Rolling. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Elisabeth Weinberger on June 28, 2018 in Lawrence, New York. Thank you very much, Mrs. Weinberger, for agreeing to speak with us today.

Thank you for being here.

Well, I know that sometimes it's not easy to go back to the memories one has from a very traumatic, bad time. And we appreciate that you're willing to do so.

And I'd like to start our interview with the times before they got bad, that is, the early years of your childhood. I'd like to learn as much as I could about what your life was like and what your family's life was like. So I'll start with basic questions.

OK.

And we go from there.

OK.

OK. Tell me, what was your name when you were born?

Elizabeth Heller.

Heller?

Yes. H-E-L-L-E-R.

OK. And what was the date of your birth?

March 30, 1931.

OK. And where were you born?

I was born in Antwerp, Belgium.

Aha. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes. I had a sister, a younger sister.

And what was her name?

Her name was Rosa.

And when was she born?

She was born in February 9, 1933.

OK. Can we cut the camera?

Rolling.

OK.

And what was your mother's name?

My mother's name was Helena.

What was her maiden name?

Her maiden name was Friedman.

Friedman?

Yes.

Do you know about when she was born?

She was born in 1909, on April 15, 1909.

In Antwerp as well?

No, no. She was born in Czechoslovakia.

Do you know where in Czechoslovakia?

It was called-- a small, small town also, it was called Ohrobec. But it's next to a bigger town, which was [? Serles. ?]

[? Serles? ?]

[? Serles, ?] yeah.

That sounds Hungarian almost.

Yeah. Also because it was also Czechoslovakia. But they were also close to the borders over there. So it's a little bit further than where my husband comes from.

OK. And did you ever visit that place as a little girl?

I went there in 1936, when I was five years old and my sister Rosa was three. Because my mother-- it was 1936, because my mother wanted to go back home to see her father, her older father. And then we should go back to where my father was born also.

So at first we went to my mother's house where she was born. And we visited the grandfather, my grandfather.

What about your grandmother?

My grandmother, unfortunately, died in childbirth when my mother was two years old. So she was a little girl. And then the father, they got married. So she had a stepmother, a very, very much of a stepmother like they have in the stories.

Oh, one of "those" stepmothers.

Yes.

Oh, gosh.

Real, really bad. So she used to take it out on my mother, who was the youngest, and pinch her and make her life a little miserable.

Did your mother have brothers and sisters?

Yes, she did. She had a sister who was in the United States that came before the war. And her name was

Bertha, Aunt Bertha.

And then she had another sister which I never met, then, I think. And a brother-- two brothers, but I don't remember them very clearly, because I was five years old. But I remember seeing them.

Was the stepmother alive when you visited them?

No. I didn't meet her. No.

OK. But your grandfather was alive when you met--

Yes. Yes.

And what was his name?

Well, I only know the Jewish name was Shia.

Shia?

Yeah.

OK. And was this the one and only time that you met him, when you were there at age five?

Yes.

How is it that your mother came from this small place in Czechoslovakia to Antwerp?

You know what, because of her childhood. She didn't have such a great childhood when she was little. Like I told you, her stepmother was a mean lady. I hate to say it.

So she went from aunt to aunt somehow because she didn't want to stay there. So she was not always happy where she was. And because the aunts were not the direct women-- it was their husbands who were the relatives, so they were not that nice to her, either. So because she was a little girl and, like, a half orphan.

So anyway, it was not easy for her. But she was the type of person who was very smart and very-- how do you put it-- not only smart, but street smart, too.

She was resourceful.

Pardon me? Very resourceful and very bright. As a matter of fact, they gave her a nickname when was very little, the little lawyer.

Really? Good for her. She needed it.

Yes. She did. She needed all the help she could get. Because they took advantage of her. So she wanted to go more to school. And the stepmother announced-- they said, no, you have to take care of the geese.

But she was very smart. So it didn't harm her not to have this too much schooling. And I guess her stepmother was in charge of the children, so she was the one that was with her most of the time.

But when we went back, it was a bittersweet trip. Because my mother wanted to see her father and her siblings that were still there. But we were very happy to be there, because it was a completely different life there.

Tell me.

Yeah.

Well, what did it look like.

We come from a big city. I was born in a big city. And there, they had outside. They did barbecue corn and all kinds of different things.

You know what I mean? It's a rural life. And they had fun. But we liked it. And everybody spoiled us.

[LAUGHING]

And because they don't see us. They never see us. They never saw us before that.

Did her father have a farm or did her father live in a town?

That was not my father's family. it was my mother's.

No, no, her father.

Oh, her father? No, it was a town. It's a small town.

A small town?

Yes, a small town.

How did he make his living?

You know what? I'm not too sure.

OK. So I can't tell you, really. Because at that time, I didn't even talk too much about it.

The problem is that I can't even ask my sister, but she wouldn't know, either. She was younger than I was. So I don't know what really he did. He was a very bright man, but I'm not sure. So I don't want to tell you something that I'm not sure of.

Do you know how she got from there to Antwerp?

Yes.

How did she get--

She got there because she wanted to get away. So somehow, I don't know how she did it, but she got some people that she knew. And she tried and she went with someone.

And she arrived-- because she had heard that Belgium is a very good country for-- she liked to sew. So she said she'll go there and she'll be on her own and make her new life there. Because she wasn't happy with her home life at that time.

And so I don't know. Some people helped her on the way and she somehow made it. I told you she was very smart, very streetwise, and very, very lovable.

She was very good. Everybody liked her, except the stepmother. And so she made it to Belgium and Antwerp.

Would this have been after World War I? Well, she was 16 when she left.

And she was born, again, tell me-- you told me.

1909.

OK. So it was 1925. She left in 1925.

Probably, yes. So she got there. And there, she somehow had some connections. I don't know how she did it. In French, they said débrouillard That means, like, resourceful.

OK.

So she knew people and people liked her. She was good. So she found a family that she went and lived in their room by them, a Jewish family. And that's where she stayed. And that's how she got there to Belgium.

But my father also was not from there. He was from Slovakia. And that was a different region. And he was born in a small town called Nizny Svidník, which is next to what my husband said, Presov--

OK.

--in Slovokia. Nizny Svidník.

Nizny Svidník. It's not easy to--

Let me see if I can say it again. Nizny--

Nizny Svidník.

Svidník.

Yeah.

Nizny Svidník.

Svidník, yeah.

OK. We got it.

Yes. So he was there. And I don't know how many siblings he had. He had brothers.

Was he the youngest, the oldest?

My father was one of the youngest also.

OK.

So he was one of the youngest. And he had three brothers in the United States that came before the war.

OK.

Yeah.

And what was your father's first name?

His first name was really Pinkas.

Pinkas?

"Peen-kaz, they'd call him. But they called him Paul-- "Pauly" in the Czech and the Hungarian way. So,

Heller.

OK. And when was he born?

He was born in 1907.

So he was a few years older than your mother?

Just two years older.

OK.

Yeah.

And so was Pinkas--

His birthday was September 10, 1907.

September 10, 1907. And your mother's birthday was in 1909?

Yes. April 15.

April 15.

Yes.

And she was born Friedman?

Yes. And her first name, again, was Helena.

Helena, of course. Helena. Helena Friedman and Pinkas Heller.

Yeah.

And how did they meet? Did they ever tell you?

They met in Antwerp. Because he came out also at 18. He went to Antwerp, too. He wanted to be there and to have a trade there and have more opportunities.

So he came to Antwerp. And because Antwerp was the big diamond center of those days, the biggest one.

So he got a job in the diamond center as a diamond cutter.

Oh, you have to be quite skilled to do that.

Yes. He was very skilled. I guess he learned a lot on the job, too. But that's what he did.

OK. So your mother and father met how?

I don't know exactly. Because I don't know exactly. But they were very much in love.

And she was 16 and he was 18. But I think they met maybe a little later than that. And I don't know the details of their meeting.

But they had a lot in common. They're both from the same part of the world.

Yes.

Even if their towns aren't that close, they're still within Czechoslovakia.

Yes, yes, yes, yes. So they did. And I guess through people, their friends and all that. I have a wedding picture of them.

Do you?

Yeah. In the other room. But because we wouldn't have had any pictures-- because we didn't have it. We didn't bring any pictures. We didn't have any pictures.

But we had sent-- they always sent pictures to the United States to their family, everybody did. So my Aunt Bertha, my mother's sister that was in the United States, she always had pictures from when they sent her. So that's when we had most of the pictures from after the war.

OK. So that's how you were able--

'Cause during the war we didn't have anything.

--get them again.

Pardon me?

That's how you were able to get them again. You know? Because people lost everything.

Yes. And that's what we have some of the memories and pictures.

So let's talk a little bit about your first memories in Antwerp? Do you have any as a small toddler or as a child that come to your mind?

Yeah. One of them is not a good memory I remember. But I had wonderful memories after. But that one memory, when I must have been very young-- maybe two. It was preschool or something. And I remember going with a group of the children. I was very little.

And all of a sudden, I see that nobody else in line-- they left me out in the hall. So that was by accident, I'm sure. But I didn't go into the class with the other children. And all of a sudden, I see that I'm all alone and nobody's coming for me.

So I started to cry. I remember this. I remember crying and crying and crying. Because I was very fearful and afraid. And finally, somebody came to get-- but it's a weird memory. I must have been very young.

But it must have been very frightening and unexpected?

Yes. Because left alone someplace in the hall somewhere.

Yeah. Yeah.

But that's the first memory I remember, really.

So that's within a school?

Yeah.

That's not at home?

No.

Do you have any memories from your home life?

Well, my home life was wonderful.

Tell me about it.

