

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Ruth Ginsberg Geller**

**August 30th, 2012**

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PREFACE

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Transcribed by Julia Griffin, National Court Reporters Association.

**RUTH GINSBERG GELLER**

**August 30, 2012**

Question: This is United States Holocaust Memorial interview with Ruth Ginsberg Geller, conducted on August 30th, 2012, over the phone. The interviewer is Heather

Radcliffe. Again, Ms. Geller, good morning -- or, sorry, it's good afternoon at your time. We're delighted to have you and we really appreciate your time in talking to us today.

Answer: Well, thank you very much for taking the time.

Q: Can you please state your full name.

A: Yes. My name is Ruth Ginsberg Geller.

Q: And can you spell that for the recording, please.

A: Yes. R-U-T-H. Maiden name of Ginsberg, G-I-N-S-B-E-R-G. Geller, G-E-L-L-E-R. By the way, Ginsberg has been spelled several different ways in the time since we left Czechoslovakia. At one time it was Gunsburg, G-U, with an umlaut, and B-U-R-G. But we've gone by Ginsberg now for the last 60 years, I'm sure.

Q: Thank you for elaborating on that. Can you tell us where you -- when you were born and where?

A: Yes. I was born April the 10th, 1933, in the town of Moravska Ostrave in Czechoslovakia, sometimes known as Maehrisch-Ostrau because German was spoken there, also. It was actually part of Moravia.

Q: Can you also spell Moravska Ostrave, please?

A: Yes, it's M-O-R-A-V-S-K-A. Another word, Ostrave, O-S-T-R-A-V-E. And Czechoslovakia, which no longer exists, but is now the Czech Republic.

Q: Thank you. Can you please tell us the names of your mother and father?

A: Yes. My father was Gerson, G-E-R-S-O-N, Ginsberg. And my mother was Blanche Basia, B-A-S-I-A. That was a Polish name. Ginsberg, maiden name of E-H-R-L-I-C-H.

Q: And what years were they born?

A: My father was born, actually, July 7th, 1897. And he was born in a city called Szinov, S-Z-I-N-O-V, Czechoslovakia. And my mother was born in Krakow, Poland, on the 13th of March in 1904.

Q: And what was the primary language that you spoke at home?

A: It was the --

Q: Question: Was it -- are you talking about Czechoslovakia or when we moved to London?

Q: I'm talking about Czechoslovakia right now.

A: Well, Czechoslovakia, it was Czech, but also sometimes German.

Q: Okay. But no Polish, because your mother is from Poland?

A: No. No.

Q: Okay. What was the occupation of your parents?

A: My father was, actually, a fur merchant and he had a business. In those days, that was okay. Now fur merchants aren't regarded very well. And my mother used to work in his business. He was actually quite successful and owned property, actually owned property in Berlin and had a house for his parents in Szinov where he was born, and traveled a great deal all over Europe and even to Canada. This is all pre-war, of course. And he did end up on business in London before the Germans invaded, but we were there and they would not allow us to join him.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

A: Yes. I had a wonderful brother by the name of Oskar, O-S-K-A-R, and, unfortunately, lost him at a very young age of a heart attack. But he did survive and go to England and then America with us.

Q: And when was he born?

A: He was born November 16th, 1928.

Q: What else do you remember about him?

A: He was a fantastic, wonderful, giving young man. We were very close. As youngsters, of course, he used to tease me. But we had a very, very wonderful relationship where he lived -- after we came to the United States and after I was married and moved out to California, we would travel back and forth, send

children back and forth, our children to visit. He took my sons up to Yosemite when he came out for a Bar Mitzvah. We celebrated weddings, of course, and Bar Mitzvahs of our nephews. And they came out to celebrate things out here in California with us.

Q: So he -- right. He moved from England to the -- or he stayed in England when you moved to the U.S. or no?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, he actually came to the U.S. on his own as a teenager. He was 19, I believe, and he came on the Queen Mary. I came with my parents. I was 15 when we came from England to America, and that was in 1948.

Q: Okay.

A: But he preceded us --

Q: Okay.

A: -- by a little while.

Q: We'll talk more about your time in England, but first I wanted to know more -- do you remember -- what else do you remember about Czechoslovakia?

A: Well, interestingly enough, I find it hard to believe, but I remember the Germans marching in. We lived in a very lovely apartment in Czechoslovakia -- in Moravska Ostrava. And I was only six -- not even six years old, but I do remember the Germans marching in in the Mercedes Benz. And to this day, we have never ever considered getting a Mercedes Benz, which, I guess, doesn't make a lot of sense. But it was a -- something that I remember seeing the Germans, you know, with the Heil Hitler with the arms out and the soldiers. And certainly not understanding what was going on, but knowing something was really wrong.

Q: And how old were you then?

A: Six.

Q: Okay. Let's talk a little bit more about your family life before the Germans arrived. Did you live in an apartment or a house?

A: We lived in an apartment. Czechoslovakia, as opposed to Poland, was really quite modern. It was a very modern city. And later on I may talk about a

cousin of mine who visited Czechoslovakia as a child, and then after surviving Auschwitz, was on the death march and marched through Czechoslovakia and remembered. And he has written a book, which I'll discuss later on. He now lives in Israel. But we were really quite well-off. But we had -- since my mother worked, we had people to help take care of me and my brother. And we had a really lovely apartment with lovely furniture. And I went to a kindergarten. It was actually a Jewish kindergarten. I still have pictures, you know, all dressed up for Mother's Day on tricycles and -- it was -- it was a very, very nice life in Czechoslovakia for my parents and, of course, for us until everything changed.

Q: So you and your brother had a nanny. What about maids? Were there maids as well to help out?

A: We had -- yes. Yes, we had people -- yes. In fact, even someone who cooked and -  
- yes, we did.

Q: Okay.

A: We lived pretty comfortable in those days.

Q: And what special occasions or holidays did you celebrate?

A: My father -- Q:uite religious in fact -- Heschel Shabbat. And I don't know if you know what that means, but he observed the Sabbath. And, of course, we celebrated Friday nights and had Shabbats dinners and all the holidays. You know, from (?casa?) always and Purim. Purim was a big thing, especially as a child, you know, you get dressed up. And my mother was a very modern lady and she had been a skier and they had been in Paris. And I have pictures of them and -- not on the actual Eiffel Tower, but, you know, one of the funny pictures with an Eiffel Tower and them hanging out of it, my father and my mother. They were amazing parents, both of them. Just amazing people up until the very end. Unfortunately, as you'll hear, my father died Q:uite young after what he went through. But my mother lived to be 89 and was a truly amazing lady.

Q: Okay. What else do you remember about the city before the war started?

A: Well, not really that much. I mean, I remember that I went to a school, like a kindergarten. And we used to go to the park and things were very nice. It was pretty much an industrial city. Right now, I think it's -- I haven't been back there. We've been back to Prague several times with my husband. But I've not gone back to Moravska Ostrave. And I've heard, you know, that there's a lot of pollution because there are factories and coal burning things. So we haven't -- I haven't gone back there. But, as I said, we have been to Czechoslovakia, to Prague, and to cal -- (?Calurvi?) -- it was called Bard, (ph) but it had a different name in Czech.

Q: Okay.

A: Saleveece barry (ph) I think.

Q: And what were some of the activities that you and your brother participated in together?

A: In Czechoslovakia?

Q: Yes.

A: Really --

Q: I know you were Q:uite young.

A: Not much because he was older and he was in school, and I, you know, played with children. And just like here, you know, if you're in kindergarten, your activities are a little different than if you're four years older. But we did visit our grandparents and we had visitors from, as I mentioned before, my cousins Zvi Barlev, whose book by the way, is in the Holocaust Museum. I donated it. It's in several different museums. He did write about his experience, so --

Q: Do you remember the title of the book?

