Good morning. My name is Lissa Keller. And today we are interviewing Rose Gelbart, a Holocaust survivor. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women.

Rose, we have a number of questions today. And I would like you to answer them in the very best way that you can. I'd like to start with today and with your life today. Please, give us your name and your age, how old you are, where you live. And go ahead.

Well, I am Rose Gelbart. And I'm 48 years old. I live right now in Shaker Heights, 19601 Van Aken Boulevard.

That is a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio.

It's Shaker Heights, Ohio.

OK. And do you work?

Right now I'm not working. I am getting ready to set up a health center.

OK. And tell me about the health center, what kind of work you will be involved with at that time and where it will be. Tell us a little bit about it and when this will come to be.

Well, we're hoping to open around the middle of December. We're waiting for all the advertising papers to come out.

That's very soon.

Yes. It's around the corner, and I can hardly believe it myself.

It's exciting, isn't it?

I am together with a Dr. Kromko. We are the founders and directors of the center. It will be called Life Guides. And it is a nutrition, physical fitness. It's a very unique program that we hope to be able to help people motivate and give them-- help them to attain vigorous health.

I'm very excited for you. And you sound like you're excited about it.

This is going to be at the Park East Racquet Club, that we have rented a room there. And I'm excited too. And I hope it'll work out.

I wish you the very best of luck with that.

Thank you.

Do you have children?

Yes. I have two boys.

Two boys-- and their ages are?

28 and 25.

And they live here in Cleveland also?

No. One is a resident doctor at Maimonides in New York. He's planning to go into surgery. He's third-year residency. And Michael is a social worker in Chicago. He's working for United Charities of Chicago.

You had mentioned to me in our short conversation before we were on the tape that you were born in 1936 in Leszno, which is near Lodz and near Posen.

Mhm.

This is a small town?

It was not a very small town. No, it was a fairly decent town.

Tell me about what it was like, the appearance and--

I cannot-- I don't remember much from there because that's where I was born. And two years later, we moved to-- or about a year and a half after I was born, my mother and father moved to a town named Kalisz. And this was close to-- also close to Posen. And there I remember--

What it was like?

--what it was like. Yes.

Were there many Jews there?

Yes. I understand, when I was in the-- when I looked into the archives library in Jerusalem, I found a very-- two volumes of books from Kalisz. And I was very much surprised. It was all in Hebrew, so I am going to try and obtain some copies.

Spell that for me, Kalisz.

K-A-L-I-S-Z.

OK. Please, go ahead.

And those volumes were with pictures and the life before the war. And they were really-- I was just shocked to see that because I never knew that so many survived from there because that city did not have a ghetto. I mean, everyone from there was sent out to various parts of Poland. So that--

For work purposes, or how--

Well, in the beginning they were all-- I guess, where the Germans decided that they will have the major controlling population of the Jewish people in ghettos. Or I don't know whether at that time they knew what was the solution for it. But this is how it started. And so they, literally, threw out all the Jews from Kalisz.

And dispersed them into different places.

Dispersed them into different places. Right.

Tell me about your family, how many brothers and sisters you had.

Well, I was the only one. And I was three years old when the war broke out.

So in your household, your mother and father and yourself.

And myself. Yes. My mother had two sisters and a brother.

What about your financial situation? How did your family make a living, your father's occupation?

Before the war?

Right. While you were growing up.

Well, they were just-- my mother left the house when she was about 15 years old and helped support her family. And she was like a traveling saleslady, which you might call it today.

That's unusual.

At that time it was very rare for women especially to be the providers and the-- in sales, in other words. And she would buy fabrics in one place and sell them to another. And so she was trying to make a living.

Now, this was in Leszno?

Right.

OK. She grew up in Leszno. Did your father grow up there as well?

She met my father there.

In Leszno?

Yes. And my grandparents, my grandfather was a bookkeeper. And they were both Orthodox but modern Orthodox. My grandmother was very Orthodox. She wore a sheitel, and she was taking care of her three daughters when they were little and her son while my grandfather was working in a lumber yard away from home. He would just come home on weekends.

For the Shabbos.

Right. And he was just barely making out. So when my mother left home, she helped support her parents.

You were not wealthy people. You were-- you needed the support.

