Interview with: Sylvia Feld
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Harper: Good morning.
FELD: Good morning.

Harper: Can we begin by you telling us your name, your maiden name, the date and place of your birth?
FELD: OK. My name is Cesia Feld, and my maiden name was Cesia Lipcyc, Sylvia Lipcyc [spells out last name]. I was born in Zloczew in Poland, in a smaller town. I come from a family of ten children. There were two brothers and eight sisters. If you want, I can name my sisters and my brothers.

Harper: OK. First can you tell me about your mother and father? Who they were, their names?
FELD: Yes.

Reich: You don't need to talk to the camera.
Harper: Yes, talk to me.
FELD: My father was Avrom Szmul Lipcyc. He was a very Orthodox person. He tried very hard for the city to do all the things with his heart and feelings. My mother was Sarah Lipcyc. She came from a family of five people, and my father came from a family of five people, too. Four sisters, and he was the only older brother. His mother and father were born in a smaller town. The father died young, just from a small sickness, and he had to take over to be the leader of the family. In the meantime he married, and we were a family of ten children. He had a lot of obligations to provide. He was not satisfied just with his family, he wanted to do for the whole town a lot, like to make shuls, and [inaudible] in the schools. He was on the school board, on the board of taxes. He was a very great person. He was 47 when the war broke out, 1939. That's all.

Harper: Before you start the war, can you spell the name of the town you are from?
FELD: Yes, Zloczew [spells outs]. This is the town that we lived in.

Harper: And what bigger city is that near?
FELD: Oy [sighs], it was not far from Lodz.

Harper: OK.
FELD: It was a smaller town around it. And my parents were in a leather business.

Harper: Your mother, where was she from again?
FELD: She was from Zdunska Wola. She was from another town.

Harper: Would you be able to spell that?
FELD: Zdunska [spells out] is one name, and the other name is Wola [spells out]. Zdunska Wola. It was between both towns [Zdunska Wola is between Zloczew and Lodz], one town after the other one, not far from each other.

Harper: Do you remember your grandparents?
FELD: On my mother's side the grandparents I don't. And from my father's the grandparents — my name is after my grandfather; when he died I was born — I just had a grandmother. That's all that I grew up with, just with one grandmother.

Harper: And where did she live?
FELD: She lived in the town where my parents used to live. She was living with her other four daughters in the same town, and year by year we went to visit her. We loved her with all our hearts. We were brought up in a nice home. I appreciate every memory that I have. My parents had a really beautiful bringing up, the whole family.

Harper: You said your father was in the leather business?
FELD: Yes. He was in export and import, sending leathers. They finished up shoes to the border of Germany. And my parents made a very beautiful living in comparing to the city. We were rich people.

Harper: Was it a factory or just a shop?
FELD: No, we had people who worked for us, not a factory. The town didn't have any factories. Just the shoes that they made — the upper, the lower — they put together and we put in boxes. My parents mailed it, and on top of this we had a big store.

Harper: You said you had a lot of brothers and sisters. Can you tell me their names?
FELD: Yes. The first born was a sister, Blima Rifka. Shall I spell out the name?

Harper: There's quite a lot of them, so only if you want to.
FELD: Yes, it's ten names. It's Blima Rifka, going to look silly to spell everything. The second sister was Luba, then Lillian, and later came the third one, a brother — in Europe the parents were waiting for a son all the time — and his name was Israel. Later I had another sister, Tova. The fifth one was me. My name was really — my grandfather's name was Cvi, and in the Jewish religion, if a girl was born, then we could switch it, like from Cvi to Cvia. It was the same name. They called me at home Cvia, after my grandfather. After me was born a boy, my brother. Then they called him Cvi, so. This was six children, and later we had four other girls — Nacha, Golda, Mottel, and Naomi. Naomi they took from the Jewish religion because she was born on Shavuos, and so they took this name. My younger sister was just, when the war broke out, from between four and five years old. That's about it.

Harper: I'm sorry. Can you tell me the year you were born again?

FELD: I was born in 1923, on the 25th of May.

Harper: Can you describe the neighborhood you lived in and your house or apartment that you lived in?

FELD: When it was the war in 1914, my parents already were married at that time. They were in business, and my father did a lot of business. After the war, then there was an exchange of the money. By the end of the war, then he bought a big apartment house with a lot of tenants, 40 or 50 tenants at that time. And as soon as the war finished, then the guy who sold the place, then the money wasn't worth it, so we became very rich. This was like a whole street. In the front were three stores, and later was a whole street. We had a lot of land, and my father's ambition was to make a Beis Yaakov. You know what a Beis Yaakov is?

Harper: Tell the camera.

FELD: A Beis Yaakov is a special Jewish school for Jewish children. I know he didn't get paid for it. He honored this. He brought a teacher from a big town, and the teacher was living in our house. Like a child, I never knew that she was a stranger; we loved her. My parents never took from her for room and board. This was his ambition, just to do a lot for the town. He was a very great person.

Harper: So you lived in a house?

FELD: Each time I talk about it, then I can't bury my tears because I loved so much my parents [cries]. Yes, we lived in a big house because we could afford it, and it was ten children to raise. My father tried very hard to educate us. When my brother was just 11 years old, he sent him in a very high school. They sent him out for [school] because our town was smaller than that high school, and it cost a lot of money to give him the best education. He was very great; he took plenty care of us. From everybody, from all my family, I just have left one sister — her name is Nacha; this is the name that we called her — and my brother Israel. This is the three of us left from all of us. My father had in his family four sisters, and he was the only brother. My mother had three brothers, and there were three sisters — there were six children — but we don't have anybody left from the family from the generations, from their kids. It's just like one cousin, that's about it.

Harper: Do you remember the name of the street that you lived on?

FELD: Where we lived? You know in Europe then there was — the name was Rennick. Rennick means — it's hard to explain it. Like the middle of the town. This is where we lived.

Harper: Was your neighborhood — were there Jews and gentiles?

FELD: Yes. The Jews and gentiles worked together. We didn't know from another thing special. That's why my father gave his effort for free; he didn't get paid for that. Like he was on the tax committee, to pay taxes. He went once in two weeks for a big convention, and he tried every person to put whatever they could do it, and how to respect. Some people were widows and they couldn't pay money. He was working this for free. He liked to be with the gentiles together.

We had our schooling separate. We went to a Hebrew school separate. In the morning from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. we went to public school. In Europe usually dinner was 2:00 p.m. So by 2:00 p.m. they have dinner, and after this we went to the Hebrew school. At night we did our homework, whatever had it down, but little is good with the gentiles [?].

Harper: Did you have gentile friends?

FELD: Yes. Our house was rented a lot from gentile and Jewish, didn't matter. Whoever came was fine. Was no discrimination. There was not such thing because we didn't want to be discriminated. After all that I come from Poland, it was not my country, it was their country. Jewish people they used to say doesn't belong in Poland, belongs in Palestine, to Israel. So that's the way life was. We had to make the best of life.

Harper: What language did you speak in your house?

FELD: We spoke Jewish, but we had to know Polish, the same thing like in the United States English, because you have to live with them and in business, in everything. You had to talk this language. But at home to the parents we talked Jewish because the two schools was very important. The Hebrew school and the other school was very important. We had to do both things.

Harper: You mentioned your father was very active. He was also active in the Jewish community?

FELD: And how! Most Jewish people when they belong to the big society, then they had special hats, a fur hat, and my father possessed this. And to the biggest rabbis he had conventions, and he went to them. And this is what I said before. We built a Jewish school for girls in our house because we had more land. We could afford it. The same thing, then we built a shul. We put up a public shul for praying, for davening, and all those things. He did more even for Jewish, but he wants to do it for the gentiles too a little bit, not to show that he just cared for the Jewish people. But the first thing in his heart, it was Jewish.

Harper: Was he involved in any secular political activities?

FELD: What do you mean by "secular"?

Harper: Any non-Jewish — like local city government.

FELD: This is what I said. When he was involved with tax, this meant the whole city because the whole city of people, if you pay tax, every person he had to know. This is what I mentioned before — he had to stand up for some people. When a husband died, and a woman was left with children and she couldn't afford it, then he had to mention about it and fight for it, they should give her a chance of life. He was involved with the whole city. He was involved even in school, too, because he came to school meetings, not for the children, but for the city. He was a very involved person.

One thing, then my mother tried to not just raising the children — because we have really a built-in [building?] maid and we have two people working for the apartments,

too — she had to be in the business because my father was so busy. Going and coming and all this, they need him. There was no other way then she had to be in the business, to try the business should not fall apart.

Harper: Was your mother involved in any political activities?

FELD: No, she just left it to him. They were really — both were [a] nice couple, loving; my mother gave a lot of respect [to] my father with all her love. She tried to raise ten kids and to give to the children understanding and respect in talking, all those things. And being all day long, the businesses in Europe were open like from seven in the morning till seven at night. You couldn't do your own hours; 7:00 p.m. if you didn't close the business, you had to pay a fine. A policeman came and you paid for it. Every place in every country had their own rules. My mother was a quiet person. My father was very lively.

Harper: Were you or your brothers and sisters involved in any groups, like a Zionist group, for example, or anything like that? Sports club?

FELD: You mean before the war?

Harper: Yes.

FELD: Before the war my parents were very religious. We were involved in the Jewish schools, in the fiankis [?] we were very much involved. This was our life. Zionist, all those things, not much. But my brother — the older one who is left now, his name is Israel — later on he switched to be more like a Zionist. When he was 17 years old, he wanted to go to Israel, he wanted to leave Poland. But there was a law, if you leave before you go to the army, then you can never return anymore to the country. He was afraid that he wouldn't be able to see his family anymore because we did not plan to go there. We had our lives there. So then he decided when he was 20 — because he should go to the army by 21 in Europe — he decided before he was not even 20 to register himself to go to the army, then afterwards he can go to Israel, and he can come back anytime he wanted.

He was in the army for two years and was supposed to finish the army a month after the war broke out. Then the war came along in September, 1939. And the fact was that his whole patrol what he was with them, they all got killed. And they shot the horse. They shot a bullet at him. In the meantime, the horse that he was riding on — the horse got the bullet, and he fell underneath the horse. Then the horse covered him up, and afterwards he crawled out, and he was alive. The war was finished from the beginning. This was not finished, just this — it was just the beginning. 19 September, 1939. Then start the whole thing.