A: Yes, it's called "Would God it Were Night." His name is Zvi Barlev.

Q: Can you spell his name for us?

A: Z-V-I, and the second name B-A-R-L-E-V. However, that's his Israeli name. His Polish name was Bleicher. B-L-E-I-C-H-E-R. And --

Q: Thank you.

A: And the book actually talks about the ordeal of a Jewish boy from Krakow through Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Gusen, Gusen. And it talks about the death march after Auschwitz, you know, before it was liberated, and his walking through the town that he visited when he was a boy.

Q: I assume you attended synagogue?

A: Yes.

Q: You said your family was religious?

A: I am a very active member of synagogue here in Riverside, yes.

Q: And do you remember how many other Jews were in your area at the time?

A: Oh, wait a minute. Are you talking about Czechoslovakia?

Q: Sorry, yes.

A: That I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: We -- I remember London very well, the synagogue, because I used to go with my father all the time. But in Czechoslovakia, no, I don't remember. But we definitely were members. In those days, as I said, my family, my father in particular, was Orthodox, my mother not as much.

Q: Okay. Now, in Czechoslovakia, do you remember any instances of anti-Semitism before the Germans came in?

A: I don't. I don't.

Q: Have you -- has anyone told you -- did your parents tell you about any?

A: No. As opposed to things that were going on in places like Poland and Lithuania, no. Czechoslovakia was -- no. It was only formed between the World Wars, and it had really progressive governments and it allowed the Jews, you know, to own property. And my father, as I mentioned -- I mean, at the age, I think, of 24 bought an apartment house. Actually, the apartment house was in Berlin. You know, so, of course, those were times when there was, you know, major problems economically in Germany. So -- but he was a very -- well, he was a wonderful man, but he was a very astute businessman.

Q: So let's talk about when the Germans came in. Do you remember when that was?

A: I think it was in March of 1939. It may have been a little bit earlier, but I think it was in 1939. Actually, Czechoslovakia was given -- land was given to the Germans in 1938, but I don't think they marched into Moravska Ostrava until 1939.

Q: Okay. You said before that you remember that. Can you tell us more about that?

A: Well, I find it difficult to believe this myself, but I was in the street, maybe with a nanny or something or with the maid. You know, somebody, not my mother. And I remember the cars and I remember the Germans coming in. And then a very interesting thing is that a German came over to me and there was like, a candy store right there. And I was a cute little child, and he said to me in German -- I spoke German at the time -- that I have a little girl like you at home, and actually took me into the candy store and bought me a piece of candy. I mean, that's the kind of thing -- you know, it seems really a weird thing to remember, but that --

Q: Do you remember anything else about him?

A: No. No. And, obviously, he wasn't in one of the cars, though, he was probably marching. Because it was a whole, you know, like, a march into town. And it was a big city, I mean, it was a cosmopolitan city. I don't know how many people, but, you know, it had cinemas. It was a very contemporary city.

Q: Do you remember what happened after he bought you candy?

A: No. He just went on his way and I probably was taken upstairs.

Q: Okay. So you lived near the candy store?



A: Yes, the candy store was very close. And maybe that's what we were doing downstairs. It's hard, I was six.

Q: Yes.

A: But it's amazing, even to me, that -- well, you know, it's a pretty momentous situation. I mean, there's so many things that I don't remember later, although I do remember -- well, we will go into that, how we left. And that was an amazing situation, too. But you probably will want to ask me Questions about that.

Q: Yeah, definitely. We'll get into that in a little bit. Do you remember anything else about when they came in?

A: No, I don't. Because after that, I don't -- things didn't change that much at that point. I mean, I think I still, you know, went to the kindergarten and -- at that point. You know, later on, of course, it was totally changed and the children were sent to Ravensbruck. Most of them, you know, was murdered. But in the very beginning, it hadn't hit yet.

Q: Okay. So in March they -- you remember them coming in, and then when did you leave for Krakow?

A: Okay. Now, it's very difficult for me to give you an actual date, but let me tell you how we left for Krakow. The Germans -- my mother wanted to take us to England where my father was. And there was no way she could get permission, but somehow she was able to talk -- now, you know, this was something that I found out a lot later -- to someone in the German, well, authority -- and she was a charmer. She was an absolute charmer. And she was able to talk them into her taking her two children to visit her father who was dying in Krakow. That was my grandfather. He was actually dying, he did have stomach cancer. And so we just put on clothes, you know, a couple layers of clothes and went on the train and went to Krakow. The amazing thing is, that she was able to ship things to London. You know, which is an unusual story, because, you know, usually you just leave everything and that's the end of it. But to this day, I have menorahs. My daughter now has beautiful candlesticks, and, you know, many things. And I was asked if I would donate stuff to the museum, and, actually, I want to keep it for my children, and grandchildren --

Q: Of course. Of course.

A: -- to have. But she -- she was able to ship things.

Q: So she shipped the items before you left for Krakow or to London?

A: Yes -- no, to London, to my father.

Q: Okay. Uh-huh.

A: And -- but then when we left, we left with nothing and went on the train and went to Krakow. And she stayed with my grandfather and I was taken care of by, you know, my cousins and aunts and my brother, too. And my grandfather died. And he died, actually, I guess it was beginning of August of 1939. And she sat Shiva.

I don't know if you know what that is, Shiva is the seven days that you sit after someone dies.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then she tried to talk her sisters and brothers to let her take their children to London. And everybody said, no, you know, he's got Czechoslovakia and that's going to be it. You know, he's -- you know, that's -- and they -- nobody left except for my mother, my brother, and I. And we went across Poland and went to a port called Gdynia at the time because it was part of Poland --

Q: Can you spell that for us?

A: G-D -- gu din (ph) -- N-I-A I think. Gud (ph) -- oh, Y. Let me just write it out. The thing is that that port changed many times. That port was called Gdansk and also Danzig when it was part of Germany. Danzig. And Gdynia would be G-D-N-Y -- gu din (ph) -- A I think.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

A: I'm not sure. And Gdansk is probably easier to spell. It's G -- gurs (ph) -- D -- dunk. G-D-E-N-A-S-K I think.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: But it's been -- you probably can look it up. Danzig the different names that it's gone under. You know, these things went back between Germany and Poland. So we took a ship and went across the English Channel --

Q: So this is your mother, yourself, and your brother, correct?

A: Right. Right.

Q: And how did she get permission to leave?

A: Poland?

Q: Yes.

A: She -- I don't think she -- I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't think -- you know, it was still -- you know, she had a passport, I think, and you were able to travel in Europe. I mean, this was before the Germans invaded and - - I mean, my father had gone to England from Czechoslovakia. They traveled all over, all over Europe.

Q: Okay.

A: And so, you know, they had passports or whatever they needed to travel.

Q: And what was your father doing in London?

A: He went on business, you know, to -- no, my father went on business. But my father was a worrier, and that will explain what happened to him later. And he, I think, foresaw that things were going to happen, and so he went to, to England on business.

Q: Okay. So he was the one who instigated you coming across to London to meet him?

A: Right. Right. Oh, absolutely. I mean, we wouldn't have gone otherwise. He -- he had gone. And I can't tell you how long he was there, but I can tell you that when he - - we came there, he was only 39. He was in the hospital with a heart attack. So the pressures and the strains, you know, of the family -- and between my father and my mother, they were able to get us over there.

Q: Did you need special permission from the British to stay there?

A: No. That's such an interesting thing because the British -- actually, there were many refugees that came to England. Most countries, including America, including, you know, so many countries, even in South America and Australia, you know, nobody really wanted the Jews to come. But my father was there on business, and it's not just -- we then made friends with a lot of other people. In fact, I'm still a close friend of somebody who came from Moravska Ostrava that were close friends of my parents. The name was Winer, (ph) and she's now married. Her name is Honey Arnold. She's still alive and she's in England. And we're still in touch and close. We visit there and they visited here. And they came to London. And there were probably oh -- not dozens -- there were many, many people that came to England.