We came from a very-- yeah, I would say not poor, but--

It helped that she--

--nothing to-- just what a bookkeeper would make in those days.

Tell me about your family's life. You've said a little bit about it already. Who made the major decisions in your family's life, your mother, father?

Well, it seemed that my mother was the more of the aggressive person because she was, like I said, 15 when she left home and supported herself and her family and helped her brother in setting up a workshop and helped her sisters a little bit. Her both sisters were seamstresses. And one of them was very good at it. And they supported themselves that way, the two sisters.

And they were the best dressed women because they made their own clothes and designed the latest designs from Paris so that my mother was always very well dressed--

Well dressed.

--dressed. And she was also very, very beautiful because they painted her when she was in a park.

Could we see a picture. I know you have a picture there.

Well, I don't have a picture because she destroyed all the pictures when she was running out of the ghetto.

I see. I see.

So she tore them all up on the train running from Rzeszów to Warsaw, which I will go into later.

Right.

But the only one I have that is from during the war, when she was in Warsaw on the Polish papers at that time. And--

That's a beautiful picture.

She was in her 30s , I would say.

At the time of this picture.

Yeah. And this was right after the war, but wearing still the same dress.

Why don't you hold the picture against your body? I think we can get a better-- tell me. You mentioned before that this is a picture that she wore--

The dress that she wore throughout the five years, that she used to wash all the time.

This was the one dress, the one garment that she wore through the entire war.

That she wore. And I think she probably had it on this picture too. And this was done right after the war.

How did you and your family get along with friends and neighbors, Jews and non-Jews during your growing-up years?

Well, what I remember is, after my mother married, they settled in Kalisz and rented a beautiful apartment and started manufacturing shoes right out of the basement of the apartment building and finishing it in the back of the kitchen of the apartment, where they had some people sewing the shoes together. And so they were all handmade shoes.

And they probably would have been big manufacturing today because they already had distributed-- my mother was the sales lady, traveling and distributing the shoes to the stores in Poland. And so my father was mainly making the shoes while my mother was selling them to stores.

So this was a shop within the apartment?

This was a workshop--

This was a workshop.

--at the apartment. But we lived in a very huge apartment building that was owned by a Jewish man. And it was the latest design and the biggest--

In architecture?

--in architecture-- in Kalisz, with pillars and marble steps and tinted windows and things like that. It was a beautiful apartment so that when the Germans entered Kalisz, they, right away, confiscated all the apartments that belonged to the Jewish people when they were told.

Where did you go then when they took over the apartment?

Well, I remember, when the war broke out, that-- what I vividly remember about my father is that, in the middle of the night-- I remember my third birthday party. And then I remember my father carrying me in his arms in the middle of the night to my grandparents' house. And then I remember being at my grandparents'

house and hearing a knock on the doors that scared everyone. And the Germans entered. And they gave my grandparents and my mother's sisters who lived then together with my grandparents, they gave them, like, 24 hours to pack up and leave. And they were transported to Rzeszów, which later became one of the worst ghettos.

Give me the spelling of that, please. I'm not familiar with that name.

Rzeszów?

Yes, please.

R-Z-E-S-Z-O-- with a comma on top-- W. That's the way it's spelled in Polish.

OK. And this, you say, became one of the worst ghettos. To get back to a little bit before what we were talking about, when you left Kalisz, what was a typical day like in your home?

Well, after my grandparents were told that they have to evacuate their apartment in Kalisz, my parents and-- my parents and I and my mother's brother then ran away to a different city. And-- to a neighboring city. And one of the cities was Kutno. And there they tried to stay together with my grandparents' relatives. But I remember the planes were, as we were running out, the planes were just over our heads as the Germans were trying to occupy Poland at that time and bombing the streets.

And we were-- people were running. And they were just bombing the people. And we were hiding in sort of like grooves that they were dug.

Like trenches?

Trenches and things, yeah. That I remember. I remember the planes very low over our heads.

How old were you then again?

I was three years old.

You were three.

Yeah. That was in 1939. And from there we ran away to Lódz, where my father's family was. And my parents, my mother, hid some jewelry in my uncle's workshop. So from Lódz, she tried to go back to pick up a little jewelry so that we should have some money because all the leather goods and everything had to be left behind.