Harper: Before we go on to that, I want to finish about your family. You said your parents were religious.

FELD: Very religious.

Harper: Can you tell me, did you keep kosher? Explain for us what that meant in your family.

FELD: First of all, in Europe kosher was — to 95% Jewish people — was not such thing that we could mix like in the United States, to me is a strange thing. My parents were very kosher. It was like — holidays and Shabbos, God forbid, at the smallest thing — being a child, then I had a special little brush to brush my hair because I couldn't comb my hair with a comb that I combed every day. Such small little things. So we had to follow the religion. But from kosher, then more like 95%. Everybody was eating kosher in Europe.

Harper: Did your father pray every day?

FELD: Every day. That's right, that's a good question. He got up in the morning, then first thing he went to shul. He makes his prayer. Later he came home, he opened the store, and the store was open to 7:00 p.m. At 7:00 p.m., when he closed the store, then first he went to shul to finish up the *mincha maariv* prayer, and after he finished up then he came home. And he didn't just pray, but at night, when the kids went to bed and when it was quiet in the house, he would sit down for two hours and study over and over. Judaism is never done; you can do it all your life, and it's never done. This is what he did. I have three children, two sons and a daughter. One son is very religious, and he has the name from my father. And my son keeps saying, "I hope to God that I am going to turn out at least a little bit on the way like Zayde, like your father." And I hope, too.

Harper: Did you ever go to shul?

FELD: I go every Saturday.

Harper: No, when you were growing up.

FELD: You mean when I was a child? Before …?

Harper: Yes, how often did you go?

FELD: Before, my mother went every Saturday to shul. My father went every day, but my mother went every Saturday to shul. It happened that my biggest pleasure — I said I'm going to do anything the parents going to tell me, I'll listen to everything just so she should give me the pleasure that I can go with her. I loved to go. Came Saturday and I was holding on to her, and happens then the Judaism and everything. I didn't do it because they told me to do it; I loved it. The fact is before the war started, then I was registered to go to a big city, in college, to take up to be a Jewish teacher, a Hebrew teacher because this is what I loved. And I can *daven* today better like a man. I really do. So then I loved it.

Harper: Do you remember where the synagogue was? In the town?

FELD: Yes. First of all, one synagogue was in our house, Orthodox synagogue, and another one was just a street further. But the biggest shul — because it was not a big town, the town had one big shul — was just like a quarter of a mile, a few blocks, and we went all the time there. The rabbi from the shul was the best friend to my father because he depended a lot on him. Yes.

Harper: I know you mentioned this schooling, but can you go in to more detail? You said you went to a Polish school in the day and then to a Hebrew school?

FELD: Yes. To Polish school I went in the morning till 1:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m., and then I was home. And from 2:30 p.m. for three and half hours, then I went to Hebrew school. I studied both, and had to make good marks in both schools. But later in life, when I finished high school, then I tried to study a little bit more in Hebrew because I wanted to go to college in Hebrew. I wanted to become a teacher because the teacher was living in our house and I took examples from her. We loved her very much. I felt she was great, and I wanted to be like she was.

Harper: Did you get to go to the university?

FELD: I couldn't do it because I was supposed to go after the holidays, and the war broke out before Rosh Hashanah, before the holidays. It was just like a matter of a month or two.

Harper: And where would you have gone? Where was the university?

FELD: Krakow. It was a big city and a big university. My parents already registered me.

Harper: Can you tell me the general relations between Jews and gentiles in your town? You said it was good on your level, but as a whole was there a lot of antisemitism? Or did you notice any antisemitism?

FELD: Yes, there was a lot. My father was on the committee. He tried to work it out. We should be friends with them because another way wouldn't work, to live in the same town. But they didn't like the Jewish people; whatever they could, let's do it, then they did. But I remember one thing, being a child — I don't know I should tell the story? Yes? Being a child, then for us is the holiday Shavuos. And they had the same holiday, but it's a different name, I don't remember the name exactly. But in Europe they had a different way; it's hard to explain to American children how this was. They used to walk around in the city because the city wasn't big, and they had a canopy like a *chuppa*, you know what I mean?

Harper: Yes.

FELD: The same canopy they were holding. The priest was in the middle, and four people were holding. And this was years before, maybe when I was ten years old, but you can't forget a fact like this. You can't forget a name like this. So then when they were walking around the city, then they said that the Jewish people from the windows poured poison on their *baldachim* [canopy], and this wasn't true. And they made a riot, at night. After this they made a riot. They had guns. They took, not so much guns, but they took iron posts, and they were knocking out the windows in our city. They just wanted to destroy the whole city.

Then the police in Europe were wearing high boots, and a pair of high boots by us was 100 Polish zlotys. This was a lot of money, and they couldn't afford this. Then my father was sharing with them. He gave them — every few months another policeman came over and we, from the leather store, we took the measurements and we made them a pair of boots, for free and they didn't pay it. So they had respect for

him. For the respect, then, they felt he should protect himself, and to see nothing can happen. By us nobody could carry a gun in Poland. Just the police; this was the rule. But they gave my father a gun, and they showed him how to shoot it. The gun was always under a lock at home — no children could touch it. And that time, when there was this riot, then my father, from the window, he showed them that he has a gun. So then they escaped. But they ruined a lot of the city. And afterwards we tried to make it up with them because we didn't have a choice.

Harper: What year was this?

FELD: 1939 was the war, then maybe this was like ten or 12, 15 years before. Yes. Because I still remember. When the war broke out, then I was like 18 or 19. But I still remember because the scaring was so bad. In the house we had a basement. My father threw all the kids in the basement because we were afraid if they break in they can kill us. He put a rug, and he put on top of the rug a table, and then they shouldn't know this was a basement underneath. I remember; I was there. This is not a story. This is the truth.

Harper: And was this the only incident of violence that you saw?

FELD: Yes. Because they took care later on that, because they felt can't exist, can't go on like that. Then a lot of people start making a committee and try to see what's happening. I didn't know, but after the war I found it out, was *Volksdeutsche* [ethnic German], too, in Poland. Germans, and they lived in Poland. They were against Jewish people, too. Then after the war they talked to the officer fuhrers [?] and to the German army, then like to kill the people. Hitler's idea was the whole thing. This is what he said on the first speech, that he is going to try all his hardest to make *Judenrein* [clean of Jews]. This means clean up the whole world from Jewish people. *Judenrein*, this is what he wanted.

Harper: When did you first hear about Hitler?

FELD: Two years before, when the town was smaller, and Poland was like a poor town — poor towns, not like the United States. Then people didn't have so much radios, but some people had a radio. Then people liked to listen to the radio. We heard that in Germany there was a new leader there, and all those things. But on the other hand, why my parents didn't escape — because some people already went to Russia, went to other places, to cover themselves because they lived through the war, 1914. At that time, nothing happened to the civilian people. A war was a war, and the civilian people were living the normal life. The fact is, my father at that time did business — and this is what I mentioned before — he bought this big apartment house. Then they felt this is going to be a war. It has nothing to do with the private people; it has to do with other countries. That's why he didn't escape, because we had money to run out from Poland to go to anyplace else. But this was their figuring, and I feel that's why we lost it.

Harper: Did you discuss Hitler in your family, or was there a concern for your safety?

FELD: No, we didn't discuss because we didn't understand much. We didn't went into it because it was not politics. What they going to run from a small town if Germany or something won a war? Our city was very close to the border of Germany. The war

broke out, and one hour later they already were in our city. They threw bombs and the whole city was in flames. Everybody ran out from the city. We had to go further because we were scared. We heard about it at the last minute what is going to be. And three days later, on our return, then we came behind, a city further than here we saw the flames from our city. There was no place where to go anymore because this city was really on the border. With the plane it was five minutes they were in our city.

Harper: Were there ever refugees that came from Germany before the invasion?
FELD: Yes.

Harper: Did you have any idea of what was going on in Germany from other people?
FELD: I was young. I don't know. Parents if they talked something then — Europe was a different style. They didn't share with children. Whatever they had to talk to themselves. We knew then a few families — it was not a big city; a few families, maybe three or four or five came from Germany. They don't want the Jewish people there, so some of them went to Poland. And the fact was, now, when I'm married to my husband, then he had family in Germany living and they went to the United States. They did smarter instead of coming to Poland because the people who came to Poland from Germany, the Jewish people, I don't think that they're alive. I don't think so. Maybe is left a tenth of a percent or something. But our town where I lived was 99% wiped off. It's 50 years after the war, and I'm searching to find somebody from our town, to see somebody. It's a few people just in Israel. I have a friend who moved before the war broke out and a few more people, maybe seven, eight people, and that is about it. He wiped out very quick towns. He did a good job.

Harper: So there was really no discussion among your family about leaving?
FELD: No, because they took in consideration. This is what they did, and I know it because the talked about it when there were already in the ghetto. They could never dream that something like this can happen in the world. And we lived through a war. People who didn't live through a war, they didn't know what a war was. But they lived through a war, 1914 to 1918, four years they lived through a war. To the civilian people nothing happened, just people who were fighting, and this was something should never happen again. No, they didn't talk about leaving.

But when we were transferred, in a ghetto already — before we came to Lodz; it was another ghetto before in another town — and my brother was out from the army at that time. So then he was considering to leave. He didn't want to stay there. My father saw him once in town, then a German soldier came up to him and beat him up very hard, and he got very sick afterwards. He shaved off his beard, and my father was very depressed, and he felt then like going someplace or something. He didn't have the strength because everything was a big shock to him.

Then my bother, the older one, Israel, he talked to my younger brother who was very young at that time, maybe 15 or 16 years old. He said that he is going to leave, and he went to the border from Poland and Russia. And the name of this place was Bialystok. When they went there, he tried to help himself. Then it was quiet and nice,

and he bought a few things and tried to sell a few things, and he makes a few dollars then he could make a living. And he saw that he couldn't go on. Then he left my brother there and he said he's going back for the rest of the family, and he should stay there in the meantime, that he should wait for him.

So when he left back then the ghetto got worse and worse, and many times they took out people from the ghetto — in the smaller town; I'm not talking about Lodz now — and they hanged them, in the middle of the street. One day he was walking in the ghetto, then they caught him and my brother and they put him in a jail over there. They beat him up terrible. My father was taken before. They caught him, too. Anybody who]was walking in the streets and they didn't know them, from any sides they came and grabbed you. They were hitting and beating up for three or four days. They were laying there without food, without anything. At that time he couldn't return anymore out from the ghetto because they would kill him. They would hang him. Then my brother was left by himself, the younger one, was left by the Russian border, and another one was still in the ghetto.

