

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Maria Devinki**  
**RG-50.106\*0002**  
**October 18, 1994**

## PREFACE

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Transcribed by Vicky Marcon (File One) and Lisa A: Steinmeyer (File Two), National Court Reporters Association.

**MARIA DEVINKI**  
**October 18, 1994**

Question: Okay. If at any time you feel that you want to stop and take a moment –

Answer: Because you don't film this, so it's –

Q: No, it's not filmed.

A: Okay.

Q: So that's fine.

A: You will use a tape?

Q: I'm using a tape, yes. I've already started it, as a matter of fact.

A: Will i get a copy of the tape?

Q: Yes, if you would like.

A: Good.

Q: Sure.

A: Right.

Q: Great. My name is Margaret. You know that. Right?

A: Yes.

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Q: Okay. Now I want to make sure that I have all of the right information about you.

Your last name is Devinki. Your first name is Maria?

A: Maria.

Q: Middle name or a maiden name? Do you have a maiden name?

A: Braun.

Q: Braun. A-U?

A: U-N.

Q: Okay. And your present street address?

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: Okay. And –

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: Okay. And your home phone number?

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: And do you have a work phone?

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: Do you have a second address, maybe a summer address or –

A: I have a second address.

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Q: Oh, you do.

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: \_\_\_\_\_ .

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: \_\_\_\_\_ .

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: What's the city?

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: Okay. \_\_\_\_\_ .

A: \_\_\_\_\_ .

Q: \_\_\_\_\_ . Great. Occupation?

A: Self-employed.

Q: Okay. And would you -- you would categorize yourself as a survivor. Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And you are Jewish?

A: Yes.

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Q: And you're not a handicapped, Jehovah's Witness. I guess –

A: No.

Q: -- none of the other ones apply. Have you ever been interviewed before –

A: Yes.

Q: -- as a survivor? Was your testimony ever recorded?

A: You mean by somebody or –

Q: Tape-recorded or -- was it ever tape-recorded?

A: It's on a tape.

Q: It has been taped before?

A: Yes.

Q: When you were interviewed before?

A: Yes.

Q: And where was that?

A: Kansas City.

Q: Okay. When was that about?

A: It's not long time ago. Could be September 30th or something, the end of September.

Q: This year?

A: Yes. Just recently. That's why I'm here. Otherwise, I would be -- I didn't want to do this. My son insist on it, and since we work in Kansas City and it's the Midwest Center Education for Holocaust Museum, and I'm a part of it, so I have to give them my story. And that's why I wait this long. I already talked about it, so it's easier, comes out easier.

Q: Really? And you never talked about it before?

A: No.

Q: So you are associated with the Midwest Center?

A: Yes.

Q: Any other –

A: I'm Vice President.

Q: Oh. Any other survivor groups that you're associated with?

A: New American Club.

Q: New American Club?

A: Yes. Otherwise, all other organizations -- there is American organization. I don't know how would you -- I don't believe this has to do anything with the survivors, but like (indecipherable) –

Q: Oh. Okay. Right.

A: -- Or federation, Jewish, whatever. It's quite a number of them i'm in, but --

Q: But it's not officially a survivor group?

A: No.

Q: Okay. So you don't speak publicly about your experiences?

A: No.

Q: Are you already in the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Survivors? It's a registry.

A: Yeah. In Washington?

Q: Mm-hmm. I believe it's national, the Jewish Holocaust survivors. Would you like to be included in that?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: I know I received every literature that is available --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- In the United States. So I don't know. I might be.

Q: So you might be already there without even knowing it?

A: As a matter of fact --



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Q: You probably are.

A: As a matter of fact, I show you. Before I left -- it's nonsense, but I took it with me because my daughter didn't see it. I was here last time on a trip, and last time we was here (inaudible) -- I already lost it.

Q: Is it a picture of your group? Is this it? Here's a group.

A: See. There's my son. So --

Q: Oh. Great.

A: And that's my picture.

Q: There you are. Oh, that's wonderful. And that's here or that's in your Kansas City --

A: No. That's here --

Q: Oh. Wow.

A: -- In Washington. We had a group of 28 people, the mayor from the city. You See. Read this and --

Q: A delegation of business and community leaders from the Kansas City area including Mayor Emanuel Cleaver. Which one is he? Right on the end. Great. And then there was a dinner here, as well?

A: Yes. Oh, we had a couple days very much entertained and being (inaudible).

Q: Oh yeah? That's wonderful. That was great. I bet your daughter appreciated seeing that.

A: Yes. I said I have to take this to –

Q: Yeah. That's great. So they send you that to keep you updated, as well?

A: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Q: Well, you are active. So you've already signed a release, and so I assume that this can be used for research purposes, that sort of -- great. So that's the formality.

A: There's nothing there that cannot be used for anything. It's just I didn't -- I was not ready, let's say this way, to even come out and let my children be aware what -- I always give them my advice of life, and I teach them what can happen to people, how people lived before them, so on, so forth, back and forth, but I never tell them that that much, what I put in their mind. It's because what I went personally, because sometimes they wouldn't take it as – they would say, oh, you so prejudice because you went through this, but that's not necessarily true. It can happen. It just happened. But it was taken from me that I'm a strict mother, and I'm expecting them, I'm telling them, and I'm advising them, and they took my for granted. So maybe I had the wrong philosophy, maybe I dealt with them a different way, but now it's not too late. They already have -- I have grandchildren an age where, whatever, however they feel, they already raised my way. So it's a two-way.

Q: Yeah.

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A: We can see it both ways.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's not necessarily true, like I say, that I was so right how I handle it, but they didn't lost anything. My kids are very well aware of what life has to offer and know a lot of things. You can see my son.

Q: Yeah. He's doing well.

A: He's a lawyer. He's doing pretty good. He's involved in a lot of things that have to do with Judaism and life and other. He's trying to think of more than one thing only.

Q: And I'm sure that's as a result of how you've raised him. So was there anything in particular that made you, besides his encouragement, that made you come forward and start talking?

A: No. I lost my husband –

Q: I see.

A: -- 15 months ago.

Q: That's quite recently.

A: Yes.

Q: I'm sorry.

A: That was basically something I felt. There's more to it, why I keep this in my mind all the time, what I went through, what he went through and how we survived and what our life offered us. And God was good to us. We had something to be thankful and we want to teach the world to know that life is not -- nothing is forever and there is more to it. We cannot treat each other as we think we would like to. We have to treat them what's right.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: And gradually, like they say, if you put bread on the water it comes back.

Q: That's true. Did you talk to each other, you and your husband, about your experience?

A: Yes. We did. We always had conversations in a different way, just saying now listen, let's see. After all, we thought it's not worth it. We shouldn't fight for it. It's just such a miserable, uncomfortable life. It's so embarrassing to live that kind of life. Why fight? Then we come -- our answer was in our conversations after. It was worth it. True, we lost a lot, true, we went through a lot, but the ones we lost, we're here to talk for them.

Q: That's true.

A: They died in vain, and we have to protect and talk about.

Q: That's why it's important to make a testimony. I agree. I agree. So your date of birth, when were you born?

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A: June 1, 1920.

Q: January 1920?

A: June.

Q: Oh, June 1920. And where were you born?

A: I was born in Hanover.

Q: In Germany?

A: Germany.

Q: And your name at birth was Maria Braun?

