

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Pepi Schafner
August 7, 2013
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PREFACE

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Transcribed by Sherry Reckas, National Court Reporters Association.

PEPI SCHAFLER
August 7, 2013

Question: Today is August the 7th, 2013. My name is Leah Wolfson from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am here interviewing Dr. Pepi Schafler in North Bethesda, Maryland. Can you tell me when and where you were born and what was your name at birth?

Answer: I was born in Chernowitz in the Bukovina, which was a province in Romania, on January 1 -- on January 3, rather, 1-9-3-5, 1935. At the time I was born, that province was part of Romania, but it had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918.

And thereafter, _____ it became attached to other nations, so it didn't stay Romania other than for the 22 years in between during which I was born. And my name was and is Pepi Schafler, S-c-h-a-f-l-e-r.

Q: And how old are you today?

A: I'm -- I'm sorry. Go back. Schafler with an umlaut. I'm sorry, how old I am?

Q: How old are you today?

A: I'm 78.

Q: How large was your family? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had one brother named Armon Schafler. He was two years older than me. He was born on February 28th, 1933, and he died in -- on March 14th, 1999 in Los Angeles where he had resided all his years in the United States.

Q: And when and where were your parents born?

A: My parents were born -- my mother was born in a small town called Berehomet, which was on the border of the Bukovina and Poland in -- when -- when the Bukovina became part of Romania, Berehomet became part of Romania as well. And her -- my grandparents lived there. Their -- my mother's maiden name was Hollar, Klara Hollar-Schafler. My grandparents' name was Malka -- grandmother's name was Malka Hollar. My grandfather's name was Malkilabe(ph) Hollar. And my mother also had other siblings in the family. She had two sisters that survived the Holocaust, but her brother did not. He was deported from Berehomet with his family to -- to Moldova, to Transnistria, and they -- well, they -- they were either beaten to death or died of starvation. He didn't. He was very ill, and he died in 1945 in our house, but he was very ill. My mother had another brother who was a banker in Indiana and during Kristallnacht, he -- he was -- the police came to pick him up, told him that he needed to open the bank for some urgent matter, and he was never seen again. His name was Benja -- Bena Hollar in Vienna. So they -- in the morning, they let her know that he had a sudden appendicitis attack and died. So his wife and son left Austria and went to the United States. His son became a professor at the University of Connecticut at the Connecticut Institute for Research. And I don't know, the lady, his widow, died. My father was born in a town called Vishnitz. He comes from a long line of people that lived in Vishnitz, and Vishnitz is also part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And a long line of people empowered. Somebody had -- with an interest had tracked the Schafler family in Vishnitz and tracked it down to 19 -- to 1845 where the -- the town, it probably the equivalent of mayor or executive, was a

Schafler. And the Schafler family was a _____ educated family in Vishnitz. That's all I know. My father's parents I did not know. They died during the 1918 group epidemic. My father was, at the time, a student at the University of Konstanz in Germany. So he didn't know too much about them, about their death. And then he -- and then he -- at the time, he may have also ready been -- he was eventually a prisoner in Moscow, the German army -- he was in the German army and he was taken prisoner. So he didn't know much about the circumstances of their death. But that's all I know about my -- he had -- he had siblings. He had two sisters and -- and a brother. And there's more about -- it was an interesting experience. One of his sisters when -- when the Bukovina was annexed to Soviet Union, one of his sisters was married to a very wealthy man. And he was with her when they had two children, and they had a baby. They were -- as soon as the Soviet -- the Soviets occupied Chernowitz and Bukovina, they were deported to -- to Siberia, to Siberia. So they -- they went with the older children who were then teens, and they left the baby behind to their sister. They figured they're coming back and they'll get him. Well, they -- they didn't come back. They came like 40 years later. They went to Israel, and the son was raised by the sister and didn't know his parents and did not relate to them, and that was the end of that. And the others -- I don't know -- you know, they died of natural causes in various places, mostly in the United States. They all came to United States. They were not interred in any concentration camp; as were my mother's sisters, they were not interred either.

Q: And can you tell me what was your family life like? What was your childhood like?

A: Well, my family life was a middle class, upper middle class family life. We lived in -- in those days, everybody lived in apartment. I guess they owned it or they didn't own it, I don't really know that. But we had a lovely apartment. We always had household help, a maid. When I was younger, we had a nurse maid, sort of a nanny. We -- I was -- it was a very nice apartment. We had a nice life. My dad was the -- was a CPA. He was an accountant and financial manager for Auto Mataro(ph), which was the Ford distribution center in Bukovina, and it was all _____ and elegant, sort of Austrian style. And my mother, as I mentioned, we always had a maid, and it was common in -- in those days in Europe to -- to go on the promenade around noon, between noon and one o'clock. There were certain main avenues, you went on the prom -- it was true even in Paris and other places. My mother and her sisters dolled up every day and went to the promenade. And my dad came home for the midday meal at one o'clock and we ate, and then he took a nap, and went back to the office around four. And that's what I remember a lot. I remember my mother's sisters, especially the youngest one, was very beautiful, tall, blonde, and she was sort of assertive and, you know -- I suppose we're not supposed to appear assertive, and they -- she was teased that she walked like a sergeant, you know. She -- on the promenade, she was sort of assertive. That was a daily event. And my parents entertained. My parents went out to -- for evening functions. One -- I remember one night there was -- obviously the maid was living in. My -- my parents were out, and my brother woke up and they weren't there, so he went and woke me up and said "They're not home." "Okay." "Come, let's -- let's look." And we went out on the terrace and we were looking for them. Well, my parents were coming home, and they could see the

children on the terrace at one o'clock in the morning. They didn't know what to make of it. You know, they asked me -- well, they asked him, and I don't know what he said, but they asked me and I said, "I don't know, he told me to get up." You know, that's about it. He was two years older and told me and I did. The maid didn't know about this, and my parents were upset. So I -- I remember a very nice middle class, upper middle class life. We had -- we had a car at the disposal of the chauffeur. I don't think my dad drove. Certainly my mother didn't. And my mother spent time with her family -- with her sisters, spent time homemaking. You know, she baked and cooked and stuff like that. Holiday dinners, I remember Passover Seders. Dinner parties, when I woke up and -- and heard voices and got up to -- to go into the dining room or living room and asked what time it was, which, you know, shocked my parents. There was tea in the afternoon. Neighbors invited me for tea. And there were two ladies, or my mother described them as spinsters, and they wanted to pump me about secret -- you know, family secrets. Not so much family secrets. I don't know what they were. But like my mother's two sisters, and the one wasn't married and the other one was just engaged, who were they seeing, you know. They were pumping me, basically, but I liked it, you know, and I talked. You know, three years old, anything. Four years old, anything. So I remember a very -- my brother had started school before the Soviet occupation. He went to public school, which took -- because a lot of the Jewish children went to Jewish schools. But my parents -- my dad used his influence and wanted him to go to public school. He was -- he's very smart, he was very smart, but he -- he was sort of a troublemaker. He did something, throw it in the garbage, put it on the door, which almost got him expelled. My dad had to go and use

his influence. I did not start school until the Soviet occupation other than -- than dancing school. And I had neighbors that I played with and friends. And it was -- I had a lot of toys and stuff like that. In fact, ours was a kosher home, and my parents were concerned -- I had been ill when I was three. I had whooping cough and -- and scarlet fever, so there were a series of some kidney problems. So my parents were concerned that I wasn't gaining weight. And, you know, Jewish mother always worries about the kid not eating. So they felt that maybe ham would -- would put weight on me. But, of course, they couldn't bring it into the house. So the maid every afternoon for the -- what is called yowzah, for the -- the tea time, would take me to a -- a place that sold ham sandwiches where I could eat a ham on hard rolls. I ate part of it anyway. That was a daily ritual, I remember that. And I had -- and my closest friend, play friend, was -- well, actually I met a little girl in the park whose father was -- two I had -- her I was just fascinated. But my closest girlfriend, the -- this girl I met in the park, little girl in the park, her father was a bus driver. And they lived in a basement one room, and she invited me to come over. So the maid took me there. But when the maid told -- yeah, I didn't know one room from three, but I liked being in one room because everybody was in the same place. So the -- my -- my parents, my mother, was not too excited about that, about this relationship after the maid told her that they live in a basement. But I -- I did still insist on going. And since she didn't have too many toys, my uncle had come -- Uncle Jupiter had come back from the toy fair in Leipzig. Every year, they have this big toy fair. And he brought me some toys which I already -- some of them I already had like a new baby doll buggy, so I gave them to her. And my parents may not have liked it, but I don't know what they said.