In other words, it was confiscated by the Germans.

Well, she had to leave it to the Polish people, whoever. We just left whatever we had. That's what my parents took along. But the jewelry, they sort of buried. And later when she tried to come back from Lódz to pick it up. And by that time, she had to have her arm band.

Is this the arm band with the star?

Right. And so she hid it a little bit lower, in a muff, so they shouldn't see it. But she was blonde. And like I mentioned, she was very beautiful. And she could pass as an Aryan. So she thought she had a chance. But somehow she was caught. And they took her.

They had a place in Kalisz that was like an interrogating building. And she was waiting for her turn to be interrogated. And she heard all the screams, and the walls were covered with blood. And she was pacing the floor back and forth, knowing what is coming, you know, what will happen when she goes into the room. And so she was trying to get out of there. As being that she would always be able to get out of things, she tried to talk to the German at the-- that was watching them.

And she says, well, I don't know what I'm doing here. Why?

Why am I here?

Could you let me out, or could you help me to get out? And he says, well, you don't look Jewish. You're not Jewish. And she says, no, I am. And he let her go out.

She said--

She said, no, I'm not.

--no, I'm not.

And he let her out. So that was just one of her lucky days, one of her many lucky days.

So she managed to still have the jewelry hidden.

Well, she-- yes. Well, then she never went to pick it up. And she just ran away from there back to Lódz. And from there we went to Warsaw. At that time, all the Jews were gathered together and there wasn't a wall yet. But they were all together in a community, where the Germans kept all the Jews together.

And then my mother went to one of the men in charge, the Germans, the SS men in charge.

Of this community of Jews, which were segregated from the other population.

Yes. And she begged them that her parents, who were already in Rzeszów with her sisters, that her parents are sick. Would they please allow us to travel to Rzeszów, to her parents who are sick? And they gave her a passport. And then we all went to Rzeszów. But going back--

Spell Rzeszów for me.

R-Z--

Oh, yes. R-Z-E-S-Z-O--

Right.

OK.

And going back to Kalisz, when the Germans entered Kalisz and they wanted some-- to live in nice places, nice apartments, so the Polacks, the Polish people, would immediately tell them where the Jews are so that they could confiscate their places. And so when they knocked on the door-- they were told, in this-and-this building lives a Jewish family, and there are beautiful apartments there.

So when knocked on the door, my mother opened the door. This German apologized. He said, oh, I'm sorry. I must have the wrong apartment. Because their concept of Jewish people was all with dark hair and big noses.

And it was certainly not your mother--

It was not my mother.

--who was light-haired.

Right. Right-- blonde and, like I said, very attractive. So they apologized very humbly that they interrupted her night because it was in the middle of the night. That's when they usually would attack the Jewish people.

And so it didn't take very long when they were convinced by the Polish people that those are Jews. And so that's when they threw us out again. That was at the beginning.

They may not look Jewish, but indeed, they are.

Right. And so when we arrived in Rzeszów, my grandparents, both-- again, it was a community all thrown together--

Of Jews.

--all the Jews. One building could contain I don't know how many Jewish families, all in one room. And later on, only to enlarge it by bringing Jews from all over.

To the same amount of space--

Well then it was--

--that was formerly occupied.

--getting worse and worse and worse.

More and more crowded.

Right, when they formed the walls in the ghetto. But my grandparents were lucky. They died just before the ghetto was enclosed--

I see.

--of natural causes, and buried.

Going back for a moment, prior to this was your family religious?

My mother was as religious as modern Jews were, where there was no eating pork or eating non-kosher food. But she was not Orthodox.

What do you remember about holidays, both Jewish and non-Jewish, while you were very young?

I don't remember anything of that. Now I know, as long as my grandparents were alive, that my mother kept strictly kosher at home, or they would not have eaten in her home.

Did you belong to a synagogue?

I'm sure they did. But I don't remember that.

Did Zionism or other political organizations play a part in the life of your family?

My father was in the Betar organization. That I know.

And are you a member of a Zionist group?

No. I was a president, a former president, of the Kol Israel Sisterhood and the founder of the Kol Israel Sisterhood. Well, it's got to be about 20 years now. I mean, the first, the founders, whenever that was-- I don't remember the year exactly. And I was president on and off for about five years in that organization.