Home life was wonderful. We had wonderful parents, wonderful father, wonderful mother-- very caring, especially my mother, because she had didn't have her own mother. So she was extremely, extremely loving and dedicated to the children. And she was a wonderful person, I told you, in general, everything. Everybody loved my mother.

Hm. Was she more outgoing than your father was?

More?

Outgoing.

Yes. She was very outgoing, very outgoing. And my father was also, but not as much as my mother. No, she was very friendly, very sociable. And she sang all the time and she laughed. And she has a very good personality.

Your father, did he have any brothers and sisters who lived with him or lived in Antwerp as well?

Yes. There was one brother that lived in Antwerp, and maybe another one for a little while. But three of them, I told you, were in the United States of America. They came here, three brothers. And one brother, two maybe-- was in Antwerp also. But I don't remember him well at all.

So you don't remember visiting him much?

No.

OK. Did your parents have a wide social circle in Antwerp?

Yes. They were going everywhere. They were very popular. And we had a very nice-- they had a very nice life. My father went to a synagogue, you know. And they were modern Orthodox.

Modern Orthodox?

Modern. Yeah, modern. Because they my mother didn't have a wig. And my father didn't have a beard. But it was orthodox, but not with the beard and the wig that they were wearing in those days.

So in other words, they had apparel that looked like everybody else's clothes?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

They wore clothes like everyone else did?

Yeah. Sure, sure. Yes.

And there was nothing from their appearance outward that would signify that they belonged to an orthodox sect?

Except my father liked to wear a hat. He was a dapper dresser.

Was he?

And my mother liked to dress, too. So he wore a hat.

I'll show you a picture of him. There may be some in the album. I don't know if it's that one. So they were both very modern dressing and modern in their ways-- except that they were kosher, of course, and they belonged to the synagogue. And all the holidays were kept strictly and all that.

Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

Yeah. It was a Jewish neighborhood, except we had a Christian neighbor, too. I remember them, too. Not too well, but I remember them.

Now did you live in an apartment or a house?

A house, it was a house. It was a two story or three story. But the upper part of the story, I think they rented out. But the rest was ours.

OK. And was it a stone house or a wooden house?

No. It was a city, so it was a stone house. It was a very nice street. You know, paved, nice, modern street.

And it was a nice house and beautiful. The entrance had beautiful, wide steps, wide steps going out. I remember that very well. And beautiful furniture, we had nice furniture. They liked nice things. My mother liked nice things, my father.

And they lived not very-- I mean, my father made a nice living. But they didn't live like very wealthy people, but very, very nice and comfortable.

OK. So it was sort of like a solid middle class family?

Yes. Very nice, very nice.

Well, tell me, in that kind of frame, or that kind of category, let's talk in the same way or ask the same questions that I had asked your husband in his interview, your husband Nathan Weinberger. Did you have indoor plumbing in your home? Indoor plumbing, running water.

Yes, we did.

OK. Running water, bath?

We had to call it-- at that time, called weight-save. They had that thing with the pull, the chain.

OK. You had a water closet, I guess--

Yes.

--a WC.

Yes, a water closet.

OK. I'm not sure about a bathtub. I don't remember, not a bathtub. But we probably had some kind of shower, something. But we had the toilet with a chain on it.

Did you have electricity?

Yes.

How was the place heated?

I don't know if I paid attention. I don't know if it was heated. I don't remember a wood stove or anything.

Do you remember a coal oven?

We had a stove. I remember that. But I don't-- maybe they put coal in it, but not wood.

What often happened in city dwellings at that time is that there'd be these beautifully decorated ovens called-- that were coal ovens.

Yeah, probably it was coal oven. And they would be in one room or there'd be one per room. And they had nice tiles. Do you remember anything like that?

Not by the tiles-- I remember the top. It was very nice and white. And it was a nice stove.

OK. And it was only in the kitchen. We had it in the kitchen.

OK. OK.

Did you have a radio?

I think they had a radio later on. Yeah. Because they were listening at one time to the news when the war was going on.

I was going to--

So they listened to a radio.

Yeah. Did your father-- how did he get to work?

He didn't have a car.

That was my question. So I don't really-- probably transportation, public transportation. But I really don't know. I don't remember, I have to tell you. I'm ashamed.

That's OK.

But I don't remember.

Yeah. Did you ever visit him at work?

I think once we went there. Yes. We did go. Because my sister went too close to their cutting machine, to the thing. And her hair got caught in the thing. That I remember clearly, in the back. She went too close to the--

She was curious?

Yeah. She was. So her hair got caught, the hair on the back.

So it was like a little traumatic experience. But it was OK. She didn't get hurt. But this I remember.

OK.

But it was very hard to cut the diamond. It had to be very, very, very precise. And he had the loop, you know, and all these things.

He must have had magnifying looks.

I don't know what they had-- loops. And it's very tedious. Because they had-- I don't know how many facets are to a diamond. But there were so many. And each one had to be cut separately and perfectly.

That takes--

A lot of skill.

Yeah.

So we did go to visit him. And maybe more than that one time. But I don't know how he got to work. I really don't know. But they used to have tramways, too, that could have been there. You know, on the--

Sure.

--streetcar.

Yeah. Yeah.

Did your mother, after you and your sister were born, did she still work? Or did she stay at home to take care of you?

She stayed at home. Take care, but she did some sewing.

OK. Was she a good sewer?

Yes. A very good sewer.

Did she make your clothes?

Yes.

And your sister's?

Yes. But sometimes we went to the stores, too. Because they had beautiful stores.

And one beautiful street in Antwerp was called De Keyserlei. Why I remember that, I don't know. That's, like, Main Street. You know, like Fifth Avenue or something.

So she used to go in there and copy from the window, you know, things, and then make it for us.

Oh, wow.

Yeah.

Oh, wow.

She was talented.

And so you remember accompanying her to see some of these stores?

Yes. Sure, we walked in the stores on that street. Yes. So we have only really good memories from our home life all the time.

And did she have any help at home, like someone helping her with the cleaning?

No. She did everything herself.

She did everything herself?

Everything she did herself.

OK.

She baked. And she cooked. And she was a terrific cook. And baked, I remember her making the strudel. Do you know what that is?

Oh, yeah.

On the table-- isn't that funny, memories like that? She was stretching the dough, you know, to thin, thin, thin dough. You know? And then fill it with the fillings with the nuts and the--

Apples?

--apples, yeah. And then rolling the thing and the cutting it. She was a very wonderful cook, really, and a good baker. And she was-- in every way, she was.

Did you help her in the kitchen? Or were you too little too help?

We were too little. And then I think she wouldn't want us to help.

[LAUGHING]

Yeah. But it's interesting the things that you remember in your mind's eye.

Yeah.

You know?

I remember the kitchen. I remember that we were-- and Belgium's-- it's the home for chocolate, you know?

Yes.

Good chocolate.

Oh, yes.

--best chocolate. So we like chocolate, of course. So my sister was the curious one. I remember this so clear-- I don't know why-- in the kitchen, stepping on some chair or something to go reach the chocolate and find it. And she found it.

She did?

This is a picture that I have of her. She was little, yeah. And she got the chocolate.

But in Belgium, they ate chocolate, sometimes even, like, a snack, they put it on the bread, you know, like the--

Oh, really?

--and butter and chocolate. You know, chocolate pieces, you know, like--

That's some snack.

It's a good snack.

[LAUGHING]

I remember this snack. And we loved it. My sister was the one that was more-- get more into mischief.

Oh, I see.

Were you, in your personality, were you more the reserved one or the one who was obedient?

I was obedient. I was, yes, I was obedient, more obedient than my sister.

But were you a pair, then? Were you one another's best friend?

Yeah. We did everything together.

OK.

We were friends. We were growing-- we had a nice garden in the back of the house.

Did you have any pets?

No pets, I don't remember any pets. No. No pets.

What did your street look like? Was it residential?

My street was a street-- to me, it seemed like it's a big street. When my sister went back to Belgium, after the war, with her son, to show her where we had lived. And she says, oh, my God. I thought it was such a big street. And it's a small, not too big-- narrow, with its two sidewalks on each side. And to her, it looked like a little, little street.

Well, it shrunk.

Yeah. It shrunk.

[LAUGHING]

When you get older, it shrinks. But we had a wonderful, wonderful area. Because on our street, going across it from the end of the street was the school where we went to.

And that was called-- the public school, the elementary school-- so that's what's called Bais Yaakov. But this was also modern. It was a girls school, for girls, a Jewish school.

Bais Yaakov?

Yes.

But it was a public school?

No, that was a private school.

It was a private school.

It was a private school.

Did you go there?

Yes. We both went there.

OK. OK. And what was your neighborhood called? Did you have a name for what part of Antwerp you lived in?

No. I just know the name of the street.

What was the name of the street?

[NON-ENGLISH] Rosebrook Straat.

[NON-ENGLISH] Rosebrook Straat.

That was Flemish.

Aha.

Because in Belgium, there are two languages, bilingual. The one language was Flemish and the other was French.

Which did you speak at home?

We spoke mainly Flemish, Yiddish, and tried to understand what my parents were talking in Hungarian. So I should know what it is. And I did pick up, because I liked languages. So after a while, I knew what they were talking about.

But most of the time we spoke-- the language of Antwerp was more Flemish.

[NON-ENGLISH]. It was called in French.

OK.

French I learned later when-- well, I'll tell you the story. We fled from Belgium to France. It's a complicated--

So at home, it was Flemish? Well, that makes sense, because that would be closer to Yiddish than French would be.

Right. Right. Right.

And your parents spoke Hungarian to each other?

Hungarian to each other and Yiddish.

OK.

And in Flemish, because they were in the country, you know.

Was the house in a residential area or downtown?

Where we lived was residential.

