

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Kristine Keren
October 25, 2007
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PREFACE

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KRISTINE KEREN
October 25, 2007

Question: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren, conducted by Amy Rubin, on October 25th, 2007. This interview is made possible by a grant from Carole and Maurice Berk. This is tape number one, side A. Okay, Dr. Keren, I wanted to just start by asking you to tell me please your full name as it is today, as well as your name at birth.

Answer: My full name is Kristine Keren. My name at birth, oh, it was Kristina Heger.

Q: Were there any other names that you went by, either first name or last name, during the war years?

A: Is -- after the war, we change -- we m-move to Kraków from Lvov and we change our names that it -- to Chyrowski, Kristina Chyrowski, because my parents thought that Chyrowski sound much more Polish than Heger, and f -- only f-for the safety reason, they change the name for Chyrowski.

Q: Can you spell that for me?

A: Is C-h-y-r-o-w-s-k-i.

Q: And did you have any other nicknames? Your first name, that is.

A: No, I always was Kristina. Only when we came to United States, at the time that we got our citizenship, we change our name to Keren, and my name -- my first name we changed to Kristine.

Q: So now could you tell me when and where were you born?

A: I was born in 1935, October 28, in Lvov. At that time the city belonged to Poland, and during the -- from '39 to '41, the city wa -- were under Russian government. Then from '41 through

'45, it became the f -- under l -- German occupation. Right now the city, Lvov, it belongs to Ukraine, and the name is Lviv.

Q: Were you -- were you born in a hospital, or were you born at home?

A: I was born in hospital, it was Jewish hospital, and is still ig -- i-i-in existence, the hospital.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your parents. What are their names and when were they born?

A: My father, his name is Ignatsi Heger, and he was born December 8, 1906, in Lvov. And he went to s-schools in Lvov. He graduate from -- you can say -- at that time they called this gymnasium, and he got a medal from the Kaiser for t -- his unbelievable success i-in high school. He was very intelligent and very smart man. He spoke few languages fluently, and he wanted to study medicine, but unfortunately at that time it was, for Jews it was forbidden to partici -- study medicine at the university. But he study at the university history and philoso -- philosophy, and he got Ph.D. in those two subject.

Q: Was that unusual at that time for -- for a Jew to get Ph.D.'s like that?

A: It was very difficult because of the numerous clauses, you know, the -- the medicine he couldn't study. If somebody wanted to study law or medicine, they have to leave Poland and l -- went, for example, to Czechoslovakia. I-In Prague -- they study in Prague, some study in Vienna, but in Poland it was forbidden.

Q: And tell me also about your -- your mother.

A: My mother i -- her name was Paulina Pepe Gold. And she was born July 23rd, 1909 -- 1909, in Lvov, and her family had a textile business i-in Lvov. He -- she went to sc-school, she graduate from gymnasias, and she graduate from a -- a s-school for d -- designers. And -- and h -- she was helping her parents in their business because mo-mostly what they were dealing, it was in textiles for clothes, and she was very good in -- with -- with this. And she -- she had a -- a sister and she

had a -- a -- two brothers. And a-after the war only who survive it was my mother and her sister. The rest of the family was -- was killed, and the same with my father family. He had the sister and the brother, and his sister was killed in the ge -- during action in the ghetto in Lvov, and his brother, 1941, the -- when the Russian a-army retreated from Lvov east, he -- he joined the Russian army, and we never heard from him. I tried to look through the Red Cross, but unfortunately they don't have any information about him.

Q: How did your parents meet?

A: Oh, my parents meet -- my father was very sport oriented. He -- he was playing soccer, basketball, base -- baseball, and my mother was playing volleyball. And he spot her because she was very pretty young woman, and he spot her and this is how they met.

Q: So also tell me if you had any siblings, and I think you have a -- had a brother, and tell me about him and when he was born.

A: I -- my brother's name is Pinyo Pavel Heger. He was born May 18, 1939. And he was di -- he was younger than me, or -- three and a half years. And he really didn't remember, you know, too much about what happened because he -- he was very young, and during the occupation, where we -- we were in -- in ghetto, I -- I had to take care of him, and we were very close. We loved this -- ea -- ea -- each other, and we will do for -- anything for ea-each other, and you know, the circumstances that we grew up, those few years during occupation, it made such a -- developed such a bond between us, that always you know, he treat me like -- not only like a sister, but like a mother.

Q: Do you remember -- you were quite young, but do you remember when he was born?

A: Yes, I remember exactly when he was born. He was born at home in our -- in my parent's bedroom, and I kn -- I knew that something will happen, because my parents sent me with our

maid, it was some k-kind of Christian holy day. And she took me and she wanted to go with me to -- to -- to -- to park, and th -- went fr-from the park she -- she went to the -- the church. But I was very un -- I was very nervous because I knew that something is going on, I could feel it, and I wanted constantly to go home. I -- I pushed her and push her all the time, let's go home, let's go home. And then finally we got home after few hours walking, we got home and my father, hi -- he w-when I e-entered the -- th-the apartment, my father took me to the bedroom and show me, and said this is your new baby brother. And he -- I ask him how it came, and my father said, you know, do y -- we put the su-sugar in front of the -- on the window le-ledge, and the --

Q: The stork?

A: -- the stork came, took the sugar and left your brother here. And I was sure that this is the story, that the -- this is what happened.

Q: That's cute. Did you -- do you remember if there was a bris for your brother?

A: Yes, I remember. It was when the -- a week later it was a bris, it -- it happen in our apartment, it was th -- a lot of people came, and they kept me still with -- with my aunt in the kitchen, they didn't let me out from the kitchen and I was crying and kicking my aunt that I want to go and see because I knew that something is going on there. But they -- they didn't allowed me.

Q: What are some of your earliest memories, you know, before anything really changed, of Lvov? Anything about the city? You were quite young, but anything you quite remember?

A: I remember very well th-those years i-in -- i-in -- in Lvov. Lvov was beautiful city, and th-th-the streets were always full of people rushing and going and I used to go to a -- a -- a -- a man -- a [indecipherable]. This is a -- a-a -- si -- si -- place in the middle of the city, beautiful with two m -- lions was -- big lions standing and watching the market. This was main market in the city, always bi -- bi -- lot of women ber -- were selling flowers, and I like it about that -- that -- you

know, so many flowers were around. And then th -- I remember that I used to go every day with my nanny, or -- or later with my mother to Visokes Zamec. It was a park, beautiful park on the hills that you could see the whole Lvov from the ma -- high hills. And always l-lot of kids. I used to play there, I used to play with my cousins there, and i-it was really such a pleasure to live in this city and I remember waiting for my parents when they were working at the business, the textile business, wa-waiting for them to come out and to go with them home. I was sitting on the step and waiting and I had clothes -- dresses made by a -- a designer, she had a -- a store special - s-specially for children d-designing. And m -- I used to go there, I remember standing on the stool, and she was taking measurements and I used to turn it to the left, to the right and look into the mirror. It was like a princess. It was so -- so nice, so beautiful, I will never forgot the -- the coat that I have in the -- in the b -- in navy blue, and the same -- I had the -- made ca --

Q: A hat, or --

A: A hat, yes. The same -- the same color from the same mat -- material. I-It was such a nice life and s-such a pleasure I took from ever -- everything. You know, my -- my grandmother used to go to Vienna, a-and she used to bring a -- a lot of materials, she used to buy textile fr-from -- i-in Vienna, but each time she went she always bring something for me, for her granddaughter. And I remember the toys that I was getting. I-It was so beautiful, and the dresses what she used to bring to me is like you know, it happened yesterday. I will probably never forget this.

Q: That's really nice. So it sounds like your -- your family was pretty well off. Can you talk a little bit more about the work that -- that your parents was -- were doing, and give that sense of, you know, how your family was doing financially?

A: You -- my family were well off, and they did fin -- financially very well. They weren't very, very rich, but they were, you know, the status was -- she wa -- they were very well si-situated. I -

- we -- we had a -- a m -- a maid and I had a nanny, and they had the -- their own business because my grandf -- parents -- when my par -- parents got married, th-they gave -- they bought for them a place, not far away from their place, and they were running their ow-own shop, their own business. And my father was helping my -- my mother because it was easy fo-for him, she needed help. And they both were working there.

Q: Was it unusual that your mother was working at that time?

A: I -- I really -- y-y -- y-you know, my mother was working there, and I took this that this is how it's supposed to be. I don't know, but I -- I think that it wasn't so popular that women were working, but my -- my father c-comes from family who was very socialistic oriented. And my mo -- my grandmother already was working f-for o-on the side of my mother, my grandmother was working in the business. That mean her daughter, it wasn't something unusual, she continued the tradition.

Q: That's interesting. Were your -- were your parents politically involved?

A: My parents weren't politically i-i-in -- involved, o-only that I know that my grandfather, my - - from my father's side, he was a Socialist and he was with a group of workers. But he wasn't involved with any demonstration, a-anything like this, no.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about each of your parents personalities, and also, you know, did they run a strict household, or what kind of home life was it like?

A: The life that I remember before the war, it was -- it wasn't so s -- you know, s-strict fo-for me, bu -- I-I had a nanny that I wa -- she took care of -- of me, but you know, it had to -- to be discipline. It was certain hour that I have a breakfast, dinner, e-etcetera. But -- a-and my father was always busy and my mother was busy too, but is -- when she was coming home, sh-she spend the time wi-with me. Most of the time she spend with me and later on with my brother

together. But th-the atmosphere at home was very easy. We're s-so delighted, you know -- my father has a great sense of humor and my mother too. And everything was always with smile, and everything we a -- we always were laughing, even if the most difficult circumstances. We -- he always tried to make jokes, and my mother too, to make it easy to -- to go through those things.

Q: So, could you also give me a sort of a physical description of -- of your home? You know, describe what it looked like.

A: Oh, we used to live on the Kopernica 12, in Lvov. This wa -- is a beautiful building and is still standing, and is even included in the hi-historical artifacts.

Q: As a landmark?

A: Like the landmark. Is a landmark, because I found out in the guide of Lvov city, and I found out that this building is -- is a landmark. Is a beautiful o -- i-it -- we live -- the building had a front side, and then it has a bit of -- a beautiful courtyard, and m -- back part. I was born on the first floor in the back part, but then my parents moved to the bigger apartment in the main part, the front one, on the third floor, and it was a beautiful -- a round thing, like spiral s-steps, and the ceiling was all with -- made with glass. And it was bi -- the entrance was beautiful, and the same the apartment. It was big apartment; when you come in, y -- we have a big hall, and then y -- you go to the left. It was the -- like a dining room, and the be -- and the bed -- and the kitchen, and th -- it was a bath there, and it was another bath for the guests a-at the -- i-in the corridor. You had -- the corridor had a beautiful window, big window, and th-then w-we have a -- a master bedroom for my parents, then it was a bedroom for -- for me, and a th -- a third bedroom for a -- for my brother. And we had a beautiful furnitures, and a very good piano that my mother used to play. Nice windows and nice balcony. I-I-It was something really beautiful.

Q: What are some of your fondest memories of being in that home?

A: Oh, oh, I -- I like it to play i-in the courtyard with my friends. And I like to play at my home too, with my toys that my grandma u-used to bring me. And we had the -- when my bro -- brother was born, my father bought a -- a dog that we name him -- name him Pooshek because his hair was so delicate and so puffy that we name him Pooshek. And the -- I-I -- I loved -- I loved this -- this apartment, th-this house, th-the kids that I used to play. I-It was a beautiful life.

Q: Was that apartment building or the overall neighborhood mostly a Jewish neighborhood?

A: It was -- this apartment building bi -- was built in the section -- newest section and it wasn't only owned by Jewish people. It was mix -- mixture. But the building that we live, most of the tenants were Jewish, only the concierge, he was Christian.

Q: And so most of the kids you were playing with were probably Jewish, you think, or you remember from that time?

A: I remember that most of the time I used to play with the daughter of the concierge. I like her very much, we were similar age. She was older than me maybe a year or two, and I loved to play with her. And there were other kids that we played. But my friend, she was really my friend.

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: Her name was Danusha.

Q: And what about within the home? Were you -- was your family fairly observant? Were they kosher? What -- describe to me kind of the level of Jewish observance in your home.

A: In my -- my -- from the [indecipherable] of my father, they weren't religion. They kept the tradition. The -- the holy days, but my father, very seldom that h-he went to a temple. On my mother's side, her grandmother was very religious. And at her home, her mother kept kosher, because the grandmother used to live with them, and it -- they kept the kosher home, and they

were re-religious, and the -- the holy days, y-you know, they had that, the holy days. But in our house, it -- it was more like keeping th-the Jewish tradition, and to temple we used to go only on the high holy days.

Q: And so you didn't keep kosher at home?

A: No, we didn't keep ko-kosher at home, no.

Q: And what about, do you have memories of Friday night Shabbat dinners, or any other kind of, you know, Passover dinners or anything like this at home?

A: We used to go to the grandparents, to -- to my mother side, because they were the one who -- who kept the -- the religion at home.

Q: Do you think that at that young age you were actually aware of being Jewish, and also of possibly being different from others around you, by any -- you know, by comparison to the larger population of Lvov?

A: I-I -- I don't think so. Til 1939, I really didn't know ex -- do you know, that I am Jewish. I-I was like the other kids, and I didn't feel the different. The different probably who felt, they were my parents. But I don't remember the -- that I fe-fe -- personally, that I feel the difference, that I am -- you -- you know, Jewi -- Jewish and that I am different from the other kids. I played with them i-i-in the -- in the park, I play with a lot of kids and I-I never, you know, knew that -- that this -- the one is Jewish and the other one is not Jewish. It didn't make any difference for me.

Q: So does that also mean -- did you not experience any anti-Semitism before the war?

A: Me personally, being a kid, like I was 13 -- I was four -- four and a half, five years old, you know, I didn't experience any di-different -- an -- any an-anti-Semitism.

Q: What languages did you speak at home?

A: We -- we spoke at home Polish, and sometimes when my parents didn't want me to understand something, they -- they spoke Yiddish or German. But the language spoken was Polish.

Q: So it sounds like your family was fairly well assimilated.

A: Yeah, we belong to the -- th-the families i-in Lvov that were as -- more -- more assimilated, and it -- it -- it was a lot of families, and special the families who were -- you know, on the higher level, lil -- little bit. They were more assimilated, they spoke Polish, they went to -- to -- to school, a po -- a Polish school, and they t -- try. They try to be even with not Jewish people, but they didn't succeeds.

Q: Before the war, were you in any kind of schooling at all, in Lvov?

A: Til th-the war, '39, no, I was at home. I was brought at home. I didn't -- only after '39, when th-the ration came, and they took Lvov and then the -- the government was like a -- a -- a Russian government, and th-they -- the -- the Russian [indecipherable], they -- they opened the kindergartens and I went -- the first time I went to the kindergarten in '39, the end of '39, maybe '40, th -- I -- I remember the date that I went -- went to the kindergarten, how I wa -- I was crying. I didn't want to stay and I remember the teacher, that she came to me and she introduce me to the other kids, and she said that everything will be okay, she brought a li -- a -- a doll that I will play. But I was still crying, but then next day I was crying less, and then I go -- got used to, and I like it.

Q: So now, if you could tell me, I'm going to -- all right. If you could tell me about what else was changing. Well, first of all, September 1st, 1939, did you have any awareness of the start of the war in Poland before -- cause I think it's three weeks later when the Russians take over Lvov, did you have any awareness at all?

A: In the -- September 1st, 1939, I remember I wa -- my -- my father took me all of his arms, and we were looking through the windows, and I -- I remember the -- the German airplanes, the Messerschmitt, and I remember the noise, and my father was looking and s -- he said to me that the -- this is the end. And th-this I remember, and we were staying in the shelter that was in the basement in our apart -- in our building, and my brother was only li-little, he -- he -- the few months and he was i-in the stroller, and I remember when they had the -- the pause between the - the -- the bombing, that I used to go to Danusha, to her house, because she was on the fir-fir -- ground floor. And this I re -- her mother made lunch for her and she made lunch for me, and she made the eggs upside down. And from this time I remember the taste even, those eggs. But later on -- few days later we moved to my grandparents shelter because it was bigger. And we stayed with ou-our grandparents til the Russian came.

Q: How long then was -- were you in shelters like that? How long was the bombing? You know, how long was that going on?

A: The bombing was going a -- weeks. I think maybe two or three weeks. And the -- til the -- the Russian came. Then i -- then it stopped.

Q: So now what do you remember about that transition, about when the Russians actually came in?

A: When the Russian came -- came in, it was change in my life because I -- first I went to kindergarten for the first -- first time. And then my -- my parents lost the business, and I remember the -- the -- the evening that my fa --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number one, side B. If you could continue where we got cut off.