A: Braun.

Q: And were there any other names that you used between 1933 and '45? Some people change their names if they went into hiding or anything. No? Did you grow up in Hanover?

A: No.

Q: No? Where did you grow up?

A: Wodzislaw. Do you know how to spell this?

Q: I don't. Wish I did.

A: I was afraid. Give me a pencil. I have to -- there's going to be more names than this.

Q: Right there. My father would be able to spell it. He speaks Polish.

A: Yeah?

Q: Yes.

A: You don't -- You read this as a T, and that's not a T.

Q: Right. My name in Polish is Malgorzata, and it's got one of those in it. So that's in Poland. And that's the only town? Did you move at any point?

A: No. I was in Sosnowiec, too.

Q: Okay.

A: Another city.

Q: Can you spell that one, too? Are they in central Poland? Okay. Thank you.

A: You will see on the glass windows those names.

Q: Those names. Okay. And now I'm just going to ask you some questions about your life as a child before the war. What was the occupation of your parents?

A: My father was in World War II. He was a -- he was -- their family was five brothers. He was the oldest one. And as a rule, in a very religious family, they cannot take more than one son to the Army. And he was the oldest one, so he went to World War I. He was in the Army.

Q: In World War I?

A: Yes. He was captured as a prisoner. He was also hurt by some kind of bombing. He Had -- His left hand was ruined. Two fingers was cut off by whatever, and he had a mark on his back, back here. Or was it two? But it was pretty severe. As a matter of fact, he was there for two years in Russia. He was captured by the Russian, and he was there for two years. After he come back from there, he married in that little city of Wodzislaw, and from there they moved to Hanover, and that's where i was born, in Hanover. Of course, being involved in such a situation, the Polish government assigned, like here we have the veterans, what they get some kind of benefits, the Polish government give them also some kind of a benefit. And his benefit was like he had permission all legalized, certain things, what was not permitted to be sold in every store, like liquor, cigarettes, salt, sugar, tea, coffee. This was items, of course, to ask here now it's nothing, but in those years, 50 some years back, especially in small city, this was big demand and it was very difficult to get. He had a pension, too. He probably was pretty hurt and pretty much damaged since they give him all --

Q: From the Army?

A: -- The privileges. Yes. Yes. But the point is so my mother -- and he was a religious person coming from a very religious home. So those people conducted more religion than cared about business, and my mother took over the business and she operated the store with all those imports. All those things has to come in from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, from Italy to Poland. Poland had most of them, more like wheat, potatoes and other sources of food, but all of those luxury things was coming from

different countries, and we had the privilege of having open business for all those things. So that was our business. We lived very comfortable with it. My mother was a good business woman. She was operating all those things. We lived in a very good neighborhood in that city. We had a good clientele. As a matter of fact, the majority of our clientele was not even Jewish people, because we didn't live in an area where too many Jews was living. This was like the higher class of neighborhood. And we operated business for years. And it was three children, two brothers and me. We all went to school. We all graduate from -- of course, in Poland it was seventh grade. After seventh grade you graduate. And by that time you was 14 years old, because you start when you're seven. And after graduation I went back to gymnasium. I had two years of gymnasium. I couldn't go too much farther, because the time got where they start everything in Germany, and the rules and regulations start getting pretty bad for Jews. Even in '36, '37 we didn't feel that much, but there was already a lot of things going on in Germany with the Kristellnacht and other things. The news was coming this Hitler is took over the country, and it started getting very difficult for Jewish People, for particular business people, professional people, whatever.

Q: Even though you didn't live in a neighborhood where there were primarily Jewish People living?

A: Doesn't make any difference.

Q: It didn't matter.



A: Frankly, I tell you, if this is taped, what I'm saying, I cannot say what I want to say.

Q: Really?

A: No. I -- that would be a joke what I want to say, and I hate to put a joke in something like this. When you say you live in the neighborhood, so it's an answer for this. At the very end I tell you that answer.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: I don't know where I am now. Anyway, so my school stopped. I went two years to gymnasium. I had one more year to finish and I could be a mathematic teacher.

Q: Really?

A: I went for math, but not allowing any more Jews to attend school, types of school. They cut it off in certain cities and certain schools. So I had to do something else. I stepped in and helped my mother to operate the business. And I was working with her and so was my brothers. One of my brothers was working as a bookkeeper in a little factory. What you call it? Steel, iron, stuff like this for building suppliers. He finished -- he actually didn't finish. He had the same problem. He couldn't finish everything, but he finish business school. So they hired him for this. So he worked there. I worked with my mother. My youngest brother was 14, 13, 14. When the world broke up he was 14 years old.

Q: Were you the oldest?

A: No. My brother was the oldest.

Q: You were in the middle?

A: I'm the middle, yes. After – we heard the bad news, but there was -- nothing specific was -- we didn't have any televisions or that type of information we have now, that much newspaper, news medias and everything goes with it. We had a radio. Every once in a while there was a broadcast, but we just could hear what they want us to hear. We couldn't have the true story. So the fact is that we lived with the idea of, oh, it will pass. It's just some kind of a bad situation right now, and we'll go back to history, if somebody is educated, you know, happened to so and so, and so and so, and all through life, all through thousands of years, but didn't pass so easy. 1939, September 1, German Army stepped in our city, took over the city, and from that day on we seen killing, we seen unusually things what we never expected or lived through, i mean, as far as I can say. I never known that a person kills a person. Life was taken by God. This is something if you get old and you get sick you die. I was too young to understand this, you take a gun and -- we didn't know too much about guns. We know that you're going to die when you get a gun, but living in the city was peaceful. Life was just different, totally -- maybe now it's a little different, too, than my vision is, but 50 years ago –

Q: Right. Right.

A: -- It was totally different.

Q: So you were 19?

A: I was 19 years old.

Q: Did you notice, was there any clue before -- was there any Antisemitismus or Anti-Semitism or anything that gave you a clue about what the Germans were doing or --

A: Like I say, we heard what they want us to hear. They didn't tell us they're killing people. They didn't tell us they're sending out anybody to camps. It was just stories going around. Of course, the Polish people was not very kind to us in that time.

Q: They weren't?

A: No. There was hope -- not exactly, if I want to say -- it's not exactly all the Polish people. You had a group of Volksdeutsche, and if you know what that means.

Q: Yeah.

A: If you have a name -- like my name is Braun, so I could be German. Okay?

Q: Right.

A: If you married somebody from the German people and you're half German, or whatever, and - live in Poland, then you were Volksdeutsche, not a full-Deutsche. And those people was taken a lot advantage. They were stupid. There was not too many -- of course, in the city I lived, I have to say, it's farm towns. There's not too many educated people, not too many intelligent who understand it's a war and we're all going to suffer. It's going to be a lot of tragedy going on, but they say it's opportunity. They have a store, we take everything away from them; they have jewelry, we take everything; if they are

bankers, whatever the case would be. And that was going on. And through the schooling there was the same thing. there were students in even a nice school where I used to go that was doing a lot of uncomfortable things for the Jewish kids. Like they could take a match and put it under your coat. It was a joke, but they did this to a Jewish girl.

Q: And the school where you went, it was an assimilated school? It wasn't particularly--

A: No. I went to a school where it was Jews and non-Jews.

Q: Right. Right.

A: There was -- i went to another school. It was a Hebrew school.