It was residential. So was it a suburban area type of thing, far from the city center, or close to it?

I don't know. I don't remember too well. I was never good in directions, still not, no sense of direction too much.

That's OK.

But to us, it seemed wonderful. Everything was wonderful.

Did you have only your mother take care of you, or was there anybody else who helped her out?

No. She took care of us all the time.

OK.

And my father came home at night after work. And he spoiled us when he came. He brought us all kinds of goodies, you know. But we also went, in the summertime, there was a beach area. And it was called-- I forgot the name but two of them. It was-- I can't remember right now.

So we went there, too. So we had a nice time there because we were by the beach. And--

It was by the ocean?

Antwerp is a port. But I don't know which ocean it was at that time. It probably must have been the north-- what do you call it? North Sea? I don't know for sure. No.

It was on the Belgian coast? Was it within the country?

Yes, yes, yes, yes, the Belgian coast. And like I said, my sense of direction, at that time, I didn't pay that much attention. I just knew that when we were going out in the street in front of the house, we used to have a scooter, not a bicycle. A scooter that we did scoot it with the feet, you know? That's what we used to call it, [NON-ENGLISH].

[NON-ENGLISH].

[NON-ENGLISH]. It's funny that you remember some things like that.

Yeah. But that comes back to you. You know? Did you play with neighborhood kids?

Yeah. We played with neighborhood kids.

And most of them were Jewish?

No. It was very mixed.

It was mixed.

Our next door neighbor was not Jewish. That I know.

OK. And did you have non-Jewish friends then?

Not out of the school. Because when we went to school, those were our friends, whoever went to the same school, even if they didn't live right there. But those were our friends, yeah.

Yeah.

That's what I remember.

What kind of memories do you have of school?

Good memories. I have good memories, yeah. It was very nice. I remember-- I don't remember the teachers' names.

But I remember what was on the walls, all the pictures, you know? They had animals and all sorts of nice-- I

remember the wall picture. I remember especially one was for A, was off-- you know, monkey?

But they were very nice. The teachers were very, very lovely.

Did you have a favorite teacher?

I wouldn't remember her from that time. Because I was there only till I was 9 years old, just 9.

OK. And so that would have made third grade or fourth grade, or third class or fourth class?

I have no idea. I know that we went there as children, too, like preschool, too. And then, I don't know.

Do you know what age you started school?

I don't know, probably five--

OK.

--six.

OK. So that would have been 1935, 1936, something like that?

Yeah. 1936, we already went to-- I told you-- to Czechoslovakia. So that I remember. We went to Czechoslovakia. With my mother.

Yeah. You mentioned that you stopped to see your grandfather. Now did he look more traditional orthodox, or was he also modern dressed?

No. He was more traditional.

OK. And did you then say you went to visit your father's family?

Yes. And he also had a beard.

OK.

And my grandmother had a sheitel, a wig. So they were very wonderful people, too, my father's parents.

Yeah?

Yeah.

And had any of their children stayed in the same place with them in-- what was it, "Novy Svedík" or something? You said that he--

Nizny Svidník.

"Nizny Svid--"

Yeah.

Yeah.

[LAUGHING]

Did any of their kids stay, their father's brothers or sisters? Or are all of them--

Most of them went away. They went to Antwerp. And they went to America, too, later on. But I don't remember clearly there.

But I know that everybody spoiled us. That I remember. Because they didn't see kids like us. Because we were different than they were somehow.

And our grandparents were wonderful to us. They spoiled us rotten. Didn't know what to do with--

That's what grandparents are for.

Yeah. But we didn't stay long. Because we had to go back. My mother and-- my father came later.

We went with my mother, alone, you know, at first. And then my father met us there. And then we came back.

That was one of my questions, whether it had been a family trip, or he had stayed in Belgium for a while and you went on ahead of him. And it sounds like first you went and visited your mother's place.

Yes.

And then we went there. And then my father was there, too, and joined us there.

Was that the only trip you took to Czechoslovakia?

Only one, the only time that I ever saw my grandparents ever.

I see. Did anybody ever come to visit you in Antwerp?

No. Not from the Czechoslovakia, no.

OK. OK. And you said that your parents did have a radio? Is that right?

No. My parents had a radio.

Yes. They had one.

Yeah.

Did they also read newspapers? Did they order--

Yeah, my father and my mother, they read newspapers.

So he subscribed to some and got them every day, or brought them home with him? Do you remember?

The papers?

Yeah.

I know he had papers. But I wasn't that interested, to tell you the truth at that time in the papers. But they were both interested in what's going on in the world.

Now do you remember-- this is an unfair question to ask, but I'll ask it. Do you remember the first time you heard the name Hitler?

It was already when I was probably nine years old. I heard something.

Had the war started or not yet?

Yeah. The war started in 1940 in Belgium. They bombed Belgium in 1940. And that's exactly when I was nine years old, just about my birthday. And then I don't remember the date, but it was in 1940.

OK.

And then they were bombing. And there were a lot of bombs. And I remember the sirens and the bombs.

And then, at that time, that's where they were all listening to the radio. Everybody was listening to the radio, even the one's that didn't have, so went to a neighbor and listened to radio. And all the Jewish friends decided, I think I'm running away from the question that you asked?

No, you're not, actually. We're going straight into them. Unless there's something I haven't asked, I think we've gotten a picture of what your childhood--

It was beautiful, our childhood, very beautiful and wonderful, comfortable, and loving, and very good memories from my childhood, and with my sister, my little sister. And we had, like I said, a nice garden in the back. And I remember going down the steps. I think my sister fell down the steps one day, because she was always in trouble.

And on that was a terrace going down to the garden. And I remember that we had grapes growing on the terrace. And we had an apple tree and a pear tree.

Oh, how lovely.

Yeah. And it was very nice. And it was a nice place to live. And to us, it was heaven. That's what we knew. That's how we grew up.

And then it all changed.

In a couple of days.

Really?

We started to hear news about Hitler before. And then it reached us. So the people, I don't know how they got together, my parents and friends and all that everybody knew from each other. And the whole bunch of Jewish people decided that they would be better off to go-- I don't know who was in charge of this.

But to go and flee to France, South of France. Because they wouldn't come there, the Germans, they said. You know? That was really a Vichy time, you know? That was free.

So do you remember leaving your home?

Yes. I remember very well. My mother made roast chicken-- no, fried chicken-- Southern fried chicken and French fries. Because French fries come from Belgium, too.

Pommes frites?

[LAUGHING]

The frites.

Yeah.

The pomme-- de terre frites. That's why I remember the meal. After we ate it, then they took just whatever they could, very little. Because we were going just, like, running away, you know. It was from one minute to the other that this was decided. So I remember--

Did you take a toy with you?

I don't know. I really don't remember.

OK.

Maybe I did. But it wasn't a time for toys, exactly, then. But some things I don't remember well, I've told you, some things. But I remember the trip.

Tell me about it.

The trip going there, because they went in trains that were not, how do you call it, real trains for passengers. It was, like, they would have the trains later on to go to the camps, you know? There's no place to sit.

Like cattle cars?

Yeah. Cattle cars. That's probably what they were, cattle cars. And everybody bunched in together.

OK.

And I remember going there. And we were scared. It was the middle of the night. We went at night.

And then we were afraid because there was bombing noise. And we were there and there's a bunch of people, some other strangers. I remember two sisters, they were two spinsters, they never got married. And my mother was, I told you, a good person, took in everybody and take care of everybody and helped everybody.

So these two ladies, they were not so young anymore. But she always took care of somebody. So they were in the same train with us.

And they were so frightened that I remember them crying. And they didn't want to live. They wanted to just--

Give up.

--give up, completely give up. So I know why I remember this. Because they were crying, you see. And my father, I remember he was very nervous about this whole thing.

So I remember him sitting-- at one time, when the train stopped somewhere, sitting on the steps from the train, sitting there. My mother was worried. She didn't know what he was thinking. You know? It was a very, very, very--

Anxious.

--anxious time for us. Don't know where we were going really. We're just going.

Did they give you any explanation why you had left, why you had to leave?

You know, that I don't remember. But they told us we have to go because no good here. Because we knew the bombing, because we heard it.

OK.

Did you own your own home?

Yes.

OK. So they left their furniture?

Everything. Everything. Everything.

OK.

It was a very nice house, like I told you. We had beautiful front going up steps. I think they were marble, as a matter of fact, wide, wide steps. You know, about five steps, six steps, I don't know why I remember this.

And we had a very nicely furnished home. My mother was very fussy about certain things. She wanted to have everything nice.

Did your father ever give her jewelry as presents?

Yes. She had her engagement ring, a diamond ring really very expensive at that time when they got engaged. And who has the ring? I don't know if we ever got it. Maybe Renee has the ring, maybe my daughter. I'm not even sure.

But she had it. She hid it all the time, wherever we went after that. And yeah, so he gave her jewelry.

OK. The upstairs neighbors--

Pardon me?

The upstairs neighbors who rented from you, did they stay or did they also leave? That was just people that we didn't even know. No, I don't even know they were Jewish.

OK. OK. You don't know if they were, they weren't.

No.

OK. So you're on a cattle car?

Yeah.

You're going South. You have two spinsters who are crying.

Yes, yes. You have you--

Nobody else was very happy, either.

Yeah.

No. Yeah.

Were there other children on the cattle car?

You know, now I don't remember. I remember-- mainly, I remember these two spinsters. Because they were crying the whole time. And they were very, very sad.

And your father is nervous himself?

Yes.

And when he's sitting on those steps, are those, like, you open the cattle car doors?

Yeah. Right, steps.

And right there.

Yes. All right.

My mother, I know, was nervous about it.

And this is as the train is moving? No, I think when it stopped or something. You can't, because the doors wouldn't open then if it's going.

