he was very proud, rightly so. Right? That was what he was doing. So consequently, I was in that school for a year, and graduated from high school, from that school, right? So that was in his

favor. This school consisted of both the per -- teaching personnel and students, of remnants of people that were in the ghetto. Remnants because a lot of people from each school were missing. Either they were killed off already, or they were able to run off to Russia, for instance. You know, a good number of people survived living in Russia.

Q: Right.

A: So there were sort of remnants of different student in different schools, so that was the new school. And the same went for teachers. And the director of the school was a very acknowledged woman, Mrs. Rhein, R-h-e-i-n, who was a director of one of the high schools, girl's high schools, private high schools in Lódz city. And she, you know, directed that school. So consequently, you know, I graduated from high school. And it serves me -- served me right later. It was acknowledged by the university in Germany, this high school. Although he developed different, what we called, resorts. Resorts were really a industrial complex, not a resort like, you know, you go to for a rest.

Q: Right.

A: So they had th -- see, I have very mixed feelings about Rumkowski, okay? For once, I hate him, for once I hate the whole Jewish kingdom that he built, which is no question about it. On the other hand, he did something positive. What he did was to bargain with the Germans for life, through the -- through the whole period of ghetto's existence. So he told the German and they liked to hear that, that we will supply you with workers, and we will gi -- you first -- give you first class industries that you can use for yourself. For the price that you -- that I ca -- can keep this place alive, I can have living people working for you here. And that's how it worked out. So at different resort, there was ro -- a resort, the industry of -- oh, I don't know. I -- where I was working in Capol, the first one was we were ma -- a tailor industrial per -- complex, making --

making uniforms and particularly coats for the German army. And that consi -- what we were working at is -- it was called the Gummi Fabrik. You recall probably the coats that German soldier -- they were stiff like a board, right? Broad shoulders, stiff and big things here. What we were do -- the tailors were cutting them, you know, cutting out the part. We -- we were using a glue -- special glue to glue those parts together, you know, because they were double, sort of double.

Q: So they weren't sewn, they were glued.

A: They were glued, yes. So -- for stiffness, and for wearability and so on, we were doing that. After we graduated, and graduated with -- with big pomp and parade. Of course, it -- the par -- the pomp was for Rumkowski, that he did it. We were given -- we were given work, you know, then we had to work. Otherwise we had no way of being in the ghetto. People that -- that worked could be in the ghetto. Whoever didn't work was sent out to another camp, meaning Auschwitz, but we didn't know about that then. So we were given work. So the first place that he send us girls -- the girls, graduating girls, was to this factory of the Gummi coats, which was such a horrendous place.

Q: Why?

A: It was run by man tailors of the lowest degree. And for them to get a group of intellectual girls, God, how they treated us. Was terrible.

Q: What'd they do?

A: Call us names, pinch us, I don't know what else he -- they did with some other girls, not with me, but the atmosphere was just full of perversion, laughter at us. It was horrible.

Q: Hm. When do you -- when do you graduate? I'm just trying to get a time frame here. You hadn't started high school when the war started.

A: 1940 we gr -- I graduated.

Q: In ’40?

A: I think it was in ’40.

Q: So the same year --

A: It was the year after --

Q: -- the same year as the ghetto starts?

A: No, that’s impossible. I don’t remember the year. Probably couple years later.

Q: So high -- is high school -- high school is not like American high school, it’s not four years, it’s less, right? Because you --

A: It’s 12 years, still the same.

Q: Right, but the high school actually starts later, am I right? Or --

A: No.

Q: No?

A: High school is four years, high school.

Q: It is four years?

A: Yes.

Q: But you go -- you actually graduated in less time in the ghetto, am I right? You didn’t go for four years?

A: No, but I was in the junior high school, I’ve -- I finished junior high school --

Q: Uh-huh. So it was the last two years.

A: -- and was to start -- yes, was to start high school --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- senior high school in the ghetto.

Q: When you're going to get work after you graduate, do you know the person who is head of the labor bureau, Bert Fuchs? Bert F-u-c-h. There's a Fuchs --

A: In the ghetto?

Q: Yeah. Jewish.

A: It does not ring the bell.

Q: Doesn't ring a bell.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: He was the director of what?

Q: The labor bureau.

A: The labor bureau.

Q: At a certain point there are two or three people, but at the beginning, he's the only one.

A: Mm-hm. No, I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember, okay. Cause I thought maybe you had crossed paths or something.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So how did -- how long do you stay in that first job, a few months, few weeks?

A: Probably months. I don't know exactly.

Q: How is it for your parents? Is your father a -- are your father and mother working right away, or you -- only your father?

A: My father was working. He became -- he got a job of being a -- ad -- administrator of a -- of a part of the ghetto, it's a couple streets. They were assigned different administrator to look after the needs of the -- of the street, the needs of the building, etcetera. So he was doing that.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Mother was not working.

Q: So would he be -- have been considered part of -- not the Jewish Council itself, but part of the administration of the ghetto in some --

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: -- in some way. Was -- did this mean you got more food?

A: No.

Q: No. Meant nothing.

A: Meant nothing. Meant nothing, that he was working, otherwise he would be sent out from the ghetto.

Q: Right.

A: And it meant that he got some -- the money was insignificant. But got some rations, you know, maybe a little more of rations cards, though I don't think so, it meant nothing.

Q: Right.

A: He was just privilege by being able to work.

Q: Right. Now, from my reading, I understand that in 1940 and '41, there were a lot of worker demonstrations against Rumkowski and the -- and the Jewish Council, that the rations were insufficient, the work wasn't sufficient, and that Rumkowski sent the Germans in, and got these people depor --

A: I don't recall that.

Q: You don't recall that?

A: No.

Q: So you didn't see any demon --

A: No.

Q: May -- maybe it was in another part of the ghetto.

A: It might have been, but I was --

Q: Uh-huh, but you didn't --

A: -- it didn't come --

Q: -- you weren't aware of that.

A: -- close to me.

Q: Right. So how did you get out of this first job? Did it just stop, or did you ask for another position?

A: …I am sort of wrestling with myself. I would like to share something with you, not about myself, and not myself, but I would not like it to get in the record. Is that possible, or I shut up?

Q: Well, we -- you can tell me at another time.

A: Good. But anyway, he was organizing the police, okay, Jewish police.

Q: Mm-hm, right.

A: You heard about that.

Q: Yeah.

A: And he also decided to have a troop of women police -- policewomen, okay? And he took the -- hi-his beloved high school graduates and sent them to the female police force, okay?

Q: He really liked this group of girls, huh?

A: Hm?

Q: He liked this group of --

A: It was his pride --

Q: Oh, his pride, uh-huh.

A: -- he did something for the future.

Q: Right.

A: You know. And he was a social worker at heart, y -- it's -- it's a very mixed bag in that man.

Q: Right.

A: So he -- a-and that what happened to me. Few of the girls from the -- from the -- this -- you know, tailor resort, went into the police. And we as police women were given the task to be on the street, and keep the street -- keep the street traffic in order. So we got uniforms, you know, and a office.

Q: What kind of uniform?

A: Green jackets with buttons.

Q: Really?

A: And green pants, yes.

Q: Hat?

A: Hat. And then we were in the office. I and another girl were made to be officers, you know, in charge of the troops, and above us was a elderly Czech Jew, who came from Prague. You know one thing is that to the ghetto, Lódz ghetto, there were sent Jews from all over Europe to be there and dispose with them, you know, everyplace else. So there was -- was a wonderful group of Czech Jews that came to the ghetto, okay? Mostly young students graduate, and it was such a refreshing -- I worked then at the housing department, so I met with them, you know, a lot, because they came for housing.

Q: Right.

A: And they were so refreshing. I mean, innocent. They didn't know they are Jews, or nude. You know, it was very -- a mixed culture, Jews and Gentiles. So one of the Prague guys was this elderly, handsome guy, you know, old -- pretty old, and he was in charge of [indecipherable] the

women -- just -- it was comedy -- with another woman, a Czech woman, I think she was his assistant. So we're sitting in the office and telling stories from Czech -- P-Prague, etcetera, etcetera. So that la-lasted for awhile, and that was disband, too. Okay, it was not such a innocent group in such a innocent job. Now, that I am talking freely because it's about myself, not about a friend. So i-it -- other than keeping the traffic going -- not traffic, you know what traffic, there were no car --

Q: It's walking traffic.

A: -- walking traffic.

Q: Yeah, yes.

A: A-And there was other traffic. There was a lot of sewage people working, you know, sanitation, because the toilets had to be -- the outside toilets had to be cleaned regularly because of fear of epidemic, so that traffic was going. What else? And the -- the traffic to the cemetery, that was a lot, you know, a lot of people were dying. You know, picked up from the street or otherwise. Other than that, we were given a order there should not be any trade on the street. Now what kind of trade do you think there was? What there was is that people were making candies out of the sugar rations. People were making candies with a taste, and wrapped them, and then they were selling it on the street. And their order was that that trade should not exist. So we were supposed to watch for that, and if we -- when we catch a guy that is selling this candy, we were supposed to bring them to the real police, the men police. So that's what we were doing, we were supposed to do. Now, if the real police catch a guy like that, you know where he was going.

Q: They'd get deported.

A: Yes.

Q: Right.

A: So it was one -- one day, I and a friend of mine from the school, my previous school, she was per -- patrolling the street and she said -- I was a officer, you see, I was not patrolling. So she says, “Paula, you have to come with me. I want you to come with me and I want to show you what we are doing, our job.” So, fine, you know, so we walked the street, and then we come to a guy that was selling candies, and she says, “Well that what I have to do, and I will do you what -- I am arresting him and bringing the -- to the police.” Which she did, and we went to the police, and she depart. And she says, “Do you know what will happen to the man?” And she says, “Do you know what we are doing here?” We spent all night walking and talking. And could not get a peace of mind. So I say, that’s it, no more, I am leaving.

Q: And did she do the same thing?

A: The lucky thing was that the pol -- women police was disbanded in a week from that occurrence, so we didn’t have to do anything. We were told, no more.

Q: Was that because the two of you said you didn’t want to do it, or --

A: No, no, independently.

Q: Independently.

A: Rumkowski did away with it, for whatever reason I don’t know.

Q: And for how long was this going on, a few months, a few week?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Not -- but not for very long.

A: Not for very long, few months.

Q: And were you -- the office that you were in, were the -- was the male police -- Jewish police there also, or were you totally separate from the Jewish police?

A: Separate.

Q: You were separate?

A: We were separate.

Q: And was that your first confrontation with what that job was doing? When you went out with this woman --

A: Yes. That was.

Q: -- you really didn't -- you didn't think about it, or know what he said to [indecipherable]

A: That's right, that's right, mm-hm.

Q: Not so easy, huh?

A: Hm?

Q: Not easy.

A: Oh, horrible. But that what it was. The police was helping Rumkowski keeping order --

Q: Right.

A: -- and keeping the deal with the Germans.

Q: And did you have opinions then about the male Jewish police?

A: Yes.

Q: You want to tell me?

A: The male Jewish police wasn -- no question about that they were fully cooperated with Rumkowski and therefore with the Germans, and we had no good opinion about them.

Q: Mm-hm. Were you afraid of them?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: And they were very helpful at the time of getting Jews into the transport going to Auschwitz. I tell you, it was horrible, the thought that Jewish police is helping Germans. It was horrible. I changed my mind a bit watching Lanzmann's movie. You know, when he interviews the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz, and you saw people that were really on the other side, in Auschwitz, helping Germans to kill Jews, frankly to kill Jews.

Q: Right, right.

A: And I got away with a different feeling. How can you blame people that were forced to do the job, knowing they are going to be killed in four months, how can you blame them?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It was very powerful.

Q: On the other hand -- let me give you the other hand here.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You couldn't do it. You couldn't do something that was in a way simpler, but was part of a process.

A: No, I couldn't do it.

Q: And it was something that you couldn't do.

A: That's right.

Q: So --

A: And I'm sure other people couldn't either.

Q: Right. So some could, and maybe they could live with themselves and maybe they couldn't, but they did it anyway.

A: That's right. That -- you're right. And in Auschwitz, you know, the Sonderkommando that did work, you know, the gas chambers and the crematoria, some were just picked and forced to do it.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They had no way out other than go --

Q: And be killed. Right.

A: -- right away.

Q: Right. You ever think what would have happened if everybody said no?

A: There would be a revolution, and maybe successful.

Q: It's hard to do that though, isn't it?

A: That's why the big problem was, you know, is -- Hannah -- what was her name, Hannah --

Q: Hannah Arendt.

A: Arendt, accusing Jews in Poland that they went like sheep to the gas chambers.

Q: Actually, she didn't.

A: No?

Q: No.

A: Who did? Where did that come from?

Q: I don't know. Sometimes the resistance said that.

A: Hm?

Q: Sometimes the resistance, the partisans --

A: Uh-huh.

Q: -- said don't go like sheep.

A: Oh, I see, yes.

Q: She never s --

A: But she didn't.

Q: She didn't say it.

A: I see, okay, so --

Q: But it's a --

A: Excuse me.

Q: No, but it's a -- it's an accusation that people think she said things like that --

A: Yes.

Q: -- she didn't. She -- she was not happy with the councils, but she never blamed the rest of the Jews. She thought that the councils shouldn't have cooperated. That, yes, but she never said that other.

A: And this gave me also another thought, you know, when I was in August in Lódz --

Q: Oop, w-we have to stop? Okay, we'll stop. Sorry.

A: Finish later.

Q: Yes, we'll finish it later.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Okay. We forgot something. When you were talking about being in high school, weren't you at some point in something called a farm settlement that we didn't talk about? What was that? Was that while you were in high school? Was that part of the high school?

A: That was part of Rumkowski's plan. As you know, he was a social worker and director of an orphanage before the war. He also was a great Zionist. And at the -- at the time when the school opened, he gave us a proposition that whoever would volunteer can go to this place that was part of the ghetto, but it was sort of more rural, and it was a old house that used to be a orphanage. Not his orphanage, but the Polish population. And that we would, boys and girls go there and learn farming in preparation for the -- to go into Palestine and become kibbutznik farmers. So, you know, we needed to have the permission of our parents, and then a group of us went there. And we spent a full year there. And it was a wonderful time, a time that permit us who were willing to be there, to forget where we were. It was out of this world, really. It was a huge house, a orphanage, you know, so there was big halls. And our group was probably not more than 20 boys and girls. Boys separate, girls separate bedrooms, etcetera. And in the morning we would go to school. We would go by -- by carriages, you know, we had some people that were bringing u -- by horse and buggy, big buggy, to school, and then afternoon we would come to the farm. We call it Hak'shara, which is Hebrew for farm. And it has the Zionist implication, but we couldn't give a damn about -- at that time about the implication of Palestine, it was just a lovely place. It was a farm that used to be used -- you know, it was used by Poles as a farm, and also had animals. It had goats, and chickens, etcetera. And there was one guy, he was a German Jew who was a farmer, and knew about, you know, farming, and other than going to school, homework, etcetera, he would teach us what to do. In other word, we would sow seeds, and all

kinds of thing, and take care of the growing crop. There was a orchard, and there were the animals. The animals we would -- let's see, there were some cows, and there were some goats, and we would learn how to milk them. And then distru -- distribute the milk by buggies, and -- horse and buggies to cooperative, to stores, you know, run by the -- by Rumkowski that will be selling it to the population on carts and so on. So it was a ideal love -- life, really. Very gratifying. Of course, we paired up, boys and girls, and so were some romances going and that was, under the circumstances, unheard of. We -- of course, were properly chaperoned by mothers that would take turn and come for overnight to be with -- with the -- you know, with us, to make sure nothing was happening. So that was the --

Q: Did they really stop things from happening?