Afterwards they divided and they started doing all kinds of things from the ghettos. They took younger people, and they put them in a concentration camp. The rest of the people they wanted to put into Lodz, in another ghetto. But in the meantime, they throw out everybody from their homes. We were standing in the middle of the street, and they looked us up and they said, "You go this way. You go the other way." What they knew where you go? If they divided, they took families like ours with my parents and my sisters, the other ones, because my brother already wasn't home. We were standing together, and the first thing that they did they grabbed you and divided you: "Here. There. There. Here. Here." We didn't know where we were going.

So they grabbed my father one side and they put my mother the other side. When my mother saw that my father is on one side and she's on the other one, she tore her dress off her body and cried. She couldn't take it that she shouldn't be with my father. She started walking out from the line and running to him. Then came a German soldier and took the rifle off his shoulder, and gave her a knock over the head. She fell down, and later on she picked herself up and ran. Then he made with his hand like this — because I was standing and waiting, and I saw everything — and he makes with his hand like this, to see then she's running, then he felt you go to dead anyway. He knew where the other people went. Those people went to the concentration camps. These people went to Auschwitz, and they put them in the crematorium. We never hear from them, nothing. We were divided.

The younger people, they put us in the ghetto, in Lodz. This ghetto was a strong ghetto with no food — they just provided a little bit — and hard work. They put you in factories, ammunition factories, factories making straw shoes, sitting with needles and sewing till your hand was busting and your fingers swelled up. It was very tough. We tried very hard. I keep thinking sometimes how I lived through. It's just unbelievable; it's a miracle. So to this ghetto my oldest sister came — the first one — I came, and my younger sister, Nacha. Three of us, we came to this ghetto, to the

Lodz ghetto. This was the big ghetto. The other ones already they then shuffled someplace else.

But when my mother was standing in line, then my younger sister — four, four and a half years old — she was very scared. She ran underneath my mother's dress, and she was holding on to her and hiding herself. So then he looked over back and forth, the German armies with the rifles. He saw then my mother looked so fat that he felt that she is pregnant. He grabbed her out. In the meantime, my sister was underneath. When she walked out he grabbed her by the hair and threw her on a truck. Then right away the blood was flushing from her mouth and the head was hanging over [weeps], and probably she was dying soon. I had three younger sisters. They all went together, and this was the end of it. I never knew from them anymore.

And the oldest and me, and my other sister, we went to the ghetto. When we went to the ghetto, then we were there a year, a year and a half at the ghetto, struggling, and my older sister she couldn't fight anymore. Then she got sick and she had a lung disease or something. One day they resolved the Lodz ghetto, and they said they were going to send us to work. All the time, it was lies and lies. They never stopped lying for a minute.

Harper: If I could interrupt you?
FELD: Yes, please.

Harper: I want you to tell us about — do you want to take a break?
FELD: No. A second, yes [sounds of sighing and crying].

[Pause]

Harper: Do you want to stretch your legs?
FELD: No, that's fine. So you have all day long time for me?

Voice: Yes. We're very serious about this so we would like to ….
FELD: Yes, but this really looks like the beginning is very slow, because we don't go too fast, and this can take hours.

Harper: That's OK. Can you tell me about the German invasion, specifically what happened, in more detail? How you were transported to the ghetto, which ghetto you went to first, and things like this.
FELD: First when we left our town — we left because we were scared, and afterwards they bombed the whole town.

Harper: In airplanes?
FELD: No. This was in our city. Then we went to other cities, and when we went to the next city, then the next city wasn't touched so we had a little bit comfortable where to go and find a place where to be.

Harper: Were you able to take things with you?

FELD: You try to bury things like candelabras and all those things. We tried to bury because we felt that we were going to be back. This was on a Friday afternoon. We were going to take candles for lighting Shabbos. It was cooked dinner already for Shabbos; we took some food with us and this was it. That's how a Jew left. A few months before the war broke out, there was a law that if you had money in the bank, you couldn't take out the money from the bank. They just allowed you to take out a hundred dollars in one time. A hundred dollars in one day, a hundred dollars in another day. You weren't left with money anyway in the house because they knew what went on, but the private people didn't know what went on. They didn't know what is going to be. So the real question, you want to know how the ghetto was?

Harper: Tell me how you ended up exactly in the ghetto.

FELD: They pushed anyway Jewish people to one place. They didn't want that we could be all over the city. This was impossible. Then they made one street, and they said all the people in this street have to leave. Behind this street, there was an army. Soldiers were standing there, and if you wanted to get out from there was very easy for them. They shot you in a minute. Was no problem. So then who wants to risk to get out? Everybody thought tomorrow it was going to be finished and we were going to live. The food was a big problem because you couldn't get food much into the ghetto. Then the hunger was, and people right away were like after months — dying and dying. People were dying.

Harper: I want to know more detail. This second town you escaped to, where did you stay? How long were you there? Then did you go to another town?

FELD: Yes. I think you can't understand this, but I'm repeating this. They just took the next town. They took one street, the Germans took one street. It was 10 or 20 streets. They said this is the street and this is the ghetto. This is where you're going to live, and this is where you're going to be. Then they put two families in one room, they put them in basements, and here, whatever. They squashed the people together, whatever it is, and the rest of the town was empty. You couldn't go there. And behind those streets — this is what I tried to repeat again — was army there, watching us. If somebody escaped out from the ghetto to grab some food or something, they risked their life. One time they could win, maybe the soldier was sleeping or doing something, and the next time they shot. They wanted to show how everything is under control. Then they took out people from the ghetto, like five people, and they put them in the other street, and they put out — how you call this, to hang?

Harper: Gallows? Noose?

FELD: Yes. Something, yes. They hanged them, and after 10 minutes they were hanging them up by the head. Then everybody saw what is going on, and you were scared.

Harper: Where was this?

FELD: This was in the smaller town, yes. Just like a day or two they knew it's going to be a ghetto. So then some people ran away; they went to the Russian border. At that time

my brother went away. But after the ghetto was done already, before we came to the other ghetto, to Lodz, to the big ghetto, then he came back. This is what I said. He came back, and he couldn't escape anymore. Then they put him in a concentration camp, and they put me and my sister and my older sister, the three of us, they put us in Lodz, in the big ghetto. The big ghetto was from all the cities, from Poland, together from all the cities. There were factories already, and you had to go once a week for your food, how you call this?

Harper: Rations?

FELD: Yes, with the card. This is what you get — bread, so many potatoes, and this and that. You had to live a whole week on it, and you had to go to work every day. If you didn't go to work, then we knew something could happen to you very soon, so everybody went to work.

Harper: How did you get to the Lodz ghetto?

FELD: We went by trains. They shuffled us.

Harper: And you were separated from your family at this time?

FELD: Right. They separated. This was their idea. This was their goal from the first minute, to separate the families. Usually people didn't realize it. The families were together, father, mother, children, everybody holding on to each other, because to whom [are] you going to hold on when you scared? To your parents, and they right away tear us apart. This is what they did right away.

When I was in the ghetto, in Lodz, they gave five people one room. When you had family or something, then they didn't mind because they took out a few leaders from the Jewish people, from Lodz, that they should help out to put the people in housing, how to do it. Then, if you registered yourself — "I have a brother, I have a sister, a brother-in-law" — then they make like .... We were five people together. I had two brother-in-laws and a sister, was three, and me and my younger sister, we were kids. It was five of us in one room. So then where do you sleep in one room? Was two two narrow beds, the rest were sleeping on the floor. That was good. Fine. We accept everything.

In the middle of that, they came to the ghetto very often, just to clean it up. They came in, they saw one, "Come on, come on." They start screaming and they took them downstairs and in ten minutes put it away. You really didn't know where he went. Or they put in concentration camps or they put them in crematoriums or something. My brother-in-law was with us. He came home from work. They make a riot from nowhere. We didn't know what's going on. They make a riot. They grabbed him by the collar. "Come on, *Jude*, go with us." They talk in German. OK. He didn't know. He had to go. He never came back anymore.

And this was the whole life, and the whole idea is for them, just with lies and with cheating, and one minute to the next one you didn't know where you are or what you were doing. You didn't know anything. So then we were a year and a half in this

ghetto. It was very tough, God knows. Every day they were taking dead people to the cemeteries. Every day people were dying in the streets because there was very little food — and how long? Some people were the sick ones, and some people a little bit older. A child is a little stronger. I could see it now. Why I survived, I don't know. I keep thinking back many times, in my dreams, how I survived.

Harper: I'd like to back up just a little bit, get some more details about the ghetto. Can you tell me what your daily life was like, what you did?

FELD: Yes. It's very easy. You got up in the morning, and whatever you have — a little potato, or a bite of bread — you ate, and you went to work. This was it. You had to go to work. Everybody was divided, what kind of work they did. You had to do it. Shuffle potatoes, or do dressmaking, or make shoes, or cook potatoes for a big crowd, anything to do it. Everybody had to go to work, didn't matter what. So when we went to work, then on your job, then they brought big kettles, and they divided soup for the workers. It was two little slices of potatoes and a thin little bit of soup. This was till you went home. By 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. you went home. You try to go to sleep. If you have something, then you eat. If you didn't, then you not. We were just a year and a half, and how come so many people died? How come so many people died? The ghetto, what we went into the ghetto, was not even a head left, after a year and a half, because there was no food. This is what they wanted to do. They didn't give us food.

Harper: Were you wearing a badge?

FELD: No, only we were wearing a star on the arm.

Harper: An armband?

FELD: An armband with a star, yes. Everybody was wearing it. That's all. Later was a decision, then they want to clean up the ghetto, and we have to leave. So there was no choice. To be honest, to tell my story, if I was brave or I was smart, I don't know. I can't give myself credit for nothing because was a little bit like good luck, too.