OK. So when it was going, it was dark?

Yes. Pitch dark.

OK.

No lights. They didn't want us to have lights because didn't want to--

Attract bombs?

--attract attention, you know.

And so how long did you travel like this?

I don't know exactly how much mileage, but awhile. Because we went to south of France, not that it's so far from Belgium. But we went to the south of France.

Well, it's far enough.

Yeah.

It's far enough. And when you got off, where did you land?

We landed in some kind of small town, village. And I don't know why they stopped there. That's where we landed, in a French village, where they never had seen a Jew. They didn't know what we were.

But we stayed in the village. And then somehow we got an apartment-- not an apartment, like a room. And we stayed in that village. And my mother used to sew for the peasant ladies. And they gave her food, you know, and things. It was a barter system, somehow. And that's what I remember, somehow.

Do you remember the name of the village?

I think of Autoliv, but I'm not sure.

OK.

I don't remember. We were there. But we stayed there a little while. And then what did they do? What did we do? We stayed a while. And then they started to take the Jewish people into camps, like transient camps-- waiting to go somewhere else. You know?

OK. Here's a question.

I don't-- I'm not remembering.

Yeah. When you were in that cattle car, do you know about how many people were in there with you?

In the car? In our car, in our area? To me, it seems like a lot, because I was little. We were little.

I don't know. Maybe it was 20, 25. I don't know. I can't tell you.

OK.

Because I don't know. I'm not sure.

And were there more cattle cars with more people in them?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, attached to the train, you know, the whole train.

OK. So it was a train full of cattle cars. And in each cattle car, there were Jews who were trying to escape?

Yes, to runaway from Belgium.

And when you stop at this village, do they all get out there? Or do only some of them get out there?

Some of them, I think, because I don't know. Didn't pay attention, really.

OK.

Just was very drama-- very how do you call it? That time was very anxious for us. Because we didn't know where we were going. We didn't know what was going on. And we stopped at-- that's what I'm saying. I don't remember dates. And I don't remember some of the names, especially more way back. Because the computer is not as good as it was-- my computer.

[LAUGHING]

Well, none of our computers are like the computers that are not human. You know, the ones that are not human are way smarter than any of us.

So I try to remember. But it's very hard. But we stayed there for a while.

Do you know what time of year the Germans started to bomb Belgium?

Yeah. Well, I think it was, that I remember, I was just turned nine. My birthday is March 30.

So it was spring time?

Spring time, yeah. That's what I remember. Maybe I'm 100% wrong. But that's what I remember.

OK.

Because of my birthday.

So at least when you were traveling, it was not through the coldest months of the year.

OK. When you get to this French place, it's still springtime?

Yeah. All right. And how long did you stay there, do you think?

I don't remember exactly how long we stayed there. Because we had to move somewhere else. Because later on, they started to take the Jewish people and tried to put them in not concentration camp, but some kind of a camps.

Holding camp?

Yeah. So that's where we ended up. Yeah.

Do you remember what that place looked like?

Yeah. It was called Rivesaltes.

You were in Rivesaltes.

Yeah.

What did it look like? What did Rivesaltes look like, from your memory?

It looked like there were barracks-- barracks and different kinds of areas-- barracks and then another part of different barracks. And the men and the women were not together.

So your father was separated from you at this time?

Yeah.

OK. Were you able to see him while you were in the camp?

I saw him. This is a time that's not a good time. I saw him once we were in the camp. And we were there when all of a sudden, a miracle happened. Because we were there a while and with my mother.

And she wasn't happy that we were there in the camp. They had nothing too. it was bad food-- bad food. We didn't want to eat it because we were spoiled rotten from the food at home.

And we used to say, we don't want to eat this soup. It has flies in it. Or it was-- I don't know what it was, something. So my mother said, you have to eat it. You have to eat it. So we ate whatever she could. And she used to go and work in the kitchen, too. Because she was a good cook, too.

And then Nate, my husband, said she used to smuggle in sometimes some different foods, you know? But I don't know exactly how long we were there. But sometime in 1941 or '42, I don't know, we went to that camp--

OK.

--all of us. And then, from there, I told you we're separated from husband and wife, the men and the women. And then I don't know the time that you asked me exactly when, what.

But by a miracle, somebody from the Czech-- no, the French marquis. Do you know this marquis? That's the underground the French had-- or from the Czech consulate or something that's connected with something with Czechoslovakia-- came one day in the camp and wanted to save some children, to grab them out of there to save them.

And so they came in. I don't know how, what was it about. Because I was only young. I didn't know all the details. All I know is that they came in and they took my sister and me and some other kids that were with us, Jewish kids. And they said that we should go out. Somebody is waiting and they took us out--

Of the camp?

From the camp, yeah. And my mother and father were there. That's the time I saw my father, the last time. And somehow he managed that he was there. I don't know how.

And we had a cousin, my father's brother's son. He was 13. And she knew that he's in a different area of the

barracks. So my mother ran. I told you, my mother was something special.

She ran there and told him, "You come, come." And he made it. We made it. He came with us. And he was saved too. So then we went on the thing. It was a big open truck, like-- what do you call that?

An open truck, yeah.

An open truck, you know?

Where sometimes you'll have a tarp over it.

No. That was an open truck, an open truck.

Open truck, OK.

An open truck. And they said, we have to go there.

Did you go willingly?

I didn't know what was going on really. We said goodbye to my-- they were there, both of them standing. This I remember very well. They're both standing there and saying-- because this was all done right there and then. And so we have to go. And they said we have to go there. We're going somewhere nice, my mother said, so proud. My mother was crying. But my father was hysterical crying.

Was he?

And he was saying, I will never see my children again. (EMOTIONALLY) I remember this so-- and he didn't. He said, I will never see my children again. It's horrible. And he didn't.

But my mother didn't say it, because she was-- somehow she was stronger. You know? So this is the picture I have. We said goodbye. And we went on that truck, the kids. And they took us down to the south of France, further.

Further south?

Yeah. Like, to the area of almost-- how do you call this? I can't think-- Cote d'Azur, almost, you know? You know where that-- the French Riviera-type, around there.

OK.

So then we took-- there was a long trip in the middle of the night. But always in the middle of the night then, we think. We didn't know where we're going. We don't know anything, we're going.

So we had no choice. So that's when kissed our parents goodbye. And we're crying and crying. And then we went.

And they stopped in the middle of the night, too. And I remember walking from some area to somewhere in the middle of the night. And we came to a place. And that was going to be our place for a while.

This was called-- it was next to Vance. You know where Vance is?

No, no. But tell me.

Vance is one of the places where a lot of the artists lived.

OK. Excuse us, please.

You could google it.

Hang on a minute.

OK. So you're in this city in the South of France in Vance.

Next to Vance.

Next to Vance.

It's a few kilometers. But I remember walking and walking. We were walking and we went to-- where we ended up was in the middle of the night in a place-- I want to say it must have been a wealthy person's home first, before. But these people that we went to, maybe didn't know it then, they were the people that were going to be our saviors. That's how we were saved from being killed. But almost we had another time when we were almost killed again. So anyway, that was called, in French, [NON-ENGLISH].

What is that?

Which means like a welcoming home for Christian children.

Ah. OK. So was it like an orphanage?

It was supposed to be like an orphanage, yeah. But most of the people did not have their parents. But some of them had. Because some of them were Christian there, too.

And there was a mixture. There was some of the Jewish kids and some Christian people, probably a political reason why they were hiding or something. They were Czech. They were from Czechoslovakia.

I want to pause here at that moment and go back a little bit. And let's find out what happened with your father. You say you never saw him again.

I never saw him again.

What happened to him?

They sent him away, my mother found out later, to a place in Jura Mountains that's next to France-- between France and Switzerland. That's where we heard that they sent him there. Because he was in the diamond thing, they needed somebody for some kind of-- not the diamond cutting, but some kind of skills. So that's what we heard, that he went there. So we didn't see him anymore--

And you never knew--

--till after the war.

--what happened to him?

Yeah. After the war, my mother went back to Belgium. And she wanted to find out what happened. They said that he lived through the war, you know. And he went to concentration camp. But he was killed while some say that-- they were doing, walking-- you know, the march or whatever.

In a death march?

Yeah.

He was killed?

Yeah. That's right. That's what some people said, that they saw him. But you know, that's all we know.

So you never were able to find out?

No. Not for sure.

Did you know what camps he was in?

Which camps? Which concentration camps?

Don't know. Because after that, we never had contact with him. He was sent away first to another area in France, you know? So we were never in touch with him.

Now during this time that you were at this orphanage--

Pardon me?

Excuse me?

That's my husband.

Oh. While you were at the orphanage, this place, the home for Christian children, did you ever get letters from your mother?

No.

So you didn't know what happened to her, either?

No. But at one time, somebody came that she-- it was a Christian lady. That was much later, though. Because she came and told us that my mother's still--

Alive?

--alive. Yeah. But I don't mean remember when it was. But that's the only time that we ever heard that she was still alive. That was someone that went for her and did her a favor. And anyway--

So you are taken probably when you were around 10 or 11 years old?

Yeah. Even younger, it was right after, almost, we went there. But 10, 10-years-old.

You're 10.

Yeah. About 10. And Rosa's eight?

Eight.

All right. And you, then, at that point, you just don't-- your parents are out of the picture.

Altogether.

Tell me what happened then. You come to this home. You stay there. How do things progress?

It progressed that these people were wonderful.

Oh, that's good. They were so wonderful to us. They just wanted to save our lives. Because the main person in that-- because a mixture of Gentiles and Jews working there, too.

And the leader, the head of this place was a Czech lady, a Jewish lady. And her name was Ida. But we called

her Tante Ida-- Aunt Ida-- Tante Ida.