What other community organizations at that time did you or your family-- well, actually your family. You were too young-- belong to?

Before the war?

At the time you were growing up.

Nothing that I know of.

That was not really part of your life.

No. No.

What was the main language that was spoken in your home?

Jewish.

And were there other languages spoken as well?

Polish.

What kind of books were there in your home? We're trying to get as much of a visual background where you grew up as we can, prior to the war.

Well, I really--

It's a little hard to remember when you were three years old.

I really don't remember. I suppose there would have been Jewish books.

Were there theaters in your neighborhood, concert halls?

The city was a large city. And there were theaters. Yes, there were.

Was your family interested in the museums, theaters, concert halls, an so forth?

Well, my mother was very--

Culturally minded?

--culturally-minded, and as far as theaters and concerts. That I remember. She was also telling me how popular she was with the Polish, the generals, the Polish Army, how they all tried to make dates with her. And she would make dates with various men and then just watch them parading in front of her house. And she would never come down. And she was very popular.

She sounds like a temptress.

Yes.

Did she go out with Jewish as well as non-Jewish people?

I think she did. She probably did, yes. She was telling me, when she used to go to masquerade balls at that time. And she and her sister would be dressed in the most gorgeous outfits. And all the Polish aristocracy couldn't wait to discover who was behind those costumes. And she would-- they really had a ball. They had a wonderful time before the war. And she was really living it up, you might say. Yes.

It was a very exciting kind of life for her. And from the picture that I see there, and I'm glancing at it, she certainly was a very beautiful woman. Did your family go on vacations?

My mother used to tell me that, when she was planning a vacation and decided that maybe her mother

needed a fur coat instead, so she would rather-- but she used to go on those, where they would go for a few weeks to gain some weight. Would you believe it? They used to go--

It's hard to believe.

--to gain weight. Yes.

That was a health cure kind of thing. What about your dad?

I don't remember much of my father, except the few glimpses that I have in my memory as being dark-haired and sort of a round face. And the only time I remember him is when he carried me to my grandparents at night, and I was shivering because it was cold in my pajamas. And I remember some scenes from the ghetto in Rzeszów.

Tell us about-- tell me about those, what you remember about that.

Well, I remember the time that my mother gave money and jewelry to a Polish woman and smuggled me outside of the ghetto to stay with this Polish woman. And I cried at night. And I wanted to go back. So she sneaked me through the wires into the ghetto. And I ran in. My mother wasn't home. My father was in bed. And I remember him-- running into the bed and him hugging me. And that's another glimpse of it.

What do you remember about yourself, what you looked like? Were you healthy?

Yes.

What your outlook on life was-- and again, we're talking about a very small child, but the memories of that, whatever you can recall.

Well, if you would like me to tell you my remembrance from Rzeszów, that is much more vivid--

All right.

--than the other scenes. I remember, we were all hundreds of people in one building. And my mother and father would go to work. My mother would work outside of the ghetto in a German kaserne. It was sort of like a-- where the Germans would come to drink and dine and--

Like a restaurant, bar kind of?

--be entertained. No, this was like a German house for the General's and for--

At a place of entertainment.

Right. And my mother worked there as a cleaning woman. And she would get some food from the Germans. And she would bring it into the ghetto and take-- bring in food and sell it in the ghetto and make some money that way. So she would always negotiate things and provide for us and for me so that I wasn't hungry at that time.

In other words, she was rather fortunate to have that particular kind of position at this time.

Yes.

Because of the food that it gave to you.

Wherever she was, she always tried to manage somehow to make a living. And she knew that, in order for us to survive, she has to have some cash, some money or jewelry or whatever to--

In order to survive.

--to survive. And so when I-- I remember when she used to go out to work. And my father would work making shoes in a cooperative, where they had the different trades people in the ghetto making different things. Like, my uncle was the locksmith. And he would make keys to boxes where the Germans would confiscate all the jewelry and the gold teeth and put in those crates. And the private people, Germans, SS, would confiscate it and send it away, probably for themselves. And he would be making the locks for them.

The locks for them.