A: I think, in a way, yes. So that was the time, and it was a lot of camaraderie, and there's sa -- were some evening that we had music, some of the people play [indecipherable] particularly played the piano, and there was a piano. So we had music, and we were dancing. You know, so we were cooking [indecipherable] for the crew, you know. So we would take turns for 24 hours to prepare meals, a boy and a girl, cou -- you know, prepare breakfast, lunch, dinner, and etcetera. So it was a unbelievable year.

Q: So you were staying there as opposed to being with your parents and your sister.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Right. Did you have a boyfriend?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Was this a boyfriend from before, or somebody that you met in this group?

A: Somebody who I met in this group.

Q: In group?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: And how many boys and girls were there, do you think?

A: Altogether close to 20. 18 - 20.

Q: Did you mother ever -- was she ever --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- chaperone?

A: Yes, yes, she agreed to.

Q: They never took the fathers for a chaperone, only the mothers.

A: Yes, cause [indecipherable] why, why, why -- I don't know why.

Q: And was this er -- wi -- like in '42 -- 1942, do you think? Do you have any recollection what year? I mean, I know it's hard to figure out what years these things are.

A: '42 - '43. Something like that.

Q: I was just trying to figure it out in relationship to the work that you were doing.

A: It was before.

Q: It was before --

A: Yes.

Q: -- right, because you were still in high school.

A: That's right [indecipherable] said before high school. And then, when we graduate from high school, what happened? O-Of course, the farm disbanded, why did it disband? Times got tougher politically. I think Rumkowski did not have any more ji -- way of thinking and doing to supervise or insist, or we simply -- that what happened, it was disband and we were given jobs.

Q: So you --

A: We were needed to work. We had to stop and we are needed to -- to work for the Germans.

Q: Right.

A: You know we --

Q: Right.

A: -- we -- we were needed to pay off.

Q: So this is that same class, that last graduating class in the high school that you talked about before, yes?

A: Right, yes. There was another class after us, so two classes graduated.

Q: But they didn't have this opportunity.

A: They're -- the --

Q: The farm.

A: They didn't come to the farm.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't remember why, or the times already toughened and, you know, there was no -- no time for frivolities, so to speak.

Q: Right.

A: So we were the only group that did it, that had this privilege, really. Oh f --

Q: And did you --

A: -- yes?

Q: I'm sorry. Did you then go back to live with your parents and sister?

A: Actually, I never went back to live with my parent again. I was emancipated. Oh, there was another job immediately after, that was -- so many jobs in such a short time, so it --

Q: That's okay.

A: -- sort of get mixed up. Hm?

Q: It's okay if it gets mixed up.

A: Yes. One job was making, you know, in -- in a production of houses, what you call houses that you build part -- parts for it.

Q: Prefabricated?

A: Prefabr -- prefabricated homes for export to Germany, okay? So some of us went to work on that, and we got housing there, also outside, you know, the main part of the ghetto. And we -- we were living there totally, and working. So that was -- lasted for awhile, and that was finished. Now, we were doing the -- the prevat -- prefabricated parts with cement, mixing cement, pouring it into forms, taking out -- you know, we learned the whole production of how do you do -- how you do it. And that ended. But another job that I had was working in a kitchen, and that was the best job. An-And really ended badly. There was a occasion to go to work for a kitchen that was established -- kitchen restaurant, so to speak, establish by Rumkowski that was producing dinners one -- once a day dinners for people that work in different kind of industries and were given a bonus to come to this -- to this kitchen for a dinner, for a week or two weeks or so. It was a extra sort of a pay-off for good work and so on. And working in that kitchen, of course it was wonderful, because you could eat, okay? You didn't have to be hungry, right? So -- and it was nice, there was a nice by -- bunch of girls, familiar also from the school, and it was nice to work there. We made hamburgers, we do this, we chopped up all kind that was needed in the kitchen, under the supervise -- supervision of women cooks. And then what happened was that there was a Sonderkommando older guy, you know, that I and he knew each other, I don't remember from where, but there were no hard feelings bet -- between us, there was some hostility. I don't know what -- what was the cause, but at any rate, he was on duty one day, and I went -- supposedly I was asking the cook that was serving the soup -- I was serving -- you know, the guy that -- the

Czech that was supervising the women police, and he was there e -- as a client, and I suppose that he asked the server to give me a little more in the plate of soup, because I wanted to, you know. And this Kohn, Kohn was his name, caught me doing that, and therefore did saw that I was kicked out from the kitchen, from my good job. Himself was a -- a s-son of a gun, you know, terrible guy to get to be accused of anything. And -- an-and -- and that was it, so that job ended, and I was sent, as a punishment, I was sent to a -- to a resort, a -- a factory that was making stuff out of wood. That means they were making wooden chairs, wooden wagons, you know, wheels, wooden wheels. It was a huge factory, under one roof, you know, just huge, full of machineries that produced a lot of dust when you worked them. So that was my punishment. I was sent to Siberia, and I was there for about a year or so. It was a tough year, really. Hard work, a lot of dust, and I was punished, you know, that was punishment. So what can I say.

Q: And you were agai -- still living away from your parents. You -- you had found your own place?

A: No. At this time I think I went back --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- home, cause there was no place to -- to be. So -- but I found a very nice friend there, working around the young people and we chummed together. And so from the social point of view, it was nice.

Q: Right.

A: Except that it was a dirty job.

Q: Right. Now, is this after you were in the women's police force? Do you --

A: I think it was before, probably.

Q: You think it was before?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Mm-hm. So -- a-and you know, my encounter with this Sonderpoliceman was as we were the last day in the ghetto, as we were transported to Auschwitz, you know, before -- before being [indecipherable] to the -- you know, to the wagons, y-you know, that take us. And there was I and this policeman, and I looked at him and I didn't say a word, just thinking, you scoundrel. Here you are and here I am.

Q: Right. Here you go.

A: Common ending --

Q: Right.

A: -- of the story. So that was part of my life.

Q: What's happening to you as a young woman? You're 20 -- in 1942, two years after the -- the ghetto was formed, you're 20 -- 20 years old.

A: Yes, 19 - 20, yes.

Q: 19 - 20 years old.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What kind of a person are you becoming? Are you -- you clearly -- as you tell the story, you clearly have moments when things are not so terrible. You're meeting friends, you have friends, there's something -- thing -- there are things that make you happy. But clearly, there's an underlying something that must be very wearing on you. Are you depressed, are you --

A: I think the motto for that being then is we shall overcome.

Q: You really felt that.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. And in the family too, you know. We didn't know the song we shall -- you know, that --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: -- that black people brought and led the -- the Civil Rights Movement.

Q: Right.

A: But that was what kept us going. We shall overcome. And the motto was life, keep on living.

Q: So you didn't give up?

A: Oh, no.

Q: In spite of everything that you knew.

A: Right. And neither would my mother or father, or within the close-knit family.

Q: They didn't give up either.

A: No. We shall overcome. And, you know, listening to the ri -- radio --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- and of course we had to give up when the German came, first among their rules was all radios you bring to this place in Lódz, and sewing machines and all machinery, guns of course, you know, etcet -- etcetera. So if you were caught listening to -- to the radio, you could be deported.

Q: Right.

A: But I want -- I wanted to say you can get killed, but deported was --

Q: The same.

A: -- equals death.

Q: The same thing, yeah.

A: So -- so no radio, no listening to the radio. So we didn't know, but somehow some rumors were crossing, some people were listening to the radio. You know, they dared and they were listening to it. And I think my father had some connection with somebody that got the news. So we knew broadly what was happening, and we knew where the Germans were, you know, the trip to Siberia, and Stalingrad. And also what we knew that at that time he had all Europe under his hand, right? And -- and fighting England and bombing London, and so on. So we knew what was th -- and some of the news were brought by people that were deported from Paris and Vienna, and yi -- all your Holland, Dutch people, Czech -- Czech people, they were bringing news because they still knew what was going on, closer than we did. So we knew that he has by now all Europe under -- under his foot, and that there's little hope really, of very -- very m -- very changes that could happen in immediate future. So you just had to take a -- a long view to the future, we shall overcome, in spite of everything that is happening. So you have to be strong. And one thing that became very important in every day life was how you live with almost nothing. That the ration that you got from the bakery, that piece of bread that you got per person, and you are in charge of it, it has to last you all week. Don't eat it in one setting. Because people that did, died. People that didn't lost weight, and died too, some that could not go on and got some infection and so on. So how do you do that? Families that could do that, and my mother was the leader of it, we did it under her supervision. We stemmed the hunger and take very -- took very little, could survive and hope for later. Many people could not, and died just because they could not do it.

Q: Did you smoke?

A: No.

Q: Did a lot of people smoke then?

A: I take it back.

Q: You take it back, you did smoke?

A: My first experiment with smoking was when I was in the police fers -- force, and this guy, the Czech guy and his assistant were smoking, and I say, hey, let me try it. So I tried, and I got sick. Dizzy, and so on, and I gave it up. But I smoked later, for a few years, you know, after the war.

Q: After the war.

A: Yes.

Q: The reason I ask is because many people smoked because it's -- I don't know if it stops hunger, but you don't seem to be -- necessarily eat as much if you're smoking. So I thought possibly that was --

A: I didn't get to that stage.

Q: You didn't get to that stage. So you -- you and your family were very disciplined about the rationing of food.

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Your sister is much younger, was it more difficult for her because she was so much younger? Or was she old enough to understand by --

A: I -- she was old enough --

Q: -- she must have been, she was a teenager.

A: -- and she was a smart little gi-girl.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: Right. Let me ask you something about Rumkowski. I interviewed someone, Lucille Eichengreen, who both -- she wrote about and -- a-about her own experiences, and experiences of other people with Rumkowski.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: That he was abusing young women, sometimes boys. It happened in the orphanage, according to her, and it -- then it happened in [indecipherable]

A: You mean before the war?

Q: Before the war.

A: Mm-hm. Pedophile.

Q: And in the ghetto, as well. And I wondered if you heard anything or knew anything about Rumkowski and what he did. Because we don't -- we can't -- she's the only person who has been willing to talk about it, and she only talked about it once everybody she knew was dead, so she wouldn't hurt --

A: Mm-hm. I see. I knew that -- but not directly -- and I never had any interview with him, though people would go asking for special things, and would have a need to talk with him. I never had the need, I never met him personally. But I heard that he wa -- you know, that if you want a audience with him, you have to be prepared that he will sexually assault you. So I heard -- that was floating rumors all over, and to be believed. Now, I know about his life something else. He got married in -- in the ghetto, you know, and his wife lived in the house -- same house that we lived. And he was -- she was a lawyer, so-called a old maid, you know? I don't know if she was 30 or 31 or 29, but she was all -- already old. You know, according. And he married her, so I saw him come, you know, to the house, walking into the house and that -- few times, and that's

it. Then when they were married, I suppose she lived with him not -- not in that house where I lived. So why he got married, I don't know, but who's to say?

Q: Right, right.

A: So, I think -- a-as you know, he was the last transport, both of them went to Auschwitz.

Q: Right.

A: And did not survive.

Q: Right. Of course, there are different rumors about that, he was killed by people who had been in Lódz, or he was gassed, who knows?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Nobod -- nobody is sure.

A: No, I don't know --

Q: Right.

A: -- anything beyond that.

Q: Do you remember the speech he gave in September of 1942, give me your children, were you there? What was that like?

A: The worst day in the world. He gathered a lot of people, cause it was known that he will give the speech, so people came. And we knew that it cannot be any good news, so you know, that was in the air. And he gave a speech. He was a good speaker, you know, telling how much he cares, telling how much work he puts in -- into survival, and do the best for the population, and we should believe him and trust him. And in that vein, he wants to tell us that it is up to us to prevent any big loss of population, the Germans gave him a number of children between the ages -- I don't remember, young children, but not too young, you know, the -- they -- the Germans will bring those children to a special care -- camp, that they will get a very good care, better than

in the ghetto, that he can assure us will happen, and that will allow the ghetto to survive til war is ended. So please, mothers, go home, prepare the children. Give them, you know, prepare something, clothing, some dishes to eat from. And it was not the dep -- you know, the collection, such and such day. That was it. And there was, of course, a lot of crying and screaming, and the people dispersed. It was paralyzing, you know, paralyzing fear and anger. But what bothers -- bothered me worst, as we ma -- were making our way home, I don't know if wha -- my mother came or not, I know I was, and I was by myself, so I don't remember. What bothered me most is I was walking back home and some neighbors wi -- with me were walking too, how quickly those women adjusted to that idea. I -- I couldn't understand that. Mainly -- mainly accepting his premise, believing him, and saying we need to do what he say, and maybe that way we'll save our children. So they were eager to go home and prepare their children for that. I almost died then.

Q: Because you didn't believe it.

A: Not a word.

Q: Did you say anything to these women that you heard, or you just kept quiet and walked?

A: No, but I went home, we talked and non -- nobody home believed that either. Many people did not believe that.

Q: Right.

A: But I was surprised how many people did believe.

Q: Right. Yeah.

A: So immediately.

Q: Maybe they always believed him. We need to change the tape.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: Paula, do you think what -- what do you think Rumkowski thought he was telling people? Did he believe that these kids would be okay? Did he not know?

A: I don't think he was so dumb. I he -- I think really that he was calculating. In his work with [indecipherable] the other German, he was simply calculating how to save most of Jews, how to help as many as possible Jews to survive. And that's how he was making the deals.

Q: So as long as he could save some, it wouldn't matter?

A: Yeah. Against liquidating the whole ghetto. That could have happened.

Q: Right.

A: You know, the Germans just could come and erase the ghetto, you know, any time, either by bomb or sending out people. They had the power.

Q: Right.

A: It -- so he was calculating how to make the best deal against that possibility. I think he was sincere about it.

Q: About doing that?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. Have you heard that speech again?

A: Pardon?

Q: Have you ever read his speech again?

A: No, no. Is there -- is there --

Q: Yeah, I have it.

A: On what, on paper?

Q: Now I have it on paper, but I believe it's on tape. Some -- somehow you can hear his words.

A: Mm-hm. Mm, I would be interested in hearing it.

Q: Let me -- let me just read you the last part of it for a second.

A: Yes, okay.

Q: "A broken Jew stands before you," he said. "Do not envy me. This is the most difficult of all the orders I've ever had to carry out at any time. I reach out to you with my broken, trembling hands and I beg, give in to my hands the victims, so that we can avoid having further victims. And a population of a hundred thousand Jews can be preserved. So they promise me. If we deliver our victims by ourselves, there will be peace." It's quite a speech. But he clearly was trying to also talk about how difficult this was for him.

A: Oh yes. I believe that.

Q: Yeah. And you do believe it.

A: I -- yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: He was a politician, and traded in human life.

Q: Right.