Q: I see.

A: But that was all through my years, since five years, from 5 to 17 years, and I was graduating to the highest whatever, that's available. That school was just for Hebrew, nothing to do with any—

Q: Right.

A: -- Public class schooling.

Q: And in the public school who were your friends would you say?

A: I had quite a lot of non-Jewish friends. As a matter of fact, i was very popular at school. I was a good student, that's number one, and I was well dressed, and that means a lot, even now.

Q: It sure does.

A: And we lived in neighborhoods where I had most of non-Jewish friends. We was doing our homework in my house. We lived in a pretty good size house. All the girls was coming to my house, and I was the popular one, do the mathematics for them, the painting, all those things.

Q: Sure. You wanted to be a math teacher. Right?

A: I was good in it. So i had a lot of friends. The fact is that just in short time everything changed. When Hitler come in, they start --of course, he come in in '39, and right there and then start a little uncomfortable situation where Main Street was separated, trying to block off the windows of those people that live on Main Street, if they're Jewish families, so they have no view to the front. They have to have a view to the back. And questions start getting around in the neighborhood. Oh, you see what done at the so and so, what done at the so and so? And children are children. What they understand? They say, uh-oh, something wrong with those people. They must be sick. There must be something. They didn't want to have a part of it, till we find out, all of us, the young and old, there is no -- it's not an easy thing. It's going to be more serious than that. By then it was too late. Of course, it was going on for months, and later on they start taking us out to work, my two brothers and me. They didn't use my father or my mother in '39, just used the children. We was working on the railroads. We was working on streets. Like, for example, here they have paved streets. In that part of the city they had like stones, brick stones and underneath sand. We'd throw in the stone and just make

a street for them. And naturally this was good to take a bunch of kids like us. The women was throwing the sand and the men was putting in the stone. Of course, they didn't pay us, and we had to be there nine o'clock, eight o'clock in the morning. We had to group all in some kind of a place.

Q: How did they tell you that you –

A: They'd go from house to house.

Q: They'd go from house to house?

A: It was the Polish police.

Q: It was the Polish police?

A: For sure. They had to cooperate with the German, otherwise they would be killed. When they take over the country then nobody has the power but them. And they want to live and was really cooperating for one reason. They want to exist. And the other was cooperating to make money or to take advantage of. And a lot did take advantage on it. And, of course, they paid the penalty later. That's another story. So from one thing to another, when they was through with one job they looked for another, whatever was necessary to do in that city. They send us away on the railroad, and we was working on – not far from us was a station, six miles from the city.

Q: Did you live at home while you worked?

A: No. We had to go there every morning to work and come back in the evening. Later on, when start getting a little bit more serious, they kept my brothers there, the two brothers, and they released me. And that was already in '40, in the middle '40. And the city start getting a little more crowded and food -- shortage of food. We had problems. People have to bake their own bread, because you couldn't buy too much, because the army used a lot and naturally didn't worry about anybody else but for them to be protected. And some of them shifted even, took stuff away, because they didn't have to pay anything if they went into a bakery or went to any place else. They didn't have to pay nothing. For example, one good day two of those Gestapos come into our store and they cleaned up everything. They had a truck in front of it, threw everything in the truck.

Q: Everything?

A: Yes. And I was stupid enough to stay in front of my mother, and I say -- my mother was taking away some -- everything was in bulk, not in packages. She was taking off from the bulk a little bit of tea, coffee, chocolate, whatever, things. And he said, no, no, she cannot do this. So I kind of asked him -- I asked him, why? She needs it. She has three children to feed. And he took a strap and cut on my face back and forth. I had stripes here for month, didn't heal. And he said you -- the people was telling me later I was lucky. He could have killed me, because he did this on other occasions. So there was no question about it that life was unsecure, no justice. You couldn't ask anybody why he's doing this to me, what I done wrong. I'm a normal person like everybody else.

Q: They took everything you had. How did you survive?

A: That's the second question. We -- like i say, we was -- that's what we had -- (tape went quiet for a moment.) We were still connected with farmers, and money, some money we had. Everything what we had on pekao we lost, because military generals took over it. It's like stocks and bonds, government things. That was pekao. And this was what my father was receiving for his pension, went straight to pekao. And, of course, this was military that claimed it, because nobody -- no jewish people can take out any more money from there. We were secured by all type of -- what everybody else. If you're wealthy, you have a little bit more clothes than somebody else, if you have some jewelry, some money in the house. In the old country not everybody put money in the bank.

Q: Right.

A: You kept something for security. That for a while was -- we lived. We could buy food from the farmers. We could exchange for goods what we still had, till it got from one to another that they decided that we had to separate the jews from the gentiles and make the ghetto in the city. Everybody has to move in a few block circle, whatever it is, and give up their belongings and the houses. We had a big house. We had to move in in the quarters where our janitor was living and give this to the Germans. We lived there with seven people. We lived in two rooms till '42, when they start Ausweisung. They come in with Ausweisung, partial deportation, like take the young people, then take the older people, then clean up completely. They like to say -- in Germany they would say that Judenrein, if you know what that means. In 1942, September, we was contacted



with some people that had authority, the Polish authority, because since we was in the business a lot of those people was buying on credit, never paid us, because -- of course, we didn't expect them to, but we had still contact with them. We talked to them. They tried to help us by virtual telling us stories. And one of those policemen was telling us there was jewish people involved in that police station. They come in and told us this. This was the final ausweisung, and everybody started looking where to get away. At that time my father was already taken away, and he sent to treblinkA: I didn't know where he was sent. We just know they took him away. When they took him away we were told he's in a working camp, he might stay in a working camp for a while, but we had no contact. There was no something you can write a letter to each other, whatever.

Q: You thought he would come back. Right?

A: Yes. And my two brothers was close enough, six miles away.

Q: Right.

A: So they was working on that station. By that time, before the ausweisung come up, they come in and took them and took us, me, and send us to skarzysko. Skarzysko is a city. We had camps there, but not dead camps, working camps. They was making ammunition for the army. And we last over there a short while. And i tell you the story how we come out from there, but that's -- it's confusing because i don't follow up. When that happened, that contact told us what's going to happen, my husband come into the railroad. And i was working, and we was not married yet, and he told me so and so going

to happen and they're going to send everybody away to some kind of camps where we're not going to see each other. We didn't know death camps. We know camps.

Q: Right.

A: He says, but I was told the young couples have a chance. The older couples will go there, but young singles, they're separated. You don't know where you are. Young couples have a chance because they need workers, healthy workers. If we get married we have a better chance to survive and we could vouch for each other. I said, it's not a bad idea, but it's not the time to get married, and my father is not here any longer. I don't even know where he is. My brothers are here. Who is going to marry us? What kind of marriage do you expect? He said, who cares? It's not a time to worry about anything extreme –

Q: Had you known him?

A: -- but just to be together. Oh, we know each other for years.

Q: Yeah? Were you in school together?

A: Yes. Yeah. No. He was older. He was seven years older than I was. He was watching me since I was a little girl, since I was going to public school, high school and every place else. We were very close friends as he's older, young man. And I was too young, so we just flirted but nothing serious.

Q: What did he do?