So my sister met a boy working together. She was working in a kitchen peeling potatoes all day long, and was there a guy and he was helping in other work. She met him, and they became friends. They talked, and in another few months the war was going to be over and maybe they going to get married. This guy had a mother, and the mother was not so young anymore. Maybe she was in the 50s. She was a sick woman, and they wanted to clean up the ghetto. They went house by house, every hole, every corner, everything to look, with dogs, to smell out if somebody's not left. So the woman — the son was at work, and she was dead. They took her out from bed and put her on the wagon, and the wagon went to the train to send her away to Auschwitz. Then he didn't want to stay there in the ghetto. He said if they send away his mother, he wants to go where the mother is. He didn't realize that the mother's going to the crematorium. He thought the mother went someplace to work or something.

And in the meantime, where I had my place, my apartment, on the top where the roof was — underneath the roof was a space, and I hid myself there. I said, "I don't want to go. I don't want to leave. I don't know what they do. They're probably killing

people." I lay down there, and I covered myself with a sheet of metal. They came to look every corner. They didn't see me, and I was lying there. Later on, my sister says to me that her boyfriend is leaving because of his mother and she's not going to let her boyfriend leave. She wants to go with him. She put me in a position. I lost the whole family. I didn't have nobody else. I said here my sister's going to go. I'm going to be here, and I don't think I'm ever going to see her again. Then I said, "Dear God, what should I do? I could be saved to lie there. In the meantime, if she wants to go, I can't do it." I said, "Are you sure?" and all those things. She said she didn't care for me. She wants to go with her boyfriend. She was young at that time, in her mind and everything. So then I said, "OK. Then I'm going to go, too." I came down, and I went together with everybody waiting to go to Auschwitz.

We didn't know then we were going to Auschwitz; they said we were going to go to work. After once there, they sent me to Auschwitz. Then we both were in Auschwitz. I was sitting there in Auschwitz, and right away they shaved us the head. They undressed us, naked. We were sitting on the ground, and the army they passed by — they such bastards — and I was so embarrassed. I was sitting like this, hiding my breasts and all those things and being ashamed. Then he took the rifle and gave me over the head. In German I understood what he was talking because Jewish is very similar to German: "What I have here? What I'm hiding?" I don't have a big stomach because if they saw somebody pregnant, then she didn't exist. In the meantime, we were sitting in Auschwitz on the ground. We felt they were going to recommend us to go for a job. The chimneys were burning the people, and they didn't have enough space there. We were sitting two nights and two days on the ground without a drop of water, shaved and naked, with everything, ready to go to the crematorium. Other people came from other ghettos, and they didn't have enough place where to put us.

Then they took us, those who were sitting there two days, and put us on a train, and they divided us in concentration camp. I went to Stutthof, the concentration camp. Women were separate and men were separate. We weren't together. There were three barracks, and the barracks didn't have any floors, nothing, just was ground. We were lying there 3,500 women, on the ground doing nothing in the beginning, very nothing. Just getting up at 5:00 a.m. and staying for [inaudible, must be something like roll call] like the soldiers, for an hour. It was bitter cold, especially in Poland if the weather is bad.

They gave us clothes with those stripes. They gave us like a dress or a little bit longer, whatever, and not a pair shoes, but like from a farm — farm boots, whatever you got, and this was the end of it. No jacket, no coat, no nothing, and standing there till you got blue. You couldn't move, and after that you went back and lying on the floor and waiting for 12:00 p.m. till they going to share the little bit of soup. Then everybody was standing in line with a little pot, and they pour you in a little bit of soup.

Harper: I need to interrupt you. I'm sorry. I need to go back to the ghetto to get more details. I hope that's OK with you.

FELD: Yes. I see you want to make a very long story, no?

Harper: Yes.
FELD: I tell everything.

Harper: Do you mind?
FELD: So long as I have strength I'm going to talk [laughs].

Harper: Were there any medical facilities that you saw in the ghetto? Was there a hospital?
FELD: Was not really hospitals. I can't even describe. Not much at all because they didn't care. My older sister, she had a cold, or later on a little bit of lung disease or whatever. They didn't give her anything, and she went on and on and on and had pneumonia. Then she got more sick. She couldn't move any more, and she was a young person, in the late twenties. She was dragged to the concentration camp because she was lying on the floor and the German consulate came, the *oberscharführer*. Then they took her right away to the crematorium because they want them to be sick. No, I don't think there was hospitals.

Harper: Do you remember the date when you arrived in the ghetto?
FELD: Some people remember. I don't know. I think it was before September, before the holidays.

Harper: Of 1940?
FELD: No. The ghetto or Auschwitz?

Harper: To the ghetto.
FELD: Oh, to the ghetto. To the ghetto it was 1940. I thought you meant to Auschwitz.

Harper: Oh, no. The ghetto ....
FELD: The ghetto, yes, then was '40. We were there a year and a half struggling in Lodz, in the big ghetto.

Harper: In the ghetto, were there any religious observances? Did anybody try to create a shul or anything like this?
FELD: You must be kidding. That's the last question. Oh, God. No. Was just for surviving. That's all what you care. People don't realize, in the world, what hunger means. They never, God forbid, should know what hunger means. If you're hungry, your life is nothing. I never knew. You just feel you're dying every second. You *are* dying every second. This is what hunger is. You just walked by in the street, and that's all what from the Jewish people; they didn't take army people there. We had to make our own life there. They took Jewish people, and they had the wagons. Maybe you've seen someplace a picture or something. Probably you saw already if you're interested in it. Then they put one person, two people in a wagon, and they throw in a hole, and this was it. You saw this all day long, all day long. Why did you see that? There was no food. That's why people were starving.

Harper: Who did you have contact with while you were in the ghetto?

FELD: I was lucky. Yes, this is what I should really talk about. Walking in the street, I found a guy who lived in our small town, a boyfriend to my second sister. When he saw me, then he hugged me and we both were crying very hard. The first thing he asked me was, is my sister alive? I said, "No, she's not. They took her away." We knew in a way if they took somebody away, then very rarely they're alive. I didn't count on my brother, either, but he was working in a concentration camp and he is alive. He was a manager in a big shop, clothing. When they undressed the people, everybody had to leave the whole clothes. People put in their clothes diamond rings in the collars because we thought we were going to be back, we going to still — because they right away searched you all over, and then you put some places. In the meantime they took off the clothes, they look off the shoes, they tore out from your mouth when you had gold ….

Harper: Fillings?
FELD: Not fillings ....

Harper: Teeth?
FELD: Crowns. They took out the crowns because anything was valuable. Then they brought shops [?] with clothes, and they had to search the whole clothes, and they put those things together. So then when he saw me, he told me that he is the manager of this place, and he said I want to work for him? I said, "Yes." He said, "You're going to have it OK. Don't worry. I'm going to try to bring you food or something." Because was a family man, because he loved my sister. Then I worked there. Later on, if was like a nice piece of clothes or something, then he closed his eyes and he made me take it. I took it, and I could sell it. Then I could get for it food. This is the way I managed a little bit in the ghetto to survive for myself and for my younger sister.

Harper: So there was …?
FELD: Shops, shops of the jobs. Ammunition shops, workshops, shoe shops. Why everybody was working so hard? They were working to kill us. You stay and work without food all day long. Everybody had to go to work. This was in Lodz ghetto. But it was not enough for them. They wanted to get rid of us because, first of all, they needed the dead bodies. The dead bodies they put in factories, they made soap from the bodies. From the skin they made, I hear. Then they made blankets with all kinds of things now I am finding out. They wanted to have the dead bodies. They didn't care.

Harper: So you were involved in the black market a little bit. You sold things on the street.
FELD: No, I didn't sell things on the street because if got one piece of material, then this wasn't on the market. I knew somebody, like a friend. She would like to buy it, then she bought from me. But he helped me out. He gave me a few dollars that I should buy an extra piece of bread or something.

Harper: Were you ...?
FELD: No market, no.

Harper: Were you aware of any resistance groups in the ghetto?

FELD: The guy who was leading the whole ghetto, his name was — right this minute I can't remember. He was the leader of the Jewish people. He was afraid of the Germans. The Germans gave him rules, and he was *very* tough to us, very tough. If you had, they call this [rations?] — you had so much to pick up once a week, like two pounds of potatoes, a small bread, and a little bit this and a little bit that, and this was for a whole week. This guy asked me if I can work in a kitchen because he had somebody, a friend, was adviser there in the kitchen. I said to him, "OK. I stay in your place, but my sister, she's crying every day when she comes home from work." Her hand it was swollen from pushing the needles in the straw to make shoes. I don't know if for the Germans, for whom they used the shoes, but we made hundreds of thousands of shoes like that. So then he gave the job to her to work in the kitchen. She was peeling potatoes. When she was peeling potatoes, then you eat a piece of raw potato, and sometimes you wash out a pot it's left a piece of potato. She could help herself to have a little bit more like somebody else. This is why when we went to Auschwitz then we still had a little strength to survive because we didn't work completely on a hunger strike in the ghetto.

Harper: You mentioned when they liquidated the ghetto, you were in hiding?
FELD: Yes.

Harper: But then you came out of hiding, is that right?
FELD: I came out from hiding because of my sister. Some people hid; there were 800 people left in the ghetto what they hide [who hid]. People talks that they going to clean up the ghetto, and if somebody going to be left, they're going to shoot them. But in the meantime, they need people to clean up after the Jewish people who lived in the homes. They wanted the city to be clean because they felt it's going to be their country; it's going to be everything theirs. So then they need the people. In the meantime, I married now my husband.

Harper: In the ghetto?
FELD: No, I didn't marry in the ghetto. After the war. But he told me the story, that he was from the ones who were left over in the ghetto. He was hiding himself, and he survived nicely. He wasn't in Auschwitz, and he wasn't in no place the whole time. We were in Auschwitz, in concentration camps and everything, and he was left in the ghetto and working there. With their work they found food and all kinds of things, and they could live.

Harper: Were you deported towards the end? Because there were many transports from the ghetto.
FELD: No, not by the end. I was maybe a year and a half or a little bit more in a concentration camp. In Auschwitz I just was two days. That's what I was, sitting and waiting for the results what they wanted to do with me. But they sent me out, and I was in the train, and I saw we have a Holocaust. And when they show the Holocaust [now], the trains, then each time I see this I fall apart because I see the train where I was there. They held us in the trains two days, packed in one wagon 50 people standing like fish each by each other. We couldn't move. We couldn't, excuse me, go

to the bathroom. We couldn't have a drop of water. We couldn't do anything. People just bent down and they were dead. When I see those trains — my sister fell apart that time. My older sister she got sick, and then I felt this is it. I lost her. When they dragged her out, she didn't live too long anymore. For two days, back and forth the train was going special. He just wanted that people — because the old ones in the crematorium couldn't work so much, and he didn't have so much space to put us away, the 6,000,000 Jews.