A: And from the point of view as I told you when -- last August I saw this fairly large number of survivors of the ge -- lo -- ghetto Lódz, I said, that is because of Rumkowski. Not that I love him, or admire him.

Q: No, right.

A: But that's a fact.

Q: So the deal with the devil --

A: Yes.

Q: -- worked in some respects.

A: That's what I think. And the death of the president in Warsaw ghetto didn't produce anything but a loss of one human life.

Q: Czerniakow.

A: Czerniakow.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. That doesn't say that I would not, given m-myself and that choice, I probably would kill myself rather than stand like Rumkowski, saying that. But in judging, what is more pr -- I want to say productive -- of what is more -- I don't -- I don't find a word for it.

Q: Right.

A: I -- I -- I cannot hate Rumkowski for it. You know I have some respect for him for that. And for his pain, as he was saying.

Q: Right, right. D-Do you have any recollection of when you -- I know that you thought that the Germans were going to kill Jews.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But the -- but they don't start murdering until 1941. There's some murders, but there's no -- the Einsatzgruppen come with the attack on Russia in 1941, and the -- the killing centers start in '41 and '42, and the major killings are f -- 1942. When is it that you realize that what you think is going to happen is really happening? Do you know? Is it in the middle of the ghetto, is it when -- y-you have a friend who comes with her daughter to the Lódz ghetto -- I mean, she becomes a friend of yours. Now, this may be towards the end, I don't know if this is 1942 or it's later, 1944, and she won't give up her daughter.

A: Oh -- oh, you -- oh, the story that I told.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Is -- is she the one who convinced you that what you thought was happening was really happening, or did you think that before?

A: I re -- since 1939 and before, listening to Hitler did not think that he is talking kwotch.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that the “Mein Kampf” book is just a book of a sick mind. We took him very seriously, and I know we were listening to the radio for hours. The -- his speeches were transmitted live as it was happening in Berlin or wherever, so we had a chance to listen to the radio, and sort of judging the speeches, and my father, my mother, myself, we knew he is speaking the truth, and that we have nothing to hope for if he is a-allowed to bring his plan forth. That is France, England -- we didn't talk about America, that was sort of, you know, outside of Europe. Unless they come and stop him, he will bring it to fruition, kill us. How, what, when, that was unknown, but we -- this projection we had way back.

Q: So I guess when -- maybe you can repeat the story that you told about this friend, during the de -- it -- it -- that you told in the shi -- in the -- in the film, “Shoah.” Not in the film, in the -- in the interview that you did --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- it wasn’t in the film, because it appeared as if it had a-an enormous impact.

A: It was not in the film?

Q: What? No.

A: He didn’t put it in the film?

Q: Mm-mm.

A: Hm.

Q: No.

A: Okay, yes --

Q: No, your portion --

A: -- yes.

Q: -- in the film was --

A: I know. That -- that's right, I forget.

Q: -- it -- it was -- it was much smaller.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: But this is a story about this woman who comes in, she must be in her 20's, maybe not so much older than you --

A: That's right, that's right --

Q: -- with the daughter.

A: -- yes, in 20's. And I know that I work then -- then I worked in the housing department, and she came from the line, you know, she is from a little town, she named the town, you know, close to Lódz. And she says is -- she is with the daughter so she needs housing for herself and the daughter. Her husband was the Alteste of the -- of the -- the small Jewish community. He was taken away and killed with others, and she is here. And in my heart was going out to her, she was -- so I -- there was a room in my -- in the house that I was living, so I told her to go there and see, and if it is okay, she can move in. And then I started to contact with her and we -- we became good friends and talked, you know, a lot. And she was telling me about the life there, and th -- and you know that in the end, i-it w-was just killed off then -- you know, and she is sent here, etcetera. So, it was nice to have -- she was a very warm, smart woman, and a cute kid, nine years old, a little girl. And then it came, you know, the speech of Rumkowski, and she said never. You

know, I will never give up my child. So we still had few days to talk about it, so we talked at length, and I said, “My God, what are you going to do?” So she said, “Never will I give up voluntarily my daughter.” And I agreed with her, you know, I -- I was not quarreling. And then the day came of our street being run, you know, with SS troops, and coming, and they ask all population of a given building to go in the backyard and line up. And two, three SS guys with, you know, bayonets came into the yard. I was standing close to my fre -- I forget her name -- close to my friend. And they said -- announced, all children of this and this age, please come. And she was holding the girl’s hand tightly. And, you know, she was not budging. Other kids came forth. And then the SS guy comes to her and says, bring -- takes the girl’s hand and wants to pull her away, and she said no. And he said in German, “If you don’t let go, I will shoot you.” And she says, “Okay, shoot me.” So he takes her by the neck, turns her around, and puts the revolver to her neck and shoots. And she falls to my feet, on my feet. And I hardly could stand. And he took the girl.

Q: Anyway. Right.

A: You see?

Q: Yes.

A: Rumkowski’s philosophy a-and the reality, and how can you say anything, just don’t ask me any questions about it, cause there are no answers. For three days I could not talk and could not eat, and my mother started to worry about me. And then there was no choice but to live.

Q: I’m not sure exactly what I ha -- I have thoughts in my -- my head, I’m not quite sure what to ask you about this because I -- on the one hand I thought to myself, she -- she had to know they would take her daughter no match you -- no matter what she did, and worse comes to worse they would shoot her and then the daughter would die, too.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And so I'm just wondering, what was -- what -- what must have been going through -- and you don't know what was going through her head, because she had to know if they were going to shoot her, they were going to take the daughter.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And I guess one would just say it was an impossible situation whichever way she did it, she was going to die.

A: But she was not going to agree.

Q: Agree to it, period.

A: Give her life first before agreeing. I can understand that. Over my dead body, it says.

Q: Right, right. Ri-Right.

A: Literally.

Q: Yes. And the daughter was -- you think was gassed?

A: Sure.

Q: Yes.

A: Unless by some fluke she could escape or something.

Q: Right, right. Was this the first time you saw a dead person?

A: Oh no, you could see many dead people on the streets of the ghetto.

Q: But this was somebody you knew, and pretty well.

A: Yeah -- ye -- my grandmother died in the ghetto. My -- my uncle died in the ghetto.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So I went to the funerals of my family.

Q: And so they're buried in Lódz.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And after three days you said, I have to go on.

A: Yes, somehow I revived.

Q: So this was 1942, this was in the middle --

A: Mm-hm

Q: -- of the ghetto. But deportation meant death to you, that was clear.

A: It was not clear, but it was clear.

Q: It wasn't known, but it was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- the intent was clear.

A: How did we -- there were people that came to the ghetto, some people that lived in the ghetto in Lódz, and were deported, and somehow run away and came, you know, sort of on the black -- black side --

Q: Right.

A: -- to the ghetto, and they brought news. One first news was about Chelmno. You -- y-you -- you know the name.

Q: Yes, I was going to ask you, yes.

A: That was -- that was a small time -- town, not far from the city, and that is where the first experiment with gas were done in buses. So those guys that escaped, escaped that, but they were witness to what's going on, and escape. So we knew about the gassing, etcetera. Then there were other news, also from peop -- you know, we got a lot of mail from people that were deported, that they are in camp like that, and everything is fi -- you know, that was all hoax. But some people came, and they brought news from Auschwitz, and that we could not believe, that there

were factories to gas people and burn their bodies, crematoria. We could not believe, but they were circulate -- those news were circulating.

Q: But Chelmno you believed?

A: Pardon?

Q: People believed what was going on in -- in Chelmno --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but not Auschwitz?

A: That's right. I -- are -- or -- impossible. And it -- but those were people they were talking about, so it was sort of, we don't want to believe that, but --

Q: Right, right, right.

A: -- hey, you have to pay attention.

Q: Right.

A: So there were news like that of what's happening in the world.

Q: Was there a lot of corruption in Lódz, you think? That's a -- that's a lot, huh?

A: Yes.

Q: It's inevitable though, isn't it, under those circumstances, since there's no -- was there a black market? Even though it was so isolated, there was a black market?

A: I think so.

Q: So when I say was there corruption and you look the way you did, what is it -- what -- what is it that's going through your head?

A: Through my s -- head is I ca -- I -- I cannot tell her anything concrete that I know, any facts [indecipherable] he told me so, but I know there was.

Q: Yes.

A: Part of the cor -- not corruption but sort of tangentially, wer -- my experience was following. My father was working, I was working, my sister was in school for a couple of years and then she got some job to work. My mother was not working. And we began to worry about it because she could be the next deported person. So the question was how do we get -- we need to get her a job. Who will get her a job? My father could not hit right. And then was the -- also the peculiar situation in ghetto of reversed roles. You know, the people -- kids like myself that were coming of age in the ghetto, but they were children in school, but by the time it was going on, they were 17 - 18. There was the support of the -- of the ghetto. That on them leaned the economy of life in the ghetto. Those were the people with strength, that could work and buy time for Rumkowski from the Germans. So all of the sudden I became very important in the group -- in the populati -- in the, you know, population. And influential. So my father said, “Well you have to do something.” But what can I do? We have to do something. At this time I was working in this housing department which had couple bosses, one older man, and his assistant -- I forget their names, Wolf -- one was Wolfe, the young one was Wolfe, and the older I don’t remember. And the -- you know, older guy and his assistant was the younger guy, and they -- you know, we had very good relationship, they respected me, I respected them, i-it was nice. So I said, I have to go to both of them and ask if they can find a job for Mother. It was a dangerous step, because you had to pay. And what does a young girl pay? How does a young girl pay? Sex, right? So that was written in big letters. Am I willing to pay that for my mother getting a job? I had to count on that, when I go to one or the other. That’s how Rumkowski comes in that category, too. When people came, women, particularly young women came to him with begging for some favor, like for a sick person to get some medicine, or what n -- extraordinary thing, they had to pay. So I said, what do I do? And I cannot talk to Father about that. So I said, well, God help me, and I go to

both of them. But to one, the older one, he was a chief, and tell him such and such, and I need a job for Mother, to keep her alive. What can I tell you my surprise that he didn't ask for a prize, and he got Mother a job in a kitchen in some resort, you know, in some factory. And Mother started to work. I was surprised, but pleasantly, you know?

Q: Absolutely.

A: So that was a one thing. The other thing was Mother worked in that factory, the director was Mrs. Sandberg, who was the father of my classmate in grade school, and we knew each other -- I forgot her name, first name, but not closely, but she -- she was a nice kid and I think she thought me, too. I knew her parents from all kinds of affairs for kids. Her father had a horrible opinion, you know, as a explorator, as a bad guy, as nobody to talk to, y -- just -- that was the opinion of Mrs. -- about Mr. Sandberg. Her mother was a nice lady. Mother was very happy working there. I told you my mother s -- wished to work --

Q: Yes. She finally --

A: -- and she could not. She got a job. And was she happy. She really was happy. She was going in the morning, she worked in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, all kinds of stuff, but being among a bunch of women -- my mother was an excellent talker, you know, and communi -- you know, sort of with people, she was a -- enjoyed it and was liked, and she would come back with stories. And I said, "Mother, I never saw you so happy." And also, in the kitchen, we -- they were allowed some stealing. They could take some -- first of all, they were allowed to do is to bring home potato peels. Something that you throw out.

Q: Throw away, yes.

A: Potato peels.

Q: It's good for you, right?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Right.

A: That was delicious food. Mother would cook a kugel from potato peels.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, and all kind of things. So it was food for the family. And she smuggled few potatoes with it, so we had few potatoes. So she was double happy for herself and that she could bring something home from the job. Make me very happy, you know, it was just nice to see that woman, under those conditions really thriving. Then one day comes the order through Mr. Sandberg, as it was coming to all directors of the factories, to supply by that date, that many workers of his to send out to -- for relocation. It was called relocation, to another ghetto. Right? So Mother is in danger, and in serious danger. And what do I do? Mother says, go and talk to Mr. Sandberg.

Q: This time Mother says it, uh-huh.

A: I may be sent out. Oh. I was beside myself. I didn't want to go. He's a mean -- I say, "Mother, he is a mean man, I may make it worse." And she says, "Don't worry, just go and talk to him." I walked the streets around my house half of the night, what do I do, what do I do? So I did -- first of all I went to talk to Mrs. Sandberg, the wife. And she knew me, you know, I was a classmate of her daughter, and I said, look, such and such, I don't know what to ask you for, but please understand where we are. She didn't say anything, yes, no, whatever, nothing. And then I made an appointment to see Mr. Sandberg, and I did see him, and he was nice enough. Not nice really, but polite enough. And I begged him for my mother's life. Well, he didn't put her on the list. But you asked me what were the fi -- feeling, living like that. You see this horror of those feelings? And horror of ever -- of being forced, not by my parents, by what's going on, to do something

that you may think that you contribute to your mother's death one way or another. Could have happened very easily.

Q: Right.

A: He could have said, I have no choice. What would you do in my place?

Q: Right.

A: Things like that. But that worked out that way. How does it leave you internally? Certainly not with a feeling of power. A feeling of rage, of anger, that you cannot get riv -- rid of through your lifetime.

Q: Do you also think of the other side, your mother saved, but somebody else goes? [indecipherable]

A: That's true, but I didn't think that far.

Q: Not then, no.

A: Mm-mm. But of course somebody -- you know, there was --

Q: Yes, somebody's got to go.

A: -- yes. He had to -- he had to produce the number of people --

Q: Right.

A: -- the Germans wanted. Rumkowski and the Germans wanted.

Q: But to go beg for someone's life is not -- it's not what one wants to do in life.

A: No.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: This -- the -- the tales you were just telling about going and trying to get work for your mother came after I talked about corruption in the ghetto.

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: And clearly you think that these examples show in what sense there was corruption in the ghetto. Can -- can you explain that a little bit more, why -- why you think so, even though these men never asked you for sex.

A: No, personally, I was afraid of that because we knew -- knew stories -- of the stories where young women would go asking for a favor, including Rumkowski, and they had -- you know, they were sexually assaulted, and they had to submit if they wanted this vital -- begging to take -- you know, to be gratified. Had to do with saving a life of a mother, a sister, etcetera. So in that way there was corruption of the people that had positions, they had the power to demand pay-offs, and in a sexual way from -- from women. That what I meant [indecipherable] what I said.

Q: Right. So this provides an example of what you may not know in terms of your personal existence, but assumed that there was a lot of different --

A: Oh, we heard about it --

Q: -- kinds of corruption going on.

A: -- yes.

Q: Yes.

A: There were circulating stories that women were telling about, and warning other people.

Q: And was there other kinds of corruption? People paying off people to not be put in deportations? Do you know?

A: I don’t know enough about it to really speak of it.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I'm sure there were.

Q: What was -- what were the relationships like? Well -- well let me do it smaller first. Ho -- how were the relations with your parents and your sister during this period? Was -- did things become more tense, or was it easy? I -- were you angry at your parents because yo -- there was a role reversal, and they weren't protecting you, you were now protecting them in some way?

A: There was a anger that you probably could not admit even to yourself, knowing the situation. No, anger with my father that he told me you have to find a job, of course I was angry, but I had to keep it in, most of it, because -- because he was right. It was this role reversal in the ghetto that the young people were made to take over, make decisions, give yi -- e-etcetera. They were also the people that the life of the ghetto depend on, because they had the strength to work, and the older generation was sort of losing this physical strength of working the factories.