I don't recall. But my brother, my brother had something to say about that, and he said, "You are gonna make us poor." Because I gave my toys away, these toys that Uncle Jupiter brought me. And the other friend that I spent a lot of time with was a little girl named Anita. She was -- Anita Gelburd. She was three years older than I was, and she had four -- I mean three older sisters. There were four girls. The oldest one was eighteen, nineteen, and there were a couple in between, and she was seven and I was five. She was -- since when I was four, and she was going to school. And I loved being there because there was girl talk, you know. There was a lot of commotion. Our house was quiet, you know, kind of stuff. And there it was commotion. And unfortunately, the whole -- they were deported, all the Gelburds -- the older daughter had gotten married somewhere in between and had a child, but the rest of the family was deported. And when -- when people were coming back when -- when the nightmare ended, and the oldest sister, whose name I think was Lenny, saw that her family didn't come back, she committed suicide. Whole family went out {Crying}. That was my childhood. Sort of uneventful. You know, it just -- used to go see my grandparents. My grandparents were religious. Shabbat -- Shabbat was Shabbat. You had Friday night dinner. I liked my grandparents. My grandfather was something in a wood factory. I don't know what he did. He was a supervisor or something. And on Shabbat, people would come over and -- and, you know, they'd -- my grandmother would bake stuff on Friday, make challah, and she gave me a piece of dough and I could work -- work the system. And they were -- they were kind people that I -- I loved. And didn't see that much of them. And I -- they were a different way of life than -- than we were used to, but it was a nice life. The whole

town -- you know, there was a main street, and their house was on the main street. They were all individual houses. And she -- people would walk by and see you on the porch and that kind of stuff. It was different. They had a garden in the back. And unfortunately, they were killed in Moghilev. They -- they died. They weren't killed. They died of malnutrition probably, and they were older so didn't see too much of them after that. You know, after the war started, we didn't see too much of them. So that's basically -- I didn't start -- when the Soviets occupied the Bukovina, when it was annexed, wasn't occupied, they would like to say it was annexed, in 1940, I started school, in Russian school. Now, I -- to roll back, when my dad used to come home for -- for his -- the midday meal, then he would lie -- lie down, I guess it was a couch. I know he was -- he lied down and I lied down right alongside of him. Had my head on the -- sort of under his arm. I learned to read. I learned to read. We spoke German at home, but I had learned to read Romanian and to speak Romanian, and I also later learned some Russian, even before -- before school. But Romanian and German I had learned. And when I didn't learn from -- when I was reading the paper with my dad would -- what I didn't learn, I sort of translated myself, you know, like -- I remember an example that my family had repeated, namely that in German whipped cream is schlagsahne, meaning beating, and sahn -- or schlagobers, the Austrians used to say. Well, schlag means beating and -- and obers is a colonel. That's the -- so I had translated _____ batoot(ph), you know, beaten colonel for -- for whipped cream. That was my accomplishment. And people teased -- my parents teased, my brother especially teased me about that. It was a quiet life, pleasant. You know, no -- no particular drama until just

before the Soviet occupation. I remember my parents, we -- my mother and the children had been visiting the grandparents, and my father came for the weekend and was -- was telling my parent -- my mother and the grandparents that the maids -- they were usually Ukrainian or Lithuanian, and they -- that there -- there is unrest, that there is hooliganism. But I mean it was abstract. It wasn't -- nothing had happened to us or to our house kind of thing. But there was some cloud on the horizon. And in 1940, the -- the Soviet marched in. It wasn't -- it wasn't like Army takeover. It was -- they just sort of marched in. It was by agreement, although they had bombed, apparently, the airport. So it was sort of different but much the same. The -- the Soviet -- the Auto Matoro was eviscerated. And my dad, they wanted -- some town father or whatever these people had as commanders wanted my dad to be the accountant for Meloche (ph) Trust. In -- in the Soviet Union, in communistic structures, everything is a trust. It's the milk trust and the - the shoe trust and the -- so Meloche Trust was the dairy trust, and my dad became the accountant and chief financial officer for the dairy trust. And, you know, we basically went on the same. I started school. I don't remember whether it was kindergarten or first grade. I mean I don't know that I would have been able to tell the difference actually. But it was Russian and -- My parents entertained some -- I remember my parents entertained some -- somebody from the company, some people from the company, Russians, and the guys were amazed how people lived, you know, the beauty, what they considered luxury. I mean we were upper middle class people, but we weren't by no means rich. Just well off, I guess, comfortable off, whatever. And he -- he was just amazed at how people lived. And he said something to my parents, and my brother felt

compelled to answer, so he said, "Yeah, this is all nice, but they call us dirty Jews." So he said, "Well, you can call me anything you want as long as you feed me honey." So that was sort of a -- an indication of -- of a perception of what they had, you know. But other than that, the year went uneventful again, and you went to school and you -- my Uncle Jupiter was not too {Coughs} excited about it because he was a businessman. He - - he did international business with -- with Austria and Germany and France, and he couldn't do that. So he was not too excited but, you know, he had to put up and shut up, basically. And when the Naz -- on July 21, 1941, the war started. I mean Nazis invaded. Actually, rolling back, in '39 I remember when Poland was invaded. How do I remember it is that my mother had taken me for someplace, to some -- somewhere, and we were coming back. And in front of the perfect _____, the police there, which was the major police entity, there were people sitting on -- on packages on the street and the sidewalk. And I had asked "Why are they there", and my mother told me that -- this was in September 1939 -- that these people are from Poland and they are refugees. And -- and just as we were standing there, a dog came by and bit my thigh, you know, chubby little thighs of little girls, and that was a big minor crisis. You know, I don't think he broke the skin, I don't remember, just that the idea of it was a major thing. So in 1941 -- and we knew that Hitler had invaded Poland and that there was -- and in 1941, the Nazis, on June 21st, 1941, the Nazis occupied Chernowitz and then everything changed. That was not benign, that was not -- it was -- first of all, it was war, number one, although you didn't feel it that much. But there were -- there were a lot of anti-Semitic outbursts. A lot of windows broke and a lot of Jewish businesses broken and -- I don't -- and lot of Jewish

businesses just simply put out of business. And -- and the Nazis had plans, had made plans to basically make Cherowitz _____, to expel all the Jews. Although my Uncle Jupiter was not -- he said, "Oh, they're not gonna do it." And he was -- he was amenable. He was pleased that -- that the Soviets had gone. Oh, let me roll back. In 1939, when Europe was getting just by things not looking so well, the Ford Motor Company in Michigan had -- had offered my father and his family to come to America. And my mother said, "Who goes to America? Only people that want to get away from a bad wife." Because in Europe, divorce was very difficult. Or people that can't make it financially and stuff like that. So that was one opportunity missed. And -- and when the Soviets were retreating, they offered my dad to come to Moscow. And my parents were sort of torn, I guess, about that. But Uncle Jupiter said, "No way, don't -- don't you dare", you know, kind of stuff. So that was the other opportunity that -- that was missed. And in 1941 -- so when they occupied, Jewish children could not go to school. And they -- they started forming a ghetto. All -- all Jews had to move into a certain area where Jews -- let me roll back. Uncle Jupiter immediately went into business or -- or revived an old business, I'm really not sure. But food transport, eggs, stuff like that was a big business in Europe. I -- I didn't really know that until much later. And he was involved with shipping aid -- you know, transporting food, eggs, dairy, who knows. That business was not in Chernowitz. It was, what, 40, 50 miles away in some small town. So he was back in -- he was in business immediately. And so when they -- when they tried to make Chernowitz _____, they ordered people to move into ghettos, you know, certain streets where Jews had lived and where the kosher shops were and stuff. But 5,000 people or

whatever thousand, I don't know, maybe -- maybe more, maybe 6,000 were permitted to stay in their homes because they were needed to run the town. I mean they were the professors and the physicians and the businessmen. And we were permitted to stay in town, and Uncle Jupiter was permitted to stay in town, and so were -- so was my uncle, my father's brother. And so we were home but -- and then these people that had gone to the ghetto -- so, there is -- apparently there was a list that they put people on, and these people could stay in their homes. And those that had been put in the ghetto, some were transported to Transnistria, and some were allowed to go home and they would have transports later on. Well, we never went so, you know, we were considered not at risk. And this was like in September or in the fall. And the next -- so after the winter, the next deportation -- these were deportations, by the way, they were. The next deportations -- I didn't go to school. My brother didn't go to school. I had a non-Jewish friend that I met in dancing school, and then in the year -- her name was Adele Havriluk. Her father was a prominent attorney. And then in that one year of schooling that was either kindergarten or first grade, I don't know which one, and they -- they used to come over and bring me school work. And so to keep me in touch with school work, and -- and bring stuff for my brother. So then in the -- the next deportations were ordered to take place in June of 1942, and they were to be -- to take place on three consecutive Sundays. Oh, my dad -- my dad had a job, so Uncle -- he worked in Uncle Jupiter's business of -- of food transport, had something to do with eggs and stuff. And my dad would travel with Uncle Jupiter every weekend. He would come home every weekend. He would travel every Monday, go there. So Jews had to be home on those three consecutive Sundays, and that