And that is amazing. I don't know, because I know the British have not always been wonderful, they were very difficult. We were in London at the time of Israel being established, and certainly the British were pretty bad about letting Jews into Israel. So we were just very lucky. We did have an -- my mother had an aunt there, her sis -- her mother's sister lived in England for many years. And so we actually lived with her for a little while until we got established in England. But that was not an easy

time either, because it was wartime and the Blitz and everything else. But, you know, these are things that, as I got older, you know, I remembered more things about what happened and our evacuation and the bombings and going into the underground shelters. And so it was a difficult time, but as children, you sort of adapt to what it is.

Q: We'll talk about -- more about the Blitz in a minute. Can you first tell us -- did you have other family members that stayed behind in Moravska?

A: Yes. Well, actually, in Szinov. My two grandparents, my father's -- my father was an only child, and the only family we had were his parents. And we used to visit -- oh, that was something I forgot to mention. As a child, we used to go out to Szinov and they had a big garden with fruit. And we used to go and pick berries. So we had a -- really had a very nice childhood in the beginning. Well, it was pretty short. But they stayed there and, unfortunately -- well, maybe fortunately for him, my grandfather also passed away. But my grandmother, Ella, her name was Ella Brenner, his name was David Ginsberg, she did not survive and was killed by the Nazis.

Q: Was she deported to a concentration camp or --

A: Yes. But, actually, not from Czechoslovakia. Because of my mother's big -- my mother had a very big family as opposed to my father. She actually went to Krakow, and from there she was deported. And I don't know exactly where or when, but she was killed, as was my mother's mother. They were both killed by the Nazis, as were a couple of my mother's siblings and some children, so...

Q: If you -- we do some research here at the museum, so if you're interested in finding out more information, we might be able to look that up for you.

A: Well, that would be great.

Q: Okay.

A: Her name was Ella Brenner -- well, Ginsberg.

Q: Okay.

A: And my other grandmother was Erlich, Eva Erlich, maiden name of Corow. (ph)

Q: And I think after the recording, maybe if you can email me the information, and I'll pass it on to the researchers here.

A: Well, that would be very, very good. Yeah. My cousin, by the way, Zvi Barlev who ended up, besides writing the book, being with the Israeli Diplomatic Corp. He was -- after all he'd gone through, he was first secretary in London. Actually, it was in Buckingham Palace with the Queen. He was also first secretary in Sweden and lived in Stockholm for a while. He did a lot of research. And we, actually, you know,

have a -- he put together a family tree. Not so much of my father's side like Ella Ginsberg, but of the Ehrlich side, which was my mother's maiden name.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time with him growing up, or was he a different age?

A: He was older. He was, you know, Quite -- well, several years older, and not that much. Because he lived in Krakow, he visited us and we visited there. But it, you know -- a visit would be a short visit. But I've been very close to him. We've been to Israel now 26 or 27 times. And so, you know, we've been in touch. And they've been here.

Q: Okay.

A: Because he -- as I said, you probably can find the book at, you know, at the museum. So that -- but there are a lot of books that have been written, but, of course, this one was published -- I guess it was a self-publish thing by Vantage. And it did have a forward, actually, I think, by Elie Weisel even.

Q: Okay.

A: It was translated from the Hebrew, not only into English, but into Swedish and Norwegian. And so the book was in a few different places.

Q: When you first came to London, did you live in an apartment there?

A: No, we went to live with my great aunt. It was my grandmother's sister. We lived with her. She had a house at Six and Andrews Grove in Stamford Hills. And we lived with her because my father was in the hospital, as I said, with a heart attack. But once he recovered, then we moved into an apartment at Two Stamford Hill Mansion. And that's where we lived until -- I mean, we lived there the whole time, but I was -- we were evacuated part of the time.

Q: Where did you go when you were evacuated?

A: A village, which is now a bigger town, called Kennington, outside of Oxford.

Q: Okay.

A: Kennington --

Q: Was that just you and your brother?

A: And my mother.

Q: Okay.

A: And my father used to come on the weekends. He would be working in the city. He was still working, he had his business. But terrible, terrible strains. Terrible

strains, you know, trying to keep the family as safe as possible. In fact -- and I mentioned this to Ashley, but I will tell you, I guess, it was in 1940 things looked so bad in England. And we thought that -- the Germans had invaded everywhere -- that it looked like they might be coming into England, too. So my father, being the worrier that he was, said we're going -- we had an uncle in America. He said we're going to send the children to America. And we stood in line and applied for all the papers that you need for that and got everything and were scheduled to take a ship and go to -- actually, I think it was Canada, but then America. It left from Liverpool. And that ship was sunk, and, I think, 70 some odd children died on that and other people. But at the last minute, my father decided we're stick -- keep the family together. So even though we had all the papers to go, we didn't go.

Q: So it would have just been your mother and you and your brother on the ship and he would have stayed in London?

A: Actually, I think it would have just been the children, just my brother and I. You know, like -- it was like the Kindertransport, but it was a little different. You know, it was something that they were trying to arrange to get kids out of England when it looked very dangerous.

Q: Okay.

A: And I don't know about my mother at that point, but I do know that we had all the papers we needed. And then the discussion with the family and my father said, no, we're going to stay together.

Q: Do you remember anything else about that, what he explained to you about first going on the ship?

A: Right. He said, you know, I -- that the family needs to stay together, but we'll try and stay safe. And we did in those days of the Blitz. It's an amazing thing, Heather, but the kids used to like to go down into the Underground because they'd run around with all their friends. You know, children are amazing, I mean, how they adapt to different things. And we would go into the shelters, you know, when the sirens would go off. And then we'd be with other kids and other friends. And that -- they sort of learn to adapt to the situation. And it was interesting because a lot of schools closed. But there was one school that stayed open, and it happened to be a convent, a Catholic school. And, of course, I was Jewish, as were a number of my friends, and the convent allowed us to come. And not only allowed us to come to the school, but we had asked if when they had their catechism and everything else, could we have a Jewish teacher come in and they allowed us to do it. So for part of the time -- and I ended up with a very -- even though I was evacuated and in Kennington in a one-

room schoolhouse with my brother, who was four years older than I was, and then coming back to London and going to the convent, by the time I came to America -- we're getting ahead of ourselves -- but I started high school. And because of the years of education I had, they put me in as a freshman. But after I was there for six months, I became an upper junior because of all the subjects we'd already had, even during the wartime.

Q: Okay. And we'll talk more about that in a minute.

A: I know. I'm sorry.

Q: That's okay. Can you talk more about -- did you understand what was going on in London at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you understand about that?

A: We understood that the Germans were bombing and were hoping to come into England. And we really felt, maybe because where we came from -- the British may not have felt this way, maybe they felt a little stronger, you know, that no one is going to come in here. But after seeing what had happened in Europe, there were times that we really thought that the Germans would come in and invade Britain or London.

Q: And did you understand why they wanted to come in?

A: I understood that Hitler wanted to rule the world and get rid of the Jews, one of the things that he wanted, one of the main things that he wanted. And the amazing thing is that somewhere or other they said that somewhere in his background there was some Jewish blood. And, you know, sometimes those -- you can get Jews sometimes that are so self -- not that he was Jewish, I'm not trying to say that. But they can be self-hating and worse than anyone else against the Jews. We did understand that, as Jews, we were very vulnerable.

Q: And did you experience any anti-Semitism in London?

A: Well, I know there was anti-Semitism. But when I think about my experience at the convent and the friends that I made and that -- one of the gals that was in my class actually became the mother superior, and I visited her on one of our many visits to London. I really had very positive feelings about, you know, how other people treated us.

Q: How did you know that there was anti-Semitism if you didn't experience it yourself?