Q: So you think it was the younger people who were -- who kept the ghetto going, really.

A: Yes. They were given the role, not that they asked for, but by the exhaustion of the older generation of their strength by doing that work for a year or two under conditions of hunger, losing weight, illnesses, the younger were coming up, they had the strength to work. So they could not complain, but they were angry for sure.

Q: They were?

A: I was, sure.

Q: Yes. Because you were given a burden you didn't -- you would have preferred not to have.

A: That's right, I didn't ask for it, and -- and it was a burden of saving the life of your mother. You know, that's not small potatoes.

Q: No, it's not. Now I -- i-in some of the work that -- that I've done, I noticed that for long periods of time in the ghetto, the men had more jobs, many more jobs than the women did. Now I don't know whether as a person living in the ghetto you could even notice that. Did -- did you notice that there were more men working at certain jobs? I don't mean just that there was a male police force, I -- I don't -- I don't mean that, but even in the factory, were there many more men than there were women?

A: Look, when we went into the war, and into the ghetto, the structure of society was not dissimilar in th-the structure of my family. The men worked, the women kept house.

Q: Right.

A: So, in the ghetto too, the primary role of men was to get a job and bring the bacon, maybe salami, right? But there was no salami either.

Q: Right.

A: Right? It was only because -- and of course there were some jobs that women from the beginning, like the sewing job, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- they sew -- I mean what -- they making -- were making clothing --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- clothing, so they were sewing machine, and for those job women were hired, and women did that before the war, too. So some of those jobs were -- you know, sort of women were working, young women, older women, but the majority job was men's job.

Q: So does that mean that more women, do you think, were deported, because they didn't have jobs, so they're more vulnerable to deportation?

A: Not necessarily, becau -- because women started to -- to work.

Q: To work, uh-huh.

A: They got jobs, and they started to work. And -- in bigger numbers.

Q: Right.

A: There was a hat factory, they were making hats. There was the sewing factory, the women were -- were working and making all kinds of apparels. So, you know, those were jobs that women could easy fit in.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: Kitchen work, women were doing that.

Q: So did you ni -- besides the -- the corruption of -- of men being in certain positions of power and being able to say, you want this, you know --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- pay for it, sleep with me, right?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were there other ways in which you think there was a kind of a -- using the word discrimination is a har -- is a strange -- strange word, but that there were differences between the lives that men were leading and the lives that women were leading in the context of the ghetto. Where as this -- is this one very important, because sexual exchange, that's what women have to exchange. And so that would be a lot of what might be going on in many instances.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So, do you think that that was the primary difference between men and women, that there was --

A: Men were -- I mean, it was their experience from before the war, where men were employed, and gain, as a group of men, experience and know-how and in different jobs -- of course, in the ghetto men got that differentiation too.

Q: Yes, right.

A: They were more fit for jobs, women were not prepared, they were not trained, much more so than nowadays, where women are everywhere. But years ago, that was a more patriarchal society, like in my family, the men worked, the women stayed home.

Q: Right.

A: Was the housekeeper. So that was a big minus for women. They had to change --

Q: Right.

A: -- under conditions.

Q: Let me ask you something. In -- in the interview with Lanzmann --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- he asked you about thi -- there was a part of the interview, not that's on the screen, but in the -- about thinking, and at one point you said, I couldn't think, I had to withdraw, because if you thought, you would commit suicide. You would -- it -- it was impossible to think too much. Do you still think that about who you were then, that you -- you really, in order to survive, you simply had to keep going in some practical way? It --

A: Of course.

Q: Uh-huh. So too much consciousness could kill you, too, in some -- in some respects.

A: Well, I think I was pretty much conscious of what's going on, and in talking with Father and Mother, you know, we were not suppressed of not thinking, and go on.

Q: Right.

A: But you -- you had to, foremost -- I told you, we shall overcome. I was not conscious of that sentence then, but the philosophy was, go on, survive and tell the story. Which --

Q: That really was conscious?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Did you know people who didn't feel that way? Who really went down -- not to --

A: They did not survive. They got sick and died.

Q: So what do you think is the difference? What is -- what i -- what is it about you and your family, you think? Does -- I mean, is there an -- even any way to know what it is that kept you going that way?

A: I was raised that way. Don't ask me --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Well ask me, you know, I'm just telling you it's --

Q: Right.

A: -- very hard to -- to answer that question. I was raised that way on one hand with tremendous love and care, and a certain discipline. And one example of that is like that. I remember -- I told you we lived with my grandparents, entrance, a little hall, kitchen, bathroom, you go in a big dining room, old fashioned, with old fashioned furniture, you know, the carved furniture. My grandparent's bedroom, and then the last room was a very huge room, that was our family room. It was a dining room and a bedroom at the same time, a children -- everything, but a big room, a huge table in the middle, oval table, and a lamp, a ceiling lamp from the ceiling and I remember it had a green -- light green silk -- what do you call this outside of the lamp?

Q: Ah, lampshade.

A: Lampshade, and lights in the middle. And that was the place where everything was taking place. We would eat there, I would make homework. And homework my father was involved for a number of years with me, doing every day homework. And I would work with my father, he was a pai -- he painted well, he drew well, and he showed me how, and all that. And I remember one scene, I was sitting with my father, and he was watching me drawing, and watching. And I remember I drew a bunch of lilac. Blue lilac. So that was a little branch with blue lilac and leaves. And I was very busy drawing that, my father on this side. And I looked up, and there's my mother standing beside me, and shaking her head to what my father saying, she's doing very well, you know, without saying. And I looked, and I was so happy, because my mother was not one to gr -- congratulate me or tell me you're doing well, never, okay? I was doing, it was my job, whatever, and that's it. It was the only time that I saw she really cares. And she approves of the work that my father is doing with me. And that memory survived untouched for all those years.

Q: And that's what gave you a kind of strength, you think?

A: I think so.

Q: You think so?

A: I think so. Approval and strength. Silent approval, not approval gushing you're great and so on, to blow up my head, but approval. And you know, a message.

Q: Right.

A: I don't have to tell you that. The -- only one time you can see that, but you know. You should know.

Q: But you also had something from your grandmother who was so affectionate, and clearly loved you a lot.

A: Oh yes. It was another memory. I told you, I could always jump in her lap and she would hold me --

Q: Right.

A: --and caress me, and so on. And then too, there was a time -- you know, the -- really, my parents had it good, she was a built-in babysitter, right?

Q: Right.

A: You know.

Q: Right.

A: She was not going out mu-much. So I stayed and they would go out, and they would go out to see the concert and so on. Later they, when I grew up more, they were taking me Jewish theater and other theater, so I was -- and I got to know the writers and actors because I would come often with my father to the administration, to the newspaper room, and there were always some actors and writers bringing book -- you know, eager to be, you know, put into the press. And I would shake hands, three years, four years old, with the biggest Jewish actors in town, that would come for shows and so on. It was wonderful, you know? So this night they were going to theater, and I stayed home and I got sick. As a kid I would get often sick with croup, you know, this bad cough?

Q: Right.

A: Croupy cough. And I was coughing and coughing and crying, Mama, Mama. My grandmother got scared and she called the ambulance, you know, because she didn't know what to do with me. The ambulance came, and then my parents came, so [indecipherable] they still here, the ambulance people left, and my mother got furious with grandmother and told her, she just fooled you, you should know better. [indecipherable]. Never do it again. You should not

have called the ambulance, because there's nothing wrong with her. She just had the croup. That was my mother, too.

Q: Was she right?

A: Yes.

Q: That you were exaggerating?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you knew it.

A: Yeah, I thought she was right, later on particularly. When I became a mother. That was an example. My mother was a doctor, she didn't need any other doctors, she was herself the doctor.

Q: Right, she -- she knew.

A: She knew.

Q: Did you get sick in the ghetto, besides being hungry and turning into skeletons, sort of? No.

A: No.

Q: Doesn't that surprise you? Under those conditions that you never got sick?

A: Maybe I had a cold or so, but I don't --

Q: No, I mean --

A: -- remember being seriously ill.

Q: Oh.

A: No.

Q: Not your parents either?

A: In the ghetto? Yes, my mother got very ill. She got ill with dysentery and was very, very ill. And I was on the -- on the farm, living on the farm then. And that was the only time that I needed help for my mo -- mother, it was some medication, or food stamps, you know. And didn't want

to go to Rumkowski, but I went to somebody else. What -- you say, what was her -- his secretary.

Q: Fuchs?

A: Fuchs.

Q: Oh, Dora Fuchs --

A: Dora Fuchs, or somebody else.

Q: -- was the secretary.

A: And they gave me some -- what I needed for my mother. And then she recovered. But my father took care of her, not I.

Q: Because you were away.

A: I was away. And -- and he wouldn't let me either, you know, they took care of each other.

Q: What sort of medicine is there for dysentery? Do you know? [indecipherable]

A: I don't know, whatever it was --

Q: It helped.

A: -- or maybe it was some cottage cheese, some spec -- special dairy product that was to be helpful. But that's when I needed -- a-and then when I tell you that different people needed some help --

Q: Right.

A: -- from there up --

Q: Right.

A: -- on special occasions. But, it was frightful.

Q: In -- in general, what were the relationships like among people? Were -- were peop -- was their solidarity in the ghetto, or was everybody out for themselves, or out for their small family group? How do you remember other people?

A: It was mixed. I don't know if I paid much attention. I -- you know, told you about my getting into the friendship with the woman whose daughter was taken away. And there was another friendship or relationship that I developed there, and that was also a Czech woman. The cze -- the Czech transport was so outstanding.

Q: Yeah.

A: Such wonderful people. Really unbelievable. So this woman was talking with me about the place to live. So I gave her, you know, we looked through the -- what's available, and wrote out where she should go. And she went and she came back, and she says, it's wonderful, I love it. Let me do a favor to you. Can I give you this, and she takes out a tchocki or something. I said, "No, nothing." Can I give you some money? I have to do something, I have to tell you thank you. She came back again. And I was telling my mother what was happening, and thi -- she said, "Look, I am very good dressmaker. Let me sew you a dress." So I came home -- and I said no, no, no. Listen, I am happy that you're happy [indecipherable]. So I came home and I told Mother, and Mother said, "Paula, let her do something for you." So ma -- Mother took out a green dress of grandmother that was very beautiful material, and was old and grandmother by that time, either was before she died, or maybe after she died. And Mother said, "Give her this dress, and let her sew you a dress." Which I did. And that was great. The dress didn't look so [indecipherable]

Q: The dress didn't look so great? So tell me, what is it -- what is when you tell that story, what's -- what -- why does it move you so much, do you think?

A: I think because it's about my mother.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And her relationship with me, that I could talk to her, tell her, and she would always give me the right answer, that still now today seems very correct. I didn't want to take jewelry, I didn't want to take money, but let her sew you a dress.

Q: Let her do something for you.

A: Yes, and let her do something.

Q: Right.

A: Well, that was one sort of relationship, other than that, what can I say?

Q: What about the Germans? There's a -- the Germans have their administrative office inside the ghetto, which is not the most usual procedure in these ghettos. So does that mean that you have contact with these Germans? Or you don't have contact?

A: God forbid.

Q: Gosh --

A: That was, you know, the center of the ghetto was the -- the marketplace from before the ghetto was formed, and through the ghetto, and now, because I visited in Lódz. So those were marketplaces where people were coming, you know, sell their wares and so on. That was turned in -- into the center of the ghetto administration. It mean rums -- Rumkowski's office was there, his secretaries, and other people in the administration, and the German headquarters. Beside there, there was another building that was the Gestapo. And that was fearsome to walk across that, because atrocities were happening there. People called for no reason for interrogation, for confiscation, for killing. So that was the German influence in the ghetto. Now, on this Balutski rinnek, Rumkowski was there and if you want -- if you needed a audience with him, it's where

you would go, or a audience with this Miss Fuchs, that's where you would go. And that was a place too, that you don't pass easily, or go in easily. Part of that Balutski rinnek was also dedic -- sort of kept for transport for -- let's say for vegetables and fruit. Fruit we didn't have, but vegetables. Frozen cabbage, frozen potatoes, all kinds of things, that's where they were dished out, you know, if you -- if you got to know that there is something there, and you came so you -- you got some. So that was part of -- o-of that center, too. And that was it. There were no Germans -- well, there were Germans around the border of the ghetto, you know, and -- the sentries, and the Gypsies across the ghetto.

Q: And [indecipherable] there's no -- there was no interaction between the Jews and the Gypsies?

A: No way.

Q: No. There were about 5000 Gypsies, I gather, in that section.

A: I don't know the number, but we knew they are there, and that was it.

Q: Did you know where they came from?

A: Hungary, Romania. That sort of comes to mind.

Q: You know, I ask you about the Germans because I ask you so many questions about the internal relationship amongst the Jews, and it isn't the Jews who formed the ghetto, or who decided upon this process, it was the Germans.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So I need to ask you about the Germans to see what sort of relationship. So did you ever see Biebow? No. Did -- Himmler visited -- you didn't see, no. Nothing. Do you remember ever seeing Rumkowski walk around, or be on his -- was -- did he have a -- a car that he rode in?

A: He had a car, I told you I saw him few times --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- when he was coming courting his future wife --

Q: His wife.

A: -- on our street. Other than that, the one remarkable place, it was the graduation from school that, you know, he was present and you know, asked the student and parent and he was giving speeches and how proud he was and how grateful -- how great he felt to graduate a bunch of kids from high school.

Q: Right. Do you remember seeing him wearing high boots? Someone said he wore very high boots.

A: Like the Germans?

Q: Yeah. [indecipherable] maybe like the Germans.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: No, huh?

A: Yeah.

Q: There were hangings in the ghetto, weren't there? And were you forced to see these wi -- you were.

A: Mm.

Q: So was everybody in the ghetto forced to --

A: The hanging were on a little -- not place, but a -- a little marketplace, other than this Balutski rinnek. And there were buildings around that market, and one of the building was the office of housing, where I worked. And when the hanging were happening, we were asked to come down and watch.

Q: To watch people being --

A: The hanging.

Q: -- hung.

A: Being hung.

Q: That must have been really awful.

A: Forced. We were forced.

Q: You were forced.

A: To see.

Q: More than once?

A: More than once. And there were speeches of course, that I think once those guys, they were trying to run away from the ghetto and they were caught, or others were stealing or whatnot, you know, but they were hung.

Q: And who was doing the hanging? The Germans? Or could you tell, even?

A: No German. Jews were doing the killing. Ger-Germans were there on their post, you know, watching it all, supervising it.

Q: But the so-called [indecipherable]

A: But there were the Jews that were hanging, yeah.

Q: Okay, I think we need to change tapes.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Paula, did -- did you -- was there something called the chronicles of the Lódz ghetto that you read, people put out a newspaper of some kind with the news on it? Or was the chronicle a sort of underground?

A: Don't recall, really.

Q: You don't recall, okay.

A: But we had a theater and concerts --

Q: You did.

A: -- in the ghetto, yes, mm-hm.

Q: And were they good?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And did you go often?

A: I went enough, you know, we had quite few times.

Q: Like once a week, or less than that?

A: I don't think they were that often.