And so I remember looking out the window because everyone out of that building was gone to work. And I would look out the window and, as a little girl, see across the street all the atrocities, seeing bodies being thrown on carts, on push carts, bodies that were either shot or died of starvation. And I remember that so vividly that I could never forget that. It's those bodies just being thrown on those carts.

And when my mother-- and my uncle's wife and baby lived also in the same apartment building with us. And one day, my mother had to go to work and she asked my uncle's wife to please take me along when they called her together. All the women and children had to go to a sammelplatz. That was a place--

Assembly place.

--assembly place. And she says, I'm sorry. I can't take her because I have one baby in my hand and one I'll have to hold her hand. She says, it'll be just too much. I won't be able to handle it. And lucky that she didn't take me because she never came back. They sent her to a exterminating camp. So it was just a matter of the luck that it was with me, I guess, and my mother. Because I mean, here she begged her to take her along because I can't take her out with me to work.

And so when-- most of the children were already gone. And it was like the last few children that were left in Rzeszów with their mother. My mother was going crazy. She didn't know what to do with me because she knew that if they call me and her, it'll be the end of us. So she arranged with a Polish woman on the other side of the ghetto and told that she will pay her if she takes me to live with her. And she agreed. And so--

Was she not endangering her life by agreeing to this?

Yes, I suppose she was. But at the same time, she wanted the money. So my mother took me to work with her, as the groups were marching out of the ghetto to work and they were dispersed to different jobs. At that time, my mother was working for a Polish man. He was a Volksdeutsche. I don't know if you know. He was a sort of Polish and German--

Mixture.

--mixture. And he was in charge of the making cement blocks-- not blocks, but sanitation pipes or something. And so my mother was working there for him. And she told me, you see this woman over there? Run to her. So I left her hand, and I ran over to that woman. And in my coat she sewed in also some money.

And this woman took me to her house, apartment. And she locked the shades, and she left me in the dark all by myself. And it was dark, and I was crying. I'm sorry.

Oh, please don't be. No, no. You take your time. I know these are very difficult memories. And you were probably very frightened of the dark. That can be frightening to an adult and much more so to a child, much more so.

So when she came home I cried. I said, I want to go back home.

You want to see your mother.

So she didn't know where my mother was. But I remember, she took me by my hand and she was going

from place to place and asking, do you know where the Grossmans live? And I guess then later, she found out in approximately which vicinity. And she told me to go through the wires.

To see your mother.

And so I ran into the house. And my father saw me. And he was in bed. My mother wasn't home yet. And he took me into his bed and--

Gave you comfort.

--gave me comfort. And when Mother came home, she was going crazy because she heard that the next morning there were-- all the women and children were supposed to--

Were supposed to leave.

--to meet at the sammelplatz.

I see.

And I also remember, one time we were at the sammelplatz, that I remember yet in the beginning. And we were not allowed to raise our heads because if we did, they would shoot. So we had to crouch, all of us, together for a long time, before we were allowed to leave there.

But anyway, when my mother came, she was looking for a hiding place in that building. And she was up all night trying to find a hiding place.

In other words, what you're saying is that she had thought, by placing you with the Polish woman, you would be safe. And since you were back home and this directive had come for the next day--

And plus, that she took the coat with all the money.

And you were not wearing the coat.

So that my mother didn't have any more money left. She knew, I guess, that there was money, you know, whatever. And--

And so the next day--

So she was going crazy, not knowing what to do.

And she looked all night.

And it already 5 o'clock in the morning, and she was frantic. She knew this was going to be it for me. So she went over to the gate where the Gestapo was. A guy was--

Where their outpost was?

Outpost was, yes. And she begged the Gestapo, the guy, the guard, that she has to go to work on the other side. And she told him where. And she has this little girl, her daughter, and she doesn't have who to leave her daughter with. Could she please take-- would he allow her that I went along with her to work. And he said OK.

So she took me again by my hand. And with the whole group, we got behind the gate. And he overlooked it because he was told before. So he just overlooked that I was there.

Again, luck is playing a part in your life, isn't it?

And she took my hand. And she tore herself away from the group and ran into a cemetery, where she knew there were people there. There was a building that people lived in that cemetery. But she knew a lot of people there because she would sell them and buy butter and bread and things like that. I mean, she would--

Trade with these people.