Harper: Could you tell me about your transport and arrival into Auschwitz in more detail?

FELD: No, I can't explain anymore because this is what I went with the train, and when we arrived there, then — we had those the clothes from the ghetto. It didn't matter what we had, we took it off. We went in to the washroom, they shaved off the heads, we had to go out on the ground, to sit on the ground, and the Germans went by and looked at us all the time. I didn't have even a stamp on my hand because they didn't consider us to send us away. They considered us to send us to the crematorium. But there was no space because when we came, an hour later another ghetto place came, and another. In Auschwitz it was not so much ground to sit there, and the oven was burning. Then they started sending out. After two days and two nights we were sitting there on the ground, they sent us out from Auschwitz to a concentration camp. And I was in Stutthof the whole time, till the last minute.

Harper: Do you know what year it was, the month and the day that you left Auschwitz?

FELD: I don't remember that because you didn't know whether you're alive or you're dead. You didn't care dates or something. But I know then I was in concentration camp over a year, a year and a half. Before I was liberated, they send us out from there, too, and other places, and I was working other places. But I know one thing, when the war for me end. May the 8th, I want to say, was when the war was finished. But Auschwitz I was just two days, and afterwards in Stutthof I was a year and a half. But I don't know the month.

Harper: Can you describe a typical day in the concentration camp, what time you got up, what exactly you did?

FELD: Yes, I can. From 5:00 to 6:00 a.m., middle of the night, we had to get out in the cold, in the rain, and the snow. Doesn't matter was icy or something, we were standing outside like soldiers, and they were counting us and just standing there. I had a bad experience there, too. Should I tell my experience, what happened to me? Usually when we were there in Stutthof, then they gave you every day a square piece of bread, maybe three quarters of an inch thick — this was the size — and a soup. This was for the whole day.

I decided I'm going to cut this piece of bread in half, and I'm going to leave it next day, an emergency. If I faint or something, then I should have it, like some people wants the dividends from the money. Then I make myself a little bag on my chest, and I put this piece of bread and I was holding on to it. In the morning when we were standing straight for an hour in the lines, it was the cold like an [appel?], and we were standing like this for an hour. This was  hanging on a string. I felt then it sliding down

through my body and falling down. When this was sliding down, to fall down, then I tried to bend down like this [demonstrates] and to pick it up. You saw what I did? Then I tried to pick it up, and the *oberscharfuhrer* — she was from [place name?], a young girl, maybe 27 or 20 years old. Five feet tall, that's all. Bitter like poison. I never met in my life such a bitter person. Always she held in her hand a piece of wood or a piece of iron to give you over the head, to hit you. Very mean. When she saw me from far away, then I bent down because I wanted to grab this piece of bread. Then she came over, and with it she picked up her foot and gave me two, three kicks in my left side. Meat on my body I didn't have. I weighed about 70 or 60 pounds.

So then right away she cracked my rib, and I fell on the ground and passed out. She said that they should drag me by my hands and feet into the barracks. This is where we were sleeping. There was three of them. I was lying there for three days. She punished me. I cannot have any food because when you want to have food, you have to go out and stay in line, for dividing. For a few days I couldn't get anything, and I felt this was the end of my life. I was going to die now. My sister was next to me and crying, and whatever she had, she had to divide with me. But she had to go to work. Another way they would punish her, too. Then I was left on the ground, in the barracks by myself for a few days.

I felt one day that I'm getting a little bit better, I could stand up already. So then I forced myself with all my strength because I was scared. Every few days somebody from the army came over and looked over every case, how you looked, and if he saw faces half dead, then they felt what she is doing here? She is not going to go to work anyway; she can't work. Then he says to the person, "We have other places like sewing things and other work things." Lies, just lies. "I have to transfer you someplace else." When he took people they never came back, and this was the end of it. This was Auschwitz. I was scared. If I'm going to lie there and he's going to come see me — whoever got sick a little bit, and was lying on the floor — you asked before the question — it was not such thing medication; it was not such thing, anything.

Then I said I'm going to go. The same day the guy came and I was out. If I would be there, then I don't know. Looks like to me, in my dream, that God wanted me to be alive, that I should bring a new generation. Thanks to God I have my children because I had so many times during those times, between life and death. It looks like God was with me, and I have to believe in Him. This thing I never forget. At night, it's just in front of my face and I keep thinking about then. I feel like repeating and talking to myself about it, this is what that time happened. He came and a few other people were there, and he took them away. He would have taken away me, too. But the end, I have another thing to say.

[End part 1; start part 2]

Harper: Can you tell me about your barrack mates, where they were from?
FELD: What you mean, the family?

Harper: The people who you were with, in your barrack, in the concentration camp, where were they from?

FELD: What they are now, or they're from where?

Harper: Where were they from originally?

FELD: Originally everybody was from Poland, from Germany, from all the towns, whatever, from Poland the most because we were on the border from Poland and Germany, and the concentration camps were there.

Harper: Did you make friends in the camp?

FELD:I In the camp, yes. Everybody was to each other like — you share. If you found in the ground a piece of carrot or something, you wiped off with your hands, and everybody gives a bite. If you had two friends or three friends, you couldn't eat by yourself because we knew — this is life and this is how we're going to die. Not 99%, but 101% of us, we knew we were going to die. Nobody talked of it, that we were going to survive. I had two very close friends who I was in concentration with them together, and happened a very bad story, a tough story with them. Can I talk about this?

Harper: Please.

FELD: After were liberated and we came home to Poland to see who was left — because you couldn't find anything that you knew and you wanted to see who of your family is left — we were sleeping together, and being together — I had two girlfriends and my sister; there were four of us. When they came home, then in the meantime came home his cousins and some family, too. They were in Poland a few weeks, and they let me know — one sister was like 21years old and another sister was 19; it was two sisters, and I was with my sister, too. Then we were four together. Then she let me know that she's getting married, and we should come to the wedding and all those things. Fine, we should make ourselves ready and everything.

In the meantime, we talked before about this question about antisemitism. The Pollacks knew that some Jewish people came home, and they were afraid that if Jewish people came home to Poland, then they were going to want their property back, and they're going to want what is left. Because after the Jews left, they make riots, and they start whatever they want in Jewish homes. They took out from the Jewish homes whatever they had. Furniture. Some people had fur coats. Some people had hidden things. All kinds of things, OK?

So when they came home, then one night they knocked out a window, and they came in the house with knives. Seven people were living in this place, my two friends, and some who they met from their town, and they killed them all. They cut their heads off. And this is not to forget anymore; to me was disturbing me more like my own sisters, because I didn't see what happened to my sisters. I knew then they were gone, but I lived with them in such bad times in concentration. We shared so together, the crying and everything. We hugged each other and cried nights. In there I felt then I have a new family, and the Pollacks killed them because they were afraid they were

going to want something back what they ever had. Yes, this was the stories. The stories never end.

Harper: In the camp you were in, was it a — did you make anything?
FELD: About what making?

Harper: Was there a factory? Did you do any work? What did you do during the day?
FELD: Yes. In the beginning, when we were lying there on the ground all day long, this was worse. But later on they found in the fields, in the country, then we should go, and then we went there and worked. We put potatoes from one spot to another one, some vegetables we were working. But they were watching us like life and death. God forbid that we should take a potato, our potato and eat it, because right away then they hit us and they give us over the head. There were all over, so many Germans. So then we were working. Going home, we went through a gate they touched us and checked that we didn't carry anything.

Then the older sister mine, she got sick. She couldn't go to work. She was lying still there in the barracks on the floor. I saw then day by day that she is dying because she was starving. When I went to work by a shop from these potatoes, then sometimes I said "*Oberscharfuhrer*, I want to go to the bathroom. OK?" I was hiding underneath my arm a piece of a raw potato, and I wiped it off and ate it. So then I could help myself; this was like feeding myself already. One time going home I said, "He's not going to find it. I'm going to put on my arm here two tiny little potatoes. I'm going to hold my hand so straight, and he's going to check me, and he's not going to find." Was the opposite. He found it. He hit me so hard there was blood running from my head. With a piece of wood he gave me over the head. It was an easy life.

Harper: Was there anything at all in the camps that gave you joy? Was there any hope?
FELD: No.

Harper: Did you ever laugh about anything?
FELD: Yes, was hope that we were going to die, and we dying, this was the hope. Crying. That's all it was, crying. All day long crying was. Was nothing left, nothing. Day by day, day by day. We were standing by the fences, and on the other side of the fences were men. You couldn't go closer to the fence. If you touched the fence, you were electro- — how you call this thing?

Harper: Electrocuted.
FELD: Yes, electrocuted. You could hold just your hand, and you were hanged up by your hand. You were dead in a minute. But when you looked at those men, then you fall apart. You saw just skin and bones, and these eyes.

God, it's so tough to talk about it. I'm saying, "I can't believe that now I am talking. I just can't believe myself." Honest to God, three or four times I started a tape, and I never ever finished anything.

That's all what you saw. Then you be the next. Just to wash yourself you had to stay two hours in line. You had to wash yourself not for your own sake that you should be clean, but you had to wash yourself because they checked you. Was a disease there with lice. You know what lice is? If you had the lice, they took you out and this was the end of it. You never came back.

In the morning they give you a cup of coffee. I had a tiny little hankie. I couldn't wait at night till I'm going to wash myself because in the morning I had to go to work. Another way I would have to stay in from 3:00 a.m. until 5:00 a.m. until it is my line to go in and wash. I wash myself with the coffee. I rubbed my head with the coffee then I shouldn't have lice. Hair I didn't have because they shaved you. Believe me, in Auschwitz the first time when they shaved me, my sister was next to me. "My dear God," I said, "I wish to see my sister." And she was sitting next to me. I looked at her, and I didn't recognize her. In one minute the head of her head, and here, you know, bald.

Harper: Can you tell me about liberation?

FELD: So after the 3,500 women who we were there, in one evening — I have to tell my story this what I know — one evening, I went into the washroom to wash myself. Then three Germans were standing next to the window, and this was almost the end of the camps, and they were talking about some places they're losing the war and all those things, and they said they don't know what they can do with the 3,500 women. Send them to the crematorium, this is too long to burn the bodies. What they can do? They had a meeting between them, what to do, and they came to a conclusion. Not far was the ocean.