Q: They weren't that often.

A: Maybe once a month, or so.

Q: Did somebo -- did you have to pay to get in?

A: Yes, ghetto money, which was worthless anyway, so it was sort of -- what could you get for it? A concert.

Q: But the ghet -- but the ghetto money functioned inside the ghetto, right?

A: That's right, you could, you know, you could buy bread and other st-stuff with the ghetto money, yes.

Q: Did it have his picture on it, Rumkowski?

A: I cannot tell you, I don't recall.

Q: Do you remember pictures of Rumkowski up in offices?

A: I don't think so.

Q: You don't think so.

A: And if there were, I don't recall.

Q: Maybe you didn't want to see them, if they were.

A: That's for sure.

Q: In August there was going to -- there was a deportation, right, that's --

A: '44.

Q: -- when they start, 1944.

A: 1944.

Q: Do you hear about this sort of liquidation -- it's not exactly a liquidation because people aren't being killed then, they're being sent out.

A: Mm-hm, but that was a liquidation of the ghetto.

Q: Yes.

A: It stopped existing.

Q: Right.

A: The structure stopped existing.

Q: Right. And does -- it stopped before August, I as -- I imagine. Or am I wrong?

A: End of August was the last transport that left the -- you know, the ghetto. And Rumkowski was on that --

Q: Right.

A: -- transport. Now they left a crew of Jews on the Balutski rinnek you know, in the center, to clean up. You know, clean up the space, put away stuff, etcetera, clean up. And a good number of those people, I think two -- 300 people were able to hide in the last minute, and survived. Th -- it was shortly before the Russian troops marched in. So a good number -- good number, 200 or so --

Q: Right.

A: -- Jews saved their lives, the ones that worked on -- on the Balutski rinnek, and were asked to stay to clean up.

Q: You were not asked to stay.

A: Oh no, I did -- I didn't work there.

Q: Right.

A: Those were workers there.

Q: Who worked in -- in that area.

A: Yeah, that's right, yes.

Q: So what happened to you and your family at that -- at that time during the August deportations?

A: During the August deportation, y-you had to make a decision to go voluntarily or not, you know? There was a station, a train station called Radogoszcz, where the trains were set up to leave. And you had to make up your mind if -- you were assigned a day where to -- when to go. I don't remember how it happened. And I said, "I am not going voluntarily. I am not going." And

my mother wrung her ha -- ha -- hands, what do we do, and turning to me, what do we do. You know, I have to --

Q: You have to give --

A: -- to tell her what to do. So I say, "I don't know, but I don't want to go." So let's try to hide. And we hid. I had a friend around there, and she had a policeman that was sort of high up in the Sonderkommando, and he knew what to do, but eventually didn't know, nobody knew. So we were hiding in a place that already was evacuated, but out -- out of a -- our house, because we had to get out of where we lived, so -- to be close to the train station. So we hide -- we did hide in a house that was strange -- you know, we didn't know it, but -- and spend a couple days or more, waiting for some signal from God, or who knows who, what to do. And then we were watching through the windows how the German SS were walking and pulling people out, and bring -- you know, marching them to the train station. And we didn't know what they do with them, do they shoot them on the way or not. So the outlook for successful hiding was ne-never -- not too good. And we were losing -- we are losing the -- the willpower to hide and be dragged out and killed. So it was sort of what happened to everybody, will happen to us too. You know, resignation. And one day we just showed up at the point where they were collecting people and marching them to the station of Radogoszcz, and putting them on the cattle -- cattle train -- cattle wagons. And that's how we landed there.

Q: So this was you, your younger sister, your mother and your father. Your grandparents have --

A: Dead by then.

Q: -- are dead by then.

A: Yes.

Q: And this is a train trip of a day, two days? It's hard to remember, I imagine.

A: It's hard to remember how long it took.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: It's a pretty fair distance, with a train that doesn't go too fast. So hours, many hours.

Q: Was it awful on the train?

A: Pretty awful. No water, no toilet, nothing.

Q: Was there a bucket for a toilet?

A: I don't think there were buckets either.

Q: How old are your parents by now? You're -- you're now 22 years old, about.

A: Yeah. My mother was 47 years old, my father was 51 years old.

Q: An-And are they still strong?

A: Pretty strong --

Q: They're okay, they're pretty strong.

A: Yes, they were pretty -- in good health.

Q: Right. So you get to Auschwitz, di -- you've heard about Auschwitz? Bef --

A: We heard the name mentioned, but not really, we did not hear, other than we heard, you know, gas, and crematoria and death, mm-hm.

Q: So is -- so is that what you expected?

A: Yes.

Q: That you would go there and you'd be killed?

A: Yes.

Q: So you get off this train, is it daytime, nighttime, morning?

A: Was daytime.

Q: Daytime. A train with a lot of people on it?

A: Lot of people, loaded, full trains.

Q: And it's a full train from Lódz?

A: Lódz, mm-hm. And as we get unloaded, there were SS men, few, but mainly Jews working there, they were the sonderco -- Jewish jo -- Sonderkommando, and they were unloading us. Get out, outsteigen, get out, and so on. And we ask, where are we? Where are we going? And they said in Hebrew, to mishpitt.

Q: Mishpitt?

A: Mishpitt is the -- the day of reckoning -- wa -- how do you say it, the day of -- the judgment, day of judgment, the judgment day. In Hebrew, mishpitt. So it was clear what they were saying.

Q: This is it.

A: Death, to death, yes. So we are herded in groups and start marching. And of course, all the things that we were carrying with us, bundles or so, were taken away and thrown on the street, you know, next to the train. So we were relieved of the luggage, and marched to the camp.

Q: Now you're -- the train comes up close to Birkenau, yes? So you go -- but does the train go under this underpass, or are you outside and you walk in, do you remember?

A: Life mu -- "Arbeit macht frei." That was the big sign there were.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Work sets you free, "Arbeit macht frei". And we marched -- we didn't know anything, Birkenau or not Birkenau, because they -- that probably the train stopped in Auschwitz proper and we were marched to Birkenau.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: Or we -- the train went to Birkenau and we were marched to the -- to the showers. You know, to the place where we were greeted, and the greeting was, take off your clothes, stay naked, and

around were women, men, and the first thing that they were doing were shaving us. Our heads, all hair of our body. Man did that. I suppose that was Sonderkommando, too, Jews doing it. And then we were --

Q: But you're not with your father. You're father's been separated, or am I wrong?

A: Take me back. We go, we walk, and then we -- we walk to the point where Mengele is standing, you know, the German physician, and says, you know, women left, men right, and men go right away to the other side, and women go to this side, and then we march in front of Mengele. And so it is Mother, me and my sister. And he pulls Mother out to one side, and us to the other side. And I said, "I want to go with Mother." I follow Mother, and he pulls me out and sends me to the other side, to left instead of right, which the right was going to --

Q: [indecipherable]. How -- how did you know it was Mengele?

A: I didn't know it was Mengele. That was a physician, we knew a physician, people were talking, I don't know who.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: But we later find out that -- you know, or people were talking because they knew from some of the Sonderkommand that this is Mengele, this is Mengele. So we knew the name.

Q: Right.

A: And the face, now the face, so we knew that was the physician of Auschwitz, the famous one. And then we go, I and my sister are left, and we are led to this big hole where, you know, we sat naked and shaved, and then led to showers. And we knew already that the showers mean death, so -- and that was sort of -- we all were looking for -- you know, for death. As it happened, of course, the ones that we were with did not get killed, we were really taking showers, and given

some so-called clothing, one shoe high heeled, one shoe low heeled, and s -- coup -- and a couple of sort of schmates, and led to barracks, we were led then to the barracks.

Q: Were you tattooed?

A: No, our transport was not tattooed.

Q: Hm.

A: And there was a number of transport that -- I think it was August already and I don't think they had time any more for things like -- for -- for playful things like that, so we didn't get tattooed. And we were led to the barracks, and a-acquainted with the kapo, which was a woman and her helper. And the kapo had, in this big barrack had a wonderful room, nicely furnished and all that, nice. She had a very important role, and was paid for that by special favors. And that's how it started, life in Auschwitz started. So before we were sent to the barracks, we still had to stay on si -- c'est l'appel, which was counting down a -- how many people we are, and that took hours. It was way into the night. And then we were sent to the barracks, and given space enough -- not enough to stretch out. There were like five in a row, five women in a row, not enough to stretch out, but just to curl up somehow, and that was our first day and first night in Auschwitz. Early in the morning was c'est l'appel again, where we were standing and were counted. Every day, twice a day, was hours, it took hours to be counted. And the number better be right, or else we were --

Q: Otherwise they count again.

A: Hm?

Q: Otherwise they count again, yes.

A: Right. And there were incidents where somebody would run away, and we would stand for hours, and then that person was brought back and killed. And so, you know, to give an example what happens if you think of running away. And life started there.

Q: That's a bit ironic, isn't it? Life starts --

A: That's right.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Now, did you know rather soon what probably happened to your mother?

A: Of course. We knew right away.

Q: You knew right away.

A: Yeah. Those people were sent o -- didn't know what happened to Father.

Q: Right.

A: I found out much later on, you know, in Lódz, when I was back in Lódz from a friend of Father, that was with him in the same camp, they were sent off to camps outside Auschwitz, and I think he told me that my father died in one of those marches to another camp, on the way. So, he died. If he was -- I assume that he was killed, you know, because in a march, when you si -- when you slow down, there was the SS man then helped you die quicker. So I assume that what happened to Father.

Q: Now, a number of hours ago when we started, and I asked you about your relationship to your sister, it wasn't -- you didn't like that she was there, blah, blah, blah.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But something changed in Auschwitz. So now --

A: Yes, y-y-you see, though Mother was very careful not to load me, the older sister with responsibility for my -- for my sister, nevertheless, it was I was the older sister, and I didn't like it, you know? If she didn't load me, I thought she expect me anyhow to help her with homework, and s -- so I had the special duty of an older sister that I did not like. And she couldn't do nothing for me. You know, it was all one way, though she tried. She did the dishes, and she just tried. She loved me and she tried so hard, poor thing. And then in Auschwitz, we were together. And the c'est l'appel you had to lined out with five -- five women to the count, and the five women slept together, sort of in one row. So there was myself, my sister and three other women. And we sort of hung out together, and that was it. Then I became ill. I developed -- really, I got sick with typhoid fe-fever. You know, fever and diarrhea and all of that, and I had no choice but report to the hospital, which was another terrible thing, because we hear terrible things what happens in the hospital. But I had no choice, so I went to the hospital. My sister stayed. And i-in the hospital, I ended up on the ward, the infectious disease ward. And we had a wonderful woman pediatrician that was from town, Dr. Greenberg, and her daughter was there, too. And she was a wonderful physician and treated us well. Every day or every other day, Mengele would come and segregate people that he thought should die already. So we had visits to -- of that sort. And then one day -- then it was one room, and there was the other room, and between the rooms were knocked out, you know, a knocked out hall that you could look into the other room. And I found out that my sister is there. You know, she got ill, too, and came. And so I could communicate, and we communicated. Twenty-sixth of September it was her birthday, so I made her a present, I saved up some bread, and some sausage, and gave her the happy birthday sandwich. Not only that, in Auschwitz, before I became ill, and when I started to be not feeling well, our role changed. She took care -- was taking care of me and doing everything for me, and being

thoughtful and caring. It was just a different sister I had. For the first time in my life she was taking care of me. I needed her help. And it was so great. But short-lived, you know, so we ended up in the hospital.

Q: Right.

A: Then one day we hear -- oh, and then it was -- they -- medically they treated us very well. Isolated, with the -- was a -- they were examining every day the stool, etcetera, and blood, so they know when people were well, and when they got well they were sent out back to the main camp. And one day I was told that I am well, that her examination came negative and I can go back. And I told that to my sister, and she says, “So go back.” So I said, “No, I will wait for you.” “Oh, what are you doing, that’s dangerous, you know. You may get killed.” Cause periodically they were cleansing the hospital to the -- to the gas chambers. So she says, “Well, you know, they may catch you.” I say, “I don’t care, you know, I don’t want to be separate from you. So I wait and then we’ll go together.” And then in couple days we hear rumors that they are going to liquidate the infectious disease hospital. And true enough, one day the trucks come, and I could see it through the window, and they are going to do that, okay? So we hear the s -- SS men coming in, and we were sort of in the middle, so they come there and the hole -- now we could communicated -- communicate with my sister through the hole, but there was no way that I could come to her -- her room, or she could come to my room. There was -- there was no possibility. They had sentry watching. So she and I talked, and she says, “What are we going to do?” I say, “Dorka, I don’t know what to do, do you?” “No, what are we going to do?” So I said, “Well, I cannot come to your room so we could be together and go wherever together, you cannot come here, so I really don’t know.” I suppose we could not cry even, you know, it was beyond crying. Then I hear steps and the sentries coming to our room, and saying to la -- for us

to line up, so people start lining up. And I just was not eager to line up up front, so I was sort of holding back and watching. And people started to leave the room. And towards the end I see two girls are jumping under the -- the beds, you know, the -- what you call it?

Q: Bunk beds?

A: Bunk bed -- beds. And I say, wow, not a bad idea. So people are leaving and I am holding back. And I start jumping under -- on the other end, under the bunk. Well -- and those two start crying, don't do that, you will give us out, they will kill us because of you. Needless to say I did not listen to that, and I stayed under one bunk bed, and that was it. And of course, I hear then, you know, they go to the next room where my sister is, and the room gets emptied, and I could see through the window, there was a window, the truck is waiting there, and they climb naked into the truck. Hours pass, and it gets dark, and two SS men come in the room with lantern and dogs and start, you know, looking. Ser -- search light under the bunk beds, and did not find us. And they leave, and we still there, under, you know, waiting couple hours or so until it was totally quiet. The buses were -- have left, and we started to talk with each other and say well, maybe it's time to get out and see what's -- what's happening. So we get out and go up front, through a big hole, nurse's stations. And we find out that a number of people are left. First of all, some people not from the infectious disease division. Some doctors, women doctors, and we join the group. And then, I don't know how long we waited, but we were put on a train and transported, we didn't know where to, but it was a benign atmosphere. We were transported to Birkenau to the old -- to the camp from which we originally came. And that camp was leaving next morning in trains, to go who knows where -- to a camp, to another camp, you know, so who knows, and who has to believe that. And indeed we -- we left, still not knowing, still full of fear, what will be in the train, gas in the train, the -- you know, this in the train. And we were

transported to a camp in -- in a forest. It was Silesia, the German Silesia. You know, Auschwitz is in Silesia, the Polish Silesia, and more left is the German Silesia, but still Silesia in the forest and outl -- unloaded in woods. Forest, pine forest. And -- and led to -- to tents. In each tent there were eight women or so. The bedding was pine branches, and the cover was pine branches a-and -- and hay. And that where we lived from then on, for the next couple months. Digging -- didding -- digging ditches --

Q: Ditches.

A: -- against tanks, Russian camp -- tanks that were -- that were a -- coming soon. So that was our -- and it was November, December.

Q: So it was hard to dig?

A: With hardly any clothes on us, o-on -- on our backs.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape Eight

Beginning Tape Nine

Q: C-Can I ask you something about Auschwitz for just a second? Because it's -- unless I misheard you, you said that you were taken from the hospital back to Birkenau.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So does that mean the hospital you were in was not in Birkenau? You were in Auschwitz one?