didn't affect us the first two Sundays. The third Sunday -- and I had, in fact, said goodbye to some neighbor girl that I knew, whose name I don't even remember, but I know I had said goodbye to somebody. But the third Sunday, Uncle Jupiter had sent a chauffeur. So Jews couldn't be out, but he -- he could send a chauffeur. And my dad had come back on Friday. He had -- he went to the bank or he picked up money, had a briefcase full of money, real money, two hundred -- the equivalent of \$250,000 to pay wages, to buy material, who knows why. That's what he had. The briefcase was lying in our hallway, like the entrance hall had like a cabinet. And Uncle Jupiter sent the chauffeur Sunday evening about eight o'clock or so to suggest that we come to his house, that we stay with -- with them. And my mother said, "Nah, I don't want to go." You know, Max is going to -- back to -- I can't remember the town where this business was, and he has this money and, you know, Uncle Jupiter was going with him so he knew. And, you know, "Bathe the children, put them to bed. I don't think so." Well, that was our last chance, because in the middle of the night about midnight, the -- the doorbell rang and it was the police, and they said they wanted us to go to the police station to check the documents. Don't worry about it, nothing serious, just check the documents. So we dressed. My -- I dressed myself. I remember wearing kneesocks. That's what every kid wore, kneesocks, little kneesocks. And we -- when we got out of our apartment, there were -- there was a lot of police and a lot of people in the building that were going, but we also -- my parents saw, I didn't have the perception to understand it, that somebody was giving some policeman a bag of jewelry and they didn't go, they didn't leave. So -- but, you know, my parents were secure that -- that once he -- they

know that he's needed, then the business will open, it won't have any money, that nothing would happen to us. Well, that was obviously wrong. We -- we left the house in a -- like a bus, and we were taken to -- to cattle cars, and that was it. And my dad, we didn't have any -- we didn't pack any luggage, although some people had taken something. My dad had the briefcase of money, and that's it. And we learned later that the -- that they were short on the transport. They had to have 2,000 people in the three -- three transports, and they were short 120 people on this transport. So they just went into a place where they knew Jews lived and took them, you know. I mean who's gonna hold them accountable? So that was basically how we were on the cattle car on the way to Transnistria. That ended the childhood that I experienced.

Q: Did you have any sense of what transports meant before that moment? Had you heard about transports, or was this the first -- your first experience with it?

A: I mean I knew what a transport was as a forceable sort of thing, but I -- I didn't really. Neither did my brother. We didn't really. And we sort of relied on -- on something, I'm not sure what that something was. I cannot articulate now. But we relied on status or something that -- that it's gonna turn out okay. And in fact, the train that -- that we were on, the cattle car, it stopped in -- outside of Moghilev someplace, and people were looking for water. Obviously we had no food. Oh, the night before when my mother said, "Oh, we'll stay home, bathe the kids, put them to bed", we were having dinner. Not that - the big meal was usually at noon, but some dinner. And my brother who always complained said, "Nah, I don't like this. It's too greasy." I don't know what it was, I can't remember. And my mother said, "Some day you're gonna be hungry and you won't have

anything to eat." Just to, you know, to -- he was getting a little on her nerves, I suppose. It was a constant thing. He wouldn't eat, and complain, and she would worry. It was a merry-go-round. And there he was, two days later he was hungry, you know. There was nothing to eat. So it was like {Coughs} was he clairvoyant, was it a feeling that -- who knows. She never -- we never discussed it again because -- at the same time, if she had any feelings, she should've -- we should've gone to my uncle's house. So we were on the train. And when the train stopped -- well, my uncle, the concierge where we lived, my parents told them to go to Jupiter's, which was I don't know how many -- the distance was, and tell him that we were taken. And he did do that. So my uncle put in -- in motion all kinds of -- called all kinds of people by nine o'clock to get us off the train, but you couldn't, I mean -- and to get us out and stuff like that. So when -- when the train stopped, I went to get some water, and I saw people, and I don't -- I had a container, but I don't remember where I got it and what it was like. And it was down a hill, and I slipped and I injured my knee. It might have been something glass that I held, but it was a big cut on my knee, and there was nothing to -- to deal with it, nothing to clean, nothing to clean with, so that became infected. And for the next three months or more, July, August, September, three months, I couldn't bend the knee. It was -- it was swollen and hot, and I couldn't bend it. So -- but I'll tell you once we got to camp, if you wanted to ask me about getting there, so this is how we wound up in Transnistria. And the camp we were taken was Cariera de Piatra, which is a stone quarry, translated stone quarry. It was -- it had a Romanian commander. And we were unloaded, and there were barracks from I guess the people that worked there at the stone quarry, so we were put into barracks. I

don't remember much about the barrack other than that there were a lot of people in each barrack and that we slept on like pallets, wooden pallets, but they were -- they were off the floor, but they were -- they were contiguous, you know. It was like -- so that's what I remember. And every day I was sitting outside. I don't know whether they carried me. I was sitting on a big rock with my leg, my swollen leg, and it was getting bigger and I couldn't bend it. And I had little pig -- pigtails and sat there and at some point -- if you want me to continue. Did you want to ask me something else? I mean I'll continue.

Q: Were you together with your family at that point?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And how long was the journey from Chernowitz to -- to camp?

A: It probably was about four days, five days. And if you want me to continue, I'll tell you about being there. So the camp was commanded by a Romanian officer, and he would walk around every day, and -- and the barracks were like in a circle around the piazza, if you will, or the -- I can't think of another word at the moment -- that round sort of in the middle of it for -- So he would just sort of walk around every day. He would come by. And he would see me and he would go by and pull my pigtails and look at the knee and, you know, smile or pat my head or something and -- and walk on. At some point, I don't know whether -- how my parents heard, but my -- my father figured he has to return the money to the company. So he gave the -- the camp commander, about maybe a month later, month and a half, the briefcase full of money. And the commander returned it to the company. He did not pocket it. And the -- my uncles -- so with the -- I mean the authorities that could do that were impressed that my father returned the money.

It never occurred to him to buy his way out with that. And -- and that the camp commander forwarded it on. So he -- but somehow the camp commander had been told that there are efforts underway -- can I get you more comfortable -- that there are efforts underway to bring us back. So what we -- you know, we were hungry. People were dying. My parents did their best to -- the people -- my parents -- my father had to work on the quarries, I guess. I don't remember much of that. Some local farmers came with -- selling food. If you had money, you could buy. I don't know. You had to sell stuff to them. But I mean food was scarce. I can't say that I ever complained or that my brother ever complained because we knew that our parents -- somehow that childhood that your parents are always on top of you doing the best for you, you know. There's so many little things that they demonstrated that. So that if there was no food, it's because there was no food kind of thing. Well, in September, around September or early October -- I mean we didn't have a calendar, didn't know one day from another. My parents might have known when it was. The -- there was an edict to exterminate the Jews from Cariera de Piatra, basically. But the -- the people to be sent away were to be told that they're being relocated. So --

Q: And how did you -- how did you know that? Is this something you learned later or is this something that you heard from your parents?

A: Something I learned later, right. At the time, people didn't know. Something we learned later. And so one day, there are all these Nazi people. There's a setup of tables. People are told to line up, get their possessions and get in line. And my family, we were in -- sort of getting ready to go in line, and the camp commander must have signaled --

signaled to my parents for -- there were tables over there and he was standing over here to -- to the right of the Nazis. They were sort of registering people. And he -- he -- my mother went up to him and said, you know, "Where -- how will this -- how will this affect our returning home?" And he looked at her and he said, "Run. Run over there." Now, he was standing this way, he was standing this way (indicating). And the Nazis, they were loading on truck. He said, "Run to the right. Right."

Q: He told you to run behind him?

A: Yeah, "Run over there." So my parents ran, my brother, and my knee that I couldn't have -- I ran, and it was oozing. I ran. And -- and he said, "Run and hide." So -- so when -- once we came -- we ran, there were on that part of the -- of the circle, there were shacks that must have been equipment shacks or something. So we -- we entered a shack and there were other people that -- that he had told to hide. {Crying} -- this is very emotional, so forgive me, but I think that's -- that's the pivotal thing that happened. So we went to stay in there, and it turned dark, and water, food, nothing. One -- before it turned dark, the Nazis went on an ex -- inspection tour with the camp commander, and they said, "What's in there?" He said, "Oh, nothing. Old equipment that we don't use and we throw away." And they said, "Oh, okay." And they walked away, and then we could hear the trucks left. The next morning, the camp commander asked everybody to come to the square, ordered everybody to come to the square. {Crying} and he said, "I saved as many of you as I could." There had been 4,000 people in the camp {Coughs} and now there were about 300. And he said {Crying}, "Did my best. You will have a tough winter. But if you survive the winter, you'll be okay."

Q: So this was in the fall that this happened?

A: Yeah, in the fall. We -- and he sent people back to the barracks. I don't -- but, you know, here is a guy, here is -- that the Nazis put in there because they -- they saw in him something that they thought would be to their advantage, and it turned out it wasn't. So he -- he did the best -- he says, "I'll do the best I can to help you." There was some food provided, and I don't recall how. My brother got typhoid, got typhus, and then he got some infection. Do you mind if I get a tissue and some water? Would you like something?