A: A-A-Af -- one evening after the -- the Russian came to -- to Lvov and occupied the -- this -- the city, my father came at evening home and he said to my mother that right now we don't have anything. That wha-wha-what happened, the Russian, they took the whole business, they took -- came to the sto-store and they told my father to give him the key, and they sa -- t-told him to -- to -- to -- to leave th-the business. And th-this is wh-wh-what happened. We -- we -- they -- my parent, they have a few employees that were wor-working for -- for -- for them. They -- the -- some of them went home, some of them stayed and worked for the Russian government. And th-this was a big shock for -- for my family. We -- we lost our en -- en -- and a -- nanny and we lost our maid because our maid said that now everybody is equal she doesn't have to work for -- for rich people. And i-i-it was a -- a completely -- completely change in our life. My mother stayed at home, my father started to look for -- for j -- some kind of job that we can survive, and t-to -- to survive he needed like two jobs because the salary were so low, that from one job you -- you couldn't, you know, e-e-exist. I don't mean t-to -- to any luxury, but it was the simple food was very difficult to get. You had to stay in line and you had to had some type of connection that you can get a -- a loaf of bro -- o-of -- of bread, o-of a little bit of butter. It was very difficult, and besides it was politically difficult too, because you know -- I didn't feel this maybe so much, but I remember that my parent were very scared and afraid because they belonged to -- to bourgeois and bourgeois sh-should be in Siberia, not in -- i-in Lvov. And besides too -- t -- our apartment, we got two tenants. They came from a side of Poland that was under the German occupation. They -- they were the Jewish refu -- refugee to came from Kraków, from other cities, and my parents took to -- to they apartment a -- a -- wa -- one room was fo-for a -- a woman, a -- one

woman, I remember her name, she was -- her name was Bagnerova. And the other room for -- i- it was for a father and a son that esca-escape from Kraków or some other city. And this way we had only wa-- wa -- one bedroom and -- and the kitchen and the -- the kitchen was for th-the -- the -- the tenants -- th-the -- the refugee, they could use th-the kitchen, th-they used to cook, and they used the -- the bathroom, it was common for all of us.

Q: Was that something that -- that you did to -- your family did to take them in because they were refugees, or was this somehow required by the Russians to -- to live like this?

A: It was both. I-It was -- Russian didn't like that you have t-too many rooms, the fa-family, and besides, it was y -- they wanted to -- to help those refugees who really didn't have a place where to -- where to live.

Q: So do you -- do you remember this as a pretty difficult time, or what are your personal kind of recollections from this particular era?

A: If -- if you take that e -- we will co-co-compare the life that I've had before and the life that I have after '39, it was different. It was more difficult, it was more tension, because my parents were always very tense, and were always, you know, a -- a -- l-l-l-looking outside with -- they were afraid. It was completely different. It was for me, for a child it wasn't so bad that for them, but I could f-feel th-the tension that was going on in the family. And f-for me, I was still playing with the kids, I -- I was going to the kindergarten. Thi-This time I -- I had a m -- my mother in home, and from this point of view I was very happy.

Q: Did you have any awareness at this -- at this earlier stage about the Nazis, before they actually came in, did you have any awareness as a young child?

A: I didn't know anything about the Nazi til the -- in 1941 the -- when they march to the city of Lvov. Nothing. It was -- probably my -- my parents, they ba -- they s-spoke with the refugee

[indecipherable] but I -- I, like a child, I didn't pay too much attention to this. I didn't know anything about the Nazi before.

Q: So now tell me what are your earliest first memories about the Nazis taking over Lvov, and -- and when is this, and -- and give me a sense of how old you are about this time.

A: It was in June, 1941. This -- I -- I was al-already six years old, and I remember this vividly because it was the same first -- it was th-the -- the -- the airplane and the bombing, and we went to the shel-shelter, and I was watching through the -- through the window the same similar like '39, but i-it -- this time it was -- my -- my parents were co-completely de-depressed and th-th -- my father said th-th-th -- I remember to me, he -- we-we had bad, but this -- this is worse, what is -- was coming. And it -- it really was like this. The -- he -- I -- I remember hear the screaming and yelling and th-th-the Germans, the -- the -- on the motorcycles are roaring through the -- through this street, a-and the Ukrainians who -- who were so glad that the German came. They were happy, the women, Ukrainian women were thi -- giving flowers to -- t-to the Germans, because the Germans promised them that they will have the independent Ukraine now. This is why they were so -- so happy. And the one who were suffering the most, they were the je -- Jews, because Ukrainian hate the Jews before the war, and did th -- the -- pogroms before the war, now they had the free hand from the Germans and they did -- did a ver-very good job by k-killing and beating the Jews.

Q: So you have -- you have a -- a vivid memory of actually seeing Nazis on the sort of day that they come in? Tell me a little bit more about what you actually saw, and this is from your -- from your home, right?

A: I saw this from my home, from the window. I saw the Nazi coming, riding the bicycles, and I saw th-the -- the Germans pa-parading, and then th-the Ukrainians joining them, and the

commotion what happened o-on the street, I saw th -- everything I saw through the window, and I remember vividly.

Q: Do you -- did you see violent things right in front of you from the window from the start, or -- or was -- you didn't see that directly from there?

A: No, from the window I could see, I could see how the Ukrainian were hitting the -- th-the Jewish people. The -- th-the German didn't got involved so much, they -- they left th-the -- th-the bad work to the Ukrainians. And they took advantage of this and they really ber -- th-they were terrible, they were worse than Germans.

Q: An-And how scared did this make you feel as a six year old at that time?

A: Yeah, I was very scared, and I -- I remember that from that time I never went out. I was inside the apartment, because my parents, they didn't le-let me go out, even I didn't play in our -- our backyard. I di -- di -- I didn't go to -- to -- thi -- thi -- this was the end of my childhood, th-that's it. From this moment I became already a grownup.

Q: Did you get to see that friend of yours any more from the building, the concierge's daughter?

A: Yeah, she was the only one that I used to go to her and play in her apartment with her, yeah. She was the only one.

Q: Did you -- were you aware of, or did you know about then the pogroms taking place in the immediate aftermath, you know, after the Nazis came in and the Ukrainians, I guess, killed, you know, thousands, right?

A: I-I saw this and I knew about it, and I -- I ur -- my parents didn't tell me straight, but I was very observant, and through the window when I was looking, I saw lot of things. But, you know, they try to keep from us. They didn't want to -- to scare u-us too much, but th-the time was terrible because the Germans started to come already to our apartment and they took all our

furnitures, all our belongings. But they took it, I remember they came and they took th-the piano and th-the -- the German, he -- he came and he saw the piano and he started to play, he played very well, and he liked the piano. And he -- he -- he send people and they took it. We -- we were sitting on the floor with few belongings and that's it. Everything was gone.

Q: Were -- were you all still living there, the other tenants with you still?

A: I -- I-I -- I -- th-th-the German used to come, a-and used to take Jewish people from the apartments, and one night, on the second fr -- on th-the same fl -- no, it was on the second floor, they came and they took the owner of the -- of the building, it was a Jewish man, and they took the -- the owner. And then they went to the third floor, and they went to the ot -- it was a two apartment, but they told that this is one apartment, similar that on the second floor. That mean they took those people who live on the right side and they didn't come to our apartment. It was a sheer luck that they didn't take us. But i-it was -- they were picking, you know, just coming to the -- and taking Jews from the apartment, then they told us that we have to take our things and leave the apartment. And we left. We went to another place on Zamar Stenowska 34, that somehow my grandfather, he -- he said some relative used to live there, and we moved there in -- in one room, it was maybe 10 - 20 people, and we stayed there for -- for a week, and i-it was very crowded, terrible, and we moved to another apartment, also on Zamar Stenowska street, but it was little bit farther. It was number 124, and we stayed there in the apartment together. It was with one bedroom and one kitchen and we stayed together with my aunt and two children in the same place, for awhile.

Q: What was going on with your -- your father and I don't know if your -- I guess your mother wasn't working when the Russians came, but what happened to your father's work at this stage?

A: During the Russian o-occupation, di -- my father w-work in -- in -- in two places. He -- he work one pla -- place, i-it was for a s-spot cleaning and he was working there, they hire hi-him because his friend was a doctor there, and he took my father and he said that he is a doctor too, and he work there. And it -- it was another place that he was working, I think it was with s-some kind of supplies. I know that he worked in two places.

Q: Was he able to do that once the Nazis came in?

A: No, once the na -- Nazis came in, this was end, finito, no work. We -- we -- we -- h-he -- he didn't work, he -- he found maybe so-something, you know, st-still but this was completely different, it wasn't in the -- in this place, and h-he had to, you know, find something to -- to supply us with -- with the basic th-things to eat. And I -- I don't know exactly where he was working because it was a short time, th-then -- then we moved to Zamar Stenowska, then we move in another place, and he was working, he was working like a carpenter when we leave, because this already was ghetto. They move -- from Kopernica we went to Zamar Stenowska, it was ghetto, but i-it was open and they didn't had -- had the fence yet. And th-th-they -- th-the -- the Germans, e-every few months they were cutting from the space from -- from the ghetto, and the Jews had to move to different place. And -- and we move a few times, we -- we move from one place to another, because the ghetto was getting smaller and smaller, and at a certain time, I think it was in -- in '42, m-maybe that i-i-it -- it came mu-much smaller and it became cal-call-called Julak.

Q: So you're saying those times that you moved, that was actually because the Nazis, the Germans were saying to your family, you have to get into the ghetto now, you have to keep moving.

A: [indecipherable] exactly, they were -- yes. Th-Th-They were moving all over us, you know, you had to -- to take it -- each time you have to take less things with -- with you, only what you have o-on you a-a-and -- a-and move to a different place, and it was very crowded, people was living for few family in the same apartment, because it -- it was getting -- th-they wanted to have Jews as m -- as much concentrated in one place that it will be much easier to kill them.

Q: What were some of the items if -- if you could only take a few things each time, were there any like favorite items you remember as a child that you just had to hold onto and take with you each time?

A: I -- th -- a -- the -- basically, i-it -- it was a -- ma -- my mother used to take always something for -- for my brother to -- to -- to -- to eat like milk, or something, and whatever we were wearing, but wherever I went for pla -- to place, I had one things that I wanted to wear, it was my sweater that my grandmother knitted for me before the war. And I cherish this sweater, I -- I don't know wh-wha -- what was, you know, what were my feelings that I g-get so attached to this sweater that I was always wer -- wearing, trying -- whatever it -- w-we move, I -- I -- I took the sweater with me.

Q: And that, of course, is a sweater that you -- explain what -- what happened with that sweater, just fast-forward for one moment.

A: Yeah, th-th-th -- the sweater, i-i-i -- was saved, together with me -- me. It went through the ghetto, through the sewer, and then it went with me to -- from L -- from Lvov to Kraków, from Kraków to Israel, and from Israel it went with me to United States, and lastly I donated this to the -- to the Washington -- the Jewish Holocaust Museum, and is there on the exhibition.

Q: What were some of the other -- I guess, could you explain -- the times that you were moving from place to place, and the places where you lived, were there these round-ups going on? I guess, actions?

A: Oh, the aksia?

Q: Yeah, if you can explain more about that.

A: Oh, the -- the -- the aktion, they call these aksia, and th-this was a -- a plan fr-from a German and the Ukrainian to t-t-take th-the Jews, as many they could for yu -- or con -- or kill them on the spot, or take them -- around Lvov it was a place called Piaski where they killed them, or they took them to the concentration camps. They used to come with the lorries and pack the lorries wi-with -- with the Jewish people in the terrible, terrible con -- circumstances that -- that they were hitting them and killing them on the way to -- on the way to the lorries, and it was plan of -- o-of the Germans. It was few actions. It was -- one I remember was terrible, it was when we live on Zamar Stenowska 124, that it wa -- they call this August aktion. It was a few days, I think from the beginning of the August, like -- like a -- the whole -- the whole week. And they were going from apartment to apartment, whoever were -- was in apartment, ta -- ta-taking the people out, and kill them on the spot, or -- or send them i-in for th-the concentration camp or other place, t -- t-to killed on the way to concentration camp. And it -- it was a -- the terrible -- the Jews w-were divided in -- i-in the ghetto for two -- t-two group of people, the people who work during the day, and the people who were working during the night. And th-th -- they used to work in the Janowska camp. It was a labor camp that the people were working for the German company. My mother was working there, and she was sewing the -- the uniforms for th-th -- for the Germans. The people who were working during the day, they had the letter R. The people who were working during the night had the letter W. And, for example, in the aktion in th -- in

August, e -- o -- everyb-body who had the letter R, had to be taken out and killed. And n-n-next time, in the other aktion, it h-happened that the people who were wearing W stay, and the R -- o-opposite -- th-the W, th-they were supposed to be -- be taken out a-and killed. And this was going on every -- every di -- f-few weeks or few months, sometimes. You never knew the -- th-that will h-happen. It was a -- one aktion that they did th- the -- to kill the -- a-all children. Wherever they found a kid, they kill him and is -- on the spot [indecipherable] or th-the kid was small, they took them by the legs and hitting with h-his head th-the -- the building wall, and -- and throwing on the -- on the lorry. I-I-I -- it -- all the time w-we have to hide. And a-all the time my father used to build some hiding places for us. And he -- he had such a -- a -- an -- he was such entrepreneur, and he had a really genius when he was finding places, and built for -- for us to hide. One of the place that I remember, it was a -- a under the window ledge. He -- he -- in Europe they build thi-this way, that the window, under the window ledge you -- you have a space be-between the -- the bricks. And he put a -- a -- a artificial wall and he camouflaged the wall, and it was a space maybe to -- width, it was maybe one foot, and maybe length it was like four feet. And we were sitting there with my brother on the potties, he -- he gave us two potties in case we have to go. We were sitting there and he ca -- ca -- bent completely, like you know, like he -- the babies i-in the mo-mother's womb -- womb, and h-he used to lock us there, and then put a table in front o-of this. And we were sitting there, a-and waiting til he will come back and he will free us from there. I -- I remember that this was the wor -- this was the -- the worst time for me. I was so scared, and I used to cry and I -- my brother used to cry and we were holding hands, and -- but we were cry -- crying -- only the tears were -- were pouring through our cheeks. We were -- they were silent tears. And -- because we were afraid that somebody can hear it that we are crying. And I used to always tell my brother, it will be okay, it will be okay, don't worry. At

least my brother had me, that I could tell him d-don't worry, but I didn't have anybody who was holding me and saying don't -- don't worry at that time. And th -- this is the -- during the whole war, I think that this was the -- one of the worst thing that I went through, hiding in -- in those places and waiting for my father to come and to free us fr-from this.

Q: Well, were you -- were you very aware at that time of people being killed, and what was happening after these round-ups?

A: At that time that we started to live in ghetto, I was ev -- aware of everything what's going on. I saw people killed, I saw people murdered. I saw people be -- be y-you know, hitting by the Germans, by the Ukrainians, and i-i-i -- o -- o -- on this place that we live in Zamar Stenowska 124, once I went to the -- we had the -- like a ba -- small backyard there, and I went there and I h-heard some kind of noise, si -- so-some noise that -- like s-s-some -- [tape interruption]

Q: Okay.

A: Like I s -- I said when we were living in Zamar Stenowska, and the -- I -- I was o-outside for - - for awhile i-in the backyard and I heard -- i-it was a fence backyard, and I heard some like a g - - cries, a-and the voices of -- o-of people, and the sounds of hitting and I looked through the hole in -- i-in the fence, and I saw like th-three or four Ukrainian boys hitting like with baseballs, hitting -- it -- it -- it wasn't baseball, but something si-similar, and they were hitting a Jewish man and he was crying and asking for them to stop, and I couldn't do anything. I run upstairs to my mother and I said what's going on, she said, you can't do anything. We -- we cannot -- you shouldn't even be outside. It -- I-I saw so many things that I have those pictures always with me and they are coming suddenly, that I even expect to -- to see like a f-flashbacks f -- in -- in my memories. Sometimes I have, during the dreams that I have, I see th-th-tho -- tho-those faces, tho-tho -- I hear those voices. I-It was -- it was terrible for a kid my age to see so terrible things

happen to -- to other people. But I wasn't a child any more, I was already a grownup. I had a -- I was more like a -- a animal, I have those instincts, that I knew that I have to hide, that I knew that I have to run and this is probably what saved me -- my life, because one of the actions I was with my cousin, and I saw the German coming, I said to her, run, and we were both running. I was the faster one and I hid, she didn't and she was taken. And she -- she was taken and to the concentration camp a-a-and -- and killed. It's -- and I-I knew how to make a di-di-diff -- how to differentiate -- to make a difference between footsteps. I know -- I could recognize the footsteps of the German a-and not Germans. And I knew when I have to hide when I was left alone because most of the time I was alone, my mother was working in the Janowska labor camp, my father was working like a carpenter in the ghetto, and I was left alone with my brother. Sometimes I -- when I heard the -- the footsteps and I knew that they are Germans, I -- I grab my brother and I put him in a suitcase that -- I push -- close the suitcase and I push under the -- the bed, and I by myself was hiding in the corner of the room behind my mother's robe -- a night robe that was ha-ha -- it -- it -- he -- he was under the floor, I knew that I can maybe hide there -- there, but I made sure that my feet will be back, that the German couldn't see maybe in my -- my feet standing out from the end of the -- of -- of the robe. And when the German left, then they -- they went usually, they checked every -- they checked and they didn't see the kids, they left and I was waiting a few -- another few seconds to make sure that they are not coming back and then I run to open the suitcase and let my brother out because I was afraid that he will suffocate. This was one of my hiding places that I found -- found.

Q: How long would that last, or how long would your brother be in a suitcase like that?