A: The head of textile business. They were very wealthy people, had a big operation in that city. And, of course, it happened to them, the same things. They come in and cleaned up all of their houses and their retail store and everything else. Again, like i say, that was the last things everybody worried, we had less clothes or we'll have less food, as long as they leave us alone, because for some reason other -- we didn't experience anything like this. And we was young, 19 years. I had friend for 19 years, and i know she wouldn't dream what i do in a time like this. I was smarter then than she smart now. Like the whole thing is not clicking, because i'm going from one to another.

Q: That's okay.

A: I'm telling you a story.

Q: That's okay. I wanted to know –

A: It's just like sometimes you read a book and it just doesn't follow up.

Q: No. It's actually -- i mean, i'm hearing it for the first time, so it makes sense to me. I wanted to ask you about the two years that you lived in a small quarters with seven people. That was you and your mother?

A: Me, my mother, my father and the two brothers, my two brothers and my mother's sister and aunt.

Q: Okay.

A: Because they all lived in that -- we had a very, very big house of two blocks, and it's not just ours. It was left by a grandfather in the old country that, when they was building something, our family structure was built like a castle for the whole family. And there was my mother's sisters, brothers, uncles. Everybody has his own quarters, like five rooms, seven rooms, whatever the size of the family. And they took all of this away. My aunt was a widow. She was 83. And she has a sister. She was not married. She was married and lost her husband. So we all shared this two rooms, all seven of us. But that was not the worst. We shared something else, too, in our life.

Q: So that was two years?

A: Two years, yes, yes, we lived there. And then, when the ausweisung come out, there was like -- no. We got married. I'm going back.

Q: Oh, so you did get -- okay. You got married, you said, yes.

A: We come back to the city. It was like, like i'm saying, six, seven miles away from the railroad. We come back to the city and there was -- we found -- a few of our friends our age was with us in that group of young people, and we discussed this with them. And they decided, yes, it's a good idea. Four couples of us went to a specific place where they have services in the evening for somebody to marry us, because we didn't have the parents to do anything for us, and there has to be somebody to give us some kind of authority to be married.

Q: Sure.

A: When we at that place there was not too many jewish people that have that authority. The only one that has authority, if you had to rule it, it could be a rabbi, if you understand what this is. There was -- one of those jews was one of my uncles. He was in the group of ten, and he married all four of us, the four couples. Of course, from the four couples i'm the only one alive.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. They all went. And after we was married we was called one good day. They come in -- the night before we heard in the city it's going to happen tomorrow, next day or whatever. And everybody -- we didn't hide because there was no place to hide. And if to hide we have to be prepared. Somebody has to give us some kind of places or whatever.

Q: Sure.

A: At 7:00 in the morning -- the night before we heard about. We were told it's going direct for a week or so. Seven, eight o'clock in the morning they knocked on the door. And my grandfather was living in the same house, also, and his wife. He was 83 or 84, also, in age. They knocked on his door. They come out. And she didn't see. She was elderly age and she didn't see, blind. She was holding his arm because she didn't see where she was walking. They're screaming, yelling, get out, get out, get out. And she hold him by his arm, not even dressed, and one of the gestapos knocked her over her head with a -- it was some kind of -- was it a gun or was it some kind of instrument. It was

pretty serious. She fall on the floor. And he grabbed him, the old man was (indecipherable) because all the people shame, and throw them -- outside was a truck sitting right by the street, and on the truck. How long he last, it's -- just god knows. Could be an hour, could be -- who knows, but they killed him or die. Anyway, he was going. And then they're going from house to house. Of course, they come to us. We got up, woke up, and they took us on -- the older people went right away on trucks. The younger people, they took us on plots, like they call the plaza, a spacious place where they can put everybody out and say left, right, left, right, left, right. We didn't know who was the left, who was the right, but one went to camp, one went to Auschwitz or any other. I call in to look, call in to the whatever, the cnp (phonetic). Me and my husband were safe, but we know it's not going to help in a few weeks or months, whatever, after we work. Our health will come down and we're not going to be capable to go on with whatever, or whatever. Who can predict? We started looking for a way -- everything -- we had times like, you know, a second, a minute, a minute and a second. That's not anymore. I had a friend, a non-jewish friend. He was also in the polish army as a main person, an army man, and he was working in the underground in the polish army. What was his reason, i don't know. He was trying to save us. He came to me before and he asked me, if time gets so serious you want me to find a saving place, before i got married, a place where to hide you.

Q: Oh.

A: And at that time i was not serious enough to say yes or no, but when it happened i contacted and i says, you remember what you told me? He says, okay. It's still open. We take you in a farm, he and a teacher at school. And on that farm -- i already talked to the farmer, he said, because i talked to him at the time when i approached you, and he's willing to do this for so much a month, money.

Q: He was willing to do it for money?

A: Oh, sure. What do you think? For A Fee. (Tape Went Quiet For A Moment.) Anyhow, I believe -- there was some other things left, what could be exchanged. And, of course, nobody know how long this will last. We was hoping maybe three months, maybe six months. And nobody predicted a five-year history, but the point is they picked us up. Well, i -- it's the whole story -- in skarzysko. My brothers was in skarzysko and i -- no. After this we went to skarzysko. I really don't -- i'm confused with the marriage business.

Q: That's okay. Wait, wait, wait. When you got married, that was in forty --

A: In '42.

Q: In '42?

A: Yes.

Q: And you had lived from 194 --

A: September 20, 1942. I remember.

Q: September 20th, 1942. And so you -- between '40 and '42 is when you lived with your family in the very close quarters?

A: Yes. We didn't live there. We just come back to sleep or whatever.

Q: You were there while you were working on the railroad?

A: We was working --

Q: Okay.

A: -- yes, back and forth.

Q: And then you talked to him in '42?

A: Yes.

Q: And you got married with the four --

A: Yes.

Q: -- by your uncle? And --

A: I -- we was transferred to skarzysko after this, all of us, the group that was married and not married, but we contact him that we need a hiding place. The situation is like this.

Q: How did you contact him?



A: How? There was visiting. There was still people coming to the -- there was workers to Jews and non-Jews.

Q: At the --

A: It was not just Jews, because Jews was the slavery, and the non-Jews was the one that supervised.

Q: I see.

A: They watched over us. It's not -- the germans couldn't spread around the army between such a nonsense, working on the railroad, working on the city. So they used the polish people, the one that assigned it, like i said, a half-german or even a polish policeman or whatever. And when we come -- we had contact. I know we know quite a lot of people. We lived in that city for long time, and my husband had a wealthy family, another business. And if you do business with people, they like you enough, there's still some kind of connection. My brother approached, when we was in skarzysko, the youngest one, 15 years old, approached one of those (indecipherable), or whatever he was, gestapo or somebody, that he give him all his clothes. He was just in boots and -- it was already in the fall, and a jacket and everything, because he had gold pieces in the boots, hide it away. We all put some jewelry in places that we can dispose it and be able to get out some bread money for. And he said, i give you my boots, i give you my clothes, and give me a uniform and take me to the station. And that man fall for it. He opened the boot and he found out it's gold pieces. He fall for it. He could have killed

him, but it's god's will for him not to kill him, because he could have all the things and kill him and forget about it. He took all of those things and took him, took us, all three of us to the station, to railroad station. And we all arrived in that city where we supposed to go to hiding. And that man was waiting for us on the station and picked us up in a wagon of hay. We all crawled in and went to that place with that farmer. We dig a hole in the barn. You know, they had those barns for cattle, for pigs or whatever. We dig a hole in the barn six foot deep, ten foot square and covered this up in boards and covered the boards with hay and straw, with whatever, just pretend it's a part of the barn. And little by little that gentleman, the gentile, brought in my mother. My mother was in hiding, because he hide.