She was an angel from heaven. And she ran the whole place.

OK.

I have pictures of her.

Excuse me? What? Excuse me. Can you cut? I do not--

It's going to beep some.

OK. I'm sorry for interrupting. You were talking about Tante Ida--

Tante Ida, yeah.

--and how she ran the whole place.

She did. She was in charge of everything.

About how many people helped her? Was it a large staff?

I don't remember how many. But she has a staff there. They had a staff, only there were people also that were there for reasons, probably political reasons, trying to get away from-- so I don't know. There was a mixture of people there.

Were they all children or some adults?

No, no, adults, too, adults, too. So she had people, you know, that helped run the place. And also, while we were there, they were trying to keep us a little bit educated. I mean, we didn't have real teachers.

But some of them were very bright people, and some Jewish and some Christian. And so they made, like, a school for us. I mean, not school, of classes, you know. They wanted to educate us. And so like I said they were extraordinary, good people.

About how many children were there?

I don't know. I don't know. Would you say 50, 100, 200?

I don't think 200. This may be closer to maybe 100, maybe not even.

OK.

Because it was adults and children. And at that time, I wasn't counting exactly.

I know.

I'm sorry.

No. That's OK. I'm just trying to get a sense of how large a space. And you know, was this house in the middle of a town or out in the country?

It was more out in the country. It's really beautiful there. It's a beautiful area.

Was it kind of in an isolated area?

Yeah, in a way. It was, like, a few kilometers from the next city, Vance.

OK.

So it was in the country. Yeah.

I guess part of my questioning is to get a sense of what was involved for Tante Ida to keep this place from gaining attention. Because if you're supposed to be kept there--

Yeah, yeah.

--and saved--

Nobody was-- we weren't supposed to be Jewish. We knew that we are Christian--

OK.

--they told us, I think. Christian, yeah, we knew. I mean, we were scared. We were always afraid that somebody is going to find out. So then when some people came around from somewhere, we knew. We were always taught, we knew that not to stand out in any way or anything. You know, so we were afraid.

Now was this part of free France?

Pardon me? Is this in the territory of free France or Vichy France? Where in the French Territories was this?

This was South of France in the Riviera area.

OK.

It's called d'Azure, they called it.

Was it Vichy? Was it controlled by the French or controlled by--

By that time, I think, it was controlled still by the French. It was, at that time, free, Vichy government.

OK.

Norman, you know what that is?

Yes, I think it's the free zone.

It was in the free zone. OK.

Yeah.

And so did you have any interaction with any officials at all? Do you remember any officials coming to the house, to the place?

No. I don't. I don't think that they wanted us to meet anybody. But at one time later on, there were some people. And we were frightened. But we knew not to call attention to anything.

But where we were there, we did not stay all the time in that one place. Because they want to move us around, and later on, because they didn't want to get caught, you know. So we had people that, during the night, they went looking for provisions, you know, wherever, and other people that were in charge of other things to do.

But the middle of the night, they were very, how do you call it, resourceful people, very smart people in there. And everybody did their job, whatever they were doing. Some were workers, the Christian ones were,

mainly, that were hiding there, too. And some were workers.

But then the Jews, they were trying to help with, like I said, the provisions and keeping us well and safe. So they were very, very good to us.

Now when you say they move you around, does that mean you would move from one house to another place?

Not to a house-- after a while we moved away from there and we went to another area of France.

Aha. I see.

Because when they thought it was too--

Dangerous.

--too dangerous, then we moved. But like I told you, I don't know dates or times. I just know that we moved.

Once we went to a-- it was called Chateau du Theil, which was a castle someplace-- an old castle away in the country. And they kept moving us around.

Did you ever venture out and go into Vance or go into any of the surrounding villages? Or were you pretty isolated from everybody?

We were pretty isolated that time. They wanted us to be.

OK. OK.

But we did go, where did we go? They took us, like, on a little thing, but only in the country thing.

Like an excursion?

Yeah. But later on we did go. Because we went to Nice. I remember we were in Nice. But that was later, much later. Because we were there till the end of the war.

So when you were taken from Rivesaltes in 1941 when you're 10 years old, it's about four years that you were with this-- three or four years that you were with this Tante Ida?

Yeah.

OK.

And she--

And-- you wanted to say something?

Yeah. I'm trying to remember. Because, like I said, they moved us around because they were afraid. But in between, we had another thing happening. That in 1942, whatever it was, when they were gathering everybody, the Jews from everywhere they're trying to get them to put them in camps like we were before, in the same camp, you know.

And so what do you think? They don't know how they found us or whatever it was. They did some kind of very hard-- if they wanted to find them, they found them. They found the children.

And they brought us back to the camp.

To Rivesaltes?

To Rivesaltes, with two gendarmes, everybody-- you know, police. And they brought us back also in the middle of the night-- always everything in the middle of the night. And then they brought us where my mother was.

And when my mother saw us, she started to cry. She didn't want us to come back there. Because she knew then we're not safe anymore. You know?

So we were there for a little bit. I don't know how many days or this or whatever. But it was terrible, because she was crying all night that we shouldn't be there. So anyway, so then they came and-- I forgot the order of things.

That's OK. That's OK. But you didn't stay in Rivesaltes. You found there was a way for you to get out again?

Yeah. They came to get us after a while.

OK. The same people?

Same people. But that's not the end, even then. Because we were there a while, and then they got us out. But then we went back later on. That's what I'm saying, the time, I don't know when, what.

Because we were back again. And then we were already going to go to-- that happened later. We were scheduled to go on a transport to Germany.

That's where every time they used to have transport at certain times. They had people to go and they said to Germany, to the camp. So that when we were there--

[SHUFFLING OFF CAMERA]

OK. So you're supposed to go on this transport to Germany.

Yes. So they used to have several of these whenever they had enough people, I guess. So we went. And they had, like, everybody had to stay and go on a open terrain, an open area, big open area. And everybody was there, all the people in that area.

And they were calling names, the names of the people, each other, and the families, you know. So they called everybody, I think, alphabetically. So when it came to H, then we heard Elaine Heller, Elisabeth Heller, and Josiah Heller.

My mother, for a second, I thought she was going to pass out. She got a hold of herself. And you know, I told you, she was very resourceful and very smart, street smart and everything. So for a minute, she said, oh. She almost fainted. And then all of a sudden, she got back to herself. And she says-- started yelling. And she's no, no. I don't belong here. I don't belong here because I don't belong here, made a whole big--

Fuss.

--fuss on purpose. And she said, she made a whole commotion, a big commotion. So they didn't want that. So then they came. And she said, I don't belong here because I'm Hungarian. And the Hungarians are Germans. And I don't belong here. And no matter what-- she wanted to make a big thing. She didn't want to stay there.

So what they did is they didn't want everybody else to start screaming and yelling "I don't belong here." So they took Mom. They whisked my mother away with us to the side. And for the moment to the side, we didn't go on that transport. That's a miracle.

They left without us. Because she went into the office with the authority, the French-- you know, what was it

called? Whoever was in charge in the office. And she was telling them the story and all that. And they wanted to quiet her, that she should not go there and make a whole thing for the whole place to start being hysterical.

So it ended up that we didn't go. And then she stayed in the camp. And then after that, not long after that, that's when they came back for us.

Tante Ida and her people?

They came and they somehow got us out again.

Do you remember how you left the second time?

The second time when we left, I don't remember so well.

OK.

But I know we went out. We were out.

With your mother or without your mother?

Without my mother. They wouldn't take her. No. They just came for the children that were brought back. So I don't know exactly when that was. I was already older, because that was probably 1942 or so. Maybe I was 11 or something. And like I said, I don't remember dates and exactly--

But by that time, your father's out of the picture.

Altogether. So right from the beginning, he's out of the picture. Because we never heard from him again.

OK.

So this story, I hope I'm in order. Because so then, by some miracle, we went back.

To the same house?

Yeah.

OK. And then, like I said, they moved us around to another place, another area. But we went back. They were safe again.

OK.

And we were hiding. They hid us. And they did everything that they could to make our lives as good as possible.

Now during this time, your mother is always in Rivesaltes?

Yes. She's still in Rivesaltes till afterwards.

Does she still continue working as a cook?

Yeah. I don't know, because we weren't there.

But I found out later on that she somehow got herself-- the wife of one of the authorities of this-- how do you call it-- the bureau. She was a fancy French lady. And she needed a cook. My mother said that she is a French cook. She's a gourmet cook.

She was a very good cook, but she cooked Hungarian and Jewish dishes. She's a French gourmet cook. I know she had a lot of nerve. It took a lot of courage.

So they took her out. And she became a cook for these people, for that family. She was hidden there because they weren't supposed to be there. So they told her that she went in the basement. And they told her she should not say a peep, not a word, nothing. Because then they'd send her right back to the camp.

OK.

This frightened her. You know? But then, I don't know if she did it. But she says, I was talking to my grandmother all the time.

Because when she was cooking, they made her cook rabbit. Did she know from rabbit? Nothing, not supposed to, it's not kosher. And anything else that they cooked, you know.

So she said I was praying to my mother-- my grandmother, not to her mother, to my grandmother, she should help me. And somehow, they were satisfied with her cooking because she was a good cook. But I don't know how she managed it, so also a miracle.

But she said she was in this basement, crying quietly. Because they said if she makes noise and she doesn't cook what they want, she goes back. So she was, like, at her mercy.

The man wasn't so bad. But the woman threatened her. So she stayed there till I don't know when.

Do you think it was more than two years that she was there?

She was there a while, yeah.

Yeah.

She was there a while. Because I don't think she went back to the camp after that. So then she was just cooking and doing other-- I don't know. But you know nothing of this--

Nothing.