A: Well, I imagine -- I knew what happened. Well, I didn't know at that time about things like the concentration camps. But I knew that -- that's a good Q:uestion. I don't know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay. Maybe it was --

A: But there definitely was anti-Semitism in London. I mean, I've read many things. You know, people resented the Jews coming in and taking jobs away and things like that. So I know that it definitely existed. But we happened to live in a very Jewish area. It's even more Jewish now than when we lived there, Stamford Hill. And so our friends with Jewish -- now, there was a Catholic school there, but we belonged to a synagogue and attended services and really participated in Jewish life there, again, celebrated the holidays. Friday nights my father would bring home people for dinner without even talking to my mother. So we'd always have guests at Friday night dinners. And things were rationed, but somehow we managed. In fact, I remember my parents never eating an egg because they wanted to give -- we got two eggs or something -- giving the eggs to, you know, to my brother and me. They figured we needed them more than they did. So we had, really, you know -- they were difficult times. And we certainly didn't have the same kind of life that we had in Czechoslovakia. My mother was not working. But, you know, she had to clean the house and clean the floors. And I'd help her, you know. So it was a different, different life, but still --

Q: Was your father working?

A: Yes, my father was working.

Q: And as a fur merchant or --

A: Yeah, still in the fur business, yes.

Q: Do you remember anything else about that?

A: He had a partner, I remember, Arpud, (ph) and must have done okay because, you know, we had food as much as we could, you know, with rationing. We had a kosher home. We were always --

Q: So you managed to keep a kosher home?

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh.



A: Yes. Interestingly enough, and at least in London. And in Kennington, I have no idea because they had never seen a Jew before. And when we came there, they actually wanted to know if we had horns. And, again, my mother, ended up charming them. She'd invite them over and she'd bake strudel and stuff. And there we were billeted or lived with an Anglican minister in his house, you know, when we were evacuated, my mother, my brother, and I. And when my father came, he would stay there, too, and --

Q: Was it just him or did he have a family?

A: No, he was single. His name was Reverend Williamson. And he particularly, I must say, liked me. That might sound difficult today. But as long as we lived in England, he would never forget my birthday. And he was very kind to us, too. So, you know, it's interesting, you know, with all the anti-Semitism going along, the people that we dealt with were very kind.

Q: Did you meet a lot of other people in Kennington as well?

A: Oh, yes, I did. We lived next to a girl who became one of my best friends there by the name of Marge Hoggnet. (ph) I've lost touch with her. She eventually moved to America. But I -- I tried to locate her. Not Jewish, they were farmers. And they had chickens and they actually had sheep. And I actually helped with -- I didn't really help, but I was there and they let me do some sheering of sheep. And so it was, again, a different -- very nice people. And they -- a lot of it had to do with the way that my mother behaved and, I guess, the way we behaved. And we -- there was only a one-room schoolhouse, you know, where all the kids went to school together. As I said, I went to school with my brother, but -- who was four and a half years older than I was. But we had a schoolhouse.

Q: Were you in the same class?

A: Yes, it was just one room. Oh, yes, just one class. It was just one class.

Q: So you went to school in Kennington and then a different school when you were in London?

A: Correct.

Q: And how long were you in Kennington?

A: Well, we were there two different times. One was earlier, you know, when the Blitz was really bad. And the second time -- and I don't know the exact dates, you probably can look that up -- when the buzz bombs came over and they decided it was too dangerous to stay in London. The buzz bombs were the ones that you could hear,

and then when they stopped they would drop and blow up whatever they landed on. And that was later, you know, maybe in '43. The first one was maybe around '40, '41.

Q: Do you remember how long you were in Kennington each time, was it months or years?

A: It wasn't years. It would be several months. Because we would go to Oxford, and near Oxford there was actually an American Air Force base and we used to see the Yanks. And there was an expression that the kids there used, got any gum, chum. You know, just -- you know, it was something that we would say if we met an American. And I did meet a couple of them. But, you know, how old was I, 10, 11, something like that. We were young.

Q: Do you remember anything else about the Americans on the base?

A: We didn't ever go to the base. They were just young, nice guys. You know, this was -- actually, let's see, America went into the war in '41, so the first time -- I don't think they were -- the first time we were there, I don't think they were even at war yet. But there were some American soldiers that did come to Europe. And there was a base -- and I don't know exactly where it was -- but it was somewhere near Oxford. Oxford is a beautiful city, very historic.

Q: So what else do you remember about the Blitz and --

A: Well, after it was over, we would go outside and we would try to collect shrapnel. Now, none of the buildings where we lived, you know, were hit or blown up. But there was -- you know, there was a lot of damage. And one of the things that we did as kids is we would go out, you know, and collect shrapnel.

Q: And did you find a lot of it?

A: We found some. Found some.

Q: And who did you collect it with?

A: Other kids, other children that I was friendly with. Like, even this girl that I mentioned to you, but there was -- there were other friends, you know, that we made as youngsters, you know, from school, from the neighborhood. Usually it was in the neighborhood.

Q: Did you ever talk amongst yourselves about what was going on?

A: In the war?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. Yeah, we did. I don't think we realized how, how horrific it was in Europe, you know, as children. Certainly my parents did. And I know that they did communicate for a little while. There was a ghetto in Krakow where all the family was, including the grandmother. And they got a picture of her -- that's my mother's mother. And -- but as I mentioned to you, my father, you know, the stress and the strain was really tremendous on him. Tremendous. And --

Q: Your grandmother was able to write to your mother, though?

A: In the beginning.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In the beginning, yes. But, you know, then things got much worse. And we didn't really talk about these things like -- we always had dinner together. And I think my parents tried to have us have as normal a life as you possibly could. One of the things that was rather interesting was that, as a youngster -- and this is when I -- I don't even remember at what age -- I developed appendicitis and I didn't want to admit it. And, actually, it ended up rupturing. This was the days before penicillin. And my father, who is very religious -- and, as I said, we were as kosher as we could be, you know, and we were. You know, we kept separate dishes and -- for whatever food we had.

And when I was in the hospital -- I'll never forget this -- and they didn't have much meat or anything else, and the only thing they had was bacon. And he said I want you to eat that because it's more important, you know, to save your life than to worry about kosher.

Q: How long were you in the hospital for?

A: Good Question. You know, it's funny how you remember some things and don't remember others. But it was ruptured and I was very, very sick. As I said, there were no antibiotics at that time. And it was probably at least a couple of weeks.

Q: Do you remember what year that was or how old you were?

A: No. Isn't that funny? I don't. But I was little, maybe nine. Eight, nine.

Q: Do you remember being underground during the bombing?

A: Yes.

Q: And how -- can you tell me more about that?

A: Well, there were different ways that we could be underground. There were shelters, which were near the apartment. And people from the apartment would go to the shelter and stay there until there was, you know, there was a siren, and then there was an all clear siren. So you would go to that. But the ones that I remember the most is when we went into the Undergrounds, which -- have you ever been to England?

Q: Yes.

A: Then you know how deep they are. And we would go down to the Underground and actually sleep down there. And you're going to ask me how often did we do that, I don't know, but it was quite a few times. And as children, we actually -- I'm not going to say had -- but we actually, you know, we went around and saw our friends and -- it's such a strange situation where you live in a difficult situation, but you kind of adjust to it.

Q: What was the environment like down there?

A: A lot of people, and, you know, with blankets and they would sleep down there. And all -- you know, families would sort of stay together. And it wasn't that often that we'd go into the Underground. But the few times that I remember, it was not that -- it sounds like an awful experience, but it wasn't. I don't know how to describe that.

Q: Did you bring food with you?

A: Yes. Yeah, we'd bring some food with us. Yeah, maybe sandwiches or something, whatever. Whatever you had because there wasn't that much available. Talking about food, another thing I will remember always is my father buying me a peach for two and six pence, which was a lot of money. That was a quarter of a pound. And it was -- you know, it was something I just remember, because fruit -- you know, it was hard to get fruit.