Q: Oh. I see.

A: And brought in my husband and my husband's sister. So it was a total of six.

Q: Okay. So then you and –

A: My mother –

Q: -- your mother, your husband?

A: -- my husband and two brothers.

Q: The two brothers. Okay.

A: And my husband's sister.

Q: Four of you -- or the six of you in this hole?

A: In that hole. That was not the end of it. We even brought in my sister's two children, but we lost them in a short time. They were just there a few months, couple of months, but tried to save them. Didn't succeed. They were too young and they went out for things and they got killed. One was nine, one was eleven. But we was trying in that. We didn't sleep laying flat but sit. Everybody would sit in their clothes, whatever clothes we still had. We stayed in that bunker for months.

Q: How did you eat?

A: It was very difficult. She bought -- it was very difficult with food, because if the lady, the farmer lady was in a good mood, she cooked. She brought down potatoes and baked a bread. This was good enough. As long as we had potatoes, we had bread, we had water, we can live, but if something just didn't work very well in her household, we could sit two and three days without food, without anything. The only advantage we had, in the middle of the night we went up and we could pull out from the barn -- they have those spaces for the animals where they're throwing potatoes, cooked potatoes for --

Q: Oh, a trough. Trough. Right?

A: And from this, the leftovers, we took it down, and that was the -- and if we needed to drink water something was available outside. We had to go down -- and this was for -- to clean us, to wash up, too, because in daytime we didn't have that opportunity. So we had to wait till midnight and when everybody on the farm was quiet, asleep, we went out one at a time and washed ourself, cleaned up to a point. I don't want to even remember

how. Of course, we got sick. I had all type of sickness, and my mother was sick. We didn't even think we would survive. There was -- there was not even -- we didn't care, frankly. I personally -- I cannot speak for everybody. I personally didn't care. I was just doing a favor for the rest of them I'm with. That's my opinion. But my opinion was big deal, who needs that kind of life, being a princess, having everything in home and being dressed and being popular and being somebody. And no time nobody even cares. All my friends, they don't even want to talk to me. I'm just like a disease. So who cares to live in a time like this. It's even embarrassing. You can be the most beautiful child, but you still a child. You think like a child. The fact is, myself, I didn't know what's commit suicide. I didn't know what you do not to live, but i didn't care. I say, whatever happens to me, if they take me out, they kill me, so they kill me. I didn't know how the feeling of killing, but just listening to it I agreed to be the victim. And what can I say? Time went by. After quite some time the man was getting wealthier and wealthier, the farmer, by paying him so much money each month.

Q: Who paid him?

A: The outsider, the gentleman outside, what find us the place, give him an ultimatum.

Q: So your friend, the one that --

A: Yes, my friend. He told him before he board us in, he said, listen, i know a lot of farmers taking this and after a few months they get tired of it, they kill and take away

everything they have. They have nothing. Everything they have I have, and I'm the witness. If anything happens to them same thing will happen to you.

Q: He said that to the farmer?

A: Yes. And on those agreement he took us in. So we had some security. We know as long as he is not going to be tired of us we will live, unless we die from diseases or whatever.

Q: Diseases.

A: And, of course, they used to come on the farm for food, the Gestapo. The German army used to come every farmer, take out a pig, a cow, poultry, eggs, whatever. This was common. Every time they come in, three, four of them with a truck, they was going around with their rifles and digging, trying to in the ground to see if it's soft. If it's soft, somebody is hiding. And the minute they come in they asking, have you this here, or do you have Jews? They say no, but that was already common that a lot of people in hiding.

Q: Sure.

A: One Sunday he comes home and he says he wants to talk to us. He knocks on the things. He even -- what is it? His name was Wadick (phonetic). What is it? He said, we heard in church stories that the rumors go around on the farm that we have Jews. And i asked him, i says, what makes you think it's serious? He said, because i told them I'm going to build a house. They say, how can you build a house if you don't have Jews there to pay you for it? Because farmers were poor people. They had a little house, you know,

from straw, whatever. He said he's going to build a brick house, and he's bragging about it, and his wife is going to the city buying better clothes than she used to wear. Naturally, things like this give you some suspicion. So we decided if that's -- and that was already in '44.

Q: '44?

A: Yes.

Q: Wow.

A: We decided if that's going -- if he already told us this, it's not going to take very long, or he himself can call the police --

Q: Right.

A: -- and tell them, I have Jews here not by will. They just come in and they hide and I discovered that they are there, or tell them they come in to rob me, or anything. You know, what -- to rob even potatoes is a robbery, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: So we decide it's not going to work, we have to see -- to find another place. And my man -- I say man.

Q: Your friend?

A: Yes. He come out, because he used to come out --

Q: And visit?

A: -- every once in a while and talk to us. And he picked days, because he was in the city and knows what days in the week the Gestapo comes in. Not every day they were there. The army was there, but the -- you know, the one in the black uniforms. They just come in for visits, like stake everything out for everybody or killing somebody. So he chose those days what's safer for him to visit us. And we told him the story, it's not going to work. And he said, okay. I have another place for you. The guy's a very poor farmer, but i told him i expect one day it's going to happen. He was a very smart businessman. He was in business. They had a lot of farms, but he himself had -- was in the automobile business. Like the bosses we have going back and forth, he had those bosses, that man. He was with people. He was not just a person that don't understand life. He could see what is going on and he was, like they say, a patriot in polish. They say he was a real patriot. He believed that one of those days we get rid of the Germans and Poland is going to be Poland like it used to be. And to him it was a challenge that he had the opportunity to save lives, Jews or non-Jews or somebody. That's my opinion, because why would he -- he didn't get any money. We just reward him a gift later, but he had no benefit as far as financial. Everything what we left with him he used for --

Q: For you?

A: -- for that purpose. As a matter of fact, he was short when he took us over to the other farmer. He told him, i don't have any more money to pay you, but they have pretty nice homes from both sides of the family. If they survive you will have something. If they

don't survive i will see to it that you get all the things that belongs to them. So the farmer fall for this, too. You know, after all, smart or not, they took a chance. Frankly, they took a chance --

Q: Right.

A: -- For their life, too. Not as we had having there, but the same token, they didn't have to do this either. A lot of people didn't want to do this.

Q: Yes. Yeah.

A: He come back and told us that he made the arrangement with other guy, but it's a good walking distance. It was quite a few miles, four, seven, eight miles. And i remember it was farm, farm, farms. Monday we have in our city like exchange food, like a market. The farmers come with food, with everything to the city, exchange for clothes, for equipment to work on the farm for appliances, for stuff like this.

End of File One

Beginning of File Two

Q: Okay.

A: We decided that night it's going to be the best night to walk out from this place and go to the other place.

Q: You had to walk?