Q: No, okay. One minute. [Interview paused]. Go ahead.

A: Okay. Are we okay?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So my brother had typhoid, and he had an infection in his leg. And he was -- for about three weeks, he was unconscious. And then I got typhoid. And I remember nothing till the spring. I was very sick. My -- my parents had nothing to sell. There was a doctor, but he was Jewish. I don't know where he got -- they gave people strychnine -- he gave, to live, I guess, to -- to stimulate the heart, they were giving strychnine shots. Why that, I don't know. And where he got them, I don't know. But my mother gave some of the wedding -- her wedding ring, and they got the strychnine. And then we both recovered. I had some other illnesses. They cut my hair off, you know, my pigtails off. They were full of lice anyway. And then I lost my hair, and then it started growing back. And then the spring came. And in the spring, we were transported to -- 120 people were transported to the other -- this other camp Capostiano(ph), which is a village, and the people were

housed in, I don't know, houses or shacks that -- and they worked, I guess, the fields. My -- my family and two other families were housed -- it was -- one of the things in Capostiano was that it was a sof-house(ph). Sof-house, a co-house, is a communal kind of enterprise. Everybody has a share in the total. And in sof-house is that you keep your own property but you -- you -- what you har -- harvest is communal. So in other words, if one grows potatoes and one grows carrots, you -- that's communal. So we were placed - - three families. There was the Glotters, which was a husband -- he was a soccer player and he was sort of caught in Chernowitz in a riot, with his wife. And he had a baby, a young baby when he was deported. The -- Harry. By the time we got together, he -- Harry was two years old. And they were the Glotters. And then there was a retired couple. He was -- had been the Postmaster General for Chernowitz, and he was this very distinguished sort of looking man, older man, and his wife. And my family -- and we -- we received a room on the property of the sof-house, and again it was sort of like a circle for various functions. And we -- we were housed in two small rooms. When you walked in, there were -- just you could stand or sit or stretch out, lay down, I suppose. And across was the dairy -- the milk separators. They brought all the milk in there and the machines were sep -- making cheese and butter and stuff like that. So that was on the other side. So we had the -- several advantages of being in there. One is that we had -- I don't remember whether -- which room we had, but we had some -- we used to get some little skim milk or something from the separators. And my dad was immediately recruited to -- to do the bookkeeping for the farm. I mean that's -- that's -- so he went to work every day. My mother did not work, was not demanded to work. She was going around

offering -- my mother had been a -- years before she married, she -- she and her sisters, they had a small seamstress designing salon. They did ball gowns and debutant gowns and things like that. And so she went around offering her services to the farm women, or to the men telling your wife, and we got some potatoes. We got to eat -- I love -- I got to love potatoes and even potato skins. I mean the -- we had -- we were no longer starving as much as we had in the past. So on the farm, there were two pivotal people that would - - it's like a movie, Matt -- Matt Damon. He -- there was this guy named Misha. He was a young guy, about 25. He appeared to be 25 to me. Very good looking. And I was at the time -- when we got to Kazakhstan, I was seven years old, and -- but I knew he was good looking, with a mustache, blonde. And he was the commander -- you know, he was in charge of the sof-house, and he would go around and scream at people. But the Jewish -- oh, the other Jewish people, the others that were teens, were in the town. They worked somewhere in the town on farms. On the sof-house, there were no other deportees. Just these three families. So we had no contact with them. Not that we knew them, we didn't, but we also had no contact. So I mean obviously we couldn't leave, or maybe we could, we never -- it never occurred to somebody to go stroll through town. So there was Misha, and then there was the -- the -- he would come by twice a day or something. And, you know, demanding -- he was demanding against the fam -- I mean we didn't have -- he had -- maybe he, Mr. Glotter, I think, worked for the farm. I don't remember that. He -- he'd play with little Harry. And then the other person that would come by every day was an older man, sort of a heavy man. He may not have been as heavy, as he wore this big coat, and he wore it all the time, same thing, every day. He was short and walked slow. And

he was -- they said he was a vet. And he went to check, every day he checked the milk and checked the -- the separators. And, you know, would say hello, maybe a pat on the head, that's it. Would not interact. Misha interacted more. So that's how we lived. We - - occasionally Misha would tell something about the news that's going on in the world. We lost all hope of -- that we would be brought back. We knew that the -- so from Misha we knew that the Nazis were losing, that the army was moving forward, the Soviet Army. So I -- my brother worked in the gardens. I don't recall what he did. I know what I did. Maybe he did the same thing. I pulled weeds. I was -- pulled weeds from the plants. Somehow we heard -- this is actually 1943. I was eight years old. My parents heard, and I'm not sure how, that the Red Cross -- oh, I know. Let me roll back. The -- we started hearing -- if you envision like this room is round and down there is a forest, and we heard shooting at night in the forest. And we didn't know what it meant. Did they -- were they gonna shoot -- were they shooting Jews? We didn't know. We didn't know that the Nazis -- that this was the partisans were doing that stuff. So we -- we learned that the Red Cross was -- this is probably -- should I give you a napkin? That the Red Cross was -- I think maybe from Misha, that the Red Cross was trying to save the children. And they were organizing a -- a mercy transport back, kinder transport back to Romania to save us from the -- because they feared that -- the general premise was that the Nazis would kill everybody in their path back, and they (?withdraw?) that they would kill the Jews and everybody else. So they wanted to save the children.

Q: And who ran the collective that you were in? Was it run by the Germans? Was it run by the Romanians?

A:Pardon me?

Q:Who ran the collective where you were working in Kazakhstan?

A:Well, nobody ran it really. It was -- it ran itself. The -- the commander, the Misha, was, you know, he said he was a Ukrainian and -- and the people -- the people basically owned it. The -- there was no guard in control. And the -- the round guy was -- was just in charge of the farm. So -- so it wasn't clear. We were basically free, you know. We could starve on our own, die on our own. You know, we probably could have left, but you are in the -- on the corner of nowhere and nowhere without any money and you are in rags. So the Nazis -- as the Nazis were moving -- I mean the -- as the Soviet Army was moving forward, the Nazis were in retreat. And we could hear a lot of gunfire, and we -- I can't remember whether somebody told my dad that this was the partisans, you know, that were hiding in the forest, and they -- they were shooting the -- they were destroying the train, the railroad tracks and things. So when -- when the Red Cross -- somebody told my dad at work that the Red Cross wants to take the children out, out of there, so they would survive. {Coughs} the -- my parents signed us up. Well, my parents talked to us first, and I didn't want to go. I felt that I wanted to stay with my parents. My brother was not as vocal as I was. Now, at this I must make a point that this Jagendorf, this guy, says he arranged it. And that is a lie. That is not true. But anyway, they -- it was the Red Cross. He says with the -- he arrange it with the Red Cross. The Red Cross. There was a lot going on that we didn't know. There was a lot going on in the Soviet Union that -- that we didn't know about. They -- that they knew about. So they signed us up, and -- and in order to ensure, A, that -- that we stayed together -- that we get -- we get to go.

And he says this was for -- only for orphans. Not true. We weren't orphans. So -- but my parents wanted to assure that we would always stay together, so they made us twins. So they picked the birthdate, 1931, on November 28th, 1931, so they couldn't be traced back, and -- and signed us up. But then they were worried about -- also my parents were worried about that I was too young, somebody would -- so they -- they register us twice. If you -- hopefully I get the list, if not I'll chase the woman down. They -- they registered us twice; once as twins, and other times as both separately being 11 and 12 years old. Just to -- to, you know, sort of secure that if somebody can't take twins, they can take one. Or if eight, they think will be too young to complain or something like that. So they registered us. And you couldn't -- you couldn't be sent back to Chernowitz. You could not. But you could be sent any other place in Romania. Well, you know, where to send in Romania, you know, cold, but my -- only where we have friends and family. We -- my dad had done -- he had done business with Ford, with Auto Motora(ph), the Ford agency in the city called Botoshan. He knew Mr. Bacall, who was a man by then would have been in his 50s or 60s, and he figured -- and Mr. Bacall also had two -- two sons. So he figured they -- they -- if they're there, they'll take us. And so he put them down to -- that's where we were going, to the Bacall's in Botoshan. We left around -- before Christmas -- and then when my parents a couple of times asked Misha, "What's the shooting up there?" He says, "I don't hear any. Shooting? I never heard any." So, you know, we -- we just sort of didn't -- didn't press him. The -- but he would come in and say to us -- "Hold on, _____+ -- just -- just stay." He -- he invited us -- so he said he was married to this farm woman. He invited us to his house once for dinner or twice. And

this woman was 20 years older than he was, which that's how it goes. And had a nice -- you know, it was good. Anything was nice. And so, you know, he -- but he always said "Just -- just stay and hold on." So would the round man, the vet. And so we -- we -- my parents said you gotta go. So we went. We left. My dad rode with us to Moghilev in a cart with horse, horse and buggy. And somebody else, which I can't remember who the somebody else was. Not a child. It was an adult. And we stayed in Moghilev for -- for a couple of weeks while the transport was being organized. And I cried a lot. I was sick. I was heartbroken. My dad returned in that horse and buggy. And of course, my parents were heartbroken. But that -- that was the general -- you are heartbroken when you are in a concentration -- Nazi concentration camp. We eventually made our way to Botoshan in -- in the spring. There were about 18 children that went to Botoshan from other camps. Jagendorf says that when -- when -- that he arrange it and the children of Botoshan have a welcoming for them. Never happened. So we -- we arrived by train, by a regular train. And we were in like a large room, and the people that were supposed to pick up children came, but so did a lot of other people. You know, just -- just to help, just to care {Crying}. So the Bacalls weren't there. It was circumstantial, because they were not notified and they were out of town. But there were other people who said -- numerous other people who said, "We'll take care of them. We will." And there was somebody in charge who decided who may and who may not, I guess. There was this family named Finklestein. A woman, she was I think 29. She had a brother that was 25. They lived with their father. And they said, "We want them. We want them." And they had neighbors, a couple, and -- and two sons, like 18 and 20, and they said, "We want them.