A: It would take a few minutes, because you know that they would -- then -- the doors -- you were not allowed to lock the doors. The doors had to be open in -- in the ghetto. They could

come, I remember that, that they opened the door, and they do -- went inside and they started to check, you know, they didn't check the suitcase now and they didn't check with -- luckily behind my mother robe. And -- and they -- it took few -- few minutes, maybe two, three minutes, but I was scared already, I knew I was so j -- that I -- he won't have enough oxygen -- a-air to breathe, that I have to o-open the suitcase.

Q: Was your brother terrified? He was younger and probably didn't understand or know as much of what was happening?

A: He was such a good child. He knew that --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number two, side A. You were telling me about your brother.

A: Yeah, my brother, he -- he knew that he -- he cannot cry, and he -- he was li -- li-like -- probably like animal like me too, you -- you know? He -- he knew that I -- if I am saying you have to go to the suitcase, he -- he never th-th -- questioned this. He -- he -- he knew that I am trying to -- to save his life. He was aw-aware of everything what's going on. He was little boy, he was four years old, but he knew what's go -- going on exactly.

Q: So, were there other children that you were aware of or even learned about after the fact, who were doing -- you know, hi-hiding like this and surviving like this? Were -- were they actually looking for children during these round-ups, or what were these round-ups about?

A: Most of the -- the round-ups, they were always looking for children, because I remember that my father didn't let me go out. He said -- and I was only in this room, I didn't go out -- outside. I -- we live in -- i-in the -- w-we the -- we moved from -- from the Z-Zamar Stenowska. We -- we then -- we live for awhile with my grandfather and then we move to another place, and then we wind up i-in the building, the -- the Wehrmacht was on the ground floor and we live on the first floor -- floor. I -- I -- I think, and I know that some kids were living in this building because I remember wa -- one -- one day it was a -- a aktion, that a -- a round-up for the kids. My father, he h-hid us, but other kids weren't so lucky, and they will -- taken out bow th -- by the Germans. And I remember when th-the -- the mothers, when they came back and they ran to the apartments and they didn't see the kids, they were -- they were calling the kids, and the -- the kids weren't there, and some the -- of them, commit suicide, jumping from the second floor. And I remember -- I-I -- I remember the sound on the falling bodies and I ask my mother, what's the ca -- the

sound, and she didn't want to tell me, she said no, I di-di-di -- don't look, don't look. But I looked and I saw it. And this wa -- the mother th-that came and didn't find th-the -- their children, and they commit suicide. This is how I know that there must be more children living in -- in this -- the building that we lived.

Q: So, at what point, and -- and was it -- was it a -- a real change for you when the ghetto was then sealed in or fenced in and -- and what are your recollections around that particular time?

A: I-I-I -- for me it wasn't s-such a b-big change because I-I -- I -- I was inside all the time right now for -- for awhile already. And I knew I have to hide, and I knew that from time to time my father was hiding in -- as -- there. Then once he -- he built a -- a bunker i-i-in the basement of this building and h-he -- he hid us there and then the German found out about the place because somebody told him that my father is hi-hi-hidding th-the -- the kids, the family, because my mother was there too. And th-th-they started to -- to rip the -- the wall that my f-father b-built, and we -- we came out and th-they started to hi-hit us and then my father s-started to beg the Germans t-to leave us alive, and th-th-they did, and they ask him who build this, he said that he built it, they ask him why you build it. Because I want to save my family, those are my children and my wife, and they started to hit him and I remember that the -- like the blood was dr-dripping from my father face and my f-father head. A-A-And then my -- my mother, she had the watch, and she -- she gave this to the Germans. She -- she tried to bribe them, and th-th -- th-then h-he said, th-the one of the German, oh-oh -- okay. Th -- one kids can stay, one kids will go and he -- they told my mother and my father to choose which one will stay, which one will go. And my father took from his pocket picture of me and my brother together, and he said, those are my two kids. I can't make the different, who will go and wh-who will stay. Please let them s -- both - - both of them stay. And s-somehow I-I think that my father gave it to him his watch, and

somehow he said, okay, [speaks German here] he said, in German. And we -- we stayed there, but we were afraid if we will go upstairs to our apartment that the other German will come or the Ukrainians will come and they will take us. And my mother s-sa -- ask him to go with us to the apartment. He went with us to the apartment and he stayed and he -- my mother ask him if he wants something to eat, if he -- h-he -- he wants eier with -- he said eier with zwiebeln, eggs and onions. And my mother made for him tho-those eggs. She started, you know, t-to say -- to keep him busy, to stay as long as -- as he can. And th-this way we -- we -- we stay alive. It was a pure, pure luck. I -- I -- I can't -- I-I -- I -- I don't know ho-how to explain this, that so many thousands went and we stayed.

Q: Do you think it -- it made a big difference, it helped that -- that your family did have some of the financial resources from -- from the earlier days? These kinds of incidents, do you think that helped a great deal?

A: An -- absolutely. If you had -- at that time it was very important to make some jewelry, some valuable things to -- to bribe the Germans, to bribe the Ukrainians, because th-th -- even if the German lets you go, the Ukrainian didn't. And th-th-this was a main commodity at that time. Another ca -- ta -- commodity that was very valuable in that time, it was the cyanide. It -- it -- th-th-this is the toxin, you know, that y-you take to commit su-suicide.

Q: Oh, cyanide?

A: Cyanide, cyanide, yes. And my mother, she always have with her, three vials, small, t-tiny vials, one for her and one fo-for each of her child because she said that the German will -- will not take us alive. And my father, probably he had one too.

Q: Did you know that she had that at the time?

A: I didn't know. I di -- I -- I only find out wa -- once, when one of the fi -- fi -- fi-fi -- th-that -- that I-I fi-figured it out once when one of the vial -- ma -- my mother broke and th-then I figure it out that sh-she has it. But this was her -- she always said that she -- the German will not get us alive.

Q: At that age did you think much about death? As in your own possible death at that time?

A: I was always, you know, afraid of death. This is why I developed this instinct and knowledge how to hide myself, and to hide my brother because I was scared. I was scared that I will be dead -- that I will die. And I was scared that my parents will die and I will stay alone, and then I will die. It was -- it was the whole process that was going in -- in -- in my head.

Q: So I'm not sure if -- if there's a -- a difference, or if you want to just talk about what kind of work your father was still able to do, and was there a difference between when the ghetto was not yet sealed and when it was sealed?

A: It -- i-i-it was -- he was a cam -- a carpenter, he was responsible for -- for all the repairs i-i-in the ghetto and for the commander of the ghetto. If something -- if he wanted to build something, want to make something, he -- he -- he build the apartment for -- for himself, it -- my father was responsible for -- for this. Yeah, it was a terrible job because he was dealing with a crazy person, sadist, who was very happy and he fulfilled with happiness when he could kill -- kill the -- the Jews, and he was looking always to -- for to -- to do something, to -- to cause that my father, that he can kill my father. But unfortunately for him, and fortunately my father, he -- my father oversmart him.

Q: So it didn't mean that he -- that this person trusted your father at all, he just used him for -- for his skills, I guess.

A: Oh, he didn't tr-trust at all my father. He -- he used him, he used my father knowledge, my father intelligent and smart that my father w-was, and he was giving him each time different sh -- chores to do -- do -- to do that he thought is impossible for him to do it, and my father did, and he couldn't understand how, how he managed to fulfill hi -- his desires, I can say. But he wa -- he was a terrible man and my father s-suffered a lot. And --

Q: What was his name?

A: Jimik. He was the commander of the -- he was known that the when-enever he came the different ghettos, that he was the liquidator of the ghetto. And he --

Q: And there was a close call, do you remember when it happened, with your father and him, right?

A: Yeah, my father was bi-building fo-for him his apartment and he told -- he gave him a -- an -- a hour when it has to be finished, date and hour when it h-has to be f-finished. And my father and the -- th-th-the employee there, th-they were painting and they finish on the time, but th-th-the -- the -- the paint was still wet, and he went with his finger and he find out that the -- the paint is wet, and he said to my father, come on. And in the main platz, he -- he-he-he put like a -- a set -- like a footstep and h-he -- he -- he took my father and my father on hi-hi-his way to the -- t-to the ma-main market, to the pla -- platz, he -- he said s -- something -- somebody was passing and he -- h-he said, tell my family to -- to -- to run. And th-th-this man came to us and he said to my m-mother, take your kids and run because you will be killed. And we run to the next floor, to the second floor, to somebody -- to -- to somebody who lived there and we were watching through the window and my mother was holding my -- my brother in her arms and my brother said, "Mama, Mama, look. They are going to hang somebody." Because he -- he saw the rope, and th-the pantel, you know, that -- that you hang people. And -- and my -- and ma-ma -- and my

mother said to him, don't -- don't watch, and sh-she turn him around and he didn't know that the rope was prepared to hang my father. He -- he says to my father, ta-ta-take the clothes off, everything from the pocket [indecipherable] a-and put it, the rope, around the neck of my father, and my father was -- he was sure that that's it, this is his last second o-of his life. And he looked to -- to my father, and h-he was perspiring, you know, he was -- he -- he probably was half of conscious already, and he said to -- he looked -- he look, he wait, and then he said to -- to my father, go. They took the rope and my father was running like this, he -- he -- he was half conscious. And he called my father back and he -- my father said okay, he is playing wi-with me a game, you know, cat, the mouse, he will hang me now. But he said to -- to my father, why are you running with your pen -- penis out? Because my father didn't put his clothes on. He run like this. And this was -- he was a sadist. He was a sadist.

Q: And you saw that?

A: And I saw this. I was looking through the window and I saw this. Yeah, it -- i-it is terrible.

Q: Once the ghetto was sealed, were you in the same apartment then, consistently, or were you still moving around?

A: We still were moving around from place, but this was the -- the building, this was the last place. From this building we escaped to the -- to the sewer.

Q: What's the address? Do you know the address of that place?

A: I don't. I don't know the address.

Q: But that was somebody else's apartment at one point that you moved into. Is that how that worked?

A: It -- it was a building. I -- I think it was like a semi-round bi -- building that had a t-two or three floors, and they had a -- outside in the back it has a -- a court -- it was a big courtyard, and

entrance to the apartments were from the back -- i-it was like a balcony is go a-around the building, and the entrance to the apar-apartment was from those ba-balconies. This is -- this is the type of building that you have in Europe, that you have th-the -- the bild -- big backyard -- how you call it -- and then the entrances from the apartments are coming fro-from the balconies i-in the -- in the back. And they used to, when they did the aktion they used to keep the people in this backyard, behind th-th-th-the building. And from there they were t-taking the people to the l-lorries.

Q: What did you eat during this phase? What were you able to eat and how hungry, you know, were you, often?

A: M-Mostly I remember what we were eating, it was bread, it was the dark bread, a round loaf of bread. Sometimes my father gets some milk for -- for my younger brother. Some soup that my mother cook when she came home from work. Not -- I don't remember eating any -- a-any meat [indecipherable] sometimes eggs. We had the somebody from the outside of the ghetto, you know, people were smuggling things for -- for money, th-th-th-they -- they b-bought things from -- from Christian who were a-around the ghetto, that they live around the ghetto, and you can sm-smuggle sometimes. A-And this is what we ate. I -- I think that we probably we-were so scared that we didn't feel that we are hungry. I don't remember feeling hungry there in ghetto that I felt I -- I didn't have food, but I was so scared that probably, you know, suppressed the -- the -- the hunger.

Q: During this -- all of this time being in the ghetto, were -- was your family able to observe any Jewish traditions, any of the holidays in any way?

A: I -- I don't remember. We -- we didn't have any -- my mother used to -- I think sometimes used to light Friday night candles. This I remember she had -- that -- that she did when she had

the candles, th-that sh-she did this, yeah. Otherwise, I don't remember when the -- the holy days came, you know, the day was -- each day w-w-was a similar to the next day.

Q: And what, if any, specific memories do you have of -- of your own interactions with any of the Nazis? Did you have any, you know, that you recall during all of these different episodes, and -- or were you able to successfully hide and not have any real interaction?

A: I-I-In this building th-that we live on the ground floor, it was Wehrmacht. This is a -- German soldiers. They were different that the Gestapo and the SS, and they used to come to our apartment and bring some sugar, some chocolate. Sometimes they were hiding in our apartment, they ask my mother to hide this because they were stealing from each other. Sometimes they were giving us something. I remember that one of -- of them, he -- whenever h-he came, he used to take me on his -- and I was sitting on his laps, and he was telling my mother that he has a girl the same age that I am. And he used to leave me some sugar, and -- a-and some chocolate. And once I remember th-th-that one of the German of the Wehrmacht, he sa-saved my father because I remember he ran to our apartment and he said to my father, run, because the Gestapo is coming to get you. And my father left and the next second the Gestapo came for my father and his -- they didn't found him.

Q: Oh, that's interesting. So they were actually, at least a few of them were somewhat, you know, protective and friendly towards you.

A: Yes, so-some of them, I -- I think you know, it is -- it was a different between the Wehrmacht, the soldiers and the Nazi and the ges -- Gestapo. This was the different, they -- they -- they were the soldiers, they were doing th-the job that they were t-told to do. And some of them had the he -- humane, you know, feelings. They have the -- the wives, the childrens, and th-th-they were different, they -- th-they weren't so, so bad like the Nazis.

Q: And as a child did you -- for instance, the one I guess you sat on his lap, did you like him?

Did you feel comfortable, or were you always sort of scared of any German at this point?

A: I-I became to like him. From the beginning I was scared, but he was coming a f -- a few times and I be-begin to like him. I wasn't so scared from him.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No, no, no, I don't remember. I remember hi-his -- how he was built, that he was strong man. He had the young face, he was blonde, and -- but I don't remember his name.

Q: I just want to go back for a moment cause I remember reading something about your grandfather and what happened to him, and I'm not sure if that's on your mother's side, or your father's side.

A: On my father's side.

Q: It's your -- it is your father's father, then, right?

A: Yes.

Q: And this is when your father ran after him?

A: Yeah, yeah. This was al --

Q: And when did this happen?

A: I think it was '42. Or -- '42 or '43, I don't remember ex -- exactly the year.

Q: You were in the ghetto, or --

A: We were in the ghetto. We used to leave -- we move already from Zamar Stenowska, from another place, and it was becoming smaller and we used to live together with my grandparents, i- in one -- in one room. And one day my grandpa -- father came, and he said to my father that -- p-pack your things a-and run. And my father said, what does it mean, run? He didn't want to go. He di -- they were discussing why he has to go and my grandfather said, because tomorrow

morning they will come and they will take you -- me, and they will kill me. And my father didn't want to believe it, but my grandfather force him. He -- he said only to me that I will sing him a song, the lul -- lullaby that I used to always sing to him, and he gave -- he took h-his watch that he had in the pocket, the round one, and he gave it to my father and he said that he has to go. My father was fighting with him, but the end he -- he pushed my father. My mother grab only small bottle of milk, grab my brother an-and we run. And I remember it was night, and we were going, and my mo-mother, she stepped on so-something, she fell, and she broke th-the -- the milk fo-for my brother and my father was very unh-unhappy, he said now we will -- won't have milk to feed him. And this was the last time that I saw my grandfather and my grandmother, because the next day in the morning, they came, they took them, and they took them to someplace. And my father was following them. He was hiding behind th-the trees and following and he was standing behind the tree, and he saw when they s-shot my -- my grandfather and my grandmother.

Q: Those were his parents?

A: Those was hi-his parents, yeah.

Q: Do you think your father was following them to try to save them or do something about the situation, or -- he just wanted to see what happened, I guess.

A: I don't think that my father could s -- could save them, but he wanted to see the last minute of his father. And this is oo -- I think th-this is why he went.

Q: Did you ever see your father become truly depressed by something like this, or did he try to stay optimistic for his children?

A: He -- he came home, he was very depressed, of course, what he saw, but my father, he didn't lose the belief that he can save us. His o -- whatever he di -- the purpose o-of his -- him staying

alive was to save his family, and he constantly was working how to do it, how to find the place that he can hide us, that he can spare us f-f-from being killed.

Q: So, before we -- I think we're almost ready to start talking about the plans for your family to escape, but before that, I just wanted to ask, were you aware of deportations taking place from -- from the ghetto? What was your awareness as a child of -- of these sorts of things, or where people were being taken, or did you hear much about -- about that?

A: I knew on the -- the -- about the deportation because I saw this. I saw, you know, people pa-pa -- be taken by the lorries, or I saw -- and taking someplace. I knew that they are going to be killed, but I didn't know really about the concentration camp. I-I-I -- I knew the place that they are killed, but the -- the name concentration camp, ma -- th-the parents probably, the grown-ups, they talk among themselves, but they didn't want -- they tried to save us no -- you know, not to tell us th-the -- the -- the whole truth. But I-I was aware of this because I saw my gr-gr-grandmother on the -- the lorry with my cousin, and I knew that sh-she -- she was killed. And l-later on, you know, after the war, I f-found out as g -- exactly where she was killed, and --

Q: Where was she taken?

A: She was taking to the concentration camp, and she was k-killed at that --

Q: Do you know which one she was at?

A: Um, yes, Belzec, to Belzec. This was the -- the concentration camp that most of the people from Lvov, from the eastern part of -- were sent. This was the first -- one of the first concentration camps.

Q: What happened to your other grandparents, your mother's parents?