--trade with those people.

So she was familiar with them.

And she was familiar with them. So we-- she knew there was a cemetery. So she ran with me to the cemetery. And we were hiding there behind a stone. I remember that. And I was petrified of the cemetery.

And then she was afraid that the people from the building might recognize us when they started going to work. So she knew across the street lived her boss. And he told her that whenever she needed help, he would help.

This was a non-Jew?

This was a non-Jew. And she-- we ran across to that building. And she knocked on his door, and nobody answered. And every apartment building had the bathrooms on the inside of the building. And all the tenants had different cubes, bathrooms.

But they were all on the inside?

Yes. And so since we couldn't get into that gentleman's apartment, we hid in one of the bathrooms. There was a lock, and she opened the lock.

And these were accessible from the outside?

Right. Right. So we were sitting there. And people started knocking. It was dawning, and people started knocking on the door. And she was frantic. We didn't know where to go. And at the same time when we were running out of from the group, there must have been more people running away because there were shots heard all over the place. And there was no way for us to go back.

And so she knocked on the door again, and she pushed the door, and the door opened. And he slept. He didn't hear us. So he told us to go to sleep.

Now, you had to come out of the bathroom from where you were hiding in order to knock on this gentleman, her boss' door.

Yeah. Which was right around where the bathrooms were.

Were you not visible, then, to people.

No, because it was still dawning. It was still very early. But she was, with her nerves, she just pushed the door and the door opened up. And he was sleeping. And so he said, OK, you go to sleep, and I will see what I can do. And my mother was telling me that story when she went to sleep.

There's some water next to you and there's some tissue.

When she went to sleep, she heard-- she dreamed about her mother. She says her mother stood before her, and she said to her, save yourself. She said, save yourself and your daughter.

This was a dream that she had?

Anyway. I'm sorry.

Take your time.

Anyways, from then on that man arranged some passports for my mother and for me and Polish papers.

Where was your dad at this time?

He was still in the ghetto. Yes. And then he gave us another Polish woman there that kept us until she arranged for a man in Warsaw, who needed a housekeeper. And he knew that my mother was Jewish, but they arranged papers with a Polish name. My name was Halinka. And--

And of course, your mother being as light as she was, this was not difficult in physical appearance.

Yeah. Right. And I was blonde too, only I had a Jewish nose. The Polish people thought that I was Jewish because I had a Jewish nose, according to them.

So my mother just went to see my father in the ghetto. And he says, just save yourself and our daughter and don't worry about me. And her sisters, who had a little girl my age, and she was a beauty. She was a beautiful girl. The Germans used to pick her up and play with her on the street. That's how gorgeous she was.

And one of the sisters that had this little girl that her husband ran away to Russia-- when the war broke out, he ran away to Russia-- begged my mother to save her little girl too. And she says, how can I? I can't save two. At least my daughter is blonde, but your daughter is dark. And I will not be able to take care of both of them. And she had to refuse. And that must have been very painful for her too.

I'm sure.

And both of them were sent to the gas chambers. The other one was not married.

The other was not?

No. The other sister was not married, but they were always together. So they were together. Before the war, I mean when the war broke out, all of us were supposed to run away to Russia. And my father said, no. He was going to run away then, later, by himself. And he says, no, it's just the blitzkrieg. It's going to go over. That's what everybody said.

In other words, it was something that will pass in time.

Right.

Everyone is very anxious-- or many people are anxious about it, and this too shall pass.

Right. It was just--

It's a temporary thing.

--the blitzkrieg, temporary war. Right.

Did many people feel that way?

Yes. Yes, a lot. Even the ones that ran away to Russia were caught or returned because they changed their minds. It was one of those things.

You mean they came back voluntarily?

Yes.

After they had decided to leave?

Yes.

You have a picture, I know.

For instance, this was my mother's sister.

Hold it up.

This was my mother's sister. And that was her husband. She's the one that had a little girl exactly my own age. And we were both always dressed the same. And he's the one that ran away to Russia, and we never heard from him since. So I don't know if he's alive, if he ever made it or not.

You have never heard from him since that time?

No. No.

You mentioned your mother's boss sheltering you for a period of time. Do you feel that there were many non-Jews who had this kind of feeling towards what was happening at that time?