A: We (indecipherable) who is going to take us. We dressed as women and men, and the women in those little babushkas, what the farmers wear, and baskets of eggs. Everybody has a basket and three eggs, whatever. If they catch us or something --

Q: You have --

A: -- the language we know. Germany, I could speak German to them. Polish, I can speak Polish to them. Where they're going, cover my face to see whether I'm a Jew or not, everything I have to just answer. So we walked by and, of course, it's always a (indecipherable), always somebody watches the -- where they had stations, like a station of so many soldiers or somebody, certain places. We had to by walk by something like this. Regardless of which part of the city we will go, it was all four corners, and we walk by and he come out and he stop. Okay. Where you going? A German, this was a German, and I says we going back to the farm. What do you have? Eggs. I was afraid if he come close to me, I cannot lie. He said go. I couldn't eat your eggs. You know, if I would say kielbasa or vodka or something else, he probably would stop me.

Q: And take it or something?

A: But eggs, go. They had plenty eggs.

Q: (Indecipherable).

A: Back to the place, and we did the same thing. We did the same thing, and we moved in in that place, and that was in '44.

Q: (Inaudible).

A: Yes, and we stayed there. Didn't have any contact with nobody. Was very primitive, old people, farmers. No newspapers, no radios, no anything. We couldn't send them to the city to buy papers because be suspicious. Farmers know who is ignorant and who is not educated.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We lived the kind of life we possibly could live, very boring, very uncomfortable, short of money. My brother went out to a near farm where he left all of his clothes, all his necessary things at a friend of his. Since we so short, he was hoping when he survive, he needs the clothes. Didn't bother taking away from him, but since we were so short and the farmer really didn't have enough money to buy even for the cattle's food, so we felt for him. So my brother on a Saturday night he went out to that other farmer, and he said I have couple of suits for you. I have to take him and sell it. He said I buy them from you. He said okay. Well, whatever you want to pay me for it. He said 30 dollars. He said fine, 30 dollars, and visit with a friend of his for a while and walked back to us. Walking back a few, maybe a mile or whatever from there, he followed him. Took away the 30 dollars and kill him.

Q: Oh.

A: We see one day he's not there; the next day he's not there. We told he was visiting those people that were friends. One good day the farmer come down and he said in the

city they say they killed another Jew because every day you could hear, and my mother immediately for some reason she felt like that's the one. She said -- she said to him you know who they killed? No, a young man. She send him back to the city and says find out what kind of clothes he wear or somebody going to tie us up and he come back and he said he wear a jacket. Describe the jacket. That's when we know it's my older brother.

Q: Who was it; was it his friend that bought the -- was it his friend?

A: Yes. For 30 dollars they killed a person. That's the way -- that's the kind of time we lived.

Q: Yeah.

A: And a lot of cases, frankly, I take -- the Polish people was as guilty as the Germans. They did more harm to the Polish Jews as the Germans. Germans took us to work, put us in the crematorium because that was the Fuhrer wanted them to do and they claim they had to believe in his philosophy and his -- that (indecipherable) people. Even got paid them for it, and time changed but still they had their own explanation and they come to judgment, but the Poles didn't have any interest whatsoever to do anything like that.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Because after all their country was already occupied by the Germans, and the Germans should be to them somebody not a friend but the enemy. Why help an enemy? They didn't (indecipherable) to help the enemy. They done it for a lousy \$30, but that's another story because everything -- if we go back in history and people are not ignorant,

we know. We're all human. We all have some kind of evil time of life. That's what happened. So we lost one. That was already April 15, 1944. We continued with a shortage, and January Russia -- the Russians start coming in to -- what you call it -- in '45, January '45. We heard the planes cruising around those farms and those little cities. We was wondering being underground, what were planes doing on the farm? We know that the Germans have no reason now. They (indecipherable). They have no reason to be in that part of the country. If we -- we know the map, we know what part of the world they should be now and knowing they was fighting with Russia, they should be far, far away from that part we be in, but who can tell? We had no newspaper, no radio. How can we even say? We estimate or we heard anything that's going on, people on the farm talk, and they say -- and he said, yes, the planes was going through Warsaw, was throwing bombs and they say the Germans are losing the war. Okay. That's good news. But how soon or what? One good day he's knocking on our thing. He said, folks, you free. You can come out. My husband says huh-uh, the Russians, we not coming out. We thought they want to do something to us. He said the Russians are here. So we opened a little bit, and we said Russians (indecipherable) why you have that news, and he said the Russians are new city. Everybody under fire is hiding because we don't know what they're going to do to us, but if you're Jews, you can go back to the city, and we said if you're hiding, why would they be so good to us; we hiding with you. Because another day we got out from the bunker. We had no clothes. It was wintertime. It was the 17th of January. We had no clothes, able to walk on such -- and winter in Poland is very cold in this time of year and the ice on the ground. We have no shoes. Everything

deteriorated in five years, what we have. So the lady, the old lady, she was so poor, give us blankets from the horses, torn, in rags, you know, something not worth even saving for a rag, but it's still something you cover yourself up, and we walk back to the city. We come back to the city. Everybody was in turmoil because everybody was again afraid of the Russian. We still not free. We are still under some kind of -- we settled in a house because everybody -- everything was occupied by not owners, but Germans supply the houses for whoever worked for them, whoever did something for the German army or whatever. So we couldn't get in our house. A postman was living there. So we went to my sister-in-law's house. We moved in. Another couple come in a day later, a single man come in, grouped together. There was -- that particular city had 3,000 Jews. By the time they all got in in the city, we have 17 alive.

Q: 17 from the 3,000?

A: From the 3,000 that was hiding in bunkers and camps or whatever. We grouped all 17 in the same area. Was afraid to separate.

Q: Did you know them all?

A: Yes. Small city. We lived there for a while. As a matter of fact, I went to my -- I was a very close friend of the mayor's sister. She was my age. Mayor over there was the burgomeister, if you know what that means.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We lived across -- I told you we live in a good neighborhood.

Q: Yeah.

A: Across from us we have an architect, a drugstore, and his wife's sister was my best friend. So I left her all my clothes, all my goodies, whatever. When I come back, I have no (indecipherable) because just (indecipherable). I will stop and she would give me back my clothes. I went in and I thought she was passed out seeing me. I didn't know. Is the reason because she felt sorry for me the way I look or is it the reason -- I didn't know why. So I start -- I was waiting for a good answer. She said, you know something, I wouldn't want you to be here. I said I don't intend to be here. I just like for you to give me some of my clothes or some shoes, something so I can start getting dressed. She said I'm sorry to tell you there's no clothes left, nothing. Your jewelry, your clothes, your coat, everything the police took out from my house. I said you sure you have nothing left, and if she would be really a sincere person, she could have given me something from her clothes --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- if it's true, but that's okay. That's what I'm trying to tell you. And I said how did the police know to take my clothes. She said you know you was too popular, everybody know what kind of clothes you wear. When they come in, they know. The jealousy was so extreme. Know what you wear. I said what can you give me? I cannot give you nothing. I want you to leave. I said can you give me some potatoes. We are really hungry. She gave me a couple of potatoes. That was my best friend. Okay. So no reason for me to worry and stay in that city or do anything. I said to my husband, we have to

move. We have too many friends here from the past but they wouldn't want us. They don't want us period. First they are occupying our homes. They have our goods. We stuffed up so many different friends with goodies and goodies and goodies, and everybody was afraid we want everything back or want some back or whatever. So I said it's no place for us. Let's go someplace else. I was -- even I was young, I was always capable to do something.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I could sew, I could write, I could read. I could do anything I want to do. We pack, and I stopped a Russian truck and they took us to a different city, me and my husband. I settled in that city. I know that city from before, Szczecin I went to that city. I start peddling around. I see clothes is good there. This is three miles away from the German border. We could walk over from one place to another. It was open already. There was no -- because there was always Germany and Poland had a border and (undecipherable) where we could go back and forth and not worry about (indecipherable) or whatever. I bought some clothes I exchanged for food. I went down to Union Station and I bought food from the farmers in exchange for clothes. The people, they need food because the big city had a very good shortage of everything, and went one to another, I make myself a little money. I opened a store, a grocery store. I don't know too much about grocery stores but who cannot sell groceries.