Q: And that was something you took down there into the Underground with you --

A: No.

Q: -- to eat?

A: No. That was the time that we were actually in the West End and somebody was selling fruit and he bought it for me. We still did things, you know, I went with my father.

Q: And, at this time, you were also still going to school, correct?

A: Yes. Yes. Yeah, I went to school all the time that we were there. And we had -- you know, we had to work hard and study hard. And we had good teachers. Some

were nuns, some were not nuns. I remember a Sister Ursula who had a very good sense of humor.

Q: Now, what else do you remember about the nuns?

A: Well, they were strict. You know, on my report cards -- which I think I still have somewhere -- it was -- I was a very good student at the time. I usually -- this gal who eventually became mother superior and I were always like, first, second in the class. And on my report card, I'd have all these nice grades. And then on the conduct, it would say very good conduct but she talks too much. So I guess I'm still doing it.

Q: And your brother was not in the same class with you at this time, right?

A: No.No. No. This was an all girls' school. He was in another school and he had a lot of -- he was very social and he had a lot of friends, too. And I remember the friends, and, you know, they were handsome young men. And they used to, you know -- used to bother them and they would always sort of try to get rid of -- from all their activities, I guess. That's the way, you know, it is with brothers that are older.

Q: So outside of school, do you remember spending a lot of time with your brother?

A: Not that much. Because he -- you know, he was with his friends and I was with my friends. And we did spend time at home. And when we were in Kennington, we were in the same school. And he put up with me.

Q: Now, what was London like after the war?

A: Well, it -- 1945, you know, things slowly, slowly started getting better. And, of course, this is where -- by that time, I was 12 and --

Q: Do you remember when the war ended?

A: Ended? Yes. Yes. And there were, you know, big celebrations. And -- but then the thing that I remember a lot is how I felt as a Jew with the fact that Britain was not allowing, you know, Jews to go to Israel. We were -- oh, I was part of a youth group, and it was a Zionist youth group. It's called B'nai Akivah.

Q: Can you tell spell that for us?

A: B'nai is capital B, apostrophe N-A-I, Akivah is A-K-I-V-A-H. Named after Rabbi Akivah. And we had a lot of activities. I even went -- after the war, I even went to a camp, you know, which was like, in the country with this group, you know, where we would do a lot of, you know, singing and dancing like, a lot -- and other activities.

Q: Do you remember where in the country?

A: I don't. I don't remember where it was, but it was the country. And there's a lot of beautiful country not far from London. You know, whether it's Somerset or -- a lot of very nice places. And so we were very committed to, I guess, to Zionism. My father actually attended the last Zionist Congress, which is the 12th Zionist Congress. That was the last one. I think that was in 1920-something. It was after World War I. And my mother, too. I mean, she was in Israel. She went to Israel in 1948. She was on one of the first boats that went to Israel. Actually, she sat at the table with Leonard Bernstein's parents and remembered the conversation of how disappointed he was that his son didn't go into his business. That's Leonard Bernstein, musician, of course, I'm sure you know. And 1948, we saw her off to go to Israel for the first time right after it was established as a state. And she went many times. And once we were able to, my husband and I, as I told you, we've been there many times, too, and have remained very close to, not only Zvi, but we had three other first cousins that survived and ended up in Israel. One has passed away, two are still alive.

Q: So would you consider that your parents were very politically active?

A: They were great supporters in any way that they could of Jewish causes, synagogue, of Zionism, of Israel being a Jewish state. And so in that way, I mean, they -- my father went to the Zionist Congress, but I don't remember -- you know, there weren't anymore after that. So I -- you know, and I don't think he was that involved in organizations. He was more involved in the synagogue. He went to synagogue every Saturday and --

Q: And this was in London or --

A: No, in London and then in New York. Unfortunately --

Q: Okay.

A: -- in 1948, he went to the synagogue. He had an aliyah and he had his last heart attack and he died. And he was only 52 or three. So he got us through all this stuff and brought us to America and he died. A tremendous loss. Then my mother carried on in the most amazing way with my brother. And I'm the only one that actually was able to go to college. I worked, but went to school and graduated. But my brother worked with my mother. They opened up a store and were successful again.

Q: Okay.

A: They did very well financially. I mean, I shouldn't say very well, you know, they - you know, were able to live very good lives. As I said, my mother was able to travel, go to Israel, see her family. But, as I've said a few times, she was probably one of the most amazing people I've ever known.

Q: Well, I do want to hear more about your brother and your mother in New York. But just going back to London for a minute, you said your father had a heart attack in London in 1948, is that true?

A: No.No. He had a heart attack in 1939 when we came there and he was in the hospital. Then he did not have another heart attack. He suffered, though, you know, in walking. He had angina. And -- but he worked and he traveled back and forth, you know, to Kennington and did all the things. And helped me when I was in the -- was there for me when I was in the hospital. And then my -- we came to America and my mother had a brother here living in New York City. And at first, we lived with him for a very short time.

Q: What year did you come to the U.S.?

A: 1948.

Q: Do you remember how that you received permission to travel?

A: No. But I know that they got all the papers that we needed. And I guess because of my uncle and my father's, you know, business connections, we were able to come. But not until after the -- you know, this was three years after the war ended. I think they actually wanted to come to America earlier, but as I had mentioned to you, they couldn't come -- oh, I didn't mention this. But they were Polish, both of them were

Polish, and the Polish Q:uota -- there was a Q:uota system here -- and the Q:uota was closed and they couldn't come in. My brother and I were Czech and the Czech Q:uota was not closed. And that's why we were able to get all the documents that we needed to come here on that children's transport, which was sunk. So originally they were going to send us and then they decided -- my father particularly decided he wasn't going to split the family. And if they couldn't come, then we would all stay together. But in 1948, I guess it was opened up. You know, this was after the war. They were still on their Czech -- I mean, Polish passports, but they were able to come at the time.

Q: And do you remember --

A: After, after America saw what Hitler had done, I guess they became a little more lenient. I mean, that was a difficult time. I'm sure you've read the story of the Ship of Fools, you know, where all these -- no one would allow the ships to come in and the sent them back to Europe.

Q: Do you remember taking the ship across the ocean?

A: Yes. It was called the SS Degrasse. It was a French ship. And it was -- you know, it's sort of like a cruise. It was very, very nice.

Q: And can you spell that for us?

A: SS is just S-S. And de is D-E and grasse is G-R-A-S-S-E.

Q: Thank you. What else do you remember about being on the ship?

A: It was a lot of fun. We, you know, were able to play games and we had lovely food and entertainment. I mean, it was a nice ship. You know, I mean, it wasn't as nice, probably as -- you know, the liners today. But after someone who had lived in England and been through the war, it was lovely.

Q: How long did it take?

A: I think it must have taken well over a week, maybe ten days. I don't know exactly.

Q: And was it calm weather or --

A: Yes. Yeah, we didn't have any -- I don't remember any problems with getting ill or seasickness or anything like that.

Q: And do you remember your first impression on arriving?

A: Oh, it was very exciting to see the Statue of Liberty. And, yes, it was amazing. It was just amazing. And my uncle and aunt were there waiting for us. And it was in Manhattan, they lived on 52nd Street and 8th Avenue in a lovely apartment. And they had no children and there --

Q: This was your father's brother, correct?

A: No, my mother's --

Q: No.

A: -- brother.

Q: Okay.

A: My father was an only child.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know if I mentioned that.

Q: Yes, you did.

A: No one else. But my mother was one of six children. The oldest was killed in a concentration camp and the youngest was killed with his wife and his baby son. But



her other sister went through Auschwitz and survived, and the brother also survived and they ended up in Israel. And they're the ones who had my cousins. And that's one of the reasons she traveled there as often as she did and the reason that we travel there as often as we do.