There were not too many. As I will go along, I will--

Mention different people?

--mention different people. Yes. When my mother's papers came, and we were traveling to Warsaw on the Polish papers, this man, whom I would like to show the picture, he's now dead--

While you're looking for that--

I'm sorry. This man here--

OK, yes.

He was in his late--

Put it on your knee. I think we can see it better. That's it.

--late middle age, I would say, in his 50s maybe. And my mother was a young woman. His wife died, and he had a son who was 21 and a daughter who was 15. This was his daughter. And he took her out of school at that time and made her go with me as my sister to various different little countries, country towns, like farming towns so that it was known to this little town where I was, this little farm, that my mother was a Polish woman whose husband was fighting in England as a POW. And she was trying to take care of my-- the two of us.

She was establishing a non-Jewish viewpoint.

Right. And that her husband was in England fighting for the cause. And she couldn't-- she was trying to make a living in Warsaw. And therefore, that we were together as sisters in different households. But in every one of those households that we went to, my mother had to pay for them to keep us.

Now, going back to your coat, which was some time ago that we discussed your coat, that was never found with the money in it again.

No, no, no. That was kept by that Polish woman. That was in Rzeszów.

That was just the one [CROSS TALK].

Mother never saw her. Right.

Where did she get the money to pay for the different things. The jewelry?

Well, no. She was just trying again to buy and sell.

Barter and trade.

Barter and trade, yes.

Do you remember antisemitism prior to all of the--

No. But I know that the reason we ran away from Leszno, where my mother was married, where I was born, was that they had-- that there was a certain group of Polish people that did pogroms on the Jews. And so the Jews had to run away from Leszno. They would knock out the windows because my mother had a store there, and father. And they had knocked out the windows. And they were doing all sorts of--

Antisemitic acts.

--antisemitic acts. Right.

Did you observe any plans or actions at that time to fight these antisemitic acts? Were there any groups that decided to rebel against this group of people?

No. That's the unfortunate thing, that I can't believe that nobody did.

Why do you think that?

Going to even after the war, when so many people survived the war, they were killed by the pogroms after the war. The antisemitism was so big that, had it not been for the Polish people, a lot of Jews would have survived. It wasn't like in Holland or any of the Scandinavian countries. I mean, they would point Jews out on the street. As I will mention later, even the children would run after a Jewish child and point their fingers at him.

Did you feel that people had known through your life, established a relationship or a friendship with, turned against you?

I'm sorry.

People that you were familiar with through your growing up years, even though you were very small, people that you had known to be friends, at the time of the war, did they turn against you?

Well, my mother was very friendly with the custodian in the building. Yet when she wrote to them from Rzeszów because she left all the shoes and all the leather goods to her and she begged her for a pair of shoes for me, she would write back that if she doesn't stop bothering her she would tell the Germans about it or something like that. There were-- I remember one place, one occasion, that somebody sent a pair of shoes that we have made, that my mother had manufactured from a store, sent for us. Evidently, she must have turned to someone else, and they did send a pair of shoes.

But once we arrived in Warsaw, my mother was at this man's place as a housekeeper and traveled to various different places, farms, where she would be with different Polish people as her friends, to visit them and so on. But she was trying to earn money by trading vodka and chocolates and butter, things like that, again trading to raise money so that she could pay those people where I was at. And that was in Warsaw.

Now, on a few occasions where the Polish people were not allowed to use the streetcar that was dedicated to the Germans, she would go in there as a Polish woman. And they would stand up and give her the seat.

On the streetcar?

On the streetcar.

But that was for German people.

Right. So that she had so much courage, but yet at the same time, every time she would live in that apartment by this-- his name was Zak-- Z-A-K. Every time she heard a siren, she thought somebody came to pick her up. So she constantly lived with that fear. Yet, the courage that she derived from that was only because she wanted to save me.

Your mother sounds like she was an extremely courageous and brave and unusual woman.

And also, she knew-- now downstairs, there were men that used to come and visit with them. And they were in the underground. And they liked her very much. But yet she knew that the minute they would know that she is Jewish, they would-- some of them might have turned on her.

We will stop for a very brief time, and then we will return. We'll pick up our story at that point.

Sure. Thank you.