Q: Yeah, uh-huh.

A: What is it, it's food. I worked in that store for a while, and I was very unhappy. My mother and my brother is still in that city, but my brother was a very capable person, for you have a fact already that he took us out from camp by age 15 and now he's age almost 20. So I was not comfortable and I worried about not contact him constantly because I want him to move away from that city. He said he's doing well financially. He was a good mechanic too. At 15 years already drove a car. He is fixing bicycles, cars, sewing machines, and he's selling them. Buys an old one, broken one, fixes it and sells it. So he was doing pretty good for a while.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But for me being so restless, not having him close to me since I have nobody, I lost everybody and that's the only thing I have is my mother and my brother. That's the whole family from 96 people. It was a family of 96. He decided he's going to move, find him a place there and, as a matter of fact, he come to see the place and he supposed to move on a certain date. He came to see the place. He bought a lot of stuff to take home with him from (indecipherable). When he brought everything home, it was May 1, 1945 -- 1945, yes. It was already four months after liberation. Coming home with a truck with goodies, going into his house. The (indecipherable) stopped him and killed him. It was four months after. He was 20 years old. So I lost another one. I went back to that city, packed my mother, and I took her with me to Szczecin and decided there's no room for us, not in Szczecin, not in (indecipherable). We have to go some places. We have to forget about that country, forget about that part of the world. There was choices. It was



two choices. Can go with a visa to United States or to Israel. Israel was not yet a country. It was '45. But they accepted people, took a long time, like you have to have -- you have to register.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And who is coming from, takes a year, two, three, whatever, but it's a question when you get your visa. Our visa came in in 1958. No. Pardon me. But in the meantime, I have to move away from Poland. This is number one. We packed again what we have. We moved to Germany.

Q: You moved to Germany?

A: We moved. We took our route. Wherever we going to get stopped or hold back, we stay. We was traveling. We was in (indecipherable), we was in Linz, we was in cities, all to drove, until we finally come across in Linz some people from a neighbor city we know, and they say they are going to Regensburg. Who is in Regensburg? We don't know. We heard it's a city. Let's go. We went. The whole group from the camp over there in Linz went to Regensburg. We went. We settled in Regensburg. This was '45 settled. Such a fast transaction.

Q: Yeah. How did you get there; by train?

A: By halting the Russians trucks, stop and take me, three miles, six miles, twenty miles, whatever. Rest of it, if we have to walk, we walk. We walked through forests because it was (indecipherable). It was (indecipherable). In some places you couldn't pass through

without the passport. Where you going, who are you? That's a very uncomfortable time, one country take over the other one and don't trust anybody. Could be espionage, could be anything. The fact is that we went through -- we walked and whatever, however we smuggled out through. We arrived in Regensburg, and Regensburg was organization. There was help. Survivors already established. They give us temporary. We're always in one place, but food was available, clothes was available. It was an organization.

You go in and you can find a dress, a dress, old, new, whatever, just something to cover your body, and so we had the -- like they have here, those stamps. We had those kind of stamps to go and get -- we get cheese and we get milk, and you get whatever, and we lived among the (indecipherable) and then we got a little apartment for us, for me and my husband. My mother was not with me yet. The two of us went because we didn't know. We couldn't drag an older person with us. Wherever we would go finally if we have a destination we stay, then I go pick up my mother. I did so after three months being in Regensburg. I went back. I didn't have enough money to travel like a human being by train. Went back to Szczecin, picked up my mother and brother to Regensburg. We stayed. We all applied for United States because my husband had an uncle in New York. We was hoping through him our visa would come a lot faster but sounds like he was too old to sponsor three people. So we had to wait for the federation, UJA, whatever you call it now, for them to help us in that respect, but they absolutely did, last quite some time. In the meantime, since we was in Regensburg and waiting, we had to do something. We

opened a business. We begin -- we worked different things. I was doing a lot of sewing, a lot of everything.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And trying to make dollars and cents, and my husband was trying to buy whatever he possibly could. We had good connection. We have languages in that respect. We went to old factories for the old sew purses, whatever was not saleable and was not -- and brought into the city, and then we got -- we was -- got the opportunity from the city to get the stamps. When you need clothes, you need stamps. You need shoes, you need stamps. There was no such thing in those years you can buy direct for money.

Everything in the city is assigned to you. We got the opportunity. We ran the store. We did that type of -- my husband was pretty capable, and I had the languages, and I didn't worry about whether write, read or whatever.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Was not like some survivors at that time who couldn't help themselves as far as -- not that I was so knowledgeable, but I was good enough to do all those things, and through this, we had a store. We make good money. We was pretty good off in no time. We have everything, but human being expect and my son was born in Regensburg. Of course, 1950 we give everything. I had a partner to that business. We took in also a Jewish man, a German, from our state, from Hanover. He was from Hanover. She was from Prague, the wife. We took them in as partners, so we left them the business, and we

walked out with just what money we had. We moved to Kansas City. We was assigned to Kansas --

Q: I see.

A: -- according to the visa. We didn't pick Kansas City. We didn't know what Kansas City is. We want actually go to New York but didn't get the privilege of going to New York because they say a lot of people settling those years in New York like it's overdoing. So they send us to Kansas City, and very nice lady from the UJA was waiting for us and picked us up in a car. We was people back to life. Somehow nothing is forever, not the good, not the bad. We have a good (indecipherable) who always watches us. It's not true. Some people feel like why God let this happen if it's really such an injustice. Sometime even a good father spank their child. If you don't live the right way, you have obligations to deliver what -- what your religion tells you, and you go against, you lose those opportunities. Somehow the same thing is happening now. If we don't watch out and we don't look because we all equal. We don't worry about one is black and one is blue, one has more money and one has less money. We should all be equal because we all got children. I raised my children this way, and I hope they will continue to be what they are now and that they be some kind of benefit to the world because they are good children and they believe what I believe. Prejudice is not going to bring us no place. Whether it's Jewish or it's another religion or whatever it is, if we're not going to teach the children and bring them to a point to understand, don't think a Jew have (indecipherable) or don't think a black is dirty and filthy or whatever. You give them the

opportunity, he can wash himself as well as you can do. He can be as good as anybody else. You don't have to be pure white to be the best person.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You can be anything and be a good person. Just think of what the world -- why you're here, why -- we all got children. We all here for a purpose. So let's think about it. Let's do the right things.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: That's what I can tell you about my life.

Q: Do you still have contact with the people who hid you?

A: I had contact until two years ago. He passed away. The wife is still alive.

Q: Is that the farmer or the friend?

A: No. I never had contact with the farmer.

Q: With the farmer. Just with the friend who helped you?