Q: Okay. Do you remember arriving at the apartment, your, your uncle's apartment?

A: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

A: It was beautiful. We took an elevator. It was a very nice building. It's still there. I mean, they're gone, of course. But, you know, it was very, very nice. And my uncle was a very warm, lovely, wonderful man. His wife was very nice. She was actually Italian, Italian Jewish, and he was from Poland. You know, he was sort of the renegade in the family. He ran off in the 20's or something, you know, to come to America. And family was very religious, my grandfather in Poland was a Talmudic scholar. This was the wife that worked, they had a restaurant, and so it was a religious family. And Uncle Henry --

Q: What was his last name?

A: My uncle?

Q: Yes.

A: grandparents name, it was my mother's maiden name.

Q: And what about your aunt, what was her name?

A: The one here in America?

Q: Yes.

A: Her name was Lena. Her maiden name was Ronga. R-O-N-G-A. But, of course, after she was married it was Ehrlich. And, as I said, they were a wonderful couple, no children. And so they really were very, very good to my brother and to me.

Q: What do you remember about them?

A: Well, Uncle Henry had a variety store. And that's actually what my mother finally went into after my father died. In those days, it was called the Victory Five and Ten. And the store was on 9th Avenue and 55th Street. And it was sort of like the old Woolworth's, not as big, but it sold everything, you know, from toys to pots to dishes to cleaning supplies. It's a five and ten, like a variety store. In those days, you know,

in the 40's and early 50's, that was before all the, you know, Wal-Marts and K-Marts and all those discount stores. And they did very well. In fact, Uncle Henry had the store across from the NBC studio on 9th Avenue. And Harry Truman did his series there. And they came to my uncle's store to purchase stuff for -- this was an interview series with Harry S. Truman had he was president. And my uncle went over, met Harry Truman, took pictures with Harry Truman, gave pictures to all the family. And he was like my mom, very outgoing, very gregarious and a very warm human being.

Q: What were some of the things you did together as a family?

A: Oh, he would take us -- oh, my gosh. The first -- as soon as we came here, I think we drove to -- was it -- where did we drive? Was it Philadelphia or to Washington? You know, he wanted to show us everything. And, you know, he wanted -- he loved America. He was a tremendous patriot. And he always said, you know, when he goes abroad -- and he was one that had come to visit us in London when we were living there. He said when I come back to America, I kiss the ground. He was a tremendous patriot. Tremendous patriot. So he tried to show us all the good things of America and took us to the country. In fact, they built or bought a cottage, a nice cottage up in the mountains, where was the mountain? I've forgotten. Not -- no, they called it rump -- it was in the Catskills they called Ramat Gan after Israel. And we'd all go up there. Not only did we go up there, but he'd invite my husband's sister and my husband's parents. And we'd go up there and friends and we would have picnics and barbecues. And all the cousins got to play together, you know, my children, and my brother's children, and my sister-in-law's children who all got to know each other up at Ramat Gan at my Uncle Henry's place.

Q: Can you spell Ramat Gan?

A: Well, I'm sorry?

Q: Can you spell Ramat Gan.

A: Oh, Ramat Gan. Okay. It's a place in Israel, actually, and he named his little property there after it. It's R-A-M-A-T, and then separate word, Gan, G-A-N. And it is a suburb of Tel Aviv, actually, now Ramat Gan. It's a big suburb. It's a diamond center in Tel Aviv, but he named it after. They were all very strong Israel supporters.

Q: What was life like for your family and how did you -- how did they earn a living? Did they help your uncle with the store?

A: No. What happened was that my father -- they decided to open another Victory Five and Ten in Astoria where we finally moved. Astoria is in New York. It's in Q:ueens in the suburb of -- you know, in Q:ueens. Are you familiar --

Q: Yes.

A: You're familiar with New York, of course. And so my mother, and, originally it was supposed to be my father, were going to open another Victory Five and Ten. Of course, my uncle had all the connections and all the -- you know, probably helped with some of the financing and stuff like that. And then my father died very suddenly of a heart attack. As I told you, he went to the synagogue on a Saturday and had an aliyah and actually died on the bimah.

Q: What year was this?

A: This was in 1948, right after we came to America after he had gone through everything to bring us here. So I told you -- I didn't tell you -- I mean, this goes back, really, to Czechoslovakia and to England. I was extremely close to my father. He would read me stories and tell me stories. And I had a very, very close relationship to my father. And when he died, I wanted to jump into the grave with him. I was so devastated. I was 15 years old. But, you know, it was, it was just such a terrible shock. One of the main reasons was that I had always gone to synagogue with him. And that Saturday I had not gone. Not that it would have made a difference, but it was devastating. And, meanwhile, my uncle helped my mother and then my brother, who was only -- in 1948 he was 20 years old. He had gone to university in London, actually. He had gone to the University of London and had studied business and some other things. But then when we came to America, he would have gone to university. But after my father died, he helped my mother run and establish the store, plus they had Q:uite a bit -- they had other help. And I used to go in and help, also.

Q: This was the second store, correct?

A: The second store. And then after a while, after a while, my brother opened a third store. So it wasn't Q:uite a chain, but there was three stores, and this one was in Brooklyn. So there was one in Manhattan, one in Q:ueens, and one in Brooklyn. And they were all the Victory Five and Ten. And they were, again, you know, not terribly -- you know, when I say successful, they made a good living. That's how -- you know, they -- definitely what, in today's political scene, would be called, you know, the middle class. So -- and, you know, they were able to enjoy all the things, you know, whether it's the theater or whether it's the -- you know, dinner or traveling. It was not easy. My brother really gave up going to school. And I ended up being the

only one that went to college. But I would work, also, in the store, as well as other people.

Q: How did your life change after your father died?

A: Well, it was -- we all became a lot closer to each other and realized how important family is, which I do to this day. And my husband and I have made sure that we take -- or try to be with our children and grandchildren and go places with them. And family, you know, became very, very important to us.

Q: In what way?

A: That we realized that, you know, money comes and goes, possessions come and go, but the people that you love and are close to are the things that are the most important in life.

Q: Okay.

A: And we've tried, you know, to -- as best as we can, you know, to instill that in our family. As I said -- well, after -- well, this is a lot later after I got married and we settled out here, we would do trips and national parks, you know, and driving trips and a lot of things with family.

Q: What year did you start college?

A: I started college in 1950.

Q: Okay. And how old were you then, 17?

A: Right. Yeah. Because the -- yeah, I -- and then I graduated in 1954.

Q: And how did you decide to go to college?

A: Well, that was another thing that really was -- well, I always loved learning and going to school. And as I had mentioned before, I had been a good student, even in London, even though it was sporadic, you know, here and there. But I loved to read and I loved -- liked to learn.

Q: Did you finish any high school in New York before you started college?

A: Yes. I finished what is called the Blackboard Jungle, Long Island City High School. I think that's where they actually filmed that movie, the Blackboard Jungle. It was a tough school. But, again, I tried to tell my grandkids this, you know, it's important the friends that you make. And people made a lot of fun of me because I spoke with an English accent. People often say to me, oh, you grew up in London,

how come you don't have an English accent? I said, well, Long Island City High School took care of that because they would taunt me. And so, you know, I spoke American.

Q: And what did you study in college?

A: Business and retailing and business. You know, that was my family's field. You know, my mother had a store, and so I studied at the Baroque School on 23rd Street and Lexington Avenue. It was the College in the Sky, you know, it was not a campus, it was a tall building. And that's what I studied there.

Q: Were there options for different fields at the time and business was the path that you were interested in?

A: Yeah. They had -- well, Baroque was a school that specialized in business. But you could also do, you know, prelaw, accounting. It was primarily -- there was also a city -- as part of City College, and City College had an uptown branch, which, you know, had all the sciences and humanities. I mean, we took those courses, you know, psychology and English and, you know, all the same kind of courses. But the primary, you know, major was retailing and business administration.