We want them. All of us want them. We'll take care of them." So we went. They were the most loving, wonderful people. I mean they were so happy to have us. You know, we were dirty, we were probably in rags, and I don't really remember. They -- they fed us. They caressed us. They -- they were -- they put us to sleep in their beds. I mean they were not people of means. They had a small -- little bit small apartment, but -- and -- and we were so excited, that the -- the son sat up all night and the neighbor, the Marcus, the name was Marcus, he sat up -- the two of them sat up all night to watch us sleep. They were worried that if something happens in our sleep. And just the sweetest, kindest people. And was fine for us, we -- we were happy to stay there. They cleaned our shoes, such as they were. I don't remember what kind of shoes I had and what clothes, but they -- they got us some clothes or they gave us theirs. I don't remember nothing about that. I was just so taken by their kindness. That was just -- it was like -- like you're a dream, you know, you're dreaming about this. And we stayed there for four or five days, and the Bacalls came back, and they found out that -- that we had arrived and they were not there and they were notified. They were not too happy about it and, of course, they also powerful people and they're also rich people, so they sent a chauffeur and -- to pick us up. And, you know, the Finklesteins and the Marcuses, they were so upset. And they -- they called somebody and they were trying to say -- and Mr. Bacall said -- you know, Mr. and Mrs. Bacall, these gorgeous-looking people, like something you see in the movies. And they said, "No, they -- they -- their parents said they come here. They come here." Mr. Bacall, Sr. had died in the interim. And they had the Ford agency still. And so, you know, money trumps a lot of things. We stayed in touch with the Finklesteins though and

the Marcuses. So they -- we stayed with the Bacalls for -- for several months. They were very kind and very loving, and I guess they bought us clothes. I don't know where the clothes came from, but we -- they weren't the rags that we came with. And it was a household where there was a maid and -- and a chauffeur and butler. So dinner was formal and -- and, you know, you rang the bell if you wanted something, even to make the butler come from a long ways so he open the bottle. And that -- we stayed there -- of course, when the Soviet occupied, reoccupied the Bukovina, the Bacalls lost their household help. Apparently, the -- the maid and the butler had been communists. I wonder why. And so they -- they quit. But before -- before this, the occupation, the reoccupation, was not -- was not seamless. The Soviets bombed the town and bombed -- it was a seder, I remember the seder, and there were people and it was an elegant sort of dinner. And we stayed -- we went on the balcony and looking over, and then the alarm had gone off for the bomb shelters, and there was a bomb shelter. But before we could -- could process it, a bomb had hit the house across the street. And by the time we got to the bomb shelter, the go-round, there were apparently a lot of victims. And my brother insisted on going to help care for the victims. The men went, you know, to help. And I think he was seeing the carnage, the blood and that kind of stuff, and he was severely affected by that. So anyway, we -- we stayed with the Bacalls. The Soviets occupied. And then my -- one day, my mother had notified them that they are planning to get us. And one day my mother just -- I could see her walking up. She had -- she had used an Army truck. She worked her way up on an Army truck, and that was -- by then, that was -- we had stayed with the Bacalls maybe six months already, five or six months. And we

went back. I don't know whether on a truck or a train. I was -- we were so deliriously happy, I don't remember. And we came home, and we didn't even know what -- what my parents found in Chernowitz. What they found was nothing. Our -- our home was stripped and our property was gone, and the apartment was -- somebody else was living in it. And like you didn't even want to start making demands. So -- but -- so what happened while we were gone is -- is a story unto itself. So my -- my parents were -- absolutely you hear the shooting, and my parents were obviously very frightened. Every -- the Glotters and the Steinvitzes, the other two families. So -- and Misha would come by or -- or the round guy, and say "It's okay." "Shooting." "Not shooting." "How? I don't hear any." Well, when the shooting stopped and when -- when Soviet Army had occupied -- reoccupied, Misha came in {Crying} to see my parents and the Glotters and the other people, and introduced himself as Moshe(ph) Wiseman, a Jewish colonel from Moscow, who -- who was a partisan. And all those shootings were the partisans who were blowing up the -- the rails. And -- and the round guy was a general. He was in charge of all the -- the -- the partisans in the Ukraine. But this gave him a good cover. You know, they -- and the reason he was wearing this round coat was he -- he was carrying a weapon, a long weapon. And he -- you know, they befriended the parents, my parents, and the other people and helped them leave, get transportation to go back to -- to Chernowitz. And -- and, you know, it -- it seemed like -- like my dad was saying. When Misha said he's Moshe Wiseman, a colonel, and that woman he said was a good cover and she knew that -- who he was and what he was doing. And this -- this guy, they spent time with him and, you know, it's like -- like a novel. So when we came home, you know,

my parents filled us in. And then my uncle, my mother's brother who had lived in Moghilev, he -- he had been badly beaten, but when the Russians came in they -- all men had to be conscripted. So they -- they found a job for him and -- but he was very sick. He -- they said he had a blood disease. We think he had leukemia. And he came to live with us. And we -- we had an empty two-room apartment and a kitchen, a small kitchen, I guess, and the -- the -- the uncle when he came to stay with us, we had -- I think we had cots that -- to sleep on, and I gave him my cot, or maybe my mother told me to give him my cot. And he -- he stayed with us for a few weeks, and he died in January 1945, the day after my birthday. And he was lucid. He was lucid at my birthday. Wasn't any -- anything done. I was nine, turning nine, and he -- but he told me I'm gonna grow up to be very beautiful, and I'm gonna be rich and educated. And I think that took a lot of imagination because this scrawny little girl -- I mean I never became rich but I'm -- I'm okay, you know. I'm -- I'm no threat to -- to the millionaires, to Gates, to Bill Gates, but -- so he died the next day. And I went to school. I don't -- there was no grade. I mean you just sort of went there and you learned Russian --

Q:How -- how old were you? How old were you at this point?

A:Nine.

Q:In Chernowitz?

A:In Chernowitz, yes. So the -- there were all sorts of ages. So -- because these were the return people and nobody had actually been schooled. So {Coughs} actually when I started, I think when I started school -- you know, I turned ten. And I don't remember where I learned it, asked me what I want to be when I grow up. I said I want to be an

architect. I knew no more about architecture than -- than the cat, but it sounded like a good thing to say. So I don't recall what we learned, but we -- we went -- there was someplace to go. And my brother had a different -- for just older kids, but the same thing. And -- but then he became -- my mother's sisters and Uncle Jupiter had gone to Romania. They didn't want to live under the Soviet rule. My dad had a job, I think again at the Meloche Trust, which is the -- the dairy trust. And -- but we didn't have very much of anything. So -- and we -- and my uncle persuaded us, persuaded my parents to come to Bucharest, to go to Bucharest. So that was another sort of using forged papers for -- so they used the -- the different birthdays, and that's how we got to be -- we came to Bucharest. I -- I remember I was in -- still in Chernowitz when the war ended in Europe May 8th, 1945, and there were thousands of thousands of people on the square in Chernowitz. And was a woman officer, you know, I never seen women in the Army, and she said, "This is a special day. Today we -- we celebrate probelov(ph), free -- freedom and peace. So that -- that was awesome. And we stayed in Chernowitz a few more months and then went to Bucharest. And I don't -- we -- we got to Bucharest, I think, on a train. But the -- the -- with the fear of the documents always. And it became now a fear of documents. We arrived in Bucharest in 19 -- sometime in 1945, and stayed there until 1946 when the -- when the -- or -- or later, maybe -- yeah, '46, late '46 when the Nazis -- when the Soviets were occupying -- you know, the king -- when the king was -- was being ousted, King Michael. It was becoming communist and it was gonna be communist, and Uncle Jupiter didn't want to stay there. And my -- my parents -- my parents -- an aunt and cousin were in Germany already, and they felt that we should leave