--nothing of this at the time.

Till at one time, somebody came to tell us that-- I told you that my mother was still alive.

OK.

And did you and your sister, did you find that you were crying for her?

Yeah, my sister especially, she was crying all the time, always crying. Everybody used to say that if Rosa comes already, you have to turn off the faucet. No, I mean, it's crying. She just cried all the time, poor thing, cried and cried. I cried, too. But not as bad as her.

There's a difference in ages.

Yes, she was two years younger than me. And she cried. But like I said, we were saved. They tried to make our life as good as they could. And we were safe.

Was there anybody that became sort of like a substitute for your mother?

Well, Tante Ida was.

Tante Ida was.

Yes. She was for all the kids. But then there was other people, nice people in there also, women that were nice, good.

So would you say that aside from the incidents you told me about, did you feel safe? Or were you always nervous?

No, we were safe. We felt safe. Except the times when I told you, if somebody was going to come around, and we didn't know--

OK.

--who it was. So then they told us to behave. But then, like I said, they moved us around so that--

When they moved you around, was it always in a general area?

No, different place. Or it was in another place in the castle. That we were in a castle, an old, old castle.

OK.

Really old, cold, ice cold castle, used to belong to someone, rich Americans, I think. But it was ice cold. There was no heat. There was nothing.

So we stayed there a while. And it was not a good place at that time. But there, we were also safe in a way, because it was also isolated. And I remember the name of that Chateau du Theil.

How do you spell that?

It's hard. Chateau, you know is--

Yeah.

Theil? It was T-H-E-I-L.

Chateau du Theil.

Yeah. And that's where we were there, too, for a while. And then we went somewhere in the Massif Central, which is the in the center of France.

And then one time, they sent me away alone without my sister. No, alone to a school, like a boarding school, out, because they wanted to scatter the kids. They shouldn't all be in the same place, safe for a while.

So that's where I went. But the bad part was that I was the only Jew there. And I was afraid that they're going to find out that I'm Jewish, somehow, the way I look, or what I do. So I was always on the lookout, that I shouldn't be.

So you were always anxious?

Oh, anxious, anxious, all the time. That's why I'm still anxious, the war, too, so anxious and worried that they're going to find out who I am. Because they're all Christian.

And I think there was one that, my memory, that I think she must have been Jewish, too. But she also was cautious. But I didn't want to talk to her. Because I didn't want to have anything suspicious going on there. But I was there for a while. I don't know how long. That there's a school-- like, a high school sort of thing, not high school yet.

A boarding school?

Yeah. A boarding school-- sleeping, sleeping, sleeping.

OK.

Yeah.

And did you come back from that boarding school?

I did come back.

OK. And your sister was still within the group?

And then at one time, they sent her also away somewhere else.

OK.

At one time they sent her where my mother was, in the basement with her. Would you believe?

Really?

I don't know how she ended up there. But then she came back, too. Miracles happened. I'm telling you, miracles.

The details of exactly how it went, I don't know. All I know is that she went there. And she was almost also killed. But finally, we were all together again, my sister and I.

Tell me, when you were together again, where were you at that time? What part or what place in France were you?

We were together, again, that was next to Bayonne. I'm trying to figure out which town, which big town there is there. Biarritz-Bayonne-- that's on the coast also. It's also the South of France, but on the other side, on the East Coast. I don't know how to explain it.

That's OK.

Yeah. Biarritz-Bayonne, and that's where we ended up. I think that was our last place.

And do you remember how the war ended?

Yeah, the war ended. And then somebody came and with my mother. I didn't know how it went exactly. The war ended. But it was ended.

And then my mother didn't come right away. But she came with someone. And she came to where we were then.

And then, from there, after a while, see we went back with her. She wanted us to be, but she had no place to be. You know? So we stayed a while yet there.

In Biarritz right?

Yeah. In the Bayonne.

In the Bayonne.

Next to Bayonne.

Next to Bayonne. So were there American soldiers there? Was this in the area there was--

Yes. Then they came. The American soldiers came.

OK. Do you remember them coming to your area?

They came and talked to us. And then, yeah.

OK.

They came and talked to us, American soldiers.

So essentially, at that point, you're liberated?

They're there, really. If the Americans were there, that means they're OK. Remember, the Americans were very nice to us when they came, to the children, you know.

And then, after that, I don't remember exactly when. But my mother did come back to get us, because she wanted us to be with her. After all these years, we were not with her.

So she went to Paris with us. I mean, she took us there. Because she had sent-- the minute that the war was over, she sent my Aunt Bertha, in the United States, in Bethlehem, a telegram.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania?

Yes. A telegram that said, we are alive. Send papers.

So my aunt got together with my uncles in New York, my father's brothers--

Oh, yeah.

And she, working with them together, and they got us papers. We were one of the first ones that came in 1946 to the United States. Yes.

And did you, by that point, know that your father is not coming back?

Yeah. We didn't know anything about it, nothing. Then? No. We didn't know anything about it.

And you didn't go back to Antwerp?

No. My mother went back to Antwerp once, to find out what happened to my father, really what happened. You know?

OK. Can you hold on just a second?

So we had a quick break. And we were all reminded that there were some episodes that you experienced that we should look back to. So tell me about learning the catechism. Did you go to religious classes, Catholic religious classes?

No. But we just somehow knew. They taught us in the place. You know, they were Christians there, too. And so I knew my catechism.

And I think we went to church once or twice. I'm not sure exactly when. But I did know my catechism.

So you know the basic prayers?

I used to know.

OK. OK.

In French.

[LAUGHING]

Yeah. These things could come in very helpful if you're stopped and you say I'm Catholic and someone says, prove it. [BOTH TALKING].

And then they'll ask you to say the prayer. You know? So in a way--

They wanted us to know that. Yeah. They didn't want to convert us. But they wanted us to know that we had to know that we're not Jewish, that we're not Jewish for now.

OK.

And we know that we're Jewish. But just, that's for protection. There's a lot of other details. But it's too many.

Well, what kind of details come to your mind when you talk about this?

Because like I said, they were very good to us, and they tried to make our life nice. So later on, they would took us on little excursions. And that was probably already after-- probably when the war had already stopped almost. And it took us, like, to Nice. You know where that is?

Yeah.

A big city, and to another place, just to show us a little bit something. But not for pleasure, just to take us out. So they tried to make our life, like I said, pleasant and good, which they did.

But tell me about-- your relative told me that you also ended up in a Protestant area?

In a what kind of area?

Protestant area, not a Catholic area?

Yeah. The place, the school that they sent me to--

The boarding school?

--boarding school was the wrong religion of what I said I was.

So you said you were Catholic.

I think so. And they were Protestant. I don't know which one I was, but I was the wrong one. So I was worried about that, too.

[LAUGHING]

Oh, my goodness.

I wasn't an exclu-- I mean, what do you call it?

Excluded.

Excluded. I mean, I didn't belong anywhere, really, looks like.

Did you ever get any explanation as to why you were sent to that boarding school?

Yes. To save me from being gathered somewhere. They wanted to disperse as many kids at some different places. They were afraid they were going to get taken away. That's protection.

Yeah. Somebody at that boarding school probably knew your real identity. Because why would have they taken you?

They sent us to get an education.

Oh, they sent you with Christian children?

Yeah. We're not Jewish. Jewish is out, completely out.

But you know that when you think about it, the pressure on a child--

It's terrible, the fear that you're going to be discovered and what's going to happen, you know?

Yeah. Did you ever come close to being discovered?

I don't know. I always thought that some kind of suspicious-- but then, I forgot about it, didn't want to think about it even. But we made it. We're here talking.

That's true. So I had asked you before, well, I had asked your husband before, how did all of these experiences change him? From before the war, before, when he was a young man who didn't know about such things, until he went through them. And I ask you the same thing. You were a little girl.

Yeah.

Basically a child.

Yes.

And how did this change you? Did it--

It didn't change me. Because I wasn't really an adult at all, so I just go from one phase to another phase. I became very anxious, I know. That's probably part of my anxiety problems. Because you know--

You got scared.

Yeah. I was scared. I was scared. We were in tension. But by the time we were with the Tante Ida and then the whole group, we were not scared most of the time, you know. Because they made our life very bearable and they were very good to us. But there was always the danger that we had to be on our guard.

Yeah.

But they were very good people.

Well, you know, it's hard to imagine the effects that something like this has on a child. The way children experience these things is a deeper way than adults do. Because there are fewer resources that a child will have to call upon.

I think if I wouldn't have been with these people, Tante Ida and the whole thing would have been even worse. But they had some time there not to be so all the time. But I was. Because we were always afraid. But they made, like I said, our life--

Sounds like they did what they could.

--very, very livable. They did. Yeah. Yeah, they did.

So tell us, where did you live in Paris when your mother finally got you? We lived there only temporarily to wait for the papers.

OK.

That's where she took us there.

OK.

And from there then, we went on the ship. And she had some people that she knew. So they made it even easier. We came on a military ship here.

Oh, did you?

On the military-- we were the only-- about 18 civilians on that ship. It's a warship.

And so was it soldiers coming home?

Right.

And so you were the only little kids on there?

Kids, yeah. But there were adults, too. There was my mother and then there was some American women. And then some others, I don't know.

But there was 18 civilians. The rest was all soldiers. And I think they were sailors, really. I'm not sure. We didn't mingle.

You didn't? No. Why? I was seasick the whole time.

Oh.

We were nine days seasick down in the thing. And my sister was worse than me. She was throwing up. And there wasn't good-- couldn't eat. After all the time, there we could have had food, good food. We couldn't eat because--

So you had motion sickness. Yeah.