A: My grandmother from -- my mother mother, she was killed during one of the aktion, she was killed. My grandparent -- gra-grandfather from m-my mother's side stay alive with us, and he went with us to the sewer.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

A: Yeah, and he got lost in the sewer, and we couldn't find -- h-he got -- he got out, and he was shot outside.

Q: Which -- which of the grandmothers is the one who made the sweater for you?

A: I-I -- my grandparents from my father's side, they were divorce. And the mother of my father, she knit the sweater for me. She was one who were coming to our apartment and was sitting with us on Kopernica, and she was knitting. Sh-She was the one. The -- the second wife of my grandfather, she was killed together with my grandfather.

Q: And what happened to your grandmother, this maternal o-of -- of my f-father, she was taken in th -- one of the aktion together with my cousin that I was running, and she -- sh-she didn't hide, and she was taken by the -- by th -- by Germans, and I saw her through the w-window, I was peeking, and I saw there on one of the lorry and she was holding my grand -- my cousin Inga, and I was happy that at least she is with her grandm-mother. And my grandmother, she -- she probably knew that I am a -- w-watching, because she -- she took her [indecipherable] and she make like bye to me, and the German hit her with the -- w-with the gun, wi-with the end of the gun he hit her. This is when -- when I last saw her.

Q: What was her name, your grandmother?

A: You know that I don't remember?

Q: That's okay. It'll come to you.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, so -- so now just start to walk me through the process before you actually [phone ringing] -- oh --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number two, side B. So, before we actually talk about the escape, can you tell me what you knew, if anything, about plans to escape, what your father and if your mother was involved, what -- what you knew, what was happening and -- and how long before you did escape were plans being made?

A: When we live in ghetto in th-this -- in our last apartment, I didn't know anything about the escape that my father was planning. But I remember one evening h-he came and he said to -- to my mother, p-pack the things and dress u -- dress us up, that we have to leave. And my mother put on me my green sweater, a-a-and a coat, and she put so many things on -- on me, and I ask her, wh-why are you dressing me so warm? And she said, you know, the place that you will go, you need warm dresses. And I was fighting with her because she wanted to put boots on my feet, a-and I said no, I -- I want sandals. I-It was -- you know, it was June. And she said no, you cannot wear sandals, you have to w-wear boots. Then -- which -- sh-she took us, and my fa -- my father took us to an -- in the ghetto there were few barracks. In -- in one of the barracks -- and we went to a basement in this barracks, I remember th -- that it was so dark, and s-so, you know, spooky and -- and we -- we stayed there in this -- this place, and even in this place, I remember that it was a hiding space that my father prepare for a -- us to hide if the German were -- were coming. It was like a second wall he built, a second wall, and we were hiding be-behind thi-this wall. And then I-I don -- I remember they were se-se -- they were going behind this wall, and

they were digging something and digging and we stayed, we didn't go back to our apartment and di -- we stay in this basement, we stayed there maybe two or three weeks, something like this.

And we -- w -- we couldn't lay down, we were all -- always sitting there and my mother was holding us, and one night I-I -- I remember th-that we were sitting and suddenly, you know, like from the ground some face came, sa -- wa -- big face with beautiful smile, beautiful teeth, blue eyes, coming and smiling at -- at us, and I -- y-you know, we were shocked. Who -- who is it?

And then my father introduced him who he is, and this was Socha. He --

Q: What's his full name?

A: Leopold Socha. And he came -- he introduced himself and my father said that this is his wife and two children, and this is how we met Socha. And then few days later, I remember it was a big commotion, people were running and screaming and my father came and said, that's it, it's time w-we have to go. And we went to this opening in the floor o-o-of the basement and I saw a big hole, dark. And my father said, go there. I said, I can't, I am not going. And he went and then I didn't want to go, and I think my mother or somebody else push me, and he grabbed me down, he grabbed me, and I heard -- the moment I went there, I ca-came down, I heard this noise of falling water. And it was so scared, this rushing water u -- and the darkness, and the smell. And I ask my father, where are we, where are we going? He said, don't worry. Stick to me, stick to me, don't -- don't worry. And then my brother came, and my mother, and this is how we started our life in -- in the sewer th-that we went down. It was a -- a lot of people, commotion, because people what -- were coming fr-from th-the manholes around th-the ghetto. They were coming to the -- to the sewers. I-I-It was -- it was terrible. It was like going to hell.

Q: How was your father able to plan for this? Do you know now sort of what -- what happened, in -- in brief -- you know, even though you didn't know at the time, but how did he plan for this?

A: Yeah I -- no-now I -- I know, he planned -- we -- he met with the -- like I said that he -- he was the carpenter, and responsible, he had the crew, people working. One of the crew, it was Berestitsky, Jacob. He was a [indecipherable] and a religious man. And my father k-k-keep him, you know, to -- to work for him, and Berestitsky approached my father and said, "Heger, I know that you are building and building those hiding places, but you ha -- you -- you will not succeed. In the end they will kill you and kill your family." And they started to think about where you can hide, and they came to a plan that i-in the sewer. And my father remembered the sewer because when it was built -- because it was a river, Peltew. And because of the stench and the -- you know, the hygiene, the -- th-they decided in the municipality in the early 900, they decided, you know, that they have to cover this. And they used -- my father was little when he was going and watching the -- the people who are working there. They -- the Italian POW's were building this, because it was Galicia that's time, you know, different politics, different -- and they were building this and my fa-father remembered how they built, he -- he -- he remember how it look like. And they came to a p-plan, you know, that t-to -- to -- to maybe, you know, to find a place. And they started to dig, they were digging from this basement, then they came down. When they came down, they -- they saw a light from a lamp, and th-three people came to them and they ask, what are you doing here? They were sewer workers, that they, y-you know, k-k-keep control of the sewers if everything is normal -- i-in order working, you know, in order. They keep the -- the maintenance of the sew -- maintenance worker. And my father said to him, you -- you know, I'm looking for place to hide my family from the Germans. Now he started to laugh, and th-th-they were starting to talk, and then he -- he sa -- he said he wants to do what he did and he look and he said, it is not so bad, but y -- w-we can help you, but if -- for a pay -- payment. And he mentioned some amount of money, it was a big amount of money. And my father said to him,

okay, I will bring you tomorrow. And when w -- they came to the basement, you know, th-th- they -- few people were involved in this, it was Berestitsky, it was Weiss, and some his friends, and Weiss s-said to my father that he is stupid that he agreed to pay him so much money. And my father said, what else can I lose? I-I have to try. And next day he came back and he gave to -- to -- to Socha money, and Socha wanted -- then Socha came up to the basement, and this is when I saw him. And then later on he said when we were i-in -- in the sewer sitting, he said that he decided to save us when he saw my mother sitting with those two children. And he said, I saw this picture, it looked like a chicken with the hands. And this is when I decided that I will sa -- try to save you. And --

Q: Was your -- would you characterize your father then as an optimist? You know, y-y -- all these terrible things are happening and then this idea that he would give a lot of money to someone he barely knows. Do you think you would think of your father then as just -- I mean, obviously very determined, but do you think he was generally very optimistic?

Q: He -- he -- he was optimistic per-person, but he was too, very determined, and he didn't, you know, lose the -- the believing that he can save us. He -- he -- he grab everything what can d -- he -- he grabbed, only to -- to save us. And he was person who -- who t -- took risks. Because I -- if my father wouldn't take risk, we wouldn't be alive, because it was during the -- you know, the ghetto time, it was so many times that he t-took risk, and I-I-I -- and he stay alive, that I-I-I-I -- I -- I don't -- sometimes you know, I'm thinking and I don't know what is -- is it, it was a luck? Most of the t -- of the time I think it was luck that -- that we are alive. I-I don't know. My mother believe in something else. She believed it -- it was a f -- the omen from -- from a high power that we s -- we -- we were chosen to -- to stay av -- stay alive. Maybe she is ri -- she was right, I don't

know. But my father was ve -- he was optimistic I can say, because I cannot say that somebody who will be, you know, very pessimist and depress, h-he would give up mu -- much early.

Q: Do you have any idea how much money your father wound up paying Socha?

A: I don't know how much money he gave him from the bi -- when he went down, but it must be biv -- a -- a lot of money because wi -- Weiss was screaming a lot. That's why I think it was a lot of money. And they -- and they -- we -- he agreed to pay him every day, 500 zlotys. 500 zlotys at that time, it was probably even 200 dollars each time. You know, each day when he came, he -- he was buying food for this, and then wa -- what's stay, it was for -- for him.

Q: And your father was able to save a lot of money somewhere without, obviously the Nazis -- the Germans finding his resources.

A: I -- I think so because otherwise how -- how he would have? I think that one of the hiding places that my father built, tha-tha -- I think he kept th-the money and he kept the jewelry. Because later we -- we paid with jewelry, too.

Q: So now, going back to when you first enter the -- the sewers, tell me just how old are you at this stage, and how many other people are joining you in this first rush into the sewers? And is this right about the time when the liquidation is happening?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me what's going on in the ghetto.

A: This -- this was, I think end of May, May 30 or beginning o-of June, that it was a liquidation and this is why the people started to run and be run t-to -- to th -- to the sewer. And this was in 1943, the beginning of June 1943, and I was at that time, I was like seven and half, yeah, and my brother was f-four years old. And a-at that time, and d-during this panic, lot of people came down. I don't know if lot of people came down through our entrance. I think that -- more that

they thought because people find out that this is an entrance. But lot of people came from the -- from the manholes. And th-th-th-then i-it was s-s-such a y-y-you know, screaming and yelling and th-th-th-th-the falling water, and th-the echo. It-It-It sounded so terribly, and you -- you know, the ledge that we were walking, it was maybe one foot wide, and we had to walk, we had to -- with our back to the walls, and slide, you know? But from the beginning when we went down, I remember that my father -- I was -- h-he was holding me on his back and my mother was holding my brother, and this is how we walked. Then I ask him constantly where are we going, where are we going, and he -- he co-constantly wa-was you know, telling me, don't worry, don't worry, you will be okay. Wa -- and we pa -- we had to pass on the other side o-of the river, and I was so scared, there was such a -- a narrow passage l-like a bridge, small narrow bridge, and I was so scared. We passed to the other side. Somehow we wind out i-in the one of the branches of th-th-this sewer, looked like a cave. A-And so many rats, a-a-and, you know, the stench, i-i-i-it was t -- a-a-and the w-w-w -- webs of the -- the spider webs. Wherever we -- we went we had to push the spiderwe-webs aside. It was terrible. And we stayed there, i-it was lot of people, I think maybe some 70 or something. Lot of people there, a-and then after Socha came and sh -- he ju -- he took a group only of people because he couldn't, you know, support -- he took like I think 21 people, and we went to different cave, and we were sitting there for -- for long time, I -- I think maybe two or three weeks, or maybe longer.

Q: And where is this -- you know, most of us haven't obviously been in a sewer system, so where is the sewage? You're sitting in this cave --

A: And o-on the -- on the floor, the sewage, it -- you -- you -- and the waste is coming on the floor of the --

Q: Right beside you the whole time?

A: Right. Right where you are sitting. This is like a, you know, sewers -- yo-you think that this is a big place, that there were -- th-this was a sew -- no, no, not -- i-it was a -- like a pipes. And some of them were very narrow, had like 40 centimeters, it's like three feet. And si -- you know, the height, or sa -- you-you have to s -- s -- when we were trying to get to the -- the bigger one, you have to go through the branches of the small one, you have to crawl on your s -- knee, and on your elbows. You have to go miles and miles this way, and th -- you know, in the -- everything is -- is flowing, and you are i-in, trying to get to the destination where you -- you have to go. I-It was unbelievable.

Q: Were you complaining as a -- as a young child in your first encounters with the actual sewage flowing by, were you complaining at all? Or were you aware that this was your, you know, possible escape for freedom?

A: I wasn't complaining. I -- I -- I was s-scared. I was very scared but I didn't complain because I -- you know, I believe in my father, and I thought that he said I have to go there, that I have to go there, no complaints. And we were sitting in this one -- space 21 of [indecipherable] we got very sick. We got dysentery, we were very weak, we didn't have water to drink. My father used to go miles on his knees and elbows and he was keeping a teakettle in his teeth and he was walking like this, he f-found this place when the -- drinking water from a fountain, in the main -- main market in Lvov. Was dripping from the statue, the statue of Neptune. And he found this water and he was bringing, and he wa -- the water for us, and we have like a -- and he divided th-this, we divide like th-three quar-quarter of a -- a -- of a cup, you know, for th -- each person for the whole day. And my parents didn't drank -- didn't drink, they gave us this water because we were s-so sick. And then from this place after -- some people left because they couldn't take it. They said they -- they -- they can't take it, they left. But the moment, you know, they -- they left

out sight the -- the sewer, they were killed, and from the whole group, I think we -- we -- it was like 11 people that we stayed there, and then we were -- discovered where another sewer maintenance worker, he came from the manhole because the manhole was leading to the place that we were sitting and we had to run from this place. We run from this place and we -- we met -- Socha was coming to -- with the food and he saw us running and he took us to a different place. And we changed the places few times because it was -- some of them were so cold and so terrible that we couldn't stay there. And finally we -- we-we wind up in a place that when we crawl in, Socha ask my mother, "What do you think Mrs. Heger, what do you think about this place?" And my mother said, "Oh, Mr. Socha, this is a palace." And this is -- there in this palace, we stay to the end, to the el-el-el-el-liberation.

Q: Can you describe then what that looked like a little bit more?

A: I-I-I-It -- it -- it was a branch o-of -- one of the branches o-of the sewer, but relatively i-it was high because -- we could stand, we children would stand up, but my parents couldn't stand up, they have to bend. That's meaning it was probably like five feet high and the width was maybe five or six feet. And it -- it was a main one and it had -- from this main branch it was a -- like L sha -- it was like a L shape. It was entrance to another compartment that was more or less the same s-size, and th-this is ho-how it -- it looked like, but comparing to the other places, it really looked like a palace.

Q: And still the sewage is flowing by here as well?

A: This -- this was a side one. It didn't have a sewage flowing. It has only manhole that came -- that the raining water was coming, but not the -- the sewage wa-wasn't there. It was mud -- muddy -- lot of [indecipherable] and a lot of -- lot of -- no -- rats. And --

Q: Were you scared of them?

A: From the beginning we were scared, but then we played with them, like you -- you play with the dog, with a cat, we play with a -- with the rats. We were watching them, what they are doing. They are very smart. Very smart animals. Yeah, and y-you can get used to th -- everything.

Q: They didn't -- they didn't bite you?

A: Th-They try, you know, from the beginning and my father -- but then they got used to us and we got to used to -- to them, they didn't bite us. The only thing what they -- they used to bite is our food, our bread. And we -- my -- my father and the rest of the people, they -- they s-s-stood guard -- guards, you know, with the sticks and constantly chasing th-them to -- to save our -- our food from them.

Q: Now you said that this became a group of 11.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you remember all the names, or the individuals who make up that group of 11?

A: Y-Yeah. It was a -- a -- a g -- Mrs. Weinber -- Weiss. She was the old wo -- woman. She was a mother of Weiss who went with us and he left outside because he said he cannot take it, and he left his mother. And it was Helena, and Mondek, and Clara and Mrs. Weinberg, and Haskell, and my mother my father, my brother and me, I think is 10. [indecipherable]

Q: Was your uncle also with you? Is he one of those?

A: My uncle escaped to the sewer with us. He -- he was with us in the first place that we stay and he w-went to -- to fetch the water, and -- and then a -- it -- storm came and he -- he -- he drown in the sewer. Yeah, he never came back.

Q: So it was quite a rushing flow?

A: Oh yes. It -- it was very dangerous because if you crawl in those pipes, you with your body is almost closing the -- the pipe. And when the water is coming [indecipherable] racing very fast. And you -- you don't have time to escape.

Q: Did you almost fall at any time?

A: I -- I ti -- when we were crawling, I-I -- a few times I -- I -- I-I fall to -- to the water and I get, you know, injure with the -- I stepped on -- on the pin, and the pin went through my foot, but I -- i-i-it was okay.

Q: So, what -- what was the routine -- and I think there are two others besides Socha --

A: Yes.

Q: -- so if you can tell me about them and what was the daily routine with y -- those who were, you know, helping you, these -- these sewer workers.

A: Th -- it was three sewer workers. It was Socha, Wroblewski and Kowaliw. Kowaliw wi -- he was the m-m-maintenance li -- he was on the head of the maintenance group. He -- he stayed always on the street. He was a wa -- the watch person. He watch for anything suspicious and dangerous that can happen. And Wroblewski and Socha, they were coming every day with the food supply. And the food supplies, y-you know, they had two hand -- handbags in that -- in that they had food and then they covered this with the -- the li-like maintenance, you know --

Q: Tools?

A: Tools, maintenance tools to -- to cover the -- the food in case somebody tell them to open the -- the handbag, you know. And it's -- m-m-mostly what -- the food what we have is -- was bread. It was some, you know, kasha, this is like a grains that we can cook, like barley and es -- sometime some -- y -- some kind of a -- a -- y-you know, of a fat or something to -- but in -- n-n-nothing -- nothing -- mostly it was bread.

Q: Were you hungry a lot?

A: We -- we were -- you know, we were dividing. They -- they couldn't bring too much, but we were dividing. We ate like three times a day. In the morning it was piece of bread, and at coffee -- coffee was from chicory, water that looked like coffee, and for dinner, Weinbergowa used to cook a -- a soup, and soup was from barley, sometimes we had potatoes, and -- and onions, yeah onions, he used to bring some onions, and --

Q: Did you ever --

A: -- beans, some beans, fava beans or something, yeah.