A: No, no. I --

Q: Or you were in another part of Birkenau?

A: Another part of Birkenau.

Q: Okay. And did they take you bay truck back to your barracks? Is that what they did? Or you don't remember?

A: I remember it being on the train. So maybe it was Auschwitz, you know, the real Auschwitz camp, not Birkenau, but it was a distance. The hospital was a distance from the Birkenau barracks.

Q: Right, right.

A: So they were taking us back to the barrack parts.

Q: Right.

A: And then we had to walk a bit and go to the barracks.

Q: Do you remember what barrack it was?

A: Number? No, I don't.

Q: Do you remember whether it was on the far right, where the -- they used to call Mexico, or --

A: I don't remember Mexico.

Q: -- you don't remember the ba --

A: Mm-mm.

Q: You didn't say, but I'm assuming that your sister was taken.

A: Yeah.

Q: She was. And that was --

A: The end.

Q: -- that was the end.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So you were not able to say good-bye, nothing?

A: Well, that I think was the worst day in my whole experience about Auschwitz.

Q: Was that.

A: Was that. That day. That always in my mind, you saved your life, but you could not save your sister.

Q: Even though you know that you couldn't have saved her.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: It still -- and it's the same with your parents, in your head.

A: Stronger.

Q: Stronger?

A: Yes.

Q: That you somehow should have been able --

A: Yes. Cause in a symbolic way, my mother in Auschwitz, gave me the job to take care of my sister. And the symbolic way was that before we entered -- before we were parted, she gave me a little handkerchief with few jewelry pieces, her pieces, few ri -- you know, that was not much to talk about, but few rings, and a necklace of hers. And she gave it to me, and says -- she said, take care.

Q: You're not over it yet. I guess there's no getting over it. So I can't say anything.

A: Hm?

Q: I can't say anything. I can't take it away. I'd like to take it away from you. But you also feel as if you're responsible for your parent's deaths.

A: Yes. But especially for my sister, because of that exchange. And then later I was not so clear, but later I said, well she kid not -- could not mean the few pieces of gold, she meant my sister, to take care of.

Q: Care of. Not to take care of these, yeah. Did you still have a desire to live in spite of that? When you went to this new camp, when you -- when you would say to me in -- in -- in Lódz, though we didn't know the words, we were going to overcome, we were going to survive. Did you feel that, or were you --

A: Oh yes.

Q: You did?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You still felt that?

A: Yes. Why give in?

Q: Right.

A: To whom?

Q: Right. To yourself.

A: The Germans, to give in and let them kill me? Take my life, too? That was a different message --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: -- than --

Q: Right.

A: I live and they died, and I shouldn't live. And that's a different --

Q: Different message.

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it's not incongruous, it's --

Q: Right.

A: -- experience at the same time.

Q: Yeah. So you're in this subcamp of Auschwitz in Silesia --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- with part of the people who were the staff of the hospital, is that true?

A: Oh, I don't know, then we got mixed up, totally, so it -- it was a different story.

Q: Uh-huh, I see. Did you know any of these people?

A: I knew a few people.

Q: You knew a few.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So --

A: From way back, you know, those Lódz people --

Q: Right.

A: So I knew some --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- the people.

Q: How bad was it in the subcamp? Was it really -- was it worse than Auschwitz, or did you now know they're not going to gas me?

A: I didn't know anything. They can take their way any place, anytime, so that was not unfinished story.

Q: Right, right.

A: But how was it? It was very cold, standing in the cold with hardly any clothes, digging ditches with very little to eat, and then coming to this tent. There was sentry, there was a little stove, a little -- you know oven, that gave a little hit -- and heat, and we could dry maybe some clothing, socks -- we didn't have socks -- you know, on the oven, and then go to sleep. The air was good, though cold. And we huddled together, and we slept and we went up and we were up day in, day out. And in short time there was something very much that lifted our mood. And that was more often we heard airplanes buzzing overhead, and we saw at the same time the German commander and his helper looking up and crying.

Q: Crying?

A: Mm-hm. Those men -- those were not German airplanes, right?

Q: Right.

A: You guess who it was.

Q: Russians.

A: Sure. And we were laughing. I-I mean, we didn't laugh in their face, right?

Q: Right. So i-in your view, something was going to happen quickly.

A: Right.

Q: Did it?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh.

A: But before that, let me tell you one thing, in the barracks in Auschwitz. We had a -- we heard a number of times airplanes above our head, and we could go out and see the airplanes flying very low. Those were not Russians, those were American planes. With insigna -- insignias, U.S., etcetera, etcetera. And we are in the barrack, and praying in unison, drop a bomb on us. Why don't you drop a bomb?

Q: On you.

A: On the barrack.

Q: Right.

A: At least --

Q: But then you'd be killed.

A: Yes.

Q: It didn't matter.

A: Didn't matter. Do something. Somebody do something. Drop a bomb on the railway. But at that point we were praying drop a bomb, just don't be so sadistic and watch us and do nothing. Those were American planes.

Q: Were you -- you left in October to go to this -- this subcamp in Silesia, I think. Am I right?

A: Something like that, yes.

Q: Do you remember whether the uprising in Auschwitz had taken place, or you went to this camp before?

A: I -- we heard about it, but frankly I don't remember much about it, and I -- I must have known more, but I don't remember what I knew.

Q: You may not have been there.

A: I -- I might have been in the hospital.

Q: Right. Okay. So were you angry at the Americans?

A: And how.

Q: Yeah. You still are.

A: I'm still.

Q: Yeah.

A: Of course I still am. More so later, because you know there is history now. There were people, particularly one Polish aristocrat, I forget his name, that went to Warsaw ghetto and saw what's going on, and he went to Washington to talk to Roosevelt and to London and tell them what's going on in Warsaw ghetto, and they wou -- didn't want to believe him.

Q: Karski.

A: Karski, right.

Q: The courier.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Mm. That was [indecipherable]

A: That what confirmed the airplanes going above our heads and doing nothing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: What cynicism. And Roosevelt saying we -- first we have to finish the war, then we'll think about the Jews.

Q: Nothing much has changed, has it?

A: No.

Q: Mm. Do you escape from this camp in Silesia?

A: Escaped from the route. I told you how the rou -- how the Germans reacted to the --

Q: Mm.

A: -- sight of planes, and probably to the news that they were getting through the radio and so on. You know, they knew more than just the planes, they knew the army -- the Russians are coming.

Q: Right.

A: So one day we get the order to get ready to march. We going to the west. And then when the Death March, so-called Death March started -- you know about that, right?

Q: Yeah.

A: Evacuating the camps to the west. So we got ready to the March. What -- how should we get ready, w-we had nothing.

Q: Nothing to pack, huh?

A: Nothing to pack and nothing to worry about, who to li -- leave behi-behind or not. And the -- they had a good number of German women, SS women, and they packed their things, and they went into the wagon, a big wagon, the women. And they -- we, the -- the slaves, had to pull that wagon with the -- those German madams sitting there, taking turns, and that was a added bonus for the Death March. So we were going and going and going, and where are we going? We didn't know where we going. You know what happened, the Death March ended in Bergen-Belsen, right, on the west border. We didn't dare s -- to slow down, because if you slowed down, you were dead. You know, the -- you know, they shoot the women, many women were shot on the way.

Q: Right.

A: So you have to use all your strength to go. And on the third day I said I -- wherever we going I won't make it because I am totally exhausted. And that night we were finished at a farm, at a big farm, and slept over, on the ground of course, under cover. And th -- in that farm there were

in -- under a shed, there were three big kettles of molasses. They were making molasses, okay? Hungry as we were, you know what we did. We threw us -- ourselves on the molasses and ate the molasses and you know what happened later. Diarrhea and vomiting.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: And I wake up, and I said, which way do I want to die. I have to find a way, because I am not making it. So at that time I was talking with a friend of mine, you know, a neighbor on my street from before the war, and in the same class, graduating from Rumkowski's high school. And she too said, well, we have to think about something. So we started to think and work together. And what we were observing is that we are going through one village after another with a very narrow village street -- road, really, and that the houses beyond the fence looked empty, and we don't see any people there. You know, one village after another. So the conclusion was that they eva -- they evacuated the Germans earlier, wherever. So we thought, well, it will be easy enough to get to one of the houses if we think about it. And that's one way, taking a chance. If Germans are there, we are dead. If we march we are dead, so what do you have to lose? So we picked a time where the sentries were not in the -- at the place that we were close by, but you know, it was a very long line of women marching. Started with a thousand women and shrinking. So the sentries were sort of spaced, so we thought, well, that's time. And we just didn't have to go far to the right, we were marching that way, houses were here. And we opened the door -- you know, the -- undone the door, and we go in. And then, on the left hand side was a barn, so we go around the barn and get into the barn and jump into the stack of hay, and stay quietly there.

Q: Inside the hay.

A: Inside the hay. And we heard the march going on, and in not too long time, it was quiet, so they passed. So we waited longer, longer, til it cleared, til it was to -- completely quiet and got

dark. And started to listen what's going on on this side. And we heard voices. We heard voices, and we heard a language -- a Slavic language but could not distinguish. It was not Polish, but we knew that i-in Germany there were many workers -- farm workers taken from Russia, from Ukrainia, from Belarus. So that all could be there. So after we got some reasonably time, we said, oh we have to go and see who is there. So we went and opened the door, and say hello, and happy to see you, and there were few women and few men sitting around. And they don't look very favorably at us. And they say -- they -- they didn't say anything, they knew who we are. Shaved heads, you know, schmates on us. So we say, yes we just run away from the -- from the march, and we ask for help, kindly. You are Jews. Get out of here. Okay. There was no way to discuss an answer like that coming from the group. So we left, and we were in the -- you know, on the outside again, and what to do? Well -- and they also said there are Germans in the village, and they will catch you. So we thought they may be right, they don't have to be right. Our thinking was clear, you know, in all that, the thinking was clear. So we look around, and started to explore slowly. And what we see on the street in the middle of the road, many dead German soldiers, okay, with guts spilling out, and -- there was a fight, there was a battle, and left the Germans behind, so they are -- the Russians are probably advanced beyond that village. That would be then to the east, and the Russians would be going west. So finally we see a house on a little hill, so we go out there. We're looking now for shelter. And we see the door is locked, but the key is hanging on the left hi -- side of the door. The family left the key so when they come back they open the door again, okay? Evacuees. So we opened the door and farn -- found a well supplied household, and food and wood and coal, you know, to heat and to eat and get sick from overeating. And we made ourself at home there. And y -- cured our stomach eventually by, you know, getting to some normal eating. And then what do we do? It's quiet, nobody moves. The

next few days we were explore the village slowly, seeing if somebody is there or not, and we didn't find anybody so we were just, you know, nursing ourselves. It was warm and clean, and clean linen, and clean clothing, it was paradise. A German paradise. We can laugh now, huh?

Q: Yeah.

A: So we say w-w-what's happening? And one night we hear marchers, you know, thump, thump on the road. We could oversee the road, the main road, east west, and we say who -- it's a army we hear, who can it be? Either Germans or Russians. We didn't dare to move, but eventually we say we have to see who it is. So we were slowly walking down that hill and looking and trying to find who they are, and what we saw was a lot of white. A lot of white horses, white, little horses. Soldiers on the horses are marching in white, and white hats and white fur. I say, well it looks like Siberia, you know, snow. So that -- perhaps they are Russian. So we go closer, eventually, and then we had no doubt they are Russians, you know? Because -- indeed, you know, the white hats and white thing and white horses. Everything to camouflage in Siberia, but that was winter, so that served everywhere in that part of Europe. And we see, you know, officers on horses along the marchers and we say, well, let's take a chance, let's go and talk to the officers. So we approach couple officers and we threw ourself in their arms and say, thank God, you are saving us, you know that? Well, they were glad to hear that, you know. They -- you know. So -- and we felt perfectly safe. So we asked, where you going? Na Berlin.

Q: Ah.

A: Okay. So I say, so what will be with us, aren't you going to stay here? And -- we were naïve. And then they say no, we have to go -- we go to get Berlin, to free Berlin, and in couple days in a different un -- different units will come here to stay, to -- the occupation army. So wait, they will come. Well, we were jubilant, you understand, right? Our saviors are just here. Two, three days

pass, and then we see a bunch of young women marching in the direction of our house, because our house was lit. And as they come closer, we see those are our friends, those are the girls from Auschwitz. We know them. But they look -- they didn't look the same. So they come closer, and we say, what happened to you? And they say, well, we were raped by the Russian army. And they are coming here, too. They were much more east, so you know, the Russians encountered them. Wow. They didn't want to stay, they wanted to go forwards, I don't know -- they had their plans how to go. And then is what are we going to do? We --

Q: Never st -- never stops, right?

A: Never stops.

Q: Right.

A: We were forewarned, that's true. So, in another few days, and the army is marching again, and few officers are coming our way, every one with a bottle of whiskey in their hands. And they oh, they hug us, my -- my was lublu. We love you. Let's have a party. So we -- w-we knew already, but we are forewarned. We prepared a bundle to run away beforehand. And then we said, you know, come to the living room and sit down and they didn't need e-encouragement or more invitation, so they came and sat down, and we said, my was lublu, too, but we will join you in few minutes, just be patient. And we --

Q: Could you speak Russian? Some Russian, no?

A: You could -- few words in Polish, you know, so y-you could make yourself understandable.

Q: Right.

A: So we go and grab our bundles and go the back door to the road. And the Russians are marching, you know, those were hu-humangous armies, you know? They are marching and we ask them, where is your headquarters? So they told us, more east -- no, more west, and they were

going, too. As you know they going now Berlin. So we [indecipherable] -- no, actually they said, they -- the headquarters were most -- more east from they were coming. So they go west, we go east, and after awhile, we -- we chance upon the -- a small house that wa -- you know, a -- a cottage, really, German cottage, and the headquarters. And we ask to be led to the chief, to the commander, and we tell the commander the story, where we from, and that we want -- we are on our way back home to Poland, Lódz, and would he -- and the danger of his soldiers, being raped, etcetera, would he help us to get -- get back home? And he says yes, we'll help you. And he says go to the kitchen, th-there are our women working, you join them, and -- and you can stay here. So another chapter started. We were with the girls, the Russian girls in the kitchen, peeling potatoes, doing other things, and was fun. They are -- they were very friendly, they were singing all the time. And that part was fine. And we pel -- felt pretty safe. We slept -- so during the day we were in the kitchen. At night -- it was the front line. From there, soldiers were going to the front for the day, at night they came back to sleep. They were eating dinner in the dining room, and then they were sleeping on the floor, and we were sleek -- sleeping on the tables in the dining room. And it was pretty safe. It was -- it was good.

Q: It's safer than being in the hay.

A: Much.

Q: Much safer. We have to change the tape.

End of Tape Nine

Beginning Tape 10

Q: Paula, would you have considered that liberation? When you were with these -- the Russians, and you're sleeping on the tables, and the Russian soldiers are sleeping on the floor, I mean, were you then free?

A: We are on the way home.

Q: On the way home. So you're going east.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You're going towards Lódz.