there because nothing good is gonna come. We should leave the area. So again, you sort of struggle and you -- you -- we lived in a one-room apartment or something in Bucharest, like a studio apartment. And you struggled to organize documents and visas and all this kind of stuff. {Coughs} -- and in 1946, we were leaving. We had a visa for Germany, and a pass-through visa to the other countries in between. My uncle couldn't get a visa, so he just contacted smugglers. There were always these smugglers and -- Uncle Jupiter. So he paid somebody a lot of money and they -- on the -- the Hungarian border was still the Hungarian border. So the smuggler took him to this little town waiting for the train, for a train, for the right conductor to be able to smuggle him over. Well, it took a couple weeks and he still hadn't gone. So he said he would send for the women, when -- his wife and my other aunt when -- when he's on the other side. But then it had become communist already and you couldn't leave. So -- but the women had become anxious, so they -- they contacted the smuggler who tried to talk them out of it. They also paid him a lot of money, and they left their -- their beautiful apartment, all their possessions, and he took them to -- to the border town. Now, these -- these people must have had a brain freeze, because in a -- in a little border town where everybody is -- is a peasant, and you see these beautiful two women, the one with the long blonde hair, you -- you immediately conclude that there is something going on. I mean so when -- when the smuggler -- the smuggler didn't want to take all three of them. They talked him into it. He put them on the -- on a locomotive or something, and of course they were all arrested, arrested and sent -- sentenced to prison for four years. But in the meantime, our -- we had these visas and we went. We left Romania and went, and I lived in Prague for a

while. We lived in Prague for several months. Don't know why. But we lived in Prague for several months in 1947. And after that, we -- we went to Munich. I stayed there until I came to the United States. And I had -- so I didn't go to school in Bucharest. I had learned -- had some tutoring, you know, volunteer tutors. But I learned -- I taught myself. I was reading and writing and stuff like that. And the same was in Prague. And then -- and when we came to Munich, where -- where did we fit in? We didn't really fit in any particular. There -- there was a school where, you know, we went every day and, you know, it was sort of teaching you life skills and stuff like that. Intellectually, we -- we were self-taught. And came to the United States at the end of 1951. So I -- when I say I grow up in Munich, I grew up basically there. And, you know, it was a lot of sort of empty time, a lot of -- grew up fast, dating, older people, you know, was kind of -- And my brother -- my brother went to Switzerland to study some kind of engineering, and he -- he came here two years after us. He stayed there until he finished his course, his studies, and came to the States in 1953. '52 maybe. Yeah, in '52. It was only a year and some months in the summer. And then he -- he went to college and -- oh, roll back. He was drafted, and he was drafted a few months later.

Q:By whom? By who? He was drafted by whom? By the -- who -- who drafted him?

A:The United States. He came on a green card and he was arrest -- he was drafted. He was drafted. He was multilingual, as I was. They didn't try _____ at the time. Don't have to now, I guess. So he was drafted. And the funny thing is my parents wanted to stay in Germany, wanted to stay in Europe. But they were concerned that my brother would have to serve in the German Army, or in the European Army. They didn't want

that. So lo and behold, we came to the United States. But once I got here, I had gotten used to it. And my brother, once he came on a green card, was drafted. So the -- but he was in basic training. The -- the colonel -- you know, my parents worried about him. I worried about him, too. Because, you know, in the basic training in the Army is a lot of Mickey Mouse stuff, clean your weapon, put it together, take it apart, make your bed, make -- shine your shoes. Well, we didn't think he knew how to do that. He's very smart and would become a very successful man, but these things are a skill unto itself. So the colonel one day heard him -- started talking to him and said to him "Where are you from and what language do you speak?" And he says, "Okay, you're my aide from now on. I want to learn French." So he eventually was sent to Europe. And I don't know if the colonel went, I don't recall, and he became part of the forerunner of the CIA. He was for the Army Intelligence. He was trained and they -- the Army Intelligence, he was -- he served the Army Intelligence. They gave him a different name. They put him in a private house -- they -- they rented a house for him in East Berlin. And he was a spy, basically, for -- for three years. And he -- they wanted -- tried to persuade him that he should -- he could be this, you know, he was done with the Army, that he should do this as a -- as a job, that he should become -- take this on. But we try to -- we talked him out of it eventually. But tried to explain to him, "Listen, they're not gonna send you to Paris, they're gonna send you to Africa or someplace." Well, anyway, he -- he went on to college and became a -- had a couple of degrees. And his job, his longest job, was for 35 years at the Rand Corporation, The Think Tank. He's very smart, and he's very good. And he died, unfortunately, 11-99. That's 14 years ago. So -- and I got married in 1952.

I'd been here just months, here in Buffalo, and had no particular schooling, self-taught, learned -- I learned English by myself, self-taught. And in -- in Germany, nobody learned English. The school we attended to periodically didn't teach English. They just sort of kept you off the street, I guess. And I -- I taught myself English. And I tell everybody the story that we lived in -- we had an apartment. We lived in an apartment and we had a maid, Anna Marie. {Coughs} -- my mother -- my mother took ill in camp and she never basically recovered. She had arthritis. And I think she was emotionally injured as well, but she had a severe arthritis. And, you know, the meds that you take for arthritis sort of harm you as well. But so in Munich, people hadn't seen African-Americans. And Anna Marie, the maid, was in the park and met a soldier that was African-American. So one day he came to see her. She told him she lives there. She didn't tell him she works there. So people saw him in the building. And oh, my God, what's gonna happen to us. And he came to our door and rang the doorbell. And I opened the door, and he said, "I would like to speak to Anna Marie." And since I spoke English, I could tell him she doesn't live here, she just works here, and she's not here. And spoke a few more words to him. Very nice. It was all very nice. He was a nice guy. But the -- the -- I was a star for the neighbors, because it was -- people were frightened. They had lived through the war and -- and this was a strange sort of person, you know, and they just didn't know what to make of it. And English was not spoken. Nobody spoke English. So it was -- made me a -- that was my good deed for -- for the week. So there were a lot -- a lot of Jews from Poland. My -- we -- my relatives that were in Munich, my cousin, a physician, well-known physician, had in the meantime gone to

New York, moved to New York, so we really didn't have anybody in Munich. So I mean my dad had a job. I don't know what -- how good a job it was. It may have been less than he's used to. And he provided for his family, I guess. And he -- so we also came to the United States, not only -- but primarily because my parents worried that Armon would have to serve in a German Army. So that's what brought me to the United States.

Q:What do you remember about how you and your family were received in the United States as refugees or as survivors?

A:In the United States?

Q:Uh-huh.

A:Sort of half let's not touch them and half like the circus puppy or the circus performer. Half let's stay away, they were. But that's not only in United States. That's Jews have done that, too. Jews that were not deported had the same attitude. And -- and I had come to understand -- to observe that later, that -- that, you know, that's them and that's us, and somehow they deserved being deported. It was on the merits, not just on -- on some crazed anti-Semite. It was on some merits. And that was one -- one part of it. And the other part of it was curiosity. Oh, you were in concentration -- you must -- and you look, you know, like everybody else, and so that -- that accounts for -- that sort of registered with me. That accounts for my never having wanted to talk about it, that I just didn't want -- I never -- I never did. My -- since I spend a lot of time in California. You know, Spielberg has a show. No, I didn't -- and my brother was married to -- his first wife was - her father was in the studio, a studio man, you know. And he -- he wanted me to -- my brother I mean absolutely would not, and thought well, maybe she's not as adamant. So I

-- I -- that was in part, I didn't want to. I mean there is -- there is a population that -- that chose to, and I give them credit that chose to. I know Gerda Klein. Gerda Klein lived in my neighborhood in Kenmore, New York. So it was -- it was -- I give her credit. It was courageous. It was -- well, I don't know about being courageous, but it was -- {Coughs} it was an affirmative thing to do. And it -- it brought attention to it, and she was okay with that, and her family was okay with that. In fact, my -- my former husband had a business with her husband, Mr. Klein, had a printing shop. And my former husband was in advertising and, you know, did that. And the Kleins had three children within the same town, so at some point somebody collides. But I think that the Kleins, as a model, were not as accepted as you would think. They were respected but not accepted. That's my interpretation. Just because -- you know, I -- some people don't see that distinction, perhaps. I'm a shrink besides having a law degree. So the -- I think you can be respected without being accepted. And I think the Kleins were respected but -- accepted means you're just a regular guy, you're a regular woman. That's acceptance. If you are singled out for something that you had no choice about, or you had a choice about, that -- and people give you credit for that, that's not accepted. That's respected. But accepted is all the people. So I -- I don't know if you see the distinction, but that's -- or you've ever noticed the distinction. But I -- so I -- I didn't put it forth that I am -- when people say to me "Where are you from?" Or you say more. In fact, I was a college professor at one time, and some of the students didn't -- you know, like they don't know accents. So they would say "Dr. Schafler, are you from New York?" {Laughter} "Or where are you from?" So, you know, I would say "Oh, I'm from some other place." I didn't want to go