Q: And what was college like? Were you still living at home?

A: Yes. Yes. I'd commute from -- I'd take the subway and commute from Astoria, which was at the end of the line, Ditmars Station, and I'd have to change and get down to 23rd Street and Lexington Avenue. But, you know, New York is -- with subways, you can get around. And that's what I did. And we -- you know, it was a good school. I joined a number of organizations. I was part of Boosters, which was the service organization. And, you know, we'd do different functions. I was also part - - I couldn't afford sororities, so we had a house plan. And I was in Riner 54. And that was very fortunate, because at one of the house plan parties that we had, I met my husband. So -- and we've been married now for 58 years.

Q: Well, we'll hear more about him in a minute.

A: Okay. I do, I do have a tendency to jump around.

Q: That's okay. What, what classes did you take? Do you remember specifically any of them?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was --

A: Well, I took statistics, I took business administration. I did take -- I did take psychology, I took marketing, I took English.

Q: What were your plans when you finished school?

A: I thought I'd try and get into an executive training program and work for, you know, a large corporation, a company. And I did work for a while at Saks Fifth Avenue.

Q: Did you like that?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What -- how long were you there for?

A: That was just a part of while I was in school, so it was like, a year. You know, it's -- like a trainee or something like that.

Q: Did you do that for the experience or --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did you need the money?

A: The work experience, right.

Q: Uh-huh. Were you paid?

A: Yes. Not very much. Not very much. In fact, my first job out of college, I hate to even tell you what I was paid. You'll maybe ask later.

Q: What was your first job after college?

A: My first job out of college was working for a department store called Gertz, which was on the Island. You know, it was easier because I lived there and, you know, I applied and I was hired. And, again, they had like, an executive training program. And then I became an assistant buyer in the children's department. And I worked there, actually, until we left New York.

Q: What -- what responsibilities did you have as an assistant buyer?

A: Well, I would go into the market and, you know, I would work on the floor, help train the salespeople. Help with the -- you know, pricing and displays and the things that are involved with retailing, which is also going down to the drain as people buy everything on the internet. But, you know, in those days that was that was the way to shop. And I really enjoyed it. And I liked working with people, both the people that were the salespeople and the customers. You'd also wait on customers. You know,

you were on the floor. So even though you were an assistant buyer and you'd go into market, as you know, New York has a big clothing market. And it was exciting.

Q: And how long were you there for?

A: Okay. I graduated in 1954. And not very long, because we -- I got married in 1954 right after I graduated. And I, you know, continued working, because my husband was a student. And then when he finished his training, we moved to California. And that was in 1956, so it was really just a couple of years that I was there.

Q: Okay. And what was your salary there?

A: I think I was getting \$55 a week.

Q: How about your salary at Saks Fifth Avenue?

A: Oh, I think that was less. That was less. I don't even remember that. I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: In fact, you know, as I think about it, I can't even remember -- maybe I did not get a salary. Maybe it was just a training thing. I, I thought -- you know, I don't remember exactly about that. But I know that my husband and I lived on that. And it was pretty interesting, because, you know, you had a hamburger, you know -- at that point we didn't take money from anybody, we just managed on what I made. It was a different time.

Q: Did you move in together once you got married?

A: Yes. But not before, which is also a different time.

Q: Did you have an apartment?

A: Yeah. We subleased an apartment from someone else and lived in Rego Park, which is also in Queens.

Q: What was your husband studying?

A: Medicine.

Q: And why did you move to California?

A: Okay. That's -- are you sure you want to ask that question? My husband was what they called draft bait. And so when he applied after his internship -- which was very tough in those days. And it was a good thing I was working because if not, I don't know if this marriage would have lasted. But it was -- I'm just making that comment. But he was working 36 hours on, 36 hours off, and, you know, just exhausted from

his internship. And a very good internship at Mount Sinai, New York. But when he finished the internship and he went looking for residencies, they said, sorry, but, you know -- at that point there was a doctors' draft -- so we can't take you, you know, because you may be drafted out of the program. And then he applied to something called the Barry Plan. And that allowed you to take training and delay, but you signed up to go into the service after that. You still committed to going to the service.

So then he went back to all the same places. He had very good training. And they said, oh, we'd love to take you, but everything is filled. And it turned out, unfortunately, for someone, that someone in California developed, as it was, testicular cancer and had to drop out of the program. And the program had an opening in Long Beach and that's how we ended up in Long Beach. We did go back later after the service to New York to finish training. But once you lived in California in those days, it was beautiful. And so -- you know, after everything, we ended up back in California. And it also ended up that we brought our parents, both his parents and my mother out here. And they lived here for a good 20 to 25 years.

Q: I was going to ask you about that, how it felt leaving your family.

A: I hated leaving my mother and my brother. I really was not a happy camper at all. But I love my husband. And that's where he went, so I went with him. You know, Ruth, whither thou goest, I will go?

Q: Yes. After -- afterwards you brought your -- both sets of parents with you to California?

A: Right. Right. And they lived in Riverside. And it was a very good time for them. Just my mother, of course. My brother visited, my sister-in-law, and we're very, very close. We had a double wedding with Arnie's sister. In fact, that's why I'm having the interview today because this week we're going to my brother-in-law's 80th birthday. They live in Florida. And we've celebrated our major anniversaries together. We had all of our families, all of our kids and grandkids altogether for our 50th anniversary. Very, very close family.

Q: So your family now is in mainly California and Florida, but not New York?

A: Right.

Q: Okay.

A: I have two nephews. My brother's sons still live in New York, but that's it.

Q: What did you do when you arrived in California?



A: Well, I actually worked for a while. Not in retailing, but I worked in a school that teaches business. It was a private school. And then I went back to school when my kids were in school and I got a master's and then I went back to teaching college. And --

Q: Okay.

A: -- my husband ended up, you know, practicing here. He's retired, but still teaching as a volunteer giving back to the community because he loved what he did. And even though he's over 80, he still goes in and teaches residents.

Q: And is your husband Jewish?

A: Yes, very Jewish.

Q: Where was he born?

A: In the Bronx.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: We're both very committed to Judaism.

Q: And how many children do you have?

A: That's another difficult Q:uestion. I had three children. Unfortunately, I lost a son to a heart attack. My kids all went into medicine. He was a doctor but he --

Q: I'm sorry.

A: -- had a heart attack. In other words, a bad, bad family history. I have now two children, a son and a daughter. They both live in California and they're both practicing physicians.

Q: And how many children do they have? I know you said you're a grandmother.

A Right. Yeah. My daughter and her husband have twins, a boy and a girl. The loves of our lives. And my son has four sons, the other four loves of our lives.

Q: And are they both close to you physically? Are they near you in California?

A:Physically, not as close as I would like. But my daughter and her husband live up in Santa Cruz, California, so it's an hour's flight. My son lives in the San Fernando Valley, which is about an hour and 20 minute drive. But we still get together Q:uite a bit. In fact, we were just with my son and daughter-in-law down in San Diego with the children this past weekend. That's why we haven't been around, you know, I had to give you this date. And then the next day we were with my son, daughter-in-law, and one of their children, because three of their kids are now in college.

Q: Okay. Why did you return to school to get your master's and what was it in?

A: My master's was in -- also in business administration and marketing. I went back because I thought I would like to teach. I liked working. I did a lot of volunteer work with students on different projects when my kids were in school. I was pretty involved, and I decided that I would like to teach. So in order to teach, you know, business in a college, you needed, you know, a further degree, which is what I did. I took it at Cal State San Bernardino.

Q: And did you start teaching after you graduated?

A: Yes. I never taught on a full-time basis, I really only taught part time. I taught at a community college, and, really, it was a very good experience. And some of my students have done very well. And then after that, I taught at, again, state university, actually, where I got my master's. Because I knew the people there and so then they hired me there, too, and I taught.