A: Towards Lódz. W -- our road to -- was to go west.

Q: Right.

A: No, east.

Q: East.

A: East, yes, mm-hm.

Q: But are you -- do you consider yourself liberated from the Germans cause there are no Germans any more?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So is there a -- a moment of -- you know, liberation is a very funny word, and I never un -- I never know when -- is there really a moment when you feel free? It doesn't s -- it seems a little impossible. It seems as if it's a -- a process as opposed to a moment.

A: I think it's a process, and we were on the way.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And don't forget, we were on the front.

Q: Yeah.

A: Right? The Russians were fighting to go -- they were going west, and they were fighting their way -- na Berlin, the goal was Berlin.

Q: Right, right.

A: They were -- they were far from Berlin still.

Q: Uh-huh. Right, right.

A: So -- and there was no way of knowing if the Germans won't get back. You know, they could conquer -- a-and that what happened in that war. They were -- you know, they were not giving up easily.

Q: Right.

A: Was the western armies or -- or the Russian armies. So we -- we knew that there is a big strength that -- of -- of the --

Q: Right.

A: -- Germans. But they were, you know, the Russians were fight it -- fighting. And listening to their mood -- na Berlin and, the army's going na Berlin, ah, we are fighting with them.

Q: Right.

A: You know? It's happening. It's a turnaround. So we were just jubilous together with the -- with them.

Q: Right.

A: On the other hand, we knew that every morning troops were going out to the front that was not far away. We -- we heard fightings, you know the shelling of each other, all day, and then the soldiers came dead me -- you know, tired, home to the base, which was a small house, and they

were, you know, eating dinner, and -- and then conking out on the floor, going to sleep. So it was in the center of the war.

Q: Right. What -- how was your being Jewish treated? Did they care? Were they sympathetic, were they -- they di -- or what --

A: No, we were so happy, so when we were sitting with the soldiers and eating dinner, they ask us about -- and a -- as I tol -- told you, between Polish and Russian we could understand each other, with difficulties, but we could make ourself understood, and they ask about us, where we come from, who we are. So we were telling we are Jewish, we come from Auschwitz, and we are ready to go home, thank you. And then one day, after a few days of such liberal talks, two officers approached us, me and Vonda, and they introduced themselves, and they say, we are Jewish. And we -- we -- we hear what you saying to the Russian soldiers and please stop telling them that you are Jewish. They don't know we are Jewish. They hate Jews. So don't tell them who you are. We will help you. Wow, that was a slap in the face. You know, to the liberators we cannot say we are Jewish. But those were astute officers, and they were Jews, and they -- we sensed that they know very well what they are talking about. And we were not surprised then.

Q: Right.

A: So what's new?

Q: Right. It's the same story.

A: You know? Hm?

Q: Same story.

A: Same story. So that was that.

Q: So no more talk about who you are?

A: No.

Q: And how did they help you, these officers?

A: Oh, they were just keeping an eye on us for safety and so on. So just was good to know that we have some comrades here that know what's cooking, and --

Q: Right.

A: -- share with us, so that was a good feeling. Friendship.

Q: Right.

A: This kind of a --

Q: So did you stay with that group for awhile?

A: We stay there for awhile, and they are promising us that they -- they are working on set -- on putting a train together that will go from that point to south Poland. And when the train is ready, we are free to go. And it did not take very long. They told us, and they drove us to the station when the train was set. And we took a train and arrived in Lódz one day.

Q: And you went back to Lódz because you thought what? You thought your father would come? Did you think anyone would be there?

A: We didn't think.

Q: You didn't think.

A: We were just wanting to go home.

Q: Right.

A: Knowing that there's nobody, you know. I didn't have illusion that Mother will be there, or Father, or my sister.

Q: Right, right.

A: But that's home.

Q: Right.

A: That's all I knew about home. My city.

Q: And when you got there, a lot of survivors had come back, yes?

A: Not a lot, but some.

Q: But survivors from other circumstances came, not just from Lódz. Am I correct, or not?

A: Well, first of all, there were the remnants of Jews in Lódz that stayed, you know, because of they were needed to clean up --

Q: Right.

A: -- the -- the -- the quarter, and they were coming out of their holes now, you know, openly. So they were there, and they were pre -- in pretty good shape, I have to tell you know, you know? They probably -- they could not stop thanking God for what happened, that they were allowed -- you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- that their things were so different from others. There were people that coming from the camps, very few. And for a long time, weeks, we sort of saw that that's it, nobody else survived.

Q: Ah, out of the whole --

A: Right.

Q: -- Europe.

A: That -- that that is -- that is all. So we tried to -- to live. We got assigned a apartment, and that was an apartment that Germans were living in and then they evacuated, they -- they went west, to Germany. So we had an apartment. We had no job, there were no jobs to be had, we had no money. The Jewish Committee that was trying to form itself was very weak and inefficient. And there was not much help that they could give us, me, my friend and some others. So life was very, very hard. And what do we do? We wanted to enroll at school, at the university. Lódz did

not have a university before the war. It was opening, and they had a medical faculty. So that was not possible to get to that, so I enrolled in natural sciences, and tried to go to school, which was very hard to do, you know, we were not there, mentally. So life was hard and there was a question how do we survive.

Q: And you were together with your friend.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Wanda -- Vonda?

A: Vonda.

Q: Wanda?

A: Yes. How do we survive? Then there were the opportunities to make sa -- a living, where for men, following, you know, after a war, and the war was not finish really, but Russians were in Lódz so it was a city occupied. Usually it is -- people live from black market, you know, exchanging -- exchanging dollars, zlotys and so on. And a big thing was ba -- bringing food stuff to the west, to the German border, and exchanging it for other things like linen and so on, and then coming to Poland and se-selling linen for money and living on that. The only thing that there was a different between a -- men and women, men were very comfortable doing it. As a woman you had to be prepared to get raped on the way. That was the -- the law of post-war without org -- or-order, without police, without anything. You know, you --

Q: Rape w -- rape was common?

A: Absolutely. You had to count on that. And some women didn't mind, or got used to that, and we didn't want to do that, so we were like that. Then comes along a friend of Vonda's, whom she knew from ghetto. And she introduced me to him, and that was my future husband. And pe -- ex-husband. And it was a typical story of a woman that cannot support herself, poor thing, so she

has to have a man who does. Is not rich, but he came also, you know, from Auschwitz, but he went to his little town close to Lódz, and his parents had a little factory of producing oil from grain. And he started this factory and he was making money. Not much, but enough to be very, effusively generous with us, helping us with bread and butter. And from little to little, you know, I was caught in that gratefulness. Had sex, and once I had sex, my Mama told me, that's your husband.

Q: Really?

A: You marry him.

Q: Period.

A: My mother was dead, but that I imagined what Mother would say.

Q: She never said that to you, but you imagined --

A: You had to be a virgin --

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: -- when you married.

Q: Right.

A: And the Jewish law was when you marry -- when you have sex, you -- you are married, if you didn't know it.

Q: It's not a great -- no, I didn't know this.

A: I'm telling you.

Q: It's a good thing.

A: I wish I would be so smart. So yeah, that was a terrible thing, because from the day one, I didn't think he's a -- you know, he is a partner for me. But I was grateful, that's true and that's fine. But wi -- I was [indecipherable] myself, feeling obliged by Jewish law to be his partner.

Q: Were you attracted to him?

A: Not really.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But it was a question of loneliness, of no food, of having sex. And I was not a femist -- feminist then, free of my mother's beliefs about sex and marriage go together like a dove and carriage, yes?

Q: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. You need to go farther, I guess.

A: That's right, and leave that, and go on. That what I should have --

Q: What was he like? When you say you -- you knew instinct -- that he really wasn't going to be a partner, so was he not an intellectual, was he not a sensitive --

A: Totally unintellectually.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Totally insensitive. Totally -- good heart he had, you know, in part, you know, to help Vonda and me, and that was of his good heart. He hel -- opened his house in that little town to some relatives, they were coming also, from everywhere. And feeding them, and giving them sleep, etcetera, so he was good in that way, and warm. But nothing else. Not a man to -- man to talk with, to discuss things, and y-you know, that's -- that was a big miss, and I was just poor little girl needing somebody to take care of her. I was not raised for that, but that's how it felt.

Q: Did -- did Vonda say to you, what are you doing?

A: Vonda was married in ghetto to a guy, and he came back from war --

Q: Oh.

A: -- at that same time, so she was --

Q: She was set.

A: She was set.

Q: She --

A: She told me not to marry him, but I was not ready to listen. I knew myself that [indecipherable] don't, but I did anyhow.

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable] of being alone, lonely, unhappy, abandoned by the world, by everybody. Poor thing. And he gives me shelter.

Q: Sure, makes sense.

A: Right.

Q: Probably happened a --

A: But I didn't have to pay the price for it.

Q: Well, no, I guess --

A: I didn't. But I did.

Q: But you did, yeah.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But you didn't know. Or you didn't know how not to do it.

A: I didn't know how not to do that.

Q: And I'm sure this is true, this is a very common kind of story, right?

A: Aprow -- yes. It is the sort of morality that enslaved women, that their sexuality is not theirs, but a man's, and they have no say over it.

Q: Right.

A: It's very hard to get away from it.

Q: Absolutely.

A: We're still not, as women, out of the woods, to comfortly -- comfortably to distinguish a relationship, sexuality, laws, etcetera. Men have no problem. Men were doing it all the time.

Q: Including during your time.

A: Including during war time.

Q: It's not a new thing.

A: Not a new thing.

Q: Right.

A: And we have a long way to go.

Q: Yeah. How long did you stay in Poland together? You -- so you -- when did you get married, '46, '47?

A: '46.

Q: '46.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So, very soon after you came back.

A: That's right.

Q: Are you going to school when you got married? Cause you started school before?

A: No, I enrolled in school before I was married, but then -- what happened then too, as I told you, I intended to stend -- stay in Poland because I thought that's my country, and you have no right to kick me out, German or Pole -- or the Polacks. But what started then, if you don't know, pogroms started in Poland, around in small towns, in Lódz Jews were killed. There were famous killing in southern Poland, Kielce, where Jews were killed for nothing. And it was frightful. You know, it was just a second ch-chapter of killing Jews, but now from Polacks, which was not a big surprise. But after that war? So there was a big exodus from Poland by Jews to Germany. Why

Germany? Because Germany was divided and occupied, you know, by the western powers and by Russia. And that was Germany, particularly American occupation that we were aiming for. Was a window out of Europe, and that was my resolve. I have enough of that continent, I'm getting out. So that was -- we went to Germany, smuggled, of course, you know, through the border. It was a big exodus, many people left. But in Germany, what happened? The big powers organized DP camps, displaced people camps, in which they put Jews, and Jews were in those camps for five, six years, cause nobody wanted to give them a visa, okay? So that was another eye opener, you know, where you going? So I enrolled in school, the university opened in Frankfurt [indecipherable] in medical faculty, and I enrolled, and I could do it because German government paid for tuition, it was the beginning of reparations for -- you know, for Jews after the war. It took me five years, I started in Lódz, five years to get my diploma, and the visa cames at that time too. So I was ready to go with my M.D. title, to America.

Q: And your husb -- your husband, was he shocked that you were going to medical school? I mean, this was not ordinarily in the 40's to -- for a woman -- maybe it was in Europe, I don't know. Certainly wasn't here.

A: In Europe this was much more acceptable.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And in that way I should say I admired him. He let me do what I wanted. He let me work, make money and he took the money and gambled it away. He was a gambler.

Q: Really?

A: Mm-hm. So I was grateful. I could work.

Q: You were gra -- but you couldn't have your own money.

A: Of course not.

Q: So, you graduated with a medical degree in what? What sort of medical doctor were you at that time, after five years?

A: Medical, general medical.

Q: Just general med-medical degree.

A: That's right.

Q: So then, you came to this country in '51?

A: Right. And hi -- I had a son two years old.

Q: So while you were finishing medical school, you had a son?

A: Right, David.

Q: Wow, that's a lot.

A: Yes, I always did a lot.

Q: You always did a lot.

A: Don't you get the feeling?

Q: I get the feeling, yes.

A: Oh, my. I was capable, and I liked doing a lot. You know, I -- I had the energy to do --

Q: Right.

A: -- and enjoying it, yes.

Q: Yes. And did your husband help? Was he good with David?

A: Yes. [indecipherable]. But I -- I was so grateful to him that he -- you know, most husband didn't like their wives to work or make money, right?

Q: Right.

A: Stay home, you know, that was the common cry.

Q: Right.

A: And he was different, he let me -- he helped me studying, he took care of David. You know, i- it was so nice.

Q: Well, you were also a way for him to have money so he could gamble, given what you said.

A: Of course, of course.

Q: Yes, hm.

A: He trained me so he can [indecipherable]

Q: Where did you go in the United States when you came here?

A: Cincinnati.

Q: Why Cincinnati?

A: Tell you why. The idea was, when the visa finally came, through the Jewish institution HIAS, and you know, then there was a question where do I go. So they assigned you where to go. So my first assignment was Seattle, Washington. You -- you won't think I am so smart any more after I tell you that story. What do I know about Seattle, Washington?

Q: I have no idea.

A: I had nobody to talk to that knew anything. So I took out the map.

Q: Right.

A: And I look, America, Seattle, ocean, Russia. I want you to know, when we left Europe, since the end of the war til we left, we lived in a constant fear that the Russia is going to overrun Europe, that they are not finished. So there was always a fear that Russia will overrun. I was infected by that, too, stupidly. So there is Russia, and here is Seattle, a inch on the map.

Q: So you really got afraid?

A: Yes. Three -- we --

Q: It's too close.

A: Next door.

Q: Right.

A: I said, I don't want to go there. Would you change, kindly. They changed. Next assignment came, El Paso, Texas. I consult the map again. And I look at the map and I see El Paso. It's the end of the States. Mexico. Cowboy coun -- Texas. It's cowboy country. And beforehand I told the guys at HIAS, one thing I won't go to is New York or Chicago.

Q: Really?

A: Right. Cause that's Al Capone country.

Q: Both is Al Capone country?

A: New York had something else, but you know, those are -- you know, and I don't want to be there. I just want you to tell -- to know. Before the war, the idea of going to America was a horrible idea for most Jews. Only deserted of Russian army --

Q: Went to --

A: -- would go, or adventurers, or gamblers were going to America.

Q: Oh.

A: A nice girl like I would not go to America. So New York, and Chicago were the biggest centers of that. Well, anyway, El Paso I told them, that's cowboy country, and I-I don't know about that. At that time friends of mine were already in Cincinnati, you know, with the same past history. So we corresponded, and we -- I told them the story, and they said, why don't you come to Cincinnati? I said, how can I come to Cincinnati, I am dependent on HIAS and all that. And they se -- nevermind, they will ship you to -- to New Orleans from -- from Hamburg, and when you are in New Orleans, we will call the leaders there, and they will ship you to Cincinnati. And

that's what happened. We were entering New Orleans, and then we correspond -- I mean, there were telephones and so on, and they put us on a train from New Orleans to Cincinnati.

Q: And did you have a job in a hospital, though?

A: Oh, well, no. We were just --

Q: You were just there.

A: We were just there, in Cincinnati, no job. And he -- he got a job, finally. And you know the institutions, Jewish institution were helpful in the beginning, supportive, til he was making money. And that's how we start our life here.