Then we were marching every day different places because we couldn't be there in the barracks anymore. We were marching 20 miles, 40 miles a day, and who could make it? They fell on the ground, and they walked up and they gave a kick and a knock with the rifle, and they didn't care. They even left the dead body. So let somebody else clean it up. We were marching and marching. It was night, and we were somewhere in the country, lying wherever was a place. Two soldiers were talking to each other. Maybe we going to tell them we put them on boats and take them other places. In the meantime, they want to dump us in the ocean. I overheard this because I understood German.

When I came back to the place where we were sleeping, I said to my sister, "Now is the end of it. I'm dead, and I'm dying anyway, and I'm never going to make it." I said, "I have one idea. I'm going to run away. If they shoot me, they shoot me. At least I know then that I tried it." She said, "I'm sick, and my legs are swollen." She was crying, just falling apart. She said, "I can't run. I can't do anything." I said, "I have no choice. I am going to leave you." I remember.

I went out two hours later, before 4:00 a.m. I looked around, and nobody was there. Usually all night, every night they were watching us. Looked like then they had already problems or something, whatever. Then I went back, and I made a blink to the

other two girls who were my best friends like my sisters because you couldn't talk loud. We were lying on the floor, and if everybody would listen, everybody would run. How long it takes them to shoot ten, 20 people? A minute. One, two, three, then we would be dead. I just dragged my sister with all my strength, with my hand. I didn't have time even, I had such old torn boots, to put them on because I was afraid then somebody else was going to see that I put on the boots. If I put on those boots then they will see I'm leaving.

Then I ran out bare feet, I grabbed my sister, and the two other girls went after me, and I started running. Nobody was watching the barracks. I started running out, then I was like a quarter block, something like this, then that shooting, after us. It must be they saw this what we did. There was in the fields, like a hole. I started screaming, "Run in the hole. Fall in the hole. Fall in. Bend down, bend down." Because bending down, then maybe the bullets going to go through a little bit higher. So then we bend down. They shoot maybe ten times, and they stopped. We were lying there in this hole.

Later on then I pulled out my hands. There were branches from trees, and I pulled a little bit branches to cover us. Because I knew what they said, this was going to happen, and this really did happen. 8:00 a.m. in the morning. The 3,500 women started marching straight, straight. We were lying about 20 feet from the street. It was like a field. They were marching. They all went on a boat on the ocean, and this is what happened to them. For years and years, I was feeling so guilty. I wrote to the Blue Cross. I wrote here. I had names. I looked for this and I looked for that, in every city where I was, and I was four times in Israel. I even advertised in Israel, the names, to find them. I didn't find nobody. So then I knew this is what happened.

And this is how I survived and how I saved my life, because of doing that. I was talking a little to my son in the car. I said, "Look, I want you to say one thing. You talked to a survivor. Don't think then I didn't manage my life. Now people if they don't make a living it's hard on them. It was harder on me just to be alive."

Harper: So how long did you stay in the hole?

FELD: I didn't finish. Till they pass. Till they pass the street and everybody was gone. It was quiet. There was nobody there, and we couldn't stay there. We didn't have even water. So then we started moving. But we had the clothes in stripes, and private people if they could see us, everybody knew in Germany who we are. It was midnight already. We were standing in this hole till midnight, till it got dark.

After it got dark, then we wanted to end up somewhere in the country, to hide ourselves someplace. The first place that we went, on the field — it's hard to explain to American people. In Europe, in the fields you saw those batches of straw that they put together, from the sun, to make this, later on for the barracks, for the cattle. Then we dragged out some straw from there to make a hole to go in, to have where to hide, to rest, because we saw in the windows from this place was so many Germans, and they lived there. We were afraid to get out. If we going to get out, then would take us

five minutes, then they would shoot the four of us. We were there for two days, then they start crying, "What you did to us? We would die there, what's the difference where we are going to die? We are going to die anyway. We can't get out from here. We can't have anything, any food or nothing."

The second evening at night when we were there, I saw a guy was watching the field and singing a Polish song. I recognized the language because it was my language. Then I said to the other girls, "You know what, you stay here and don't show your face to nobody. I'm going to go out, and I'm going to talk to him, and I'm going to see what he can do for me." I went out, I told him I'm from Poland, and he told me he's from Poland. He told me they brought him there to work. They took a lot of Polish people just for working. Not in a concentration, but they paid them very low. He was there working for a farmer.

Harper: Was he a gentile?

FELD: He was a gentile. He was working for a farmer. Of course he wasn't Jewish. They never kept Jewish people. So then I told him from which town I am, and he told from which town he is. He was from Krakow. I still remember his name was Stashik. I talked to him. I was crying, and I told him the story. He had mercy. "Don't worry," he said. I tried to trust him. I had to trust him anyway. I had no choice. I said, "There are three other girls." He told me to stay here, and he's going to go back and in the middle of the night, he's going to bring us some food.

So then he went back, and I thought maybe he's going to go and tell the Germans where we are. I was expecting this because we tried to be friends with the Pollacks, but they didn't like the Jews in Poland. We tried to be friends because we had no choice. I thought he's going to tell them, and they were going to take us out and shoot us.

So then he didn't do that. He came back, and he had in his pockets cooked potatoes that he was feeding the horses and the cattle. He put some potatoes in, and he took a piece of bread and hid it underneath his shirt. He threw it by this pile of straw and left. OK. I didn't have a chance to talk to him, nothing. The next day he came again with some food. He said to me, "You know what?" It was raining maybe four, five, six weeks. It was raining and raining and raining, and the straw was soaking wet. That's why I suffer till today from my arthritis. I know it was from that because my sister lost her voice from being there. She couldn't talk at all; she was pointing with the fingers. I was in pain, but it was no use to complain. This was the only choice that we had. Then he said, in the — how you call this where usually the horses stay?

Harper: Stable?

FELD: Yes, the stable. Then here was straw from one side, a lot, and in the front was the horses. He said he's going to make a hole there to put the straw out, and he's going to make a place for us to go in. We could lie at least where it's dry because the straw was soaking wet. So then we went there. This was everything in the middle of the

night. He had risked his life. His boss and everybody was sleeping, and he did this everything, middle of the night. He took us there.

He didn't realize it, but the boss had dogs. The dogs didn't stop for one minute barking. They were barking and barking and screaming and barking. Then finally in the morning, 5:00, 6:00 a.m., the owner went out and said to him, "You know Stashik, something happened here. The dogs have feelings and are with me such a long time, why are they barking? We have strangers? They going to steal here? What is happening?" Then he said he doesn't know, this and that, but the dogs were barking. Daytime we were still there, and at night he came and he said, "You have to go back because if he's going to find you, then it's going to be the end of it." He was a *Volksdeutsche*. He was himself half Polish, half German, the guy who he was working for. So then he went back, and we were there another few weeks, about two weeks or three weeks.

Finally, after three weeks some planes we saw in the air and we looked. We went out on the field and opened the hand, and the planes started waving and coming down. This was the Russian planes, and they make like this [gestures]. They saw us with the clothes; they recognized our clothes with the stripes. We were still wearing the stripes from the concentration camps. Maybe two days later some Russian people came to the place. We talked to them, and they took us to hospitals and other places to check on us.

After that, then they arranged street carts [a German word?] — the street carts are like trains; I mix in German words — trains to take us back where we belong, to Poland. The trains went very slow, very slow. Every five minutes they stopped. Then we went down from the trains. There were big mountains, hills, and we looked around for food. When we looked around, we found carrots or something. This is what a few days we ate until we came to Poland. When we came to Poland then was already UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], and they took care of us. They were so poor. They gave us a bread with brown oil for a day; this was the food.

Harper: How long were you in the hospital? They took you to a hospital first?
FELD: They took us to a hospital to check us. So then they checked us ….

Harper: Did they give you clothes and things?
FELD: No. I don't remember exactly if we went back on the train in the same clothes or they gave us something else. We wanted to just go back to Poland because I wanted to see if somebody's alive. It was still in our dream, maybe in someplace, other camps, somebody from the family was there. I was hoping my older brother because he was a very tough guy. He was already in the army for two years. He was in a camp. He was an electrician, and they needed him for work, too. It was my dream that maybe he is alive.

Now I remember about the clothes. It was in Poland. We went to the UNRRA, a Jewish organization. They changed us. They gave us shoes and something to wear, and that's all. This was in the beginning, and later on you could go to the Blue Cross. You could give names and they helped out. The Blue Cross helped to find people all over the world.

Harper: You went back to your town, where you were from. How long did you stay there?

FELD: I really didn't go back to my town; I went back to Lodz, to the big city. To my town I was afraid to go back. First of all, I knew then our house was in ashes. Everything was burned from the first week of the war. I knew that.

After ten days — I'm going back to a fact I forgot, which was very important too, but I'm just human and I can't think of everything in one minute — after our town was burning, after two weeks my mother wanted to see it, if something is left. She didn't expect anything from the Pollacks, [but she wanted to see] what they can do and who was left. The younger sisters were too young, and I was in the middle, so I said to my mother, "Then I want to go with you." My father couldn't go because he was already complaining and sick, and he didn't feel good. He had a dysentery disease. He couldn't hold in the bowels. When the war broke out he got this, and he was sick. So I went back with my mother. I came to the street where our house was, and we looked and everything was still in flames. It was slow because nobody tried to put water and to bring down the flames. They didn't care. There were still flames, and this was like almost two weeks. We were standing and looking, and from nowhere came a Polish guy. He was Polish and German. He knew us very well, especially my parents. Then he said to the German guy, "This is the richest person from this town. She's back." The German said, "Oh, yeah?" He took off the rifle and gave my mother over the head, like "I show you who is rich."

So this is the only thing that my mother took with her, when you asked the question and I forgot. We took some things with us. My mother had diamonds — earrings, diamonds, rings, whatever. She made a little bag on her chest and she put those things. When we were traveling, then she was holding on to it. That's all that she had. You couldn't hold onto silver and gold and carry with you because you walked from town to town. So she held on to that. She fell down when he hit her, and this fell out.

She's watching me. Good [transcriber's note: reference to someone present during the taping].