--we were seasick. And then, yeah, the trip wasn't so good. But we made it early. We came 1946, at Passover time--

So in the springtime?

--which is the springtime. Yeah. It was Passover. Yeah.

That is early.

Very early, one of the few earliest ones, because we came not on a civilian ship.

So tell me, how did this affect your sister? You say she cried a lot.

She cried a lot. She cried a lot.

Was there a time she stopped crying?

She still cried afterwards, too.

Did she?

Yeah?

But she was a wonderful girl, my sister. I miss her so much. Because we went through everything together.

She was good. She was talented. Made this sweater for me and a whole bunch of other things. And she was a good person and really--

Well, she was a lifelong friend.

Yes. Since we were babies together. And so I miss her terribly, in every respect.

I can imagine.

And so can't get her back. So she deserved everything, the best. But she didn't have a good life.

It was tough for her, huh?

Yeah, her husband, I mean, her marriage was not good. And I felt terrible for her. Because she was talented and good and smart and beautiful.

I can see that you miss her.

Pardon me?

I can see that you miss her. I can see that, from your description.

Yeah.

Yeah.

She is.

Yeah. Let's go back to when you arrive in the United States.

Oh, yeah. That was another experience.

Tell me about that. What was that like?

Because we came on the ship, seasick and all that, finally, we arrived in New York. We think my mother had sent the date when we arriving. The day we arrived, we didn't go-- we came to Staten Island.

I don't know where, because it was a ship, not a luxury ship. That's where they ended up, in Staten Island. I don't know where.

Also nobody was there, nobody. We come there. We go up there. Everybody gets out of the boat, ship.

And we go in there, and there's nobody there for us. We're standing there, like, not knowing the language, not knowing anybody, not having anything, anybody to refer to. And so we stood around. Nobody came for us.

So my mother, there was a-- the first time I saw a-- what do you call it? I can't think of the name. My god,

like, a restaurant, but it's not a restaurant.

A cafe? A diner?

A diner, exactly. Thank you. A diner. So we went in. My mother said, let's see. We went into the diner.

And there was a man there behind the counter. And we can't converse with him. But with gestures and all that, and then finally, we said French, Francaise.

You know, wait a minute. So he went in the back and got a young girl, must've been his daughter. And he says, [NON-ENGLISH] come here, you know?

So she said, talk French to them and find out what they are and what they want and what's going on. The poor kid, she knew French from book French. But she didn't know how to do conversation. She didn't have conversational French.

So she didn't really help anything. And the father got so angry at her because she didn't understand. Why can't she speak?

So that didn't help. Finally, he gave us some change to make a phone call. And my mother called her sister's number.

But we were waiting there a long, long time. And so in the meantime, he told us to come in the diner. And he gave us something to eat, put on the jukebox.

Never heard a jukebox, first time we heard a jukebox. And he treated us, you know, with something. I don't remember what. But he was very kind to us.

And finally, we got in touch with somebody. I don't know if it was my uncle or my aunt. But my mother called and got somebody.

So they came. It was a wrong day. They thought we were coming the next day.

Oh.

Finally, after all this, we got together with them.

This is your mother's sister?

Yeah, my mother's sister and the uncles also came. And she alerted them. And they didn't come from New York. But somebody came-- I don't remember. One of them was, you know, that comes here, my cousin Sheila? It's too late already?

No, no, no, no, no.

My first cousin, she was my father's brother's daughter. She came with a big bouquet of flowers, big, big, tremendous. She was-- how old was she, 10 or so? She was younger than me.

And she came that big thing of flowers. It was so nice. But then, finally, we got situated.

Who did you stay with?

We stayed first, I think, one night with one of the uncles. I'm not sure where or what. I don't remember. It's like a--

A haze.

--a fog. But then we went to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to my mother's sister.

OK.

So I don't know even who took us, or they took-- somebody came from there. And they took us.

Do you remember the trip there?

No.

OK. It was, like, probably at night, too, already, by the time we get there. But I remember getting there, when we got there. So my aunt was an angel to-- and her sister, Mary, my mother's sisters. They both were wonderful people.

So she took us in right away. Their daughters had just gotten a nice new bedroom set, the girls. They were the same age as us, except the older daughter was five years older than I was, 20. And my other cousin was 15 like me. And the younger son was my sister's age, 13.

So they gave us their bedroom. Put them in some other kind of room, with a brand new bedroom set, with a brand new-- chased them out, poor things, and gave it to us. And she treated us like royalty.

And she didn't know what to give us to eat. They wanted us to see us eat-- my little cousin wanted to see us eat ice cream. But we couldn't eat cream because it was Passover. So we had to eat Passover stuff.

So he couldn't wait till it's over. I went to see them eat ice cream, he said.

[LAUGHING]

Isn't that funny? But that's the way it was. But they were so good to us.

It must have been years and years since the two sisters had seen each other.

Pardon me?

It must have been years and years since your mother had seen her sister.

No, because she came into the United States as a young girl, very young girl. Because somebody couldn't make it in one family. So she took the place of someone and came in their name.

OK.

There was also a miracle, that she came here.

And did she work in Bethlehem? Or was she a housewife? Of course, a housewife works, too.

No, and then she had a grocery store and worked very, very hard. Because my uncle, who was a very handsome, nice man, American. And he was in the war, I guess World War I.

And he got wounded in the head. And it was OK. But after a while, his vision, he lost his vision. So he's blind.

So she had to be the provider--

Oh, my.

--for the family. And she worked very, very hard, never complained, nothing. He worked, like, in a station store, selling newspapers or something. But he couldn't see. So that was not-- but they were so wonderful to

us, so wonderful.

How long did you stay with them?

We didn't stay long. Because my mother didn't want to stay long. Because she wanted to go to New York.

Because there was nothing there for her. She said there was a factory there. That name, I remember. Isn't that crazy?

Yeah. Laros Silk. They made-- Laros, L-A-R-O-S, I think-- silk. They made the factory sewing some kind of a underwear or something something. But she wasn't happy there.

Well, you know, that's not the rag trade. There's one place.

And she was sewing. Yeah.

And New York is everything.

So she didn't want to stay. She wanted to go to New York and see what's going on. She wanted to be already settled with us someplace. Anyway, so that's what we did.

OK. So we moved to New York. But there was no place for us to be. Because the soldiers were coming back at that time. And they needed apartments. There were no apartments.

So my mother slept in one of her sister-in-law's couch. And we had no place to go. So our uncles put us-- they said we didn't have the Jewish education. We didn't know any Jewish. They put us in a Jewish school called a Bais Yaakov, but very, very, very religious.

And where was this?

In Brooklyn. Williamsburg.

In Williamsburg? OK.

So we were not together, still, with my mother. And she was trying to get a place to be together, but we couldn't have. So finally, we went to there. And finally, she looked and looked and looked. And she found a house in New York, Lower East Side, not far from the Williamsburg Bridge.

And the same house, it was 31 Cannon Street. And that was the house where Nate lived.

Your husband?

My husband, with his brother and sister-in-law.

So this is the house where you met your future husband, in this walk up?

Yeah. This horrible walk up, terrible, ugly. We were on the fourth floor. They were on the third floor.

And it's a long story. I don't think we have time for this, right?

Well, how did you meet? Tell us how.

How did we meet? Well, we didn't meet him right away. Because my mother, I told you, she found this horrible, ugly apartment. The bathrooms were in the hall with a lot of people sharing it.

And not the finest people, like, we want to know, their jobs were not so reputable, the women.

Oh, where there were some of those ladies of the night?

Yes.

[LAUGHING]

There was some like that. And others, not fine class. And then the bathtub, we had a bathtub, though, in the kitchen. A terrible place, infested with roaches.

Welcome to New York.

Yes. Their first time-- full of roaches. And when it rained, it rained in.

Because you were on the top floor.

That's right. And so we kept pots all over the place. And my poor mother, she tried to make it livable and nice before we came. Because where we were in the dormitory, in the school.

So finally, she got it together, sort of. And then she met my sister-in-law, Nate's brother's wife, and heard her talk Hungarian.

So she made friends with her. She started a conversation. And she said, my mother said, I have two little girls in the school. And I'm moved in.

And so, Nate, she says, could you come please and help me put up some curtains? She bought paper curtains, printed. I remember those curtains, cheap, printed curtains. That's all she could have. And could you please help me put them up? Because she was little, like me.

And he did. And he went. And that was, then, love at first sight. Because she was wonderful to him. He loved her. He said how much he loved my mother, his own mother.

Because his mother was lost. And she was like a mother to him.

She was, because my mother was very warm, very warm, good person, you know, and kind and nice and everything. So but he didn't meet us yet. We were still in school.

And one day, we came home. And there we are. And she said, I have two little girls. So he figured, I don't know, how old we are. But it wasn't so old.

I was 15-- and no, at that time, I was 16.

Not so little.

And my sister was 14.

Yeah.

No.

Not so little.

And that's the first time I met him. Wiping away some cockroach thing, oh, not very romantic. But that's how we met. And then there's a long story after that, too.

And so at what age did you get married?

I got married just before my 19th birthday. Technically, I was 18, but not really. Because my birthday is

March 30 and our wedding anniversary is March 19, just a couple days before. But that's how old I was. That we worked together from before that, also.

Your mother, how did she make a living in those early years in New York?

She was working in New York in a factory of coats and suits.

So she was a sewer?

Expensive coats and suits. Yes. She was, like, the sample maker, you know, making the finishing work by hand, and very expensive coats and suits.

Was she able to support herself from that money? She did. But it wasn't easy.

Yeah. I can imagine.

She tried to be very frugal. And you know.

She was a single woman with two girls.

Yeah. Yeah.

Did she ever remarry?

Yes. She married my stepfather after we were married. We were married in 1950. And they got married in 1952.