Q: So when did you start your practice?

A: I had to do my state board.

Q: Right. Did you speak English? I just thought of this.

A: No.

Q: Of course you didn't.

A: But I took one year English in school, as an additional foreign language.

Q: When? Way back?

A: In high school, way back. [indecipherable]

Q: And that was enough?

A: Then I learned, I worked and I learned.

Q: And the medical terms, of course, are the same. Or --

A: Different language.

Q: Different la --

A: Or the -- the Latin was the same.

Q: Latin's the same.

A: Yes.

Q: Right.

A: But different language.

Q: So when did you pass your boards?

A: I think ’55. We came in ’51, I did my internship and residency in -- in medicine. I could not take the board before because they had a problem with recognizing certain schools in Germany as worthy of -- you know, to acknowledge the graduation. So it took them few years, and finally I got the news that your school is recognized. So I took the state board, and then I was a doctor.

Q: Then you were a doctor?

A: Yes.

Q: We have to change the tape.

End of Tape 10

Beginning Tape 11

Q: Did you start working as a doctor right after you passed your boards in ’55?

A: I opened my practice in ’57.

Q: And this was a family pract -- this was a --

A: Family medicine.

Q: Family medicine.

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: So when did you decide to be -- to do psychiatry?

A: I was about, you know, close to 15 years in practice, in family practice. And then I realized that I -- you know, I had a lot -- my practice was mainly women -- women and children, very few men. Family, so the husband would come and so on, but mainly women. And I was taken aback by observing how many women suffered from depression, deep depression. And that was a well-to-do suburb of Cincinnati, where families were ma -- mainly coming to work with Cincinnati with General Motors, Ford company, PNG. So they were -- the husband were -- had good jobs. The wives were taking care of the house and children, and I would see them in my office, and they would come with all kinds of physical symptoms. And we did the work and nothing showed. So I would have to tell them that I could not find anything else, so I don’t know why you -- why you hurt here and there. And try to sort of enlarge the questioning, what and how. I was doing a lot of house calls, not because I was so generous, but maybe I wanted -- I was used to house calls back home. But I wanted to get to know the country I am living in, and that was a very good way to do it, to see people’s homes, and how they lived. So I know the ones -- one thing I knew that was very stressful, and that was the big companies were promoting people, but you paid a price for it. The promotion would come and you had to move to another part of the

country. If you get the promotion in Cincinnati, you would be sent to the west coast, and from the west coast you would be sent to Cincinnati. So the family was always in a turmoil, having to live with the idea that every two years you have to move, if you want to move up the ladder. And it was the wife that had to put in roots quickly, school, church, neighborhood. I knew that that was a chore, but they were always sen -- saying that they are treated well -- they are treated well. The husband really didn't move. He was still in the circles of national commerce, or productivity. But the wife had to change totally her surrounding, and make it easy for the husband. So I know -- knew that, but beyond that I didn't know. And I had friends, they were either in training of psychiatry, or psychiatrists, and they told me about it, and what -- and I didn't know anything about Freudian psychiatry in Germany. We were learning psychiatry, you know, but not about Freud. So, you know, the dynamic psychiatry, it was fresh to me, and it was exciting, so I said, I ka -- I have to do it. That's -- I went into training.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that was very exciting, and that was good. Listen, I have to tell you part of my story that I omitted, and I ashamed of that. But it is very hard. And that -- I told you I had another son, right?

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I was -- when I came to America, I was pregnant -- you know, David was two years old and I was pregnant. And then Charlie was born in '51, still the same year we came. And he was a lovely child, so I had two children, right, and fine. He developed -- what can I say? He developed psychological problems, was in therapy. We did not recognize the depth of his depression. Eventually he committed suicide. He was 21. So that is a thing I don't like to talk about. You understand why. Big pain.

Q: Yeah. Is that also one of the reasons why you d -- wanted to go into psychotherapy?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: It was quite separate.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Course it's painful, it's horrible. And David is two years older?

A: Two and a half years older, mm-hm.

Q: Should I ask you something? I don't -- I --

A: Yes, go ahead.

Q: Did y -- did you understand und -- at any point before he died, how deep the depression was?

How -- how -- how much in pain he was, or was that too hard to tell?

A: I knew some, but obviously I did not understand how deep it was.

Q: Mm, mm.

A: And how dangerous it was --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- to his life.

Q: Yeah. Did David? His so -- his brother.

A: Neither.

Q: Nobody.

A: No. He was in therapy.

Q: Right.

A: But I don't think the psychiatrist understood it too.

Q: So it seems as if no one could have -- I mean, there were no -- there were not enough signs for someone -- and it's not clear that one can do anything --

A: That's right.

Q: -- under those circumstances. And why did you say you were ashamed? You were ashamed because you didn't say it.

A: That's right.

Q: Oh.

A: If -- to -- as if to deny his existence, you know?

Q: Right.

A: Which I don't want to do --

Q: Right.

A: -- but it is too hard to talk about it, so --

Q: And I must admit, I was hesitating to ask you. I knew. I didn't know this -- I didn't know any part of the story, but I was hesitating. So it's -- it's very tough. When were you divorced?

A: '73. Charlie died in '73, too.

Q: Sure. Wow. So that was quite a year.

A: You can say that.

Q: I don't know, your life has these arcs of so many difficulties, and so -- and at the same time, accomplishments. No?

A: I don't know, I don't treat it as accomplishment. It was work that I had to do.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Work I had to do to survive the war in the ghetto, in Auschwitz. You know, to bear witness, which I am doing now.

Q: Right.

A: Just to tell the story that it -- it really was.

Q: And when did you start talking about the Holocaust? Did you talk with your sons? I know you couldn't talk with your husband, he -- he would not speak about any of his experiences.

A: With my sons I talked, but very little.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Facts, giving facts.

Q: But they didn't know your experience.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Certainly not in details how we talk now. So the silence was horrible.

Q: Did you want to speak?

A: I could not speak.

Q: You couldn't.

A: I could not speak. I could tell them some, but then I -- I -- I couldn't go any farther. And people didn't want to listen --

Q: I was going to ask, yeah.

A: -- including my children.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So that was a sort of silence over the whole experience.

Q: Right.

A: Individually, and as a Jewish experience.

Q: So, the people that you met in Cincinnati didn't say what happened?

A: There was a group of people, of Jews, that came here at the same time, about the same time, with similar experiences. And I was involved with that group. One was the friend that, you know, asked me to come, you know, from se -- from New Orleans here. Where it was by and large not a comfortable group, the same way as my relationship with my husband was not because he was not on my level, and we had very little in common in communicating and talking about things, and -- but that group was the same cut of people. We were celebrating holidays together, we had parties like, you know, for holidays. The advantage of being part of the group was one. We knew about our experiences, and we didn't have to talk about it, where we from. We all had the same experience, and i-it was just being together, and not to have -- to explain yourself, or listen to explanation.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But then, at the same time that I was contemplating moving away from my husband, my relationship with that group also broke off. And it was funny and not funny how it did. You see, that group was strictly Polish Jews of tradition and Jewishness, and patriarchy, and the woman is a woman and I am the man. You know, in Jewish law, a woman cannot divorce a husband. The husband always can divorce the woman, to the degree that if there is not a rabbi, he can tell the woman, I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you, and that e-equals divorce, when you tell it to the rabbi. But a woman cannot divorce a man. I didn't un-understand that for a long time, but then, after I divorced my husband, that wo -- group turned against me, they stopped talking to me. And I didn't understand why til I became c -- became clear to me that I did do the unspeakable, I divorced a man. A woman divorced a man. So I was not sorry about breaking off the relationship, but what made me very angry was realized why it happened.

Q: Mm-hm. So is the -- the -- the next -- the next person with whom you actually talk about your experiences Lanzmann? Because that's in the next couple of years, right? Or is it --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And once you do that, once you give that interview, do you decide, okay, now I don't have to talk about it again? Or not?

A: I don't know, but in the time since my divorce and all that, I was more free to talk with my friends, many of whom were Gentiles, women we got sort of all together with a group of women that we were sort of compatible, and they are all Ge-Gentiles. And I was free to talk with them about it, or even with other -- other Jews. But how it happened really, maybe the impetus was the interview with Lanzmann.

Q: Mm-hm. Have you spoken to students, or is this all very private? Or synagogue groups, or church groups, or --

A: No, no --

Q: No, no public --

A: -- I never wanted to do it.

Q: -- no. You didn't want to do it.

A: No, no. I did once in a school, you know, in a public school to a group, to a class, talked about it, and that was very unsatisfactory. I didn't enjoy it, it was just not my --

Q: It wasn't your cup of tea.

A: Ye -- right. So I didn't.

Q: Do -- have people in the last 10 years, or m-maybe since the Lanzmann film, do they, when they meet you say -- ask you more questions? They don't?

A: No.

Q: I guess I'm surprised at that. In the last 10 years? Not --

A: Be-Because they saw the -- the film?

Q: Because they saw the film, or in the last 10 years, I mean, the Holocaust Museum in Washington opened, and then there was "Schindler's List" and there seems to be more discussion about survivors, so I thought perhaps there was more discussion with you as well? No.

A: No.

Q: But you s -- you said you -- when you were in the ghetto, that you felt you needed to bear witness, yes?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So how were you going to do that? I mean, how did you, in your own head, think about ho -- the Lanzmann was accidental, actually --

A: That's right.

Q: -- if you hadn't gone up to him.

A: I didn't have it formulated either in the ghetto, or -- or in Auschwitz to bear witness. But thought was, you have -- you have to live through, you have to survive, be able to talk about the pa -- because people won't believe if you don't talk about it.

Q: Right.

A: They won't believe those stories. So somebody has to tell how it was. And I didn't have any concrete things to talk or write about it. But just to be alive, and show them you didn't -- you know, I was not killed, I was --

Q: Right.

A: -- almost done away with, but I am alive.

Q: Right.

A: And that really happened.

Q: Right.

A: It was sort of more abstract by -- that was one way.

Q: Right.

A: To survive to tell the story. But very -- in a abstract way.

Q: So do you talk more with David now, or his seeing the Lanzmann interview ge -- it -- meant he didn't have to ask you so many questions because you said so much in that interview?

A: It's not that he asked questions, but he -- we watched it together, and he told me how much he appreciate that, that we did it, and that I have done it.

Q: Mm.

A: So we had a more unspoken feelings --

Q: Right.

A: -- of understanding.

Q: Right.

A: Which is invaluable, really.

Q: Absolutely. Well, I have to say that the first time I spoke with you, you said to me, absolutely not, you're not going to do an interview. And finally the second time you said yes. So I just want to tell you how m -- I'm really, terribly grateful that you said yes, and it's been more than a pleasure for me to be with you today.

A: Thank you. And it's very important that we did it.

Q: Absolutely.

A: I feel that's another step to sort of clear my heart and clear my brain.

Q: Does it do that?

A: I thinks so.

Q: Yeah? I hope so.

A: And also another thing. I think I told that to Raye, maybe to you, that the trip to Poland, you know, to Lódz, the 60th anniversary that I participate in, shook me very much, to the degree that I was sorry I went.

Q: Really?

A: It really unsettled me unbelievably. And I don't have really all answers to that. One thing was that it was the feeling like bearing witness to be there, established the fact that it really happened to me and to my family and to my people. It's sort of I put it to rest through the years, and being there at the anniversary --

Q: Right.

A: -- it brought it, you know, physically --

Q: Right.

A: -- that it really did happen. And that was such a -- a reaction, physically and mentally my whole body and -- was totally unsettled for months now.

Q: This was 2005 in the summer, yes?

A: That's right.

Q: 2005, it was --

A: That's right.

Q: -- so it was recent.

A: August.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yes, 60th anniversary.

Q: And it -- you're still unsettled from it?

A: I'm still unsettled from it.

Q: Hm. So you've clashed with your -- the self that put it behind, and then it got brought forward, it -- and of course it's physical because you're in the very place that you lived as a child, and lived under this horrible threat. So I guess you won't go back.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I done my duty.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know if duty, but it is like going to a grave, you know? To a grave of my previous life. Family and my own life. Ya -- 60th anniversary.

Q: Yeah.

A: And of course, what else can you expect but a good dose of mourning. That's how I explained my -- to myself, what I was going through since August [indecipherable] of -- you know, of this year.

Q: Do you think you never had time to mourn before? That you were so busy and so moving towards your future that you didn't -- you couldn't mourn?

A: You're right. It was a unfinished mourning. Because you had -- and probably for all of u --

Q: Yes.

A: -- I mean, all survivors, you had to live against your wish to be dead --

Q: Right.

A: -- with your -- with your family.

Q: Right.

A: To join, you know, the family that was dead. So it took all energy to stay alive, and not to join them.

Q: Right. And now you were back. Did you find your grandmother's grave? Did you even look? No?

A: I asked, there was no -- you know, the cemetery supervision was in total disarray. They couldn't find graves, so I gave up.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I tried.

Q: Right. Well, I hope the mourning period doesn't last. That appear at so -- at some point it must stop, no?

A: I hope so.

Q: I hope so.

A: And I think you know the interview with Lanzmann, and with you now, and talk with Raye has a lot to do with it. To bring that feeling, or maybe of being free of it.

Q: Yes.

A: Of the mourning.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know, but what can you do? How did you find that subject with other survivors when you talked with --

Q: I don't think they've talked about this in quite the same -- in quite the same way. So I don't -- I -- I don't know how to s -- I don't know how to tell you.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And I haven't met anyone who went back to that anniversary and wondered.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Maybe I'll make a f -- a few phone calls and ask and see -- see how they are, based on that. Well, thank you. And we'll shut the camera off, and then do your photographs.

A: It doesn't have the date of my mother, either.

Q: Paula, who is this gentleman here?

A: That's my dad.

Q: And what's on the back?

A: Hm?

Q: Is there something on the back that you want to [indecipherable]

A: There's some Hebrew writing.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Well, but he writes in Hebrew something, and the last sentence is in Polish. And he refers, really, to his expression of the face, which is very angry, and he says it's a Polish thi-thing. [speaks Polish here]. The devil is not so terrible as he is painted.

Q: Oh.

A: And that's my mother, and I don't know from when it is. And those are my parents.

Q: Right. It's great shots. Yes, Paula [indecipherable]

A: That's my father and myself. The year is 1927, so I am five years old.

Q: And on the right?

A: That's myself from the same year.

Q: Okay, this shot?

A: That's a picture of myself, and I am five years old.

Q: And this was not a hat of your choice?

A: Hm?

Q: This was not a bow of your choice?

A: Oh God, no.

Q: On the right?

A: And this is the picture of my sister, Dora, and she is one year old.

Q: And this picture on the left?

A: That's my family. In front is my grandmother, on m -- my mother's mother. Then is my mother just behind her. My father is to -- to the right. My sister next to grandmother, and I myself are next to my mother.

Q: Was this at your house?

A: No, that was in the country on summertime.

Q: And the other shot?

A: And this -- this shot is my family as well, the same constellation. In the back is my mother, and next to her my father. I am next to my father and in front is my grandmother, and to her right is my sister, Dora.

Q: And now your sister has the big bow.

End of Tape 11

Conclusion of Interview