Q: Did you ever have any meat at all while you were down there?

A: We didn't have meat at all, but we children were lucky because when Socha was bringing his lunch that his wife made for him from the cold cuts, he used to share with us. He used to give my brother part and me part. And I remember it -- I remember the taste of this meat til now. And it was so delicious, so good, that I used to keep the piece of meat for -- from, you know, the cold cuts, and piece of bread, and I was given such a big bite of a bread, and tiny bite from meat that it will stay longer and longer as I can -- as I can. That -- then -- we were lucky, we -- we got some meat, yeah. But the rest of the people --

Q: Sounds like he had a special affection for you and your brother, would you say?

A: Yeah, he -- he really, you know, he loved us, us children, and he -- he had a -- a lot of -- y-y- you know, he -- for my mother he had a lot of like --

Q: Respect?

A: Respect. Respect for my mother. He admire her mother -- my mother, and he admire my father. He -- he -- my father for him was like a guide. Everything what he was supposed to, he always ask my father if this is okay. Even his private things and he -- he always ask my father. He was

very close to my father. And he liked us very much and we like him too. I di -- I treated him like my father. He -- he was -- for me he was an angel.

Q: Did he ever show any signs of sort of the anti-Semitism that so many Polish people grew up with and, you know, sort of had so systematized, you know, as -- as -- you know, did he ever reveal that, even at the same time that he was obviously helping you and caring for you?

A: I don't think so. I never, you know, heard anything, and I don't think so that I never heard even later from my parents of a -- no, I don't think so.

Q: And tell me a little bit about Socha's background because I think it's an interesting story, because maybe partly his background led to this kind of work that he -- you know, this saving and rescu --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number three, side A. So we were just talking about Mr. Socha. If you could tell me a little bit more about him?

A: Socha wa-was a v-very interesting person. He -- he was -- when he was young, he -- he was an orphaned. And he tried to make his living, you know, when he was a -- a li-little boy and then when he was t-t-teen [indecipherable] little bit [indecipherable] thieves. He was a -- a-a thief. He was starting with small things and getting to -- to-to bigger one. He had a -- a -- some companions who t -- another thieves that they were working with him and he was caught few times. I think that he was like three years in the -- in the jail. And he was committing [indecipherable] robberies, but he -- he never killed anybody. It was a s -- i-it was probably only to -- to survive, he didn't know anything else. And he was a very religious man. He was Catholic, very religious and I think it was -- it was unbelievable that person like this can change so much and save 10 people in such a circumstances, in such a conditions. And I was always thinking wh-why he did this and I think that he wanted -- he really was very good person, very good human being, but this was the way he -- he was forced to be brought up, and suddenly he -- he met different people and he was very proud of my father because a person like my father, very intelligent, very educated person, trust him, give trust, you know, of his -- him and his family t-to hi-his hands. And h-he was very proud of this and it changed completely his -- hi-his life. He probably felt right now that he is somebody, that he is not a ti -- a piece, you know, of garbage or something, that people are pu-pushing away. He -- he found a -- a friend with people of completely different background, and he was very proud, and besides he -- I think it -- because he was very religion, he wanted to pay for his sins, and he look a-at th-this like kind of

redemption and this is what I think what -- there were the forces that kept him going and save us. And he -- he -- he was a great person. For me, I -- I loved him and I still loved him, and when I say kaddish for my parents, I say kaddish for him, too. I-I-It was a -- a great person. A great, righteous person, and we always, the 10 of us who survive and the families of 10 of us, we always remember him and his name.

Q: Was he ever named as a Righteous Among the Nations?

A: He is. He is named a Righteous o-of -- th-the Nation. He is in Yad Vashem. He has -- he -- trees on his name was planted already like 30 years ago there. He is on the permanent exhibition in Yad Vashem. This is a new wing, like now, this is for Righteous People, and he is among them. He, as a matter of fact, I think that the biggest place on the walls is -- is dedicated to -- to Socha.

Q: Now how would you characterize the other men who were helping, the other two, I believe who were helping Socha? Were they, you know, as devoted, would you say, to saving you? Or -- how would you describe them, their motivations?

A: I -- I would describe them, they were righteous people, you know, and th-th -- they did this, but they were not so devoted, were the -- I can, you know, see, like Socha. He was the machine. He was the brain o-o-of us because it came a moment that we didn't have any more money and my mother was delegated to tell him that we don't have any more money and Socha said, oh, if you don't have n-no more money, then we cannot work any more. But he came next day, he came like usual and he brought us food. But I know that he said that the -- Wroblewski and Kowaliw wanted to stop but he -- he forced them n-no-no-not to -- not to stop and he succeeded. He was y-y-yo -- you know, taking his -- his work that -- to-to -- to the end. He told this is his

de-destiny and this is what we wanted -- he wanted to accomplish and he did. He was very proud of this.

Q: When did you run -- when did your family run out of money? Do you know when that happened while you were down there?

A: I-It was a f-few months before the liberation, yeah, that we runned ou-ou-out of money, that we didn't have.

Q: And -- and prior to that there was actually another story, I think, about the gold, or the jewelry?

A: Yeah, it was a-after I think that we stayed there almost a year, only be -- a little bit less. We -- we runned out -- ou-out of money, we -- we-we had some jewelry with us that my father was giving him, but we run out of this too. And then my father re-remembered that his aunt, o-or -- told -- told him-- a aunt -- I think aunt, that she hid some money in the cellar of her apartment that she used to live, and th -- sh-she tol-told this to my father, and my father m-made the plan, he wrote on piece of paper, he designed the plan of the -- the -- he remembered th-the -- the building and the cellar and he told Socha to go there and ma-maybe he can dig and he can find it. And Socha went there together with ro -- Wrobleski and they said that they are from sewer working, that is some kind of gas leak or something, and they we-were digging and they found th-the jewelry. And he -- he -- and the next da-day, we ha -- I remember Socha came, and he -- he -- he had the jewelry and he give this to -- to my father. And he said, Mr. Heger, you will give me yi -- like usually, every day little bit. And this is how it happen. Every day my father used to give him, like before, certain amount of jewelry or money, and he was taking this in, probably, or selling or -- and then buying a food for us.

Q: And -- and so, right, a lot of money was used not for Socha to get rich necessarily, but to -- to buy the food and the items that you needed, right?

A: Right.

Q: What happened after you ran out of money? Was Socha able to afford buying these items for you on his own?

A: He -- he p-paid for on his own for -- for -- for the food. He probably had, you know, some money because th-the money that we -- my father paid him, it was a lot of money and not everything went for buying the food, he probably had, and he used this money t-t-to -- to continue.

Q: So, if we can go back to describing just a little bit more the conditions of -- of where you were living, and you said that it was under this manhole cover, in this -- this space that you stayed in for a good long period of time, do you know where that is in Lvov? Have you identified where that manhole cover is?

A: Yeah, thi -- two years ago I went to Lvov, and I went to places that I remember for -- for -- that they were [indecipherable] where I was born, when I live [indecipherable] and where we move from place to place in the gh -- ghetto, I identify each place, and identify the -- the manhole that we were lead -- it was leading to our hiding place, to our palace. And if -- is funny because next to the manhole right now is a coffeshop and th-th-there were table and -- and chairs and people were sitting drinking coffee, drinking beer, and below it was a place that we used to live, 14 months.

Q: And at the time you were there, what was above, on the street level right above your manhole cover? What was -- what was going on there, do you remember?

A: Yeah, it was a st -- a street. It is a small park next to a church, and i-it was a street and a sidewalk a-and buildings. And this is where th-th-this is at -- he -- he -- this is -- we -- we were sitting under the s-street level.

Q: Could someone open the manhole cover and just see you directly?

A: They couldn't th-th -- if somebody opens the manhole, he has to go down, then he can see us, because you go -- i-i-is a pipe that leads you down and then you have like branch to the side, smaller one that lead -- that will lead you straight to our place. That it was under the angle l-like 45 de -- 90 degrees angle, th-the -- the branch.

Q: Were there ever any cl -- any close calls like that while you were in that area of -- of people, you know, coming to see you, or -- or accidentally, you know, happening to see you that way?

A: No, in this place, not. I-I -- we only were very ju -- you know -- we ke -- quiet, we kept our voices down, and -- because we could hear, you know, people outside talking, I heard kids playing in the park and -- and y-you know, picking up the flowers and I always ask my -- my mother if I will be able one day to go, to be outside and live like the other kids. And my mother always told me, don't worry, the time will come that you will be among the other kids, and you will pick the flowers, too. And th-this -- we -- we have to, you know, be very careful, because the people c-could hear us. And besides, after, you know, after the liberation when we came down, the concierge from the building that's -- that's was next to the -- to the ma-manhole, she said that she was always very surprise because when it was snowing, th-the -- only this place around the manhole, this -- the snow was melting. It was probably from that w-we were cooking. Even that sometimes we block -- when we were cooking we used to block the -- the opening, that the smell will not go out, but probably from our body, the heat from our body, that was radiating too, that

this -- that the -- it would -- the snow was melting in this place. And she was always very curious, why only in this place the snow is melting?

Q: It certainly seems like such an unusual story. Now, I don't know if you've heard of other people surviving the war and the Holocaust this way in other places, but in Lvov, were the Nazis or the Germans thinking about this? Thinking that maybe somebody is down in the sewers hiding like this? Do you think it was, you know, on their radar?

Q: I think wa -- from the beginning, were -- when the liquidate the ghetto, they -- they -- they knew that people were hiding. In -- i-in the sewer they thr-throw even some places grenades through the manholes. But later on, th-th-they, you know, nobody could imagine that so long after the liquidation, you know, people can still survive in the sewer.

Q: Now, besides your intact group of 11 at that stage, were there any other groups that you know now, you know, did also survive this way in those same sewers in Lvov?

A: No, from what I know and I, you know, was interested to -- to find out and I remember my father too was interested, nobody. And Socha told us nobody survive in the sewer. And I don't think so -- I don't think that from the whole, you know, surviving stories that I heard, that is another one about the people who survive in the sewer. Maybe for -- f-f-for two, three weeks, maybe in the Warsaw ghetto dur-dur-during the uprisal, maybe, but nobody for such a -- a length of period of time survive in the sewer.

Q: When your mother would tell you, don't worry, your time will come to go outside again and pick flowers and be outside, did you -- did you keep a high level of hope, or did you get discouraged? How did you feel, personally?

A: Personally, y-you know, I -- from the beginning I -- I hoped that, you know, that y -- i-it -- somehow I -- we will stay alive and I -- we will manage to -- to -- to -- you know, to -- to co-

come out from this a-and live a normal life, but then I lost already when t-time was passing, I-I -- I lost th-the hope. I remember that I -- it was a time that I was -- after maybe a year or something like this, I got very na -- depressed. I got very melancholy and depressed, I didn't want to talk to anybody, I didn't want to accept the food, and I was completely, you know, in my -- living in my o-own world, completely l-losing faith that w -- that we can survive, that I can leave the -- th-the se -- the sewer. And i-it -- it was like a few days, or-or -- or -- or even longer, and then my mother didn't know what to do and he -- she said to -- to Socha what happened, he was very -- he -- he -- and, you know, h-h-he was thinking about it and he -- he tried to -- to help me, and he was very worry wh-wh-what happened to -- to me, and he -- he said to me one day [indecipherable] he took me with him, he said, come with me and he took me to a si -- place in the sewer, to the -- under the manhole, that I could see the light. And he -- he picked me up, and he -- he said to -- to -- to me, l-look. L-L-Look at the light, and breathe th-th-the air. And he started to -- to -- to tell me that y-you see, it will come a d-d -- a time you will be outside, you wi-will have th-the daylight, and you will li-live like other kids. Well, you have to be patient and don't yi -- lose your hope. And he -- he took me back and then slowly, slowly, I started, you know, to accept the food, and I started to talk. I-It was like a crisis in my staying there. And i-i-it happen. We -- we survive.

Q: Did you have, at any of the stages, where you were holding out hope, did you have a -- a faith in God? Did you pray?

A: W-We -- Berestitsky, one of the li -- 11 pe-people, he was very religious man, he had the tallis, and he was praying in the morning and he was praying in -- i-i-in the evening. And h -- th -- during s-staying in the sewer, we have a few tragedy th-that happen. Once we have the -- the fire, that we thought that we all will be b-burned al-al-alive, and I ask Berestitsky to pray to -

- to God, and once I remember we have a flood, it was i-i-in spring when the s-snow was melting and it wa-was terrible hurricane too, and it was so much water then this sew-sewer was filled up and we -- th-the water came so high that my mother has to keep us high i-i -- up -- up to the ceiling that we can bre-breathe. And the -- I -- I was sure that this is it, that we will drown there. And I was asking and begging Jacob to pray, Jacob, pray to God, pray to God. I found it, you know, that this is maybe th-th-the last resource, that we can hold it to -- to stay alive. And suddenly th-th-the waters started to, you know, coming down, and we survive. The next day Socha -- Socha came, and he was s-sure that he will f-find only dead bodies there, and h-he said th-th-th-this is a miracle that we survive. He -- he went to the church and he light a -- a candle, the thankful candle for -- for us.

Q: How did your brother, you know, go through these kinds of experiences? You -- you had a certain approach, did your brother seem to have the same approach, he's younger. How did he kind of experience things?

A: My brother was younger and he m -- he didn't remember to -- too much, you know? He got used to -- to this. And he thought this is the whole world. This is the sewer and those 10 person, and he didn't -- from the beginning probably h-he -- he remembered, but later on -- on, he forgot. Because when we were liberated, and we c-came -- emerge fro-fro-from the -- the sewer and my brother, he started to cry that he wants to go back. He was scared from the people, he was scared that, you know, from the sunlight, from everything. He thought that the life is th-the -- the sewer, the rats, a-and those 10 people. And this i -- this is h-how he reacted. He -- h-he -- he -- I think maybe it was better for him that he didn't remember th-the things. This is why maybe I got depress and he didn't.

Q: How did the group interact? Are you -- do you want to -- [tape break]. So I wanted to ask you a little bit about the interactions within the group, if you can tell me, were people getting along very well, were there any problems, and anything notable about some of the individuals you were there with?

A: We were really strange people. Only my mother a-and my father a-an -- and my brother and me did -- you know, we were people that we knew each other, I never saw rest of the people ti-til we -- I found myself i-i-in -- in the sewer. And this -- the people, you know, is like, among the people sometimes you agree on someth -- on something, something, or you disagree. There are people who are more agreeable, you know, who will ge -- get along with everybody else, and people who -- who are not. Most of those people we were very, you know, we got along very good with each other. We had only one, Haskell, who was only -- if you said, this is white, he said this is black. He was only against, and he -- he was th-the only person that I really di -- was afraid of, and I didn't like it. But re-rest of them was managing, you know, very nicely. We had to s-spend our time there, you know, to be i-in the -- in -- engage in some things, because otherwise you can go crazy sitting i-in one place so long. And my father used to write comedies and we used to perform, everybody has a role, and perform his -- his part. We used to sing, we used to d-do a -- that's mean the -- the grown-ups, they use -- used to -- especially my father and Helena, they used to do puzzles. Puzzles, and they used to play a game that you call intelligentsia, that you have one word, and from the letters from this word, you have to make new words. I don't know if is a name in English for this? And who -- who will make more words, i-is a winner. And always it was fight between my father and Helena because she claimed that she has more and my father claimed that he has more, and he was telling her to go back to -- to gymnasia. And he -- he -- you know, we tried to m-make life little bit easier. And m-my

mother and my father, they used to teach me, you know, ca -- Socha br-brought book, elementar -- elementals, they call this. This is when the -- the f-first time you go to school, and you ra -- write ABC and words, and they used to teach me how to write, how to read, and they used to teach me ma-math -- mathematics. How to -- to count, you know, add and minus -- plus and minus. And to -- to keep me bi -- busy.

Q: How could you see down there? Was it dark?

A: We -- we had a -- a -- you know, a special carbide lamp that was lightening the spa -- it wasn't, you know, very bright, but you -- you could s-see, yeah. And this was ho-how we si -- we spent our time, and wa -- oh -- oh -- usually after breakfast that we have that we were waiting for Socha, when he comes and Socha and Wrobleski when they came, it was the -- th-the -- the best time of the day, because we talk, he told us what's going on. He used to bring sometimes the newspaper for my father, and my father was re-reading the newspaper and then he and Socha -- my father was a big general, he was planning the next [indecipherable] you know, move of the Soviet army, of American army, of thi -- he was directing the fight i-in the sewer. They should go from this side, they should go from this side. And -- and this is ho-how, then it was th-the dinner and then we did -- did something, play, and then we had to -- time for cleaning ourself from the lice. Every di-di-di -- at five o'clock, I think, my mother was taking our di-di -- undress us and killing those lices, and put -- lice, and put the dress up. This was another function.

Q: How did she do it? She would -- there would be live lice on you and then she would just kill each one?

A: Yeah. Th-They used to th-th -- most of the time they were in the stitches of your dress. You have to turn the stitch and then you kill it, yeah.

Q: Did you get lice in your hair?