Did they stay on the Lower East Side?

No, no. By that time, when she met him already, that was already in Brooklyn or someplace. Where was it? No, somewhere else. Yeah, I'm thinking Brooklyn already.

We moved around, too. We moved to the Bronx. And we moved to Rockaway. We moved all over.

But my sister-in-law and brother-in-law moved away to the Bronx and left us where we were, still there. So I didn't see him. And they were all talking him out of marrying me or going with me.

She's too young. She doesn't know how to cook.

[LAUGHING]

She's not for you.

And so how many years later is are you still not for him?

Well, he didn't listen too well. Because he came, and he came on the Williamsburg Bridge. And I used to go to school. Afterwards, I went to Hunter, on the campus one, not in the city, in the Bronx or whatever, where it was.

I went, and I used to go to school. So when he used to walk, he used to go on the Williamsburg Bridge and watch me walk wherever I was going, whether I was taking a train, or whether-- I don't remember.

But he told me later that he knew. And he never gave up. So then afterwards, he didn't listen to them anymore, cook or no cook.

And you've been married how many years?

68 years.

Not bad. Truly not bad. Not bad, for that amount-- for such a long time.

And it was a good marriage, very good marriage. Now he's sick and not feeling so good. But he was a wonderful husband, wonderful father, wonderful everything, wonderful husband. Yeah.

I'm so happy to hear that.

Yes. He was. Did you tell one another about what kind of childhoods you had?

Well, he used to talk about it to me, but not to the kids. When we had the children, he didn't want to give them this sad background. You know, where this shouldn't happen. It was wrong.

You know? And they should have known. But they didn't. We wanted to spare them.

A lot of people did.

And make their lives just as easy and pleasant as they could.

Did the kids ever ask questions?

Afterwards, when they were older. But we never went into detail too much, because like I said, we didn't. Finally, after a while, they did know.

But we tried not to.

Can you tell me-- excuse me. Can we cut the camera?

Yep.

And how many children did you have?

I had two daughters.

What are their names?

I have two daughters, Renee--

Renee.

--and Paulette.

--and Paulette?

Yes, Paulette. They're French names.

Lovely names.

Yes.

Did you ever return to Belgium?

No.

You've never gone back?

Never have we been back and my husband never went back to Czechoslovakia. My sister went back.

To see that it was a very small street?

Yeah, right.

[LAUGHING]

And we thought it was a big street. She said, my God, everything was so small.

Yeah.

No, she went back with her son. She wanted to show him where we had lived in Belgium and the school we went to. She wanted to show him.

Yeah.

And that's it. I never went back.

Are there things that you would like to say at this point? Because we've come close to the end of our interview. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Well, I was lucky. We were lucky. Then we had, like I said, a wonderful marriage.

He was a wonderful husband. So we were living-- and we had two daughters. Then we had four grandchildren.

And their names?

Their names, the grandchildren, the oldest one is Jordan. And that's Renee's son and Rachel. She's the one that's in some papers, too, Rachel.

And then I have-- Paulette has Summer Joy was born June 21. And then she has Tony. And then I have great-grandchildren.

You have great-grandchildren?

Yeah. I've got a great-grandchildren. We're 68 years married. So anyway, so I have two great-grandchildren by Rachel, that's Renee's daughter. And three from the other daughter.

Well, that's quite a clan.

Three? No, only two. Come on, I'll remember this. Hudson and-- no. There are only two there, Joshua, Hudson.

And that's it? Two by her, too. Why did I give an extra child there?

Why not?

[LAUGHING]

No. And that's it.

Well, you founded quite a family here from the families that you--

We came alone, the two of us with my mother. And then I was lucky to find Nate. And there's a lot of other stories, but it's too late already for this.

But let me tell you, in one interview, like I said, one can't fit it all in. But it's important to get the most important parts.

Right.

Is there something you would like your grandchildren and great-grandchildren to know about your experience, about what you went through, how you endured it, how you came out of it? Is there some message--

I came out of it a lot because of my mother, she helped with everything, and my husband. I have to be thankful for them. And we're happy that we had a beautiful family. And I'm very grateful.

And I am very thankful and grateful to God that after all that we went through-- and we hope nobody has to go through this again from our family or any family. And hope they have a wonderful life.

And I'm happy that I had a chance to have this interview with a really lovely interviewer and young man--

Thank you. Thank you for the compliments.

--photographer.

[LAUGHING]

So I'm trying to think of something more wise to say.

You did fine. You know, that is about as-- those are the things that are meaningful. That is what's meaningful for people, the family that they know, the life that they had.

My children are very happy that we're doing this, both my daughters. They're so grateful. They said, I'm very happy that you're doing this. They want to have for the children, for the future grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, that they'll have some kind of a memory of their parents.

Well, the gratitude goes both ways. Because through your story, we get a little bit more of the historical record of what happened at that time and what people endured, how they survived. And how they stayed human. And that's sometimes the hardest thing to do in such circumstances.

It's hard. But like I said, I had good, good, wonderful support from a very wonderful mother and my husband. And I had wonderful good children, far away.

Well, they'll see this. They'll see this.

They could see this on the internet, they said.

Eventually, it will be there. Eventually, it will be there. So what we'll do right now is I will conclude the formal part of our interview. And then we'll start again and show a few photographs and ask you to explain what they are.

The pictures?

Yeah. But before we do that, I will formally conclude the interview.

OK.

OK. And that is this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Weinberger on June 28, 2018 in Lawrence, New York. Thank you.

And thank you. Thank you for everything that you did.

[LIGHT APPLAUSE]

So tell me, who is the lovely lady in this photograph? This is my mother.

Helene?

My wonderful mother, Helene Heller [? Friedland. ?]

OK. And about when was this photograph taken?

This was taken after she came to the United States.

And about how old would she have been?

She was-- we came here in 1946. She might have been in her 40s, maybe, 30s even.

OK. Very, very lovely.

Early 40s.

OK. OK. Thank you very much.

And tell me, who is the lovely lady in this picture?

That's me.

That's yourself.

Myself before I was married and before I was engaged, just before.

But still taken in the United States?

Pardon me?

Taken in the United States, a photograph taken in the United States?

Oh, yes, yes, yes. I came here when I was 15.

OK.

This was, I was about, probably around 17 1/2.

OK. And that's Elizabeth Heller.

That's right. Elizabeth Heller.

To become Weinberger.

Right.

OK. Thank you. And tell me, who is this a photograph of?

This photograph is of my husband, Nathan Weinberger-- but we weren't married yet-- and of myself, at that time, Elizabeth Heller.

So you're about 17 and 1/2, 18 years old, something like that at that point, two young people here in New York City.

In New York City.

OK. Thank you. You're

Welcome.

Ready?

Yeah.

All right. Tell me, who is this a photograph of?

This photograph is of my husband, Nathan Weinberger, and his younger brother, Alexander Weinberger, who never came back from the Holocaust. He was killed.

OK. So your husband's story was is that he was killed on the death march--

Yes.

--out of Auschwitz. And Alexander is the darker haired brother on the left. And Nathan is the lighter haired brother on the right.

Correct. OK. Thank you.

So tell me, what is this a photograph of?

This is a photograph of the children next to Vance, where we were hidden during the war, is Christian children. And it's in 1941 and by the pool.

In Vance?

On the outskirts of Vance, yes.

OK. So this is one of those excursions that they took you on?

No, no. This is where we lived.

Oh, this is where you lived?

Yes.

OK. What a beautiful place.

It was beautiful.

Yeah. OK. Thank you. OK.

Tell me who is this a photograph of?

This is a photograph, a very important photograph to me. This is a lady called Tante Ida. We used to call her Aunt Ida.

Because she was the one, the main person in the home where we were hidden as Christian children during the war. And she saved us a lot of aggravation and misery. She was a wonderful, wonderful human being.

Those are two children that were hidden, too, during the war.

But not you?

Not us, not me, no, different children.

Do you remember Ida's last name?

Tante Ida Wexler.

Wexler? So Tante Ida Wexler.

Yes. OK. Thank you.

OK. And tell me what is this a photograph of?

This is a photograph of myself. And this was taken at Christmas time, I think. Because I was an angel because I was hidden as a Christian girl by the home where I stayed during the war, the ones that saved us.

Yeah. Do you remember putting on the angel wings? Do you remember the costume and the event?

Somebody put it on for me in Vance. And this was right next, I think, was close to the pool someplace in the forest, where they took this picture.

OK. Thank you.

You're welcome.

OK. And tell me what is this photograph of?

This photograph is of my mother and myself and my sister. And this strange child in the middle that, when she went to Czechoslovakia for a visit in 1936 to visit our grandparents.

OK. So this is that visit you told me about during your interview, where you first visit your mother's parents and then you visit your father's?

This is, I think, my father's parents.

OK. And it is your mother standing there with a huge smile. And you're the larger child in white to the left. Then the middle child is the one that we don't know. And the littler one in white is right next to your mother. And that's Rosa.

My sister Rosa.

OK.

Yes.

OK. Thank you very much.

You're welcome. And tell me who is this lovely person in this photo?

This lovely person is my wonderful sister Rosa when she was a young girl, a young person. And she was with me during the whole Holocaust. We were together when we were hidden as Christian children in the home.

And this is when she's already in the United States with you?

Yes. She's now in the United States. And I miss her terribly. She was a wonderful human being.

And she passed away two years ago. And a big loss for me, I miss her very, very much. And I loved her very much.

Well, this is a lovely tribute to her. Thank you.

She was-- we were all together during the whole time of the bad times of the Holocaust.

I'm sure that that was the reason why you were able to survive, is that you had her there.

That's true.

And she had you. OK. Thanks.