into it. So the -- the -- I did not want to attract attention because of that. So, but I don't think that Jews were as forthcoming as all that. They were not forthcoming in many ways. And -- and the more you -- you look around, there were a lot of Jewish profiteers. I mean like -- like Mr. Jacobs was a profiteer in the sense that he earned money and he lived better and earned himself positions. And I was reading a book not long ago about the Wrightmans. I don't know if the family name strikes you, but the Wrightmans are billionaire developers. They have developed half of Toronto or three-quarters of Toronto. And they are Hungarian Jews, and they bought their way out when -- when Hungary was going -- they bought their way out and they went to Tangier. So they -- so that they wouldn't be considered profiteers. Oh, and they went into money laundering. That's profiteering. And there was so much money. There was no place to launder money other than in offshore. So they became very, very wealthy. So for -- for people that don't know, they said she -- that Mrs. Wrightman had a group of women and they were wrapping packages to send to the concentration camps. Now, that is the stupid -- the second stupidist thing I've ever heard. I can't think of the first. The idea that you can send packages to the -- to the concentration camp and they have mail call, and they say "Schmul Kahn(ph), there is a package for you." Are you kidding? So they -- and -- or -- or that the Nazis would have allowed packages to Dachau or Auschwitz or even Cariera de Piatra. That is too stupid. Oh, and -- and she -- they write -- probably self-written. I don't recall who wrote it. But they write that they -- they had difficulty sending them to the camps. They have to send them through Switzerland. And the packages had chocolate, coffee. Now, come on, give me a break. How ridiculous can you be? So the --

the -- they had dehumanized. They dehumanized the experience. If you think that -- that you can launder money for Nazis but you're sending chocolate -- chocolate to some camp somewhere, how dare you. So Jews did not -- did not do much, did not do much.

Q: When did you become interested in researching your own story and really piecing together your family history?

A: I -- I didn't -- I mean I know -- I knew some of it, you know, as I -- as I went along. I -- the -- the Schafler side of it was done by somebody else. When my brother died, the -- the rabbi said, "Schafler, are you related to my best friend Schafler who was a rabbi in -- in Toronto?" I said, "I don't know." And he showed me a picture, and he looked exactly like all the Schaflers. All the Schaflers are blonde, blonde, blue-eyed or green-eyed.

They have perfect features. They all look alike, you know. So I said well, this guy must be related to me because he looks like my dad. So anyway, he says, "Well, I'll -- I'll -- he died, but I'll contact his widow." And he contacted this widow, and she -- she lived in Boston at the time, and she had -- but they had lived in Canada before, and then he been a rabbi in Boston as well, and she had seven children. They're sort of all over Canada and -- and Israel and New York and whatnot. And she started researching the Schafler family, and she sent me -- she would keep me posted, and she would send me all kinds of stuff about it, and she'd send me -- she'd send me like a matrix outlining who went where and who did what. But then one day she called me and told me that she's not gonna do -- and she had gone to Israel and she talked to people and she went to Vishnitz. But one day she told me she's not gonna do that anymore because she's getting married {Laughter}. And she met this friend she -- who -- who died, and she met up -- she connected to her

husband and she is marrying this guy. So what I know is what I -- about the Schaflers is she did it. And I -- and I just have it. I benefited from it. As far as the Hollars, that's my mother's family, is what I know is just the one generation prior. I -- I don't know very much beyond that. But what have come to me, what I have -- I never thought much about it, many -- for many years, I ignored the -- it's been too painful to evaluate the Jewish contribution to the Holocaust and to the people that suffered. It's been too painful. But I have come to understand -- I don't understand it. I just notice it. The Jewish people had been conditioned by religion that, you know, do what you're told to do by authority. No way could -- could ten Nazis with ten guns shoot 6,000 people. No way. So if they would have shot 200 people, 300 people, fully 5,700 or 4,700, whatever the math is, would have been alive, and -- and they offered no resistance. My grandfather said "It's God's will we go" when they were ordered to -- to evacuate or get on the train. What I didn't -- what I didn't say is -- about what happened to the other people in Cariera de Piatra. The people were shot on the way. They were shot just going to -- on the way to Kiev. And those that survived {Coughs} were buried, were taken to Kiev, to Babi Yar. You've heard -- have you heard of Babi Yar? Yevtushenko's poem and stuff. I have a -- a picture I'll show you later. I went to Kiev to Babi Yar to see Babi Yar a few -- ten years ago. And Babi Yar was babi in Russian and Ukrainian means grandmother, and yar means a forest. But so this at the time was -- was outside of the city so they -- the Jews were dropped off there and told to dig graves and they were shot right into the graves. So nobody survived even for two days. That was the end of all the people at Cariera de Piatra is that they -- they were murdered there.

Q: And how did you learn about that, the fate of that particular transport? Did you learn about that much later?

A: Later. Later. Later. Later. Much later, yes, yes. We -- we didn't know. I -- I learned about it much later. And after Yevtushenko's poem, I wanted to go to -- to see it.

Because we -- we had so many birthdates, my parents -- when my parents were alive, they were very worried about that, that -- that somebody will find out. They had been intimidated by -- by Nazis and stuff. And -- and they -- they had trouble coping with me because -- and so had my brother, by the way. And the interesting part is that he -- he had high security when he worked for the -- for the REC and they never discovered that. And -- and he had a different name. Armon. He was using the same initials, Armon, and I can't remember what last name they had given him, but Armon Schafler was his name. So -- but -- so my -- when my parents were alive, they were always worried that somebody is gonna find out. What are they gonna do? Where are they gonna send me? You know {Coughs}. But -- but I didn't want to worry them, like why would I -- and I -- my -- so I -- I tell people when I was born, you know. And it does not coincide with the - - with my documents. So my parents knew that I am doing that. Now, I married the second time. I had divorced and married in Mexico, because it's difficult to divorce in -- in New York State at the time at least. So I {Coughs} need to take some water. I -- we arranged that we would -- I would get divorced in Mexico. That used to be the divorce capitol of the world, in Juarez. And we'd get married ten minutes later. My -- I married, my husband was an attorney, and -- but my parents was worried about that, that transaction. So -- and we flew right away to California. So on the airport, just getting off

the plane, my mother said, "Does he know your birthdate?" {Laughing} The big secret. The big secret. So when my parents were alive, I mean this was -- this was one of my instances when my parents were alive. I didn't want to cause them grief, you know, to -- to travel, so my -- my passport said born in '81 -- '31 or whatever. And did not want to -- but -- but they worried about me going to Russia or the Ukraine. They worried about that {Coughs} so I did not do that. But after they died, I did, and that's what took me -- you know, nobody cares, I don't think they cared, but my parents cared. And -- and I went to Kiev and I went to Babi Yar. And Babi Yar has now the -- the City of Kiev had grown around it, so it's now just a -- like a park. This is a park and it has that -- that statute on it, and I photographed it. But most people don't know about Babi Yar and stuff like that so - - But anyway, I went to Moscow, and nobody -- oh, and when I was in Moscow, somebody lost my passport, and {Coughs} -- I -- I didn't think for a second that -- that it was -- had anything to do with -- with the false papers they got out of the Soviet occupied. But at the same time, a little bit, you think about it. So that -- that fear is {Coughs} -- and I have my driver's license -- my driver's license, if you were to take our driver's licenses, my brother's and me were twins. So my brother never told his wife. He had been married for 27 years to this -- this woman, and he never told her about that. So earlier this year, I went to California and she had -- she had made some reservation for me, and she says, "Well, give me your -- your birthdate as it's written on the -- on your driver's license." So I told her. She said, "Oh, my God, that's my brother -- my husband's." I said, "You're right, it is." So you can change it and it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. But the fear is there and, you know, when I would say "Mom, where are

they gonna send me? I'm stateless. I'm an American citizen. Where are they gonna send me?" And maybe I'd like it if they do. So the -- the fear. And -- and I think there is a Jewish fear. There is a inherent fear. Maybe -- maybe it's just the generation that experienced Naziism. Maybe it's still -- although the Jewish paper, somebody sent me this article from the -- the D.C. Jewish paper that it said Jews have no opinion about some political thing. Like why should they have an opinion? I mean Americans should have an opinion. Why should they have an opinion? So maybe -- maybe it's not as homogenized yet as I think, that that fear has -- has been left. But then Jews don't speak out about -- about Jewish slight. Jews were silent in the '30s. Business was good, especially in the United States. It was after the Depression. And they were selling arms, and they didn't want to rock the boat. So they were silent. I mean having a demonstration in -- in New York City is not enough, so -- but this has come to me later. When I married my first husband, he -- he was a staunch -- talked about Roosevelt, his whole family. And Roosevelt sat with his lover he had in Bethesda. You know, you probably heard that he had on the corner, like the second corner of Connecticut Avenue, there is a house on the hill and he used to go there every afternoon to meet his lover. And -- and Jews didn't -- were not an issue. Jewish blood being wasted was not an issue. So that had come to me later when I -- when I started looking at it. And for me that's what I like about Israel. They're pugnacious and they -- they -- in a way they are like a four-year-old who's pugnacious but dependent at the same time. Israel is dependent on the Western World. But at the same time, they're pugnacious, and they -- "Hey, I don't like

this crap, yeah? I don't -- I'm not gonna take this." So -- but that has come to me much later. The fear of being Jewish has -- had persisted for a while.