A: Yes, yes, we -- we had -- but I had very short hair. They kept my hair very short like a -- like a boy, yeah. I went to the sewer with long, beautiful hair and then they cut it and [indecipherable] they grow.

Q: And how was sleeping in the sewer, what was that like?

A: Sleeping, it was another th-thing. We -- we slept on the benches, on the planks, my father built from the planks that he found in the -- in other part of the sewer, he -- he built th-th-the -- that -- they were supported on the one side of the wall, and on the other side of the wall. During the day he took it -- w-we took this and he -- we made it that we can sit, but for night we pu-put this, and we slept, you know, like three people and three people in the row like this, long ways, because it was not so wide, it was narrow. I slept between Haskell and my father. I slept right in between -- it was so tight that if one person wanted to turn around, three has to turn around in the same time.

Q: Would you say you got used to some of these routines in a way, or was -- you know, how much did this sort of feel like a very strange and difficult way to live, and how much did it feel like an adjustment to a totally different kind of way of life?

A: Is -- if -- with the time, you know, you -- you -- you get used to this. It was the daily routines that we had and we got used to this. We were ha-happy that, you know, that we were alive one day, and that we were a -- waiting to another day, and we continued th-the same routine if we didn't have anything like floods and fire. And th-this is ho-how it happen in -- we -- he -- he -- you know, we got adjust. You can get a-a-ad -- adjust to, I think a human being, you know, can get adjust to anything.

Q: How did you go to the bathroom?

A: Oh, we -- we tried to, you know, to keep one spot on the end o-of the tunnels only that we had a bucket and we used to do our duties there and once a day in the morning, every time somebody else was taking this bucket, you know, out and throwing, you know, the waste to -- to -- to -- to the Peltew, and then come with the empty one. And this is h-how we did.

Q: Did Socha bring water, or you always got your water within --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number three, side B. So we were talking about how you got water.

A: We got water fr-from the sewers. I-It was a -- every day somebody di -- they -- they ke-kept -- you know, every day somebody else, and mostly the -- the men is a -- used to go and br-bring water, drinking water, yeah. But Socha u-used to bring mostly food.

Q: So I know that -- I know at least two stories about two of the individuals in the group, and I guess the two that I'm thinking of refers to this older woman who was in your group --

A: Right.

Q: -- and this other woman, a younger woman.

A: [indecipherable]. Yeah, we had -- when we c-came to this part of the -- or Socha took us to this part of the sewer that we stayed at, we were 11 people, but it -- during the time that we were there, I d-don't -- after few months, Mrs. Weiss, she -- she was a elderly woman and she had the asthma, she was sick and she was getting sick each time, and he -- he -- her health deteriorated very much, and my mother used to take care of her, you know [indecipherable] to bring her food be -- beca -- when she could and even later on sit and try to feed her and try to always, you know, be with -- hold her hand and be with her and she said to -- to my mother that she -- she is

praying that my mother will s-stay alive, that we will stay alive, and she said, "I'm sure that God will hear me, and you will s-stay alive," and wa -- one night she -- she passed away, and they t-took her body and -- to the Peltew, and they thr-throw this to the water, to the Peltew. And -- and this was one thing that happened, and -- a-another was th-the Mrs. Weinberg, when she did -- went down to the sewer she was pregnant but nobody knew about it, she was hiding. She was wearing a -- a big coat, black coat and she was always wearing this coat, and I -- I never saw her withou-ou-out this coat. Sh-She was hiding and then after th -- you know, her pregnancy was very advance already. Sometimes even when we were passing through those small pipes, she couldn't go through and we didn't know why, we were pushing her, you know, through. Later on we discovered that this is because she was pregnant, she -- she [indecipherable] even imagine that the -- th-the pipe wa -- the width that she was when she was pregnant. And when we would discover that she's pregnant [indecipherable] I'm talking about we, I didn't. I didn't know anything and my brother didn't anyway, didn't know anything, but you know, the grown-ups, they -- that -- I knew that something's going on because they were talking quietly and they were speaking Yiddish, then I know is something that I shouldn't know. And finally -- th-th-they were afraid to tell Socha and Wrobleski that she is pregnant. Now I th -- I-I think that in the last day or two, they th -- they thought that she will give birth, they -- they told Socha that she is pregnant and that -- he -- he said, that is impossible that the -- the child will -- will survive here, a-and besides, he was afraid that the ch-child crying will, you know, le-led to our discovery of us by -- by people outside. And this -- that this was very dangerous. And -- but [indecipherable] and they left, but meantime she -- day or two later, she -- she started to y-y-you know, delivering a baby. And my father was the del-delivery man. I -- I knew it was on the side of the -- she was laying in the side of the -- the pipe, th-th-the -- the part, th-the -- of our compartment and the other

compartment and my father had the rusty scissors and he had this shoelace that he tied the umbilical cord. And he deliver the baby and I -- I remember for a moment I heard the -- the -- the cry of a baby and then th -- i-it was quiet. My mother was helping my father, she was next to -- to Ginya Weinberg and she -- she keep -- she was trying to give the baby little bit water with sugar that he was sucking, but W-Weinbergowa, she was pulling my mother away from the baby. She -- she -- she took the baby and she put on her chest and she kept and she didn't let my mother to -- to do it. And they were fighting among because my mother wanted to -- to -- to feed the baby and she di-didn't want. And then my mother was so exhausted that she falled asleep. When my mother fall -- fall asleep, the -- she suffocate the baby. She sacrificed the baby because she knew that is no way that the baby c-can survive there. And th-the next day when the so -- th-they disposed the body of the ba -- the baby and next day wh-when Socha came, you know [indecipherable] people, we -- we told him that the baby, the -- it was a boy, and tha-that she ki-kill the baby. And he was very upset because he wanted to arrange something with the n-nuns and bring -- take the baby to -- to the nuns. But, you know, we didn't know -- she didn't know about that. It was so quick. Th-This is what -- this is what happen.

Q: Did the baby have a name?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so.

Q: Did you see the baby?

A: I didn't see the baby, no. I didn't, I didn't see. It happen probably when I was asleep.

Q: Did you -- did you know that the -- what had happen -- you knew what happened then, to the baby, afterwards?

A: I -- I knew that the baby had disappear. I didn't know anything. They -- they -- th-they -- I didn't know anything. I didn't know about pregnancy, I just -- didn't know what pregnancy means, at all. And th-the -- for me it was something strange, and na -- I didn't know anything.

Q: You knew there had been a baby and the baby disappeared, but you didn't know that the baby had died.

A: Th -- I didn't know. I knew -- knew that something happen, but I didn't know e-exactly what happen. I -- I only find out later, yeah.

Q: Okay, I just want to actually ask a little bit about any sort of religious observance, you know, as a group, any of the traditions that you were able to maintain down in the sewers. Anything at all, that you remember?

A: From -- wh-what I remember, like I mention already, that Berestitsky was religious, he had the tallis and he was praying and probably he knew when the -- all holy days are coming, but my -- my mother kept every Friday evening, she light the candle -- Shabbat candles. And she ask -- I remember from the beginning, she ask Socha if who -- he wouldn't mind to bring her candles to light again. He said no, no, no, and he was bringing her candles, and he like it very much that my mother kept the tradition. He was religious, and he -- Christian religion, but I think he knew what it is to believe, you know, in your religion, and he liked that my mother keeps the religion, the Jewish tradition.

Q: What about any of, you know, the high holidays? Were you able to mark them in any way?

A: I don't remember. I-I -- I know only that Yom Kippur we didn't -- we kids could eat, but the grown-ups didn't eat. This I remember. But the other holy days, I don't remember.

Q: What about your birthday?

A: Oh, I don't remember that we ever, you know.

Q: Did you know what day it was from day to day, the calendar, did you know anything about that?

A: I-I-I di -- I -- maybe -- I didn't know, maybe, you know, but my father knew, because he was up to date in politics and e-everything, he knew. But I -- I -- I didn't, I -- I -- I didn't if -- for me, you know, I n-never knew ki -- when is day and what is night. It always w-wa -- I-I knew that day is morning when Socha is coming. This was my clock. Otherwise I didn't know if is day or night.

Q: And how did you prepare food down there? Did you have a stove?

A: We had the carbide st-stove, th-that Mrs. Weinbergowa she was cooking the soup, and what we cook else is only probably boiling water for -- for -- for this s-so called coffee. But otherwise we -- we didn't use the -- it was very primitive carbide st-stove.

Q: I think there was a time -- I wanted to ask a little bit more about -- sort of your -- your health and the health of your brother as well. There was a time where I think he had an injury to his leg?

A: Yeah, he -- I think he fall on his step wrong, that -- an-and my father said that he has a broken leg, and he -- y-you know, they kept this unmobile, and it healed. It healed by -- by -- you know [indecipherable] self. You did -- this is -- if you have broken leg right now, the thing is to keep this steady in the -- immobilized. Yeah.

Q: And was there any effort to get any sort of additional help for him, or was that just impossible, given the circumstances?

A: It was impossible. Wh-Wha-What can you do, it i -- it is impo -- impossible. When he -- once he had the sore throat, he -- he -- he -- h-he couldn't speak, you know, wi -- and Socha, when he came, he ask my mother, "Mi -- Mrs. Heger, what do you think will help him?" And my mother said, you know, the only thing -- she knew that we cannot get any me-medication because Socha

wo-wouldn't go to -- to pharmacy to buy, because he was afraid that they will t -- ask who wrote the prescription, because my father could write, but -- prescript -- he know how to write prescriptions, but he was afraid to do it. And my mother said, you know, the only thing what can he-hel-help him is Gogel Mogel. This is a -- Gogel Mogel is that you take the egg yolk with sugar, and you mix it -- mix it to the -- to-together and you swallow this. And he said, oh, this is the only -- she said, yeah, this is maybe. And you know, after Socha left, after maybe two hours, we -- we heard th-the -- the noise of somebody coming. You know, this sloggish noise, shu, shu, shu. And w-w-we -- my father and Corsage -- th-the -- Mondek, he was standing, you know, next to the ho -- hole that he was cu -- coming, and they wanted, you know, to hit him, because they thought that this is somebody strange is coming. And they finally, you know, it was [indecipherable] they saw Socha f-face. He brought three eggs. He gave these eggs in a handkerchief, you know, tied at those four corners, and he put in hi -- in his mouth, he was holding with his teeth, and this is how he b-brought th-those three eggs that my mother can make a Gogel Mogel for my brother. This kind of person he was. It's unbelievable.

Q: And he cou --

A: It help. It help, and he was very happy.

Q: And your own health, were there any of these sorts of episodes that ever happen with yourself as well, or mostly your brother's health was -- was more the focus, would you say, or --

A: It's mostly my brother. I was always healthy. Only -- I had only this episode of -- that I was so depressed. That was more, you know, the mental, psychological than the physical. But no, I -- I -- I-I was healthy, besides the -- the -- the terrible diarrhea that we had in the beginning, the dysentery, but I-I was okay.

Q: And once you had that it didn't return, it was really just at the beginning?

A: No, he didn't return. Thank God he didn't. We got immune and he didn't return.

Q: And also, just curious, were you -- were you wearing the sweater that your grandmother gave you, often, or what -- what were you wearing during this time? Did you have any change of outfits, or were you always wearing the same thing, really?

A: W-We -- most of the t-time -- we wear the same thing. I-I -- I ne -- remember that I had like a tee shirt I was we-wearing, and on this I was wearing this sweater, or I had something else too, but i-i -- th-the tee shirts, once a week or twice a week my mother was changing on us and Socha was taking our clothes, you know, f-f-for -- for laundry. He -- his wife, she was cr -- doing the laundry for us, and he was taking the dirty clothes and bri -- bringing the clean ones.

Q: So now will you start telling me a little bit more -- I mean, now we can get into the details of actually when the Russians are starting to come in. What did you know ahead of time, what did you know at what point, you know, when things were starting to change?

A: My f-father used to discuss with Socha always th-th-th-the politics and what's going outside, and Socha used to always bring the news. I think that he belonged to organization, the underground Polish organization, and he knew wh-wha-what's going on, and we knew that, y-you know, the eastern front is coming, that the Russian -- that -- that th-th-the German lost the Stalingrad and they are now -- now retreating, and we were v-very happy. We were always waiting and waiting wh-when it will happen. And my father discuss this. I didn't d-discuss, you know, the politically -- from the point of view of politically, I -- I only was waiting til we can ge-get liberated and I can go out. I didn't know what's the eastern front and this front or th-th-this wasn't in my interest a-at that time. And they didn't discuss with me, whatever I overheard is -- but I -- I n -- I knew, a-a-at the end, you know, my father was losing already hope. He was getting depressed too. He was -- he was so anxiously waiting til we will be liberated that every

day it was for him like a year. He couldn't wait for this, he was very, very nervous that -- the last few -- few weeks, maybe two months or something. He -- he -- he was always afraid that it can turn back, you know? But i -- he knew really what's going on with this, he read the newspaper, Socha was u -- he bring him a news -- a Polish newspaper and sometime German newspaper, he read from the b-b-both sides.

Q: And so were you also feeling that something is in the air, something was changing, or did you only know at the very last minute something had changed?

A: No, I think that maybe the last few days, you know, we knew that something -- I knew that something is going o-o-on, because my father was v-very, you know, al-already restful. He -- he -- h-he couldn't already wait. And this is why I knew that something is coming, but yo-you know, we took day by day. I think that a ma -- that the one who was really reliving this, you know, this coming liberation th-the most was my f-father.

Q: Was your father the leader of this group, would you say?

A: Yeah, this is what Socha call him, that he is the leader, that he is th-th-the group. He is the captain, he -- he say -- he said. And he always ask my father and always t-told everybody, whatever Heger said, th-th-that's it, a-and he always ask my -- my father th -- if he agrees, or -- or if he has the plan, or he has some ideas or something, yeah.

Q: I read in the book by Robert Marshall that they even drank a little vodka together, is this -- is this a --

A: Oh!

Q: -- true story? Do you remember this?

A: Yeah, yeah. This is a -- this is true. This is -- Socha used to bring sometimes with -- were s-
some occasion, some birthday, or on my mother birthday, the July 23rd, he -- he brought some --
[tape break]

Q: So I was just asking you about vodka.

A: Yeah, some occasion Socha used to bring some -- some vodka and th-they used to, the -- the
grown-ups u-used to, you know, d-drink wi-with him and my father al-always was very worrying
that -- that they will not get -- Socha and Wroblewski will not get drunk. And this is why he
always drank the most amount of vodka because he didn't let them to -- to be drunk because he
was afraid, you know, when you drunk you can say something. But wi -- s -- Socha, once he --
he says -- said to my father that a -- that he -- my father is afraid that he will get drunk, th-that he
will sa-say some -- he -- he -- he felt, you know, that m-my father is accusing him of get dr-
drunk, and then my father said no, no, you know. [indecipherable] fo-fo-fo-forgive me, I didn't
mean like this. But he was afraid.

Q: So what happened next? What was the moment that everything changed?

A: When we got li-liberated.

Q: I-If that's the next thing, you know, what -- what led up to that, or what, you know, happened
--

A: Well, we had another th-thing that ha -- that happened, that the few weeks, maybe three
weeks before the li-liberation, suddenly Socha came with another person. And he wa -- th-this
was a -- a young man who was a deserter f -- he -- he was fighting on -- on the Russian side. He
was Ukrainian that fighting with the Germans on the Russian side. And he got to m -- he was
POW, the German t-took him in prison, and he -- he was a POW for -- for -- i-i-in the -- Russian
POW in the German, and they treat them terrible. Th-Th-They tr-treated -- i-it was unbelievable

how the German ter-terrible treat the Russians, the POWs. They tortured and th-the terrible -- and wa -- one of the thing that they did that they forced them to fight -- to put the German uniforms and fight against Russians, against their will. And he -- he escape. Somehow he -- he deserted the -- th-th-the German army, and Socha's wife sister find him someplace a-and give him a hiding place, and they fall in love. He -- he was very good l-looking young man, and the only place -- and they knew the Russians are coming, and they knew that Russian will kill him because he fought with German against the Russian. The German, if they will ca-catch him, he is a deserter, they will kill him. Th-The only place that he can survive, it will be in the sewer. And Socha brought him to the sewer. When he came and he saw this, he si-si -- he turn around, he wanted to run. He said, in this condition he is not living. You must be -- th-th-this is like a-animals. You must be animals, no-not human being that you can stay here more than one day. And he i-i -- ya -- he was miserable. He only wanted to escape. And Socha gave a gun to my father, and he said, if he wants to escape, shoot him. And they took turns, you know, every few hours somebody else was watching him that he won't escape. And this is how it happened to the -- til -- til the liberation.

Q: What was his name?

A: Tola. Tola. He -- after the -- I-I think after the -- the liberation that the Russian took him back to the army and he was killed in the army, yeah.

Q: I didn't know that, I'm not even sure -- maybe it's in the book. Maybe those are the last 20 pages that I didn't read.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'm sorry, I tried to read all of it, but -- but wow, I didn't know that somebody else had joined you like that.

A: Yeah, Tola.

Q: So -- so now you are a total of 11?