This fell out. Then he said, "What is that?" in German. He tore off the string, he opened it, and he saw it was diamonds. When we knew what happened, then I with my mother we both started running to the house. It wasn't far from the house, maybe 20 or 30 steps, because we were standing by the house and looking how the house was on fire, and it was ours. Then he started screaming, "Come back, come back, *verfluchte Jude*.'' This means in German "Filthy Jews, dirty Jews, where you running?" Then we ran inside, in the fire, because he had the gun. He wanted to shoot us. I was standing with my mother behind the wall. The whole time I was standing he

screamed. He screamed maybe for five minutes. He didn't want to go in, but he screamed that I should get out, "Come out *verfluchte Jude*." I said to my mother, "We're going to stay. The fire's going to kill us or he, but we have to stay here."

Eventually he saw that we didn't leave. This was a big house, and was so many things — burning things fall down — and he didn't want to go in. So when the night approached, 10:00 or 11:00 p.m., the city was very quiet. Nobody was around. We left the city, and this was the end. Never, ever, did I want to go back anymore to the town where I was born and where I lived. Some people went back and wanted to see that and all kinds of things. We reported the Polish because they still have a town and everything is going on there. Then we report them, then the Germans paid us back, $3,000 or $4,000 American money, just for the lot from the house because the house was gone. I never went back anymore.

I brought back this story, and I was further [than] where I was before. You don't remember?

Harper: Were you [inaudible]?
FELD: You know, honest to God, you deserve a lot to do a thing like this, you do.

Harper: Thanks.
FELD: You know, thanks to God when we have children like you, like all of you I mean.

Harper: It's important for us to know.
FELD: The Washington tour, they made it, and I was in Israel in the Holocaust [Yad Vashem], and I was in New York — *Schindler's List*. Did you see us, kids, *Schindler's List*? Yes. I'm strong, what you think?

Harper: Very [laughter].
Female: I'm scared to see that movie.
FELD: Yes. I can't believe it and I don't cry. I really mean it. My son asked me. He said, "I'm taking you there. You're going to spend a few hours. Don't do what you used to do." I said, "Look, I'm not promising. I'm going to try my hardest, but I think then I'm going good if I don't cry, because if I cry then I start forgetting and I ruin everything, and I don't want to ruin now." So what is the next question?

Harper: I want to ask you about ....
FELD: When I came back to Lodz, yes?

Harper: Before I ask you what I want to ask you, if you can please tell me what happened to your parents. Do you know exactly what happened to them?
FELD: Yes. They took them to the crematorium, and this is I'm sure. It's no other way because they were gone before we came to the Lodz ghetto. They were gone right away. The war just went on a year, not even a year, and I lost already my parents.

Harper: Do you know what camp they took them to?

FELD: They didn't say anything. First of all, they didn't take them to a camp, no camp. If they would take them to a camp — in the beginning the people from the camps they could write letters, because my brother was taken to a camp and we were still in Skofoland[?], in this ghetto. He wrote to us, and we tried to mail him a package or something at the beginning, and later on they cut it off, like after a few weeks. Everything went on harder and harder for them. But when they resolved the ghettos, the Skofoland, they divided the people who had to go to Lodz, to ghetto. Especially they took young people, 99%.

I never saw in the ghetto coming in an older person. My parents were close already almost to the fifties. This was old people already. So then this is the place what they had to make active the crematoriums. They did with the older people first. And the children, and the little children, too. I had three little sisters. Everybody by us was apart two years because I come from an Orthodox home. It was like ten, eight, six, even younger. Something like this. Then the three sisters were going together with the parents. Right away.

Yes. People are strong from iron, they just think then — because so much love. I'm not embarrassing, God forbid, you three kids. I'm not saying anything, and don't take me wrong, please, but so much love that in Europe children had for parents, I wish in the United States children should have for the parents. I don't mean you. I'm just saying. I'm just thinking all the time. I said, "How in the world I can live without them? How in the world I can live without them?" My only prayer was to God. I kept saying, "I survived for a purpose. I want the generation to go on." I said, "Dear God, help me that I should bring a generation." At that time when I had my children, I was sick. Right when the war ended, then a few months later I had gall bladder surgery. I had stones, and the hospitals in Germany were so bad. They cut me here, and for two years I was very sick. I was at that time young and stupid, and I thought if I have surgery, I'm never going to be able to have a child. In the meantime, thank God, I have two sons and a daughter, and I have nine grandchildren.

Harper: Is that what you were …?

FELD: Yes. I have four from my Orthodox son, and this son who brought me here two, and my daughter has three. Nine grandchildren. That's my best thing in my life. All the money I'll have, I don't care. I just care for that. Yes.

Harper: Were you thinking about what you just explained, what kept you alive, that you wanted to have another generation — were you thinking about that while you were in the concentration camp?

FELD: Concentration camp? No, in the concentration camp I didn't think about having a generation. In the concentration camp I thought, "Is this ever going to be possible, that we're going to survive?" No, we all knew. When we were together, sitting in little groups at night before we went to sleep, then we knew that today our eyes were open and tomorrow we'd be dead. That's all we knew. Because it was impossible to go on with life like this. And to have children, no. At that time, no. Just for after the war. Then I got very sick. I have a cousin who survived the whole war and

everything, and two months after the war, he got sick and died. The body couldn't take it anymore. A lot of people died after the war. When I had my surgery, I went down to 70 pounds. I was at that time married. From the hospital my husband had to carry me in his hands, so sick I was. My first son was born two and a half years after. If I would be well, then I would have had a child nine months after because that is all that I wanted. I keep saying to my children, "If there would be a way of living twice, to come back from the other world, I am not sorry what I have. I'd still want my children." I love them and wanted them.

Harper: This may seem like a strange question, but what do you think it was then that gave you the courage to break away from the group and hide in the hole?

FELD: Yes, many times I think about this. I don't know. I learned a lot of things. People are born with a nature to — this is my opinion, raising now kids, then I could see it. I have three. Why my three? I raised them the same, I did the same thing for all of them, then why are the three different? Then I could see it, that people are born with a different thing.

I feel a lot of times that I grew and I had a little nature like my father. I was a strong individual. I'm a fighter. A few times I went already after I got married for surgeries. Then the doctor stays by me next, and he said, "So how you doing? I'm looking at your eyes. You don't cry or something." I said, "No. I just pray to God one thing. I'm going, and please God bring me back."

I'm a survivor. I want to live, and in my mind I'm strong. I heard they were going to put them in the ocean, and I said, "I have no choice. What's the difference?" If you die with fire or you die in the water. What's the difference? Then at least let me take a chance, and if when I walked out from this camp, and if there would be a soldier there or something, then this is impossible. This is impossible because shooting for them was like — I can't even explain, easier than to drink a drop of water. In a second they shot you. They didn't care, and they stepped on you. So I looked around the whole barracks, from both sides, and nobody was there. Then I felt that I was meant, and I was blessed. Why nobody was there? Every night somebody was there. So then I ran. Yes. I ran and I survived.

Harper: When you went back to Lodz, how long were you there for?

FELD: I came back in May. In October I met my husband.

Harper: Where?

FELD: In Poland I met my husband. I have to say this to you about how I met my husband because this is really a funny thing. I'm not just strong. I'm a good-hearted person, too. The people who know me, everybody tells me that I'm good-hearted. So when I came back to Lodz I mentioned before, they gave us a small little bread and a bottle of brown oil, and this was the food. We didn't have any money, and we had to survive. It was a city with life, with everything, like nothing happened. All the people who lived there, the Polish people and everybody, they got rich from what the Jewish left them. They took everything away.

So then I said that I have to go on and do something. I wanted to work. There was in another street a restaurant. I went in the restaurant and said, "I want to help. I want to do something. Just please hire me. If I am good keep me and if not let me go. I am going to try my hardest." I worked there a few days, then the owner said that every night somebody else has to sleep in the restaurant to watch it. I was naïve, and I felt OK, just I should have my job. Then I was sleeping there, middle of the night, and he opened door and came in, felt he could have sex with me. I am in my nightgown, whatever I was. I ran out in the street and I started crying, very bitter. I said, "What you want from my life? I come from an Orthodox home and I help myself until now. Who you are? What you want from me?" The next day he fired me. I didn't want to go to work for him anyways.

In the restaurant some people went to the border between Poland and Germany to make business selling. Went on all kinds of crazy things because everything was expensive. Then I said, "I have to go there, too, to see what I can buy and sell." In the meantime, I went to another town and somebody offered me leather. My father was in the business and I knew what this was. I said, "OK. I'm going to buy it." But I was afraid to bring this back by train because the Pollacks wanted to show that whatever Hitler did, they want to finish it. They went on the same steps; they weren't kind after the war. Not at all. Worse. They wanted to show the same thing. They had guns, and they went on the train, and whatever somebody had they took it away. I knew about this because I heard about the story in the restaurant.

So then two soldiers were sitting and eating, and I had to learn to be on my own because this was it. I didn't have nobody, no parents, nobody to guide me. I had to be my own person. I walked up to these people and I said, "I have a package to take to Lodz and I'm willing to pay any price. You're a soldier. You're entitled and you can go." It was after the war. They still were wearing uniforms, but I felt that they were on vacation. One guy from the two of them was maybe Pollack or something, but the other one was Jewish. He said OK, he's going to do it, but he wants to see what I have. I said, "Fine. I want to show you." He said to me, "You know what, whatever you are going to sell, you have to give me half. If not, then you go by yourself." I felt better have half than nothing. I said OK.

I went on the train. He was sitting next to me, and I had my big package with me. This was worth a lot of money. The Pollacks came in and would throw out everybody from the train. I was sitting with him, and he put his hand around me like I'm his girlfriend or his wife or something, and they didn't touch me. They didn't say a word.

Later on when the train started running — the train had windows and [inaudible] steps. Now is my husband, but at that time he was holding on with his hands when the train was running — outside like this — because they throw them out from the train him, and he was holding on his back a backpack, and inside in this backpack was full of merchandise because he brought this there, and the people from the train took away everything and left them in the woods. This is what they did with the things.

When the train started, then he grabbed the train, and he felt he was going to go further because he eventually has to go home. And I looked at him. I don't know. In his eyes, then I saw that he was Jewish.