Q: How many years did you teach for altogether?

A: How many years did I teach? Probably 15. I stopped teaching when my mother became quite ill and I decided I wanted to take -- help her.

Q: Okay. Is your mother still in California or?

A: No, my mother died. She died in 1993.

Q: Okay.

A: No, she would be -- she was born in 1904, so she --

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. But she did live to be 89 and worked in our synagogue, ran the gift shop, was very popular, was very involved in the community and was very happy here, as were my in-laws. Very involved.

Q: Okay. Is there anything else you can tell me about California that we haven't touched upon or that you would like to add?

A: Well, we live in a very -- you know, it's a nice community. It has its problems, smog and probably a lot of other things because we're ringed by mountains. But a very close community, especially through the synagogue, which is where we have a lot of our friends. And I'm involved in something called Osher and something called LIFE, which is Learning is Forever, which is through the University of California in Riverside which is for seniors. And we have lectures and programs and different things. So, you know, it's very nice being in a university town. As I told you, I enjoy

learning. And so, I think -- as I used to tell my students, learning is not for making a living, it is for living and you should learn as long as you can. And so I enjoy that. I also volunteer with an organization called HiCap, which is health insurance counseling. Because I helped my mother when she was ill. And seniors -- because I'm a senior, too -- but a lot of seniors have a tough time navigating the healthcare system, and probably is going to get worse, you know. So that's something that I volunteer with. And then I do stuff through the synagogue, you know, on education. And my husband, as I told you is still teaching. And we -- and whenever we have an opportunity to be with our kids and grandkids, we do that. When my daughter was working and her husband was working, she sent her twins down for a summer and they spent the summer here. And I'd take them, you know, for swimming lessons. But that was a number of years ago. They now just started high school. And we just figured we had better enjoy, enjoy the family when they still have time for us. Because, as I'm sure you know, Heather -- I don't know, you're an intern. Are you in school or out of school?

Q: Actually, no, I'm a permanent staff member.

A Oh, okay. Okay. So -- but, you know, as you get more involved, whether it's with education or with jobs, you know, you don't have as much time for grandparents and families. So whenever we have a chance -- we're actually heading to Israel in October for the 100th anniversary for Hadassah. All of us are -- my mother and my daughter and my daughter-in-law, my granddaughter and I are all life members. And right after that, it turns out that it's grandparents day at my twins' high school and they just started high school. And so we're going right from Israel up to Santa Cruz so we can be there for that. And we're also going up for Sukkot -- unfortunately, it's not as easy to get together for holidays. All our children belong to synagogues, which makes me very happy that they're involved. And what will happen with the next generation, I don't know. But we took everyone to Israel a couple of years ago. Actually, it was five years ago in 2007. There were 14 of us that went. So we feel it's very important, you know, for our family to know, know Israel and to know the history of the Jews and to be proud of who they are.

Q: Have you also been back to Czechoslovakia?

A: Yes.

Q: Or Czech Republic?

A: Yes, we have. We've been back there a couple of times. Not gone back to Moravska Ostrava because I probably would not even remember where to go. And also I've heard that the city is not a terrific place to visit now. But I -- I don't know,

we may still try to go back, but I don't think so. But we've been to Prague and we've been to other parts. And Prague is a beautiful, beautiful city. And, of course, you may know that Hitler had maintained a lot of the places there, supposedly as a museum to an extinct people. So the Altneuschul, which is the oldest synagogue, and we went there for services -- is been in -- it has been in practice since 1200. Of course not during the Holocaust, but it's still there. A wonderful museum. Have you ever been to Prague?

Q: I have not, no.

A: Well, it's an absolutely, beautiful, beautiful city. And a lot of Americans have gone there to work, young people, too. So we have -- I have -- both my husband and I have been back.

Q: I know you said you've also been back to London a lot, does that include Kennington?

A: Yes, we did go back to Kennington and it really has changed. I did find the house that we lived in and -- but it's become much more metropolitan. You know, more of a little town or city compared to the country village that I remember. It was really a real village. You know, the people next door to us, you know, had sheep and chickens and Marge, their daughter, was my best friend. And, you know, we used to play together all the time. So I'm sorry that I lost contact with her. One thing I try to do, I still have that -- you know, several friends that I went to school with at the convent that have visited me here and that I visited in London. So we -- you know, we've kept -- we're still in touch.

Q: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to touch on about anything that we've covered that you think is really important that you want to add that I haven't asked you about?

A: No. I think, not only have you asked me things, that I probably, you know, said more about things than you wanted to know. Actually, there was one little thing that I did mention to Ashley before, and that is a story of another cousin of my mother's who left Vienna and tried to go to Switzerland after Germany had already invaded. And when she got to the border with Switzerland, she needed to go to the bathroom her name was Celia Summerville -- well, no, it was Celia Mohrer. She later married and her name became Celia Summerville and she was an artist.

Q: Can you spell her name for us?

A: Celia, C-E-L-I-A, and Mohrer was what she was at the time that she left Vienna. She was a very young woman. M-O-H-R-E-R. And her parents were actually in

London. And my mother helped -- they were older and my mother helped take care of them because they were like an aunt and uncle of hers. But when Celia left Vienna at the border, she needed to go to the bathroom and she got off the train. And the Nazis got on the train and cleared off all the Jews. And then she got back on the train and went into Switzerland. And from there she came to live with us for a while in London, then she moved into her own place. But she then moved to America and married a Summerville and they lived right near Harvard on Cambridge Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And they had only one son, and he's -- he's a Ph.D in epidemiology. And she -- he was working in New Mexico, she moved there, we went to visit her, and then, you know, she passed away and he moved up to Alaska. And this summer, he called me and said he was getting married, and could we come up to this little town of Palmer outside of Alaska so we went up there. So just wanted to mention that to show you how family is so important, that my husband and I dropped everything that we had planned and decided to go back up there and we did. And we went to the wedding and it was -- he was thrilled and his new wife was thrilled. And we're very happy for him because now he has a whole family rather than being all alone. And one other thing I do want to mention, you know, I told you about our really tremendous loss. It was with me all the time, my oldest son. His son just got out of the IDF in Israel. He was in the Israeli army. And that's another reason we're going to Israel in October. Not only for the Hadassah's 100th anniversary, but also to see him and the rest of the family. So that's something you didn't ask about maybe you wanted to know, but --

Q: No, we like details.

A: But I just thought, you know, this -- the story of -- she was called Cilly, Celia. It sounds -- C-I-L-L-Y. And she was wonderful young lady and I got to know her very well in London. We have some of her paintings, which were exhibited at the Fogg Museum in Harvard. And, so, you know, it's just important to stay close to family. I hope you have a good family and --

Q: Yes.

A: -- realize how important they are.

Q: So she was in the bathroom when the Nazis cleared the train?

A: Yes.

Q: Did she realize what was going on and --

A: No. She got back on the train and didn't realize until she realized that all the people that were traveling with her or near her were gone. You know, and then from Switzerland she came to England and she stayed with us for a little while. And then

she, you know, moved into her own apartment, and, you know, did different things, but --

Q: Did she know what happened to the Jews that were taken off the train?

A: No. No.

Q: Okay.

A: No. I don't think there'd be any way, you know, of knowing. But -- and I can't even really tell you what exactly what year it was, because we were already in London when she came. And she came through Switzerland. But, you know, this was another one of these stories, sort of like the one about the ship we were supposed to be on that -- you know, it's just by chance that we're here. And that's why it's so important to do the best that you can with your life as long as you can. Which sometimes isn't as long as you want, but, you try.

Q: Yes. Okay. I'm going to stop the recording now.

A: Okay. Thank you.

Q: Um, hold on one minute.

#### Conclusion of Interview