A: We are at -- back in 11, because he's the 11th person. And, you know, we heard already [indecipherable] the planes, the Russians planes were coming and he -- bombs were falling, and we were afraid that the bomb can hit the sewer because you are under the ground, very under th - - under the surface, you know, and the bomb can hit the -- the street and you are exposed, and you are killed. And this was -- this I remember I was so afraid of, whenever I heard the noise o- of the a-airplane, I would start to shaking, because I was -- I heard the bombs falling, I said, oh, okay, that's it. It was -- this was one thing that I was so scared, and after the flood, the rain. When I heard the drop rain falling, I already was panicked. And -- a-and then the Germans were -- th-they started to dig and putting mines above us. And we heard the digging, the digging, and we -- we were starting, you know [indecipherable], but it -- it -- it -- it's gonna -- it started to -- t-taking the -- the carbide that we used to the lamp, th-the disposed carbide they used to move to the side when they heard the digging is coming. You know, the German were digging from up, and then we were filling from downstairs that they couldn't get in. But it wa -- it -- Socha came in, we said to Socha, and he -- he went ou-out to the street and Kowaliw, you know, wa -- he was with the authority that he is the -- the maintenance commander and he said to the German, you cannot dig here because there is a gas pipes here. And th-they didn't want -- and he said le-let me talk to the re-responsible person here. It was some German, some Nazi, some Gestapo, I don't know. And he said to -- to him, listen, those are gas pipes, the moment you hit the gas pipes, you will all blow up. Th -- and they stopped digging. This is -- you know, every day was bringing something, but it was to the end on the -- a-already, and you are so afraid that in the last moment something can happen. You suffer so much. And -- and we heard, you know, the -- the artillery.

We knew that the Russian are -- are -- are close already. We -- we heard -- we -- we were scared from the bombs and then, but we -- we knew they are coming. And my -- my father was ti -- watching Tola, and it was time that the shift was changing that th -- Mondek, the [indecipherable] was taking over and my father was so tired he went to sleep and I fall asleep and he was asleep. And then, when he was a sleeping, it was like early in the morning, suddenly we heard the noise, like somebody is banging o-on the crates, you know, on the manhole, the -- the - - the iron --

Q: Gr-Grate?

A: Grate, grate. I-Iron grates. And we were, you know, everybody was come, my father was asleep, he was so tired. And the rest was in the [indecipherable] was -- was listening and then he heard Heger, Heger, Corsage, you are free, you are free, you can come out. And he -- he said, I am giving you the plan how to go to -- each way to go. And he gave us to go th-through those -- we grabbed whatever we c -- you know, we had no-nothing, and we -- we -- we was crawling through those pipes til we came to the -- to the point that he said, th-this is the point that you have to come out and if -- through it was the manhole, and he was open and he was standing, and he said that the children are coming first. Then Mrs. Heger, then the women and then you, and then the last is coming Heger, the captain. The captain is coming the last. And this is why -- how we ca-came out. It was a courtyard next to the -- not far away from the sewers that we were hiding, above was a courtyard. He called all the people, and he -- he told them to stay and watch, and they watched like we were coming, like rats, you know, we were come -- and my brother when he came out, he started to cry. He said he wants to go back. He was so scared. He forgot how the world look like. He thought that the whole life, his whole world is the sewer and those

rats and -- a-an-and that's it, those 10 people. He was crying and he was pulling my mother, like
I want to go back, I want to go back, and she explained to him in the --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number four, side A. Okay, go ahead.

A: When we all came ou-out -- emerge from -- from the manhole of the courtyard, my father was the last one, because this is what Socha said, that the captain is coming the last. And he -- he was so proud and he was smiling so har -- and he said to the people who are standing and watching, and surprised they were, you know, so shocked, and he said, "Those are my Jews. This is my work." He was so proud. He -- immediately, you know, he -- he went to the building and he started organize. The -- th-th-they were the empty a-apartment with the -- because the -- the Germans run ni -- run away. A-And he -- he said, this room will be for Heger, this is for Clara and [indecipherable] this is for Weinbergowa. He was the organizer, he set up everything, yeah. And then next day I think that he brought his wife and his daughter to meet us, and we met -- we met them. It was unbelievable, 14 months.

Q: Now, how long were you there again?

A: We were 14 months in the sewer. We emerge in July 27, '44.

Q: Can I just -- tell me how old were you at this time when you got out?

A: F -- f -- '44 I was -- I was end -- eight and half, yeah.

Q: Did you know the date, or you only later learned what the date was when you came out?

A: I -- I knew the date because we were so anxious that, you know, everybody was counting the days, and we knew that this is July. And y-y-you know, it was fu-funny thing, because a few weeks before th-the li-liberation -- it was maybe like a month before, or sa -- or six weeks, that Berestitsky, he woke up and he said that he had a dream, and he ask who is born in July? And my mother said, July 23 is -- I was born July 23. And he -- he said that we will be -- we -- we

will be liberated in the day of my mother or a little bit later, that he had a dream, and he knew the -- the date. This why I remember exactly July -- July 27.

Q: Did you know that the, you know, other parts of the war were still going on? Were you aware of this?

A: We really were liberated July 23rd, on my mother birthday, but Socha, during the liberation, the mom -- he didn't come to the sewers. We -- he -- he -- he supply us with food before, because he knew he won't be able to -- to come, and he didn't want us t -- let us out. He was waiting few days, because it happen in another city, in Tarnopol that after the German left, and the Russian came, the Jews went out and then the German came back, and they all were killed. This is why he didn't want to, he waited few days. That m-means July 23rd on my birthday, probably this is when the -- the Russian came. This is what the prophet Berestitsky said.

Q: So what were your first impressions when you got out -- outside and above ground again?

A: When we got out -- at first I didn't see almost anything a-and then when I start to see it was, everything was yellow. You know what, my -- my sight was terrible til my eyes get adjust to daylight. And then we were -- looked so terribly, you know, th-th-th -- the dress that we were wearing, things -- we -- we looked terrible, because I remembered when I was on the street with my brother, some woman, she -- she passed us and he brought s-some fruit, gooseberries. And she had it in the bag and she looked at us and she said -- and she gave us, and he said ha -- children, have this. Sh-She felt the pity for us. This is -- we -- we probably looked terrible. I didn't look to the mirror.

Q: Were you -- were you very skinny at that point, were -- you know, because you weren't eating very much, or how -- how was your appearance in that regard?

A: I -- I -- fi-fir -- I was skinny, th-this is -- is one. The second, I had the infection. I have like abscesses from malnutrition. I-I still have scars fr-from this, and my father was very sick, too, he had a lot of those abscesses. And he wa -- he was very -- very, very sick and thank God it was, you know, penicillin that was discover, and my father was a -- was one of the first one, almost, who got penicillin injection. And this, you know, s -- bring him his health back.

Q: Did you need anything like that?

A: I -- I didn't -- didn't. I wasn't in such a critical condition that my father -- yeah, that -- with me, it -- it went through ba -- by themselves. They -- probably maybe I a-ate better, o-or --

Q: How about your mother and your brother, how wa -- how was th-their health?

A: My brother was very skinny. He was so skinny that -- unbelievable is that his two legs were like two -- two -- two sticks. And my -- m-my father and my mother, they both were, you know, they didn't ke-keep straight. Their posture was completely, y-you know, it -- i-it -- it -- they -- they were bent, they had -- backbone was completely dismanaged. Th-Th-Th -- they were bent, they couldn't -- being bent for -- for -- for 14 months, the only time they could -- they could straight is when they were lying down. And it -- it -- it -- this -- th-th-they -- and sh-she was skinny too, my -- my mother. But she didn't have this -- this infection that my father had, but she -- she -- she looked terrible, too.

Q: So did you really believe this was it, you'd finally made it? Would you -- were you at all sort of questioning, could anything else go wrong or change, or did you feel like we did it, we made it and you all sighed a big sigh of relief?

A: I think that we f-feel -- we -- we felt that we, you know, are safe, at least fr-from the Germans, you know, that we made it, that you know, that we are liberated, we right now can try

to -- to live normal life, and we had the hope, you know. It was very difficult, because no jobs, no th -- no -- no -- no -- no money, nothing. And i-it was very harsh and difficult time.

Q: And what kind of anti-Semitism greeted you at that point?

A: Ha -- I -- I -- I know that we were liberated in end of July, and in September, the school was supposed to start, first of September is school year start and my mother went to m -- to the school and to register me and the -- the secretary ask my mother, you know the name, th-th-the family name, the first name, the age when -- all th-th-those details, and she ask what religion. And my mother s-said moisia showa. Moisia showa, it mean you are Jewish. And she looked at my mother, and she said excuse me, and she went to the principal to ask if she can register a Jewish child. And when she came back my mother was so angry, and my mother said, "Did -- did you go to the principal to ask if you can register a -- a Jewish kid to school?" She -- she didn't say anything, and she register me to s -- t-to school, and I started to -- to go to -- to school, but I -- I felt very bad, and you know, because my -- I didn't ha-have shoes. My father made shoes from old newspapers and sh -- sa -- make shoes for me, cover ma -- ma -- my feet. And I had this, you know, that -- this clothes t-terrible, and I fe-felt very bad. I -- I remember that I was running, I didn't walk, I was running because I thought if I run that less people will see that I ha -- don't have the shoes, only tho-those newspapers. And I remember one of the girls, she was sitting -- I remember her face. She was sitting next to me, one day she ask me why I am writing from left to right? Th -- I should write from right to left. I didn't understand what she is talking about. I came home and I said, "Mom, why is she's telling me that I should write from right to left, not from left to right?" She said, "Because Jewish alphabet, Hebrew, you write from right to left." And she knew that I am Jewish, this is why she was asking me why I am writing this way and not this way.

Q: Were you the only Jewish child in your class?

A: Yeah, I was the only gi -- Jewish child. With m-my luck, I was almost always only Jew in the class.

Q: And did you experience other sort of incidents with other students or teachers or anybody else sort of make you feel bad in that way?

A: No, no, no, i-in Lvov -- we left Lvov in '45, i-in I think ma -- March '45. This mean I didn't go to -- to -- to s-school too long in Lvov. But I -- I remember very vividly. I study Polish, I study Russian, I had to, you know, say th-that -- by heart all the life of Lenin and Stalin, all those communist propaganda. And we -- we -- in '45 March we escape, and we run to -- to Kraków, to Poland, because it -- in the Russian says that -- tha -- i-i-it came a law that P-Polish p-people who want to immigrate to p -- to Poland -- because at that time, r-right now, Lvov is already Russia, then y-you can emigrate t-to Poland. And i -- we -- we want in, and besides th-the Russian, you know, it -- they wanted to send my father and us I think to Siberia because they found out that we were bourgeois before the war, and this is, you know, terrible in -- under the Russian communist government. And th-then, another thing was th-they suspected that anybody who survived during Holocaust must be schpern, spy. This was -- this is why I remember my fa-father came one evening and he said let's leave, and we left everything, whatever we have and we went to -- a-and we left to the railroad station, to the -- they were like cattle trains, and we stayed there, we were hiding there, and it took us three weeks til we got to Kraków.

Q: Three weeks on those trains?

A: Three weeks on this train that right now it takes few hours, because it was after the war, the bridges were, you know, des-destroyed. And I do -- I remember just winter, it was so cold tha -- my father was burning little bit water for us i -- like in the sewer, he d -- he did in the -- from the

s-sardines, y-you know, a -- a can? He used to put some water in the warming, this -- this is what he did there, too, that we will have some warm water.

Q: So this was yet another big change.

A: Yeah. It was another thing, we came to -- t-to Kraków, and i -- I went to school in Kraków and my mother register me already -- not -- she didn't want to register me th-th-that I am Jewish, because after the war they had still pogroms in -- in Poland. And somebody told her, you know, for her safe, say that she is Christian, and my aunt, because during the war she survive, she was a maid to a -- a priest, she knew the all prayers, and she taught me the prayers. I had -- have to learn when I went to school that I knew when to say, what to say when I went to church that I know -- know what to say. And I -- the -- the principal, a woman -- very nice woman, very nice woman, she knew that I am Jewish, and she said to my mother, you know, for her sake, let's say that she is Christian. And this is how I -- I was i-in Poland, til I went to high school. When I went to high school my mother said that this is enough, now you are going, you are Jewish.

Q: But y -- had your name changed? Had your family changed its name?

A: Yeah, when we came to Kraków, you know, the people advise us th -- ya -- change the name that sounds more Polish, not J -- Jewish. And we change from Heger to Herowski, cause Herowski sounds very Polish.

Q: And so nobody would question you or your family? Did anybody give you a hard time and suspect that you were Jewish, or anything like that?

A: They suspected we are Jewish. They suspected I was Jewish because wa -- wa -- one time th - - sa -- mothers of the few kids fro-from school, from class, they came to the principal and they ask her if Krisha is Jewish. And the principal said no. And she said, why you asking? Because he -- she is too smart. This was their answer. That's really, you know, the-they always -- I

remember th-the sign on the building across the street from us, Krishka [indecipherable],
Kristine, she's a Jewish. She's a Jew. I -- I went to Poland, you know, a few years ago to Kraków
and I was looking for the sign, it's not there.

Q: What is the sign? I'm not sure I understand. Somebody put a sign?

A: Somebody wrote, you know, o-on the wall.

Q: Graffiti?

A: Graffiti. Graffiti. Krishka [speaks Polish] it means -- in Polish it means Krisha a Jew.

Q: And that was for you.

A: This was for me because I live across the street, the windows, you know, from the windows I
could see the sign.

Q: Did that bother you a great deal at that time?

A: It -- it bothers me, you know. It hurt me, but after what I went through, I didn't care. I knew
that I -- th-this is it, that is anti-Semite, that I have to be very careful what I say, what I do. I
grew up with -- in this, the -- that I knew it. I -- I really -- like you, you know, you get used to
this, you -- you know, that you are a presi -- prosecuted, and yo -- I got used to -- used to this.

Q: But at least your family didn't feel immediate danger in the same way before, even though
there was an awareness of -- of the anti-Semitism in Kraków, right?

A: Yeah, it was much better, fir-first you know, the -- the government, we -- i-i-it was later on
communist too, and a-according to the doc-doctrine, communist doctrine, everybody is equal.
They cannot -- officially they cannot do anything against Jews, but unofficially, under the table,
they did whatever th-they could to -- to hurt the Jews. But th-this is the -- yo-you know, he -- he
di -- we knew that we are Jewish and we knew that he -- we have, you know, to carry this -- this
bag. But i-i-it wasn't that we were afraid that somebody will come and will kill us or something,

n-no. And later on -- I-later, we di -- we didn't have any official, you know, pogroms or things, and maybe it happened, you know, some of -- one person killed the other person, but th-th -- th-th-the -- it weren't like after s -- immediately after the war. I-It was much b-better, the anti-S-Semitism was, you know, hiding. They -- they -- it wasn't so obvious, open, because yi -- it shouldn't be.

Q: Was there one occasion where your mother had heard about a pogrom nearby and -- and was worried for your safety? Was that in Kraków?

A: Yeah, th-this was in Kraków when the pogrom in Kielce. Was I -- I remember I was -- my mother was working and I was by myself with my brother and I went to a market to buy some vegetables, and my mother wrote me what I have to buy at th -- for cooking, and it was a one neighbor, a-and she -- she came downstairs and she said, Krisha, what are you doing here? Go home, go immediate -- and I, you know, I was with my brother, holding his hand, and she said, go home immediately. And I run home. When I came home my mother was running and she said go home. Go -- this is when it happen i-i-i-in Kielce. I think in Kraków they have pogrom too.

Q: So school proceeded and you actually enjoyed some parts of school, or was it a difficult time for you?

A: No, I e-enjoy, I didn't -- you know, I knew that I am playing a role. I knew that I am Jewish, and th-th-this is only a game to -- to -- for me to survive, a-and I knew it and I c-continue with the -- I went with my friends fr-fr-from school, I went to the -- th-the church, and I si-si -- you know -- you know, wi -- all the procedure what's going in the church here I did, I knew how to do it.

Q: You had your first communion?

A: I had my first communion and I have pictures. I went to the church, now that I was i-in Poland, I went to the church, I saw the church a-and I found a -- a-a m -- yeah -- you know, a plaque there for commemoration for John Paul the second. What happened, the times that I was going to the church, he was the priest. He was coming there and saying the prayer -- prayers, that maybe when I was there he said the prayer.

Q: What did you think about that experience, did you sort of always reject when you were in church, you know, in your head what was happening, or did you enjoy any part of the -- the rituals that you were part of in church?

A: I didn't enjoy the ritual, I knew that I am playing, you know, that I am playing game. And to - - to prove it, you know when you take -- when the mass, end of the mass, you have people who are coming to take the communion, you know, the -- the -- the white --

Q: The wafer.

A: Wafer, yeah, the whi -- the wafer, yeah, and you -- is a way that you have to take it. You cannot bite on this. You can take on end of your tongue and swallow. And I wanted to prove it that I'm Jewish, that I don't believe what I am doing, I was always biting. Like, you know, revolt against.

Q: Interesting. So --

A: [inaudible]

Q: I think I remember something about you, wa-was it during the summertime you would go on vacation and you had a -- a sort of incident or something with a Polish -- a Polish farmer rented you a room and there was something that came up at that time?