Then I said to the other guy, "Please try to do this for me. This guy is going to get killed outside." Because the train here started going slow and is soon going to go faster. One little move, he's going to fall off and get killed. I felt like my heart was thumping to look at this. Then I said, "Please soon the train is going to stop. Try on your schedule and everything — say then this is your brother or something. Please bring him in." OK. He had feelings, and this what happened. Every ten minutes the train stopped because they wanted to go over the train to see if they can grab, they can steal, they can do anything, the Pollacks. The train stopped. He brought him in.

So I start talking to him and all those things. We were sitting, talking. Eventually I found it out that his father, in Poland, was doing business with my mother's brother. And I knew them. Like that. So then I met him. Two months later we got married [laughs]. Two months. Two months later, and now I'm married 48 years. Pretty soon, two more years it's going to be our 50-year anniversary, and thanks God, our first marriage. That's the best of life. Thanks to God what I have.

Harper: How long did you stay in the woods, and where did you go from there?

FELD: Yes, then I stayed in Lodz. I came back May the 8th. I met my husband in October. We got married December the 25th, and the next year September we decided then we didn't want to stay there anymore, in Poland. We felt we never going to end up to be in Poland; I hate it. But we didn't have in the beginning choice because we didn't have any money. So then my husband went and made business a little bit to accumulate a little bit money, then we can leave. Because nobody gives you anything for nothing.

Then the meantime, my brother he end up to stay in Germany. He was an electrician. He opened himself a store, and he wrote constantly to the UNRRA, a federation then in Lodz. He put his name and my family's, all the names he counted and everything. Wherever you were, came back, you registered yourself. All the registration was on the walls, and if somebody was left from other places and they called or they wrote to Lodz, it was their names, too. One day I was looking at the wall and reading and I saw Israel Lipcyc, then I knew this was my brother. I went up to the desk, then they should give me the address. They gave me. They tried with the Red Cross to notify him, and later he knew we were there, and he said he is never going to come back to Poland. He doesn't like it. He said, "Please you come to us. We're going to be together. I'm here, and what I have and everything."

My younger sister was liberated at the same time with me, and her boyfriend came; he survived. We didn't have the money to get married, and my husband that time made a little bit money, but she didn't have any money. Then it was my idea, then I said to my husband, or he can agree with this, if not, then I want to wait, then I'm not going to get married so fast. He said, if he agrees then it's fine, to get married

together in one night, both couples, me and my sister. My husband, he loved me, then he agreed. We talked to the rabbi, and the rabbi said one can get married before the sun moves out and another one two hours later, and we got married in the same night.

Six months later, then I left everything that I had there. I went to Germany, to my brother, and my sister she left a few months later. She had things to accomplish because she felt maybe his brother is alive or something. In the meantime, he had a brother and he came back from the army. Then we were living in Germany three and a half years until the United States gave us an offer, that we can register to emigrate to the United States.

But in the meantime, my husband had a cousin in Australia, and the same thing, from the Red Cross he found it out. People did like this, [to find out] that we were alive. He sent us a letter, and he sent out papers, and he wanted us to go to Australia. He was going to support us and help us and everything, that we should come there.

But our decision, we felt the United States is the best country in the world, and struggling and everything is so tough, and people after the concentration, they not so strong enough, and all those things. I said to my husband, "We have more opportunities, maybe, to do in a better country. Australia is still not developed so good like the United States." So we decided. 1949 December, the Federation decided [for us] to come to Detroit, and we never moved out from Detroit.

Harper: In Germany were you living in a displaced persons' camp?
FELD: No. After the war?

Harper: Yes.
FELD: No, after the war everybody worked and did a little business.

Harper: When you came to Germany, were you ...?
FELD: After Poland?

Harper: Yes. Were you living in an apartment?
FELD: Yes, a small apartment. You couldn't get big ones. One big room was good enough. We were happy with everything.

Harper: When was your first child born?
FELD: Yes, I want to say about that. Six months after I was married, I had surgery and I was sick. That's what I mentioned before. This was everything accumulated, gall stones and everything, from living through a life like this and from eating such gorgeous good food, too. We were married six months, then I had the surgery, and it took me a year and a half until I got better from the surgery. The doctors and — was bad at that time, very bad. The medication and everything was a lot of army, from the United States in Germany. A lot of army was from the United States. We met them, we talked to them.

Afterwards, I was crying and saying to my husband stupid things like, "I had surgery. I'm never going to have kids." I didn't realize it then one thing has nothing to do with another thing. My husband wanted to calm me down. He said, "Look, we're going have children. If you can't have any children, we can adopt children. I know you love it and you want it and this is your dream, and this is what you wanted." Two and a half years later, my son was born and we raised him there, in Germany. When we had the papers and the immigration went through, he was 20 months old. I came to United States with a child 20 months old.

Harper: Where were you living in Germany?

FELD: The city was on the English side, Luedenscheid. It was a nice city. My brother lived there. We tried to live in the same city, too, because we knew we were not going to stay there. We were waiting because the United States didn't send out the papers so fast. We had to wait. We were liberated in '45, and we came to the United States almost '50. It was five years, but a year I was in Poland. We would wait almost four years for the papers.

Harper: Did you feel awkward living in Germany? Was it difficult to live there?

FELD: We had not much business with them. Yes. It's the same thing like when you do something and you know that you're going to get out from it. You don't care if you're going to make friends with them or nothing. We knew we're not going to be there. We had three choices that time: to go to Israel, to go to Australia, and to go to the United States. I had three choices.

Really the truth, people from our people — refugees — we all belonged to Israel. We should all have gone to Israel, but the selfishness from life shows you. I was very sick, and I said to my husband — we knew what went on in Israel in 1948, was fighting and wars and all those things — I said, "I went through so much in my life, and I have to go to Israel, to go through again?" I said, "Forget it. I don't want to live anymore. We go to the United States or I don't want to live anymore." I said, "I can't do it anymore." How much can you fight for survival, how much? My husband wanted to go to Israel. After years later, I was sorry what I did. Not that I don't like the United States, but I felt we owe Israel to be there. We should support Israel. This is what I felt, but look, years goes by and that's the way it is. We try to do for Israel as much as possible. We don't stay away from them. We always do donations. We help Israel. It's our country.

Harper: So you came to Detroit, and …?

FELD: The Federation. We didn't have a choice Because they had to divide people in every city so much then because of the obligations. When we came they supported us here, with everything. They gave us a place to stay. They gave us so much money for food. This has to be for a little bit clothes. We were on their shoulders a whole year because my husband went every day to the factories — this was 1950 — for a whole year to see where he can get a job.

At that time it was Truman, was good everything, the President was good, but we couldn't get any jobs. Especially, he didn't know this way — he went to the factory, they told him to write out an application, and he put down he's Jewish. They never called him and we didn't know why. So a friend of ours did the opposite. He put down he's gentile, then he got a job right away. This was 1950, the United States, and the truth. And because he did, then a whole year he couldn't get a job and I had to live on the UHRRA. The UHRRA gave me 17 dollars, and the 17 dollars I was with a child. I had to have for food and for this, and I try every penny because you cannot go to the Federation and say, "Look, I want to eat better. I want it better." No. We were happy whatever they did for us. They brought us here.

Later on I got angry at my husband and I said, "Look, if they don't want to take you, then try to do something on your own, whatever it is." So finally he got a job, and he worked maybe two months. He was sitting in the corner on the side having his lunch that I gave to him when he went to work. Then came a guy and he said, "How long you eating this lunch?" He said, "I just had one sandwich. How long do you eat a sandwich?" "You have a big mouth, come on in the office." So he took him in the office, said "You're fired."

After that, then my husband took in a suitcase, he took from a store. He went about with a few pieces of linen, a few towels, a few this, and went from door to door to sell it, and to try hard to be on his own because that's the way it was, 1950. But thanks God, I don't complain. I'm happy to be here, and we made it very nicely. Whatever we have doesn't matter. You don't have to be a millionaire, and I'm not poor. I have clothes. I have food. I have a house. I have everything. And I have kids.

Harper: Were you involved in the Jewish community?

FELD: Yes, all the time. I belonged to B'nai B'rith, I belonged to the newcomers, and I belonged to Share Shapliton [?], and we always helped and did. My husband keeps up the Jewish religion. He *davens* every morning. We belong to a shul, to an Orthodox shul. We try our best on kosher. I wouldn't eat what's not kosher. You bring up kids — I would say the truth, my oldest son is very Orthodox; the other ones are not. Can you do something about it? No. But they're good kids. God forbid, they never was on [inaudible]. They went to school. They worked hard. They made themselves people. My daughter worked in a hospital, social worker first, later she was an administrator. She made a lot of money. She is smart. She married a doctor, and they make a nice living. He is educated . My other son works in health insurance, in New York. So whatever I tried ....

Harper: Do you have a message for future generations who may be watching this tape?

FELD: Yes. I have a message that people should be good to each other and people should never learn from the Holocaust whatever they did [should not learn to do the things that were done in the Holocaust]. When I came to this country in 1950, the robberies and the killing was not like that. I hope that Hitler didn't leave a bad arm to the new generations, and that they should [not] learn to be tough and rough. The same thing is happening all over the United States. Los Angeles was a beautiful city, now with the

riots, and the same thing is in Detroit. You hear children are carrying guns and killing each other. Please just think about the future and about the new generations, that they should grow up good people.

One thing then I feel, when I went to the Holocaust [museum] in Washington — at that time Regan was the President. He was very happy with the refugees, and he said then, that we are nice people, hard-working people and he never had trouble from us, and people doesn't want it like the robbing, do things and holdups. Then every person whatever they made, and whatever was from hard work. The main thing that he talked about, that we put in our best effort.

I don't have a good accent, I still have a European accent, and how much I'm educated, not much. I'm trying with my mind to do it because I couldn't go to school. I couldn't do much because I came right with a child, and, afterwards, two years later, my other son was born, and three years later, my daughter was born, and afterwards I still went to work with three children, to support our kids, that the kids could go to college and grow up to be nice people. We didn't want from the government, to be on their shoulders; we wanted to work for it. They should take a little advice from us because we went through hell. Nobody should go through in life what Hitler did to us, and the killing and all those things in other countries should stop. And with all my love for the future people, and all over the world. I hope I did a good job.

Harper: Thank you very much.
Female: You did a good job.
Harper: Do you guys have any questions?
FELD: I did? Then I'm so happy. I tried. I don't know how I did, but with all my love ....
Harper: Thank you. You did great.

[End of recording]