Q: So why did you decide to tell your story now? Why did you decide to tell your story now?

A: Well, first of all, because I -- I no longer feel constraint by -- by my constraints. As I mentioned to you, when -- when the man spoke, and you can probably look it up in the -- who he was and -- look it up in the calendars, you know, I thought I'm not doing that, you know. I'm not looking at -- and, you know, all the people in California, I didn't want to have anything to do with it. But -- but I -- maybe it's an empowerment. I have empowered myself. This happened to -- to me despite what I thought, despite me being innocent, and now I can tell you about it and you didn't help me. You did nothing about it. The -- the people that we thought were -- we were helped by the people that we thought were victimizing us. The camp commander who hid, who said, "I saved as many of you as I could", and he didn't steal the money, he didn't -- he didn't bribe himself. He had the opportunity. And -- and the -- and Misha and the -- we never -- didn't know his name, the round guy, is {Coughs} that used to give us food and say "Don't worry about that, just hang in." Just -- just -- or some days when there was a lot of shooting, he'd say, "Today is not a good day you should look out", you know, or something like that. But he'd come by almost every day. I can't remember a day that he didn't. So these are the people that helped us that we thought were our -- our enemies, our -- that betrayed us. They didn't betray us. They did what they could to survive themselves. And in a way -- in the -- on the way of helping themselves, they helped others. This is a huge risk for the

camp commander to hide 400 Jews. This is a huge risk {Coughs}. And -- and to sort of minimize it, and probably he was scared stiff, but he said, "Oh, there's nothing there, just old stuff." So this is why I -- I feel empowered now. I got it. What I didn't get before, I got it now. And I think it's a -- it's a moving story to tell. It's -- it's -- this kid that didn't have any schooling went on to -- I started -- I took a course in college in interior decorating. That's what you did in the '50s, you decorated your house. And _____+ went on would take maybe something else similar. But later I -- I heard -- I took a psychology class, and I was so enthralled by what the professor had to say that this was my -- going to be my life-long quest to study. So I went on and I -- I have a BA. I went on for a Master's, and I have a Ph.D. I have been in school for, I don't know -- in college, not -- actually for 20 years, yeah, and then I went for my law degree. I had -- I had 20 years of college and no nothing. And when I started college, you still had to take gym. So I had to get special permission, I do not take gym. And golf didn't count. I used to play golf a little bit. That didn't count. I used to take ballet lessons for a long time. That didn't count. Had to be gym, and I'm not sure what it had to be. I was just -- you know, I was way beyond that. So -- so I have come a long way, I think. I didn't become rich, you know. I modeled in between. I have modeled for artists, for photography, you know, kind of stuff. I was a college professor. I had my own psychotherapy practice and my own office. Self-made. In fact, my daughter, my children, are highly educated. My daughter is a physician. She's a distinguished physician. She was a rogue scholar and she -- they both went to Ivy League schools. And she was a professor at Penn. Now she's a big wheel in a drug company in -- drug company -- pharma company, Merck.

And my son is a lawyer. He went to Columbia Law School. And Ginsburg was his professor, Justice Ginsburg. So -- and even the next generation, the grandchildren, three of them at Cornell and one at Williams. How -- how better can it get? So -- so it -- it can be done, and I did it. So now I -- I feel no -- no constraints. I -- if I'm not accepted, I don't care. I mean I might be respected, but I don't know that any -- any concentration camp victims are accepted. I don't know that. I have not seen any evidence of that. I think that even those that have reached fame or wealth are sort of more like the circus entertainer than just -- just an ordinary person. But that's my own view of that. Elie Wiesel is somebody who comes to mind. I mean he's not -- he's admired but he's not -- and respected but he's not accepted, you know. I mean he's not a regular guy, you know. To -- to be accepted, you have to -- you can be respected and be a regular guy, and he's not respected as a regular guy. So -- but I don't care now, you know. I have accomplished a lot. And those that don't want to accept me, go away.

Q:Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

A:I -- nothing that, you know, I haven't -- I'm trying to think what I wanted to tell about the camp story that I omitted. That to -- to illustrate the accept -- I felt as a child the acceptance versus the kindness. And as I told you before -- and I think you may want to -
- to make a point of that, that -- I told you that the Bacalls were not there when we were, and there were the Finklesteins. They -- they accepted us, you know. They -- they didn't do their duty to -- to some unknown whatever. They accepted us. We were children, and they -- we were special. And the way they treated us, you know, sort of -- we were dirty, I'm sure we were, and they -- they put us in their beds and they cleaned our clothes and

they watched us sleep. That's acceptance. And -- and -- and they were poor but they fought for us, to keep us. They were not poor -- I mean poor, I'm using it in relation to -- but they were not wealthy. And two more mouths to feed, I don't know that it was easy. But they were -- they were -- they wanted to share because they -- they accepted us. So not a big -- the Bacalls were wonderful and all their friends. They had parties and physician there, and he used to examine us and he was their close friend. And they were wonderful. But then they were rich. And the maid did most of it, and the chauffeur did the rest of it, so they -- it's easier kind of thing. It was not -- they -- I don't think they accepted us. They sort of a "noblesse oblige", if you know anything in French, that so -- that kind of thing. And I think that -- that the acceptance for minorities in general is just not what it should be. It should -- just not what it should be. I mean when -- when I came to this country, I thought being Jewish, being a Holocaust survivor, is like being, you know, a toddler, you grow up and you move on, but it isn't. Nobody -- you're not treated like that. So therefore, you internalize that you're not treated like that. We also thought that, you know, we -- we fought for the '60s and all the marches and stuff and we thought well, equality for -- for African-Americans, for black people would come. And then you would just think well, this is another woman and she's great or she's awful or just another guy and he's great or he's -- didn't happen. It didn't happen. The -- so this is one of the reasons that I decided now to -- she's the one that is the survivor. I mean when -- when -- when Madoffs, the people that gave the money, you know -- you know, we all -- you probably know, you saw the list, I'm sure you saw the list, you -- you think -- you thought to yourself how could people that have that much money be so stupid? How

could they not know what goes on? How could they not know that -- that when everybody else pays 3 percent and somebody pays 10 percent that is illegal or -- or fraud. But people looked at Wiesel, especially, Elie Wiesel, and thought how could he do that? I'm sure you know he lost a lot of money. And he said he didn't want to talk about it. He feels that. He feels that his -- his -- his burden is -- is higher than someone else's burden. You know, somebody else had lost that much money. A lot of people spoke out. He never spoke out, because he feels that -- that he's not accepted, and for him would just be another piece of evidence not to accept him. No, another reason not to accept him. I had -- I had wonderful childhood, you know, wonderful childhood. That's not true. I had wonderful childhood until -- until -- but I had like Ruth, I had very good parents, wonderful parents, although they were more conservative and fearful as they got older and fearful because of what they went through. They were -- they were just -- we were their priority, and if we -- they didn't give us food when we were in camp was because there was none. And we didn't have to ask and say "How come we're not eating?" If it would have been possible to get food, they would have gotten it. So -- so this kind of total devotion. And I remember my -- when we came back from Botoshan and we were walking down the street and we saw my dad come walking, {Coughs} coming towards us, and he hugged me and he said, "You came back to your poor old father." And I'm thinking to myself how could he doubt it? How could he doubt that we would come back? You would make a choice you left luxury and you came to your poor -- poor old, poor father. How could he doubt that? That he -- they were very loving kind of -- if not dad -- my dad was more affectionate than my mother, but both of them had the priorities

taking care of the children. So -- so this -- this kind of thing gives you a basis. I didn't have to worry about that they would not protect my interests. So -- so you take this basis with you into life, this early -- or this -- this approval, you know. I had come to -- to -- to -- when you go through marriages and stuff like that, and you realize that only good parents love you. Everybody else has a motive, wants you to love them back, wants to be married to you, uh, whatever. But only loving parents love you because they -- they wanted to have children and they -- they -- they feel the responsibility to do the best by you. And when they led us -- they sent us away, they wanted us to survive. If they couldn't assure their survival, they wanted someone else to -- they wanted us to survive. So anyway -- yeah, I can think of -- the woman in Ruth, she -- she talks about -- I don't know if you are familiar with the book, but she talks about hers was a more modest. They were sort of hand to mouth kind of people. And so any -- any bit of deviancy in life affected them immediately {Coughs}. So different experiences may have made her different -- her attitude different. That's all I have to say.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time.

Conclusion of Interview