A: Yeah, i-i-it -- it -- usually during vacation, because of our health problem, we were so malnourish, and that my parents always wanted, you know, to -- us to go to the countryside, to

the villages, because we -- then we can have a fresh milk, fresh eggs, everything fresh and build up little bit our -- our health. And my father rented a room and we went with my mother, we stayed there. And then after awhile we -- y-you know, my m-mother pay attention that something, you know, the people are going around the house that th -- we were staying and one night she heard noises next to our door, even th-the door were locked. And I remember th-th-the ne-next day or two the -- the woman from which we rented th-th-the -- the apartment, she came to my mother and he said, "You know, it will be much better for you if you leave, because they are planning to kill you." And, because from the beginning, she didn't know that we are Jewish, but somehow you know, those people around, they found out. They had a ver -- th-the -- the crisis -- Pole -- Poles were very good nose to find the Jew. And the -- w-w-we -- we left. We left, my mother -- my mother called my father, or g-g-got in touch with him and by train it -- or he came by car, I don't remember, a-an-and we left, because we were afraid that they will kill us. They were running with the knife, and when we only c-came a day or two after, you know, my -- th-th-th-the woman that we rented the house talked to my mother, we were walking and she think, you know, Hitler, the Germans were bad. The one thing bad that he -- Hitler did, it was that he didn't kill the whol -- whole Jewish population.

Q: You've been back to Poland as recently as a month ago --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- I believe, and I don't know how many times since -- since the war, but have things changed?

A: I -- I went few -- few times becau -- because I ha-had to go, and besides, you know, Poland is beautiful country. The nature is so beautiful, the mountains and the lakes, the rivers, th-th-that is bu -- really beautiful. I enjoy it to look at the nature. I am not so proud and happy about the

people who -- who live there. I think that the new generation has a different view. Th-They are changing. They, you know, are learning much more and they are learning much more about the Jew -- Jewish culture. They are learning right now about the Holocaust, they never learn about the Holocaust during the communist government, you know, the -- and I hope -- I hope it will change. You can see the difference in the big city, like for example, in Kraków y-you talk to people they -- th-they -- they talk the -- completely different, but in the small villages, I don't know if it's so much change. And th-th-the -- the big influence is the church. The -- the -- the anti-Jewish propaganda is even still there. You know, the special thing that they are blaming Jews for killing Jesus, for his blood and th-things. It -- even though the John Pope the second, he -- he said they have to change, that they shouldn't say that Jews killed Jesus, and other country are changing, but in Poland if you go to the mass, and I went to the mass to hear it, they still are saying the same.

Q: You said that you needed to go back. Was that for any reason --

A: No --

Q: -- tied to the war, or anything?

A: This was because -- you know, my husband was born in Kraków, his whole fa-family is in -- in Kraków. He went through, he is Holocaust survivor, too. And it was few things that he has to - to take care of. Yeah, a-at th -- this is why he -- we went. But like I said, the country is beautiful.

Q: So now, let's go back to you living in Kraków, and you were living there from about what age until what age? How old are you at this point?

A: I -- I live there from -- we came in '45, March '45, and I left from Kraków to Israel in 1957, September 1957. So maybe --

Q: '45, about --

A: -- for 12 years. 12 years, yeah, I went to -- t-to school there, I went to -- you can call high school. I started my medical study in the University of k -- of Kraków.

Q: Which was very unusual for a woman, and a Jewish woman, I would presume?

A: They -- at that time, they didn't ask you, because this is already communist government, you don't ask religion. Religion is not the subject right now. If they don't ask, you don't say anything, but my friends, they knew that I am Jewish. They knew.

Q: And was it unusual to be a woman in dentistry school at that time there?

A: I-In Poland, not. Eastern European, more woman, or equally maybe, or even more women in dentistry than men. The -- it wasn't anything unusual. Yeah, wh-when we leave, I -- I -- I want to mention to you that in 1945 in May, we got a news from Gliwice because Socha escaped from Lvov after -- in '45 to -- to Poland, too. He escape at --

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren. This is tape number four, side B. So you were telling me about Socha and his dream to have a bar.

A: Yeah, he -- he -- he dr-dreamed that after the war he will open -- he will have his own bar. And he moved to -- to Gliwice where Margolis live with his wife, with Clara, because Margolis and Clara they ge -- got married, and th-they live in Gliwice for awhi -- while. Helena used to live in Gliwice, too. And we got a -- a news on May 13, it came a telegram that Socha was killed.

Q: What year was this?

A: '45.

Q: Oh, just '45.

A: May.

Q: Just after the end of the entire war.

A: Yeah, th-th-the war, yeah, na -- May na -- nine, it was the end of the war. We got a telegram that came from Gliwice that Margolis send us that Corsage died. It was in ma -- May 1946, and it was shocking news. We -- it was like something falling fr-fr-from the sky. And we w-went to the railroad station, we went to Gl-Gliwice, and h-he went to his home and to the funeral and he -- I -
- I -- I think going, you know, to the -- walking after th -- his -- what that's called?

Q: Oh, the casket --

A: The casket.

Q: -- or the coffin.

A: Coffin.

Q: Yeah.

A: Walking a-after h-his c-coffin and seeing him on the ca-casket, it was the worst thing that happened to me. And it -- it was devastating for all of us. We were -- he -- he -- it was in a car ac-accident. He was riding the bicycle, and on the -- another bicycle was riding hi-his daughter. And in the front, approaching them from the fr -- opposite side was a army truck, a Russian army truck, and the driver was probably drunk, and Socha saw this and he s-start to pedal much faster, that he came in front of his daughter, and in the last moment the -- th-the truck hit him and not his daughter. And what is unbelievable, that his blood was dripping through the manhole to the sewer. We u -- we couldn't believe it, and when we were standing, you know, at the funeral in the cemetery, we heard that somebody said, this is the -- the punishment from God for somebody who saved the Jews.

Q: Did you stay in contact with the others who were saved with you from the sewers?

A: We -- all of us were very close, especially -- I have to say th -- especially Margolis, beca -- we felt, you know, like a family. W-We, all those year til now, I am, you know, I -- in touch and I -- with their -- their children and with her -- their grandchildren. And i -- unfortunately Weinbergowa, who married Haskell, they lived in Germany, and they b-both pass away. She was very sick. She s-suffered for depression and it was a very difficult life for her. And Helena, di -- she got married and she lived in United States, she has two children, and unfortunately she passed away, she had a heart attack. And my parents and my brother, they -- they lived in Israel. My brother lost his life in Israeli army.

Q: When did this happen, with your brother?

A: It happen in 1978. He -- he was 39 years old, and he -- he -- he was killed. He -- he left a wife and two children. And my father passed away in 1975, and it was my mother who has to go through this. And -- but, like always, sh-she was very strong woman, and she live til her 90's, and she pass a-away t -- in January 10, 2000. From those all 10 people -- from all those 10 people who survive in the sewer for 14 months, and who survive Holocaust, I'm the only one who is still alive. And this is why I am telling the story, that I am the last eyewitness news. I witness that, saw this, went through this and can say that I saw this, not that somebody told me.

Q: And your father also wrote memoirs. How did that come about?

A: My father used to keep the memoirs i-in -- in the sewer, he -- he used to write, but a-after the war he wrote -- he had a -- wrote a -- a -- with his -- his handwriting memoirs and when he came to visit me in the United States in 1975, w-w-we force him to put his -- in writing and to -- to write this on -- on the typewriter. And I -- I went with my husband to lower east side, and we found old Polish typewriter, and we force my father to sit and write it because we said, now you

don't have any excuse, you have the typewriter, and type it. And he wrote the m -- memoir, I have the manuscript of his memoirs, and this memoirs are from 1939 til 1945. And after he wrote the memoirs, when he went back to Israel with my mother, and a-after half a year he pass away. This was like his last document that he put the all historical facts and mor -- everything what happened to his family and the rest of j -- of the Jewish nation.

Q: Have you remained in contact with Socha's family?

A: We were i-in contact with Socha's family, and a-after -- she died and n-now I am not in contact with the rest of -- o-of the family because his daughter, she -- sh-she felt that we did something wrong, that we said about him that he was a -- a -- a thief. And she is holding against us why we mentioned this, but this was the truth, and this was very important truth, and the fact, and I don't want to miss any -- any facts. This is, you know, historical event and everything has to be truth. The truth has to be said, but I didn't -- don't think that this is something negative. I think that he is the no -- the most p-positive figure that can exist, and -- f-for us, for the survivors and for the families of the survivors, we always talk about him, and he is like, for us he is like a angel, like si -- like you know, sent by saint, sent by God to save us.

Q: Do you think your experiences during the Holocaust affected your thoughts about God?

A: This is difficult question. I don't know how to answer. I -- I am not religious, this mean -- I keep the tradition. I ke-ke -- the holy days, I can light the candle, I pray, I say the Kaddish for -- for my family, for Socha. But my mind is very scientific too, and those are two -- two fields that are fighting either -- each other. I really cannot say. But I think that somehow it is some power, bigger power th-that we are. I don't know how -- how to call this. I don't know even if Einstein know how to call this. But something must e-existed. I-I -- I really don't know.

Q: And can you just then, finish telling me you left -- when did you -- your family leave Poland, and -- and walk through a little bit of the chronology of the rest of those years, you know.

A: We left Poland in 1957. It was a time that the Polish government somehow agreed to let some Jews to leave -- i-immigrate to Israel. And we immigrate to Israel, my mother had a sister there, and th -- and her family and w-w-we -- we came to -- to Israel, we d -- live in Haifa. My -- I went to the kibbutz to -- to study Hebrew language, but I w-was in the kibbutz only for three weeks, because the s-study -- u-u-university started in October, and I wanted to continue my education. I was accepted to the Hebrew University, to the dental school, to the second year, and I continue my study. That wasn't so easy, from the beginning because I didn't know Hebrew, and no English, but I manage. And th-th-then I -- I g-got married. My husband was in the army, my brother was in the army. I -- my first son was born in Israel. I graduate, I have my practice, private practice in Israel for seven years almost, and then in the 1968, my husband parents got the visa to United States, visa for which they were asking in 1945, in Kraków. They apply in 1945, and they got this in 1968. And when we -- my parents-in-law didn't want to emigrate from Israel, but they said, if we want, we can use this visa. We went to the consulate and they told us if we will not use it, then we will lose it. The entrance permit to -- to United States, and we -- we said okay, we will try, and we plan to come for two years and from those two years is already 36. And I got my license here, and in 1970 I started my own practice. I was teaching in n -- NYU, and then I started my own practice that I de-develop, and my older son, who was born in Israel, he -- he -- he was -- he went in my footsteps and he graduate from Columbia University dental school, he is a dentist. He was practicing with me for 17 years, and now this practice is heres -- his, because I, after 46 years of -- of working, and bending my back, decided to retire. And here I am in the meantime, when we came to United State, I have a-another son, and -- who didn't go

my footsteps, he -- he became a city planner, and he is working for an environmental p -- environmental position he has. And I have -- both are married, I have two grandchildren, and I am happy. I -- right now i-in the -- the 208, i-i-in spring, my -- I wrote a book, and the book will be publish in the spring in 208, about my experience and my life, and living i-in the sewer and before and after, everything will be in the book, and I hope that the future generation can read it and come to conclusion that you have to fight for whatever you want, and n-not to give up.

Q: Also, is your father's memoirs available anywhere for people to read?

A: My father's memoir are not translated, they are in Polish, and I am trying to tr-translate this because this is really a historical documents. He puts the dates and the names and everything in it. I would love to publish. Maybe after I publish my wa -- my book, I will try to find a translator, then can translate it and publish and give it to the museum. It is, I think, I'm not sure --

Q: Even a copy in Polish --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- might, you might want to put in the museum, right?

A: I think it is.

Q: Okay. We'll check on that.

A: I'm not sure. I know that they ask for it, but I don't know. I wanted to give it them a copy, I didn't want to give them the original.

Q: Right, sure. Can you just --

A: Oh [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: -- can you just describe to me, since we've talked about it, just give me a little description of the sweater from your grandmother.

A: It used to be green -- green color, and it's like, around the neck, it look like chanel, and it had a short sleeves, and a little ba -- bit, two strings in the front that you can close the -- th-the ne -- make a necktie. And this is the sweater that I cherished the -- the most, and when I show the sweater to my son -- sons, they were at -- in my house once and I show them, and they -- honest th-they were so surprise, and I think what they said, Mom, you were so little. Because they couldn't imagine that once is -- their mother was a child too, and the sweater is a reminder of it. The sweater I-I donated. First I wanted to keep it for my kids, but then they -- they said, Mom, if we will keep it, nobody will see it. You better -- and I know that -- that the museum donated f -- asked for artifacts, I -- I give few already, and the sweater I kept. And I ag -- ag -- agree, and I give the sweater to the wa -- Washington museum. And it's still there, and it was on -- on exhibition, travel exhibition in New York, and I took my grandkids to see it, and they saw this, they couldn't believe it, they said ma -- Grandma, you were so little. But they were -- they were so proud. And right now the book that I want to publish, it probably will be -- have the title of, The Girl in the Green Sweater.

Q: I'm just curious, what is it about this sweater? Is it the color, or just that your grandmother made it for you? Is there anything in particular that made it so favorite, you know, such a favorite for you?

A: I really don't -- don't know. I got so many things, you know, fr-from my other grandmother that used to go to Vienna and bring me so many things. It may be because I saw my grandmother knitting this for -- for me, and when I look at the sweater I see her face, I almost see her sitting and knitting. Maybe this was something I -- it's very difficult to ex -- explain, that it had such a value to me, and I was a little child, and still I knew how to evaluate things.

Q: I just have two more questions for you, and one is, I'm just amazed at -- at the level of your memory. You know, your memories are so detailed, it seems unusual. And you were so young. Is there anything that you can say about that or any thoughts that you have about having such detailed memories of all these things?

A: Usually everybody always said that I have very good memory. It was in the school, and even when I used to give deposition the first time that I gave deposition, this was in the orphanage after the war, that I was [indecipherable]. And I gave deposition in 1945, and the people with whom -- to whom I talk, they said oh, you remember so good everything. But what I think why I remember so well, it is like a carve in my memory, in my br-brain. Those are bad things and good things that you -- you brang probably [indecipherable] and it stays with you. I can't explain it. I -- even now when I went to -- after s -- I went to Lvov after 60 years, and I recognize every building, ever -- every floor, every park. Wherever I went when I was a little child, I remembered. We had the guide, and I was guiding him how to go and where to go. He was amazed. He said, how can you remember those things? I-I a -- I don't know. I s -- probably it got -- when you are getting so involved in something, it goes so deep in y-your memory that it stays with you. And probably this had a such impact on me, the things that I went through that is all -- always with me. I-I will never forget this. I-I live with this every d-day to -- from one day to another. I live with my -- my story.

Q: What are the most regular reminders? Are they s-smells, or -- or noises? What are the things, you know, that you live with every day in that sense? What are the things that remind you?

A: I-It's -- it was -- you know, things that reminds me, it is like you have -- you get a feedback s-sometimes from a smell, fr-from a taste, from th-the noise. For example, when it start to rain I always -- I -- I always hear the rain, because I remember what happened with the flood i-i-i-in

the sewer. Is so many things that it -- suddenly can trigger your memory and you go back. But the ya -- the whole life that the memory is working for me til now, thank God, that I-I think it has a positive make-up -- po-positive feeling fo-for me, and positive way for my life. It made me stronger and made me look clearer, and made me be more careful, more observant and more humane.

Q: And did you talk much to your family about your experiences? Your children as they were growing up? When did you start talking about your experiences?

A: The one thing that I have to tell are -- are about family -- my family and people that we survive with, especially the -- the Margolis's that we were in contact with. We talk about our survival. We tal-talked -- you know, in some occasions, something when we me-meet together, or some -- sometimes from nothing, sometimes that remind us something and we say oh, you remember this, oh you remember this. A-And -- and sometimes you know, some jokes. I still remember the songs that we were singing, the jokes that th-th -- my father was telling. And i-i-i-it was -- this is thanks to my parents, they -- they talk about it. I-I know that some Holocaust survivors didn't like to talk about it. We talk and I th -- I think it was much better. We didn't hold it in and we di -- among us. We didn't talk to anybody else, but a-among us. We -- we -- we live with this.

Q: And when did you start talking to others?

A: I start talking to others, it was after the documentary. This was done by BBC, and after child organiz -- Holocaust survivors, the children who survive Holocaust, they had a meeting, I think it was first meeting in '89, in Marriott Hotel. And it was like 1600 Holocaust survivor children that survive came to this convention. And so many people from media came, from all around the world and people we -- we met each other, we started to talk and suddenly I felt free that I can

talk not only to my family but to the other people. And then I was, you know, may a -- I-I did a few interviews with the different newspapers all around the world, even to -- to German newspaper, to -- to Japanese newspaper. And I did -- I was invited to -- to schools and to other places to talk about this. And this is one thing that I really don't like to do it, but I'm -- sometimes I'm doing because I'm looking from different point of view, I think that the young generation has to be educated, and this is why I'm doing this. Is very painful, but from time to time I am doing this.

Q: Well, I appreciate you taking so much time to -- today to do this interview, and I wanted to just simply make sure to ask you if -- if you feel that there's anything that I may have left out that you wanted to -- that you wanted to mention.

A: I -- I don't think so. I think that you -- you were very, very precise with your -- writing your questions and you didn't miss anything, I think.

Q: Well, thank you so much for doing this interview, really appreciate it.

A: Thank you for doing this with me.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Dr. Kristine Keren.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Conclusion of Interview