A: That's right. I would send him money from Germany when I lived in Germany. I would send him money from the United States. Whoever went to visit Poland, I send money with them.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: My cousin from Canada went and I sent with him. He send me beautiful pictures of him and his wife and children, and he wrote me letters. We was in contact constantly, constantly. In the beginning it was difficult to send money. So I sent packages from Chicago from (indecipherable) --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- at the time for Christmas half a dozen packages that (indecipherable) and clothes. I was buying those coupons they would sell for a suit, three yards of coupons (indecipherable) so and so much. I always send three or four coupons. He sold them and make some money.

Q: Yeah.

A: And whatever was available, every connection I had to send them something, I sent them. One time a nephew of ours was there to visit him, and he said (speaking in a foreign language). Because I told him, I says I want you to leave him the money. That's the reason I send it, and he left it he said to him. (Speaking a foreign language). Of course, he was the angel of life. Let's face it.

Q: Sure, sure.

A: That could be both ways or God send them --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- or it was just he so righteous to achieve something like this. That's a good question because he's the heaven. I know. He have to be born for something like this.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: What else can I tell you (tape goes quiet) because there's a back story, there's a front story, and what's going on. Certain things that come to me after I walk out from here --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- because it's just -- like I remember a story, we was like girls and we had the -- the Typhus start in the city, and they picked up a number of girls, we was eight, nine girls. Most of the time the kids were the more educated and understand, and they can read and they can go through certain alphabetical things to find out what to do in a case like whatever it is, and we was given -- instead of having just the armband, the star, the Jewish star, we had the Red Cross on top, and able to go to those sick people and help them because they was afraid to go. That would kill them. They was afraid. Typhus is such a disease that they would catch it. So they assigned us to catch this good (indecipherable). There was some -- and from those -- it was nine girls. From those nine girls, I'm the only one alive. Every week somebody else was killed from the nine girls, just taken out and killed for some reason or another. There's so many things that comes to me.

Q: Sure, sure. What about when you were living underground?

A: There is no -- no -- actually there's no way a human being can even have the feeling or understand unless -- my kids don't even understand. If I tell them how sick I was and when I had -- that was (speaking a foreign language). For that reason, very few people survived with medication, and I had -- you don't supposed to drink water for this. You don't supposed to -- everything has to be boiled, cooked and whatever, and cleanser is very, very important. We have no cleanser. We have no bath. We have no hot water. I had no tea. I had to drink the water from that -- bailed from the outside, and the bread, sometimes she brought down, it was molded inside. She didn't give us the bread which she baked today or yesterday. What was left through the week, she put another batch of bread so she give us the old one, and that bread I had to eat, and my time was six weeks I had trebunk (phonetic). My son asked me one time what is trebunk (phonetic). I said it's red. I don't want to tell him. It's a joke.

Q: Did you -- did you need to be quiet during the day?

A: Oh, yes, oh, yes. There was no conversations, no nothing. (Indecipherable). He brought us every once in awhile a paper. Of course, the papers didn't give us that much, but at least we had something to read, and I was the one allowed to crochet, sewing for the people, for the farmer.

Q: I see.



A: She brought me materials from the city, and I cut -- as a matter of fact, I had a couple nightgowns, beautiful nightgowns, I took it with me, and she liked it, but she didn't -- she was tall woman and I was a little short girl.

Q: Yeah.

A: So she wanted me to make community dresses for the -- she had a little girl three years old.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So I cut them through and make them and put little ribbons around.

Q: You did that -- you did that without talking?

A: As a matter of fact, we had no light. If you ever talk to your father, he would understand what I'm saying. He had those little lights, No. 3, with kerosine inside, and there were little things that sticks out, what do you call it?

Q: A wick?

A: Yes, the wick.

Q: That you would light?

A: And this couldn't stay lighted because there was no air. This was covered. With seven people, had no air. The light went out. Sometimes I was sewing, and in the middle of everything the light is out.

Q: The light went out.

A: You don't open the window because no window.

Q: There's no window.

A: You don't open the opening because you're afraid.

Q: Yeah. How terrible.

A: Yeah. As long as we can talk about it, we are alive. We are happy. We can tell the story. What my father could tell, what my mother could tell, what my brothers. They're not around to even hear that story. I'm left by myself.

Q: What about your father; what happened to him?

A: He went to Treblinka.

Q: He went to Treblinka?

A: Yes, 1993 (sic). I had a friend when she was in the same train. That's the reason I know. The 6th of January, '93 (sic) the train went to Germany.

Q: '43?

A: '43.

Q: So that was after you --

A: My father didn't see me from the day he left.

Q: So you took care of your mother, and she came with you to Kansas City?

A: Came to Kansas City. She died here 25 years ago. She was a sick woman but we took care of her. We did the best we could.

Q: Sure. I'm sure she was very glad to have you.

A: She was a beautiful person, so talented. She could do everything. It's unbelievable, unbelievable. She got herself a little house in Kansas City.

Q: Really?

A: And she put in her own little (indecipherable).

Q: You're kidding?

A: She put all the screens in the windows by herself.

Q: Oh, wow.

A: She was going around buying little hooks, all those things and make jewelry, went to the dime store and sold the jewelry. She could do anything. She could sew. She could -- it was nothing she couldn't do. Just a very talented person, but she suffered. She had heart trouble since she come out from the bunker.

Q: It's not surprising.

A: We was young.

Q: Terrible, yeah. A: Younger people. Another thing, what killed her is when she lost that second son. They killed him after liberation.

Q: Yeah.

A: After this, she was totally, like almost gone.

Q: That was so unexpected too. That's why --

A: Yes.

Q: You thought everything was fine with liberation.

A: It could happen. A car accident could happen, a sickness. Somebody is going to kill you after something like this and for no reason. They didn't want anything. Just we don't want you. That's all. Yes. All the stories, like I say, people give you all those testimonial things, whatever, but there's really no way anybody can remember. Maybe to them this is important, but there's so many more important things.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it's important -- it's most important is to tell the world to watch out.

Q: That's true. That's true because you could see -- you can see things happening in the world and you --

A: Yes. We should all feel the same way. We should support education. We should support all those organizations, what they are doing, because that's the only survival, and

people are stupid and uneducated, don't know why, and somebody come in like Hitler, I will give you food, I will give you everything, screams and yells, and everybody says, okay, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler, not knowing --

Q: Not knowing what it means.

A: Yes. All right? Anything else?

Q: I've taken up a lot of your time.

A: It's okay, it's okay. I don't know how important the story is to you.

Q: It's very important.

A: Will I get some tape? I'm interested to know what I said because admittedly I don't remember. I start talking and it comes to me.

Q: And you know when you listen, more things will come to you too.

A: Oh, sure.

Q: But I think, like you said, it's very important to do it. Very important to have --

A: It's a different -- it's a different story than a lot of -- there's quite a few survivors from bunkers, from (indecipherable) in the forest and place like this, but the bunker story was really critical, very critical. Life was so -- and the camps was uncomfortable, we know this, and there was nothing but danger and everything else, but to be and not to have the opportunity even to look out --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and see, is it sunny? Is it raining? When is a holiday? We didn't know anything.

Q: Anything at all.

A: My mother had a book with her, a religious book, and we was trying to establish when is the holiday without trying to see, is it dark, is it moon, is it what. All right.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

A: All right.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview