

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Rose Weisfeld

May 19, 1998

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PREFACE

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The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and

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Transcribed by Carilyn Cipolla, National Court Reporters Association.

ROSE WEISFELD

May 19, 1998

Question: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Rose Weisfeld conducted by Margaret Garrett on May 19, 1998 in Baltimore, Maryland. Tape No. 1, Side A. What was your name at birth?

Answer: In the Jewish {speaking in a foreign language}.

Q: And in English what was your name at birth?

A: The name right now -- Rose Weisfeld.

Q: Weisfeld at birth was your name?

A: Rose Weisfeld is my marriage name.

Q: Yes.

A: Rose Friedman.

Q: Rose Friedman. And what is the date of your birth?

A: 1914, March the 28th.

Q: And where were you born?

A: Poland _____.

Q: Would you describe your family as when you were a child and growing up?

A: Mm-hmm. My mother was a house -- raised five children. She was holding down the house, the family, and my father was working by shoes -- in a factory ____ shoes.

Q: And would you give the names of the five children?

A: The first is still alive -- lives in Toronto. A brother of mine _____. He is Mortel Figma. Oh, that's gone already? Mortel Figma. The other brother was Benjamin Figma. And can I say now how he died?

Q: If you like.

A: After the family was split -- was just my two brothers and me, they took out my young -- my older brother family -- the younger from the -- the second -- the second boat. All the family. They took him out. They took Benjamin by German to make him shoes. We all three been working in a factory working shoes in a German factory where they make shoes. So he stand up, and he said he like -- he going to go out for the measurement for the German better like the older brother what he's still alive in Toronto. And never came home. I show you a picture.

Q: What year was that?

A: This was 1940 -- 1941.

Q: Okay.

A: Never, never came back. The two sisters working in a home for German people washing floors. And one morning they picked up and they both went to work and they never came back. Where they took him -- where they left the life, I don't know -- they never told me. I start to work in a factory from like they making guns and -- I'm an

Q: Now, is this after you got into the ghetto?

A: This was in the ghetto. Oh, you wanted before the ghetto?

Q: Yeah. Well, let's go back to your childhood. Were you the youngest child?

A: No. I was the third girl.

Q: So there was a boy, a boy --

A: Two boys --

Q: -- and then three girls.

A: -- and three girls.

Q: And you were the third child.

A: I was the third child.

Q: And did you go to school in Rotham?

A: I went to school in Rotham, yes. I went to school. I finished the 7th grade --

Q: Seventh grade.

A: -- for 14 years, and I start working.

Q: Now, before that, while you were still in school, you went to a public school?

A: Just a public school.

Q: And were there many Jewish children in your school?

A: Yeah, there was mixed.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: Mixed.

Q: And were your friends mostly Jews or not Jews?

A: Like half and half.

Q: Half and half.

A: Mixed -- yeah. Mixed. And we've been very nice madame. Living very nicely.

Q: Mm-hmm. So peoples -- the children seemed to get along together pretty well?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And was your neighborhood mostly Jews, or?

A: Half and half.

Q: Half and half. Mixed.

A: We've been in an apartment which was like about 50 families. Maybe was 8, 10 ____ and the rest was Jews. Oh, we've been very nicely living with them together.

Q: Mm-hmm. And was your family religious?

A: Yeah. Like a family of Jewish people -- yes.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: Not so, you know, deep religious like -- like, like -- like you are Jewish; don't you?

Q: No.

A: Oh, you're not Jewish?

Q: No.

A: Oh, I understand.

Q: You have to explain to me.

A: Oh, like milk and other things which comes out from belly is -- was separate --

Q: Kosher.

A: Kosher. Like to say. You know what I am talking about. Yeah, there was a kosher home. There was not. When you was Jewish, you get a kosher home. You was Gentile, you get their home. Here is different. Here the life are different -- kosher, not kosher, you live it.

Q: And did your family keep the Sabbath?

A: Yes. Oh -- yeah. My father went to shul every Saturday. Yes. And the children educated in the Jewish way.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: And so, I do it to my children.

Q: And how were you educated in the Jewish way? Did you go to classes?

A: No, a teacher came to the -- like the boys -- the two boys went to a special school. This was a school for them. For the three girls -- like, I been the age was apart six years from me to the other sister -- came to call a rabbi to the house and he teach me.

Q: The rabbi came to your house -- just you and your sisters.

A: To my house for me. Later on the sisters grow up, he came to my sisters -- yes, yes. And like -- and in school when I -- though I stop seven years. And I finish the 7th grade public school, which costs no money; just the books cost money. The school didn't cost money, because my parents couldn't afford to pay. Didn't cost money, though I finish the public school.

Q: You finished public school.

A: Seventh grade.

Q: Did the religious training by the rabbi cost money?

A: Yes. Yes. His mother paid. He came every day for an hour.

Q: And your family was able to pay for that?

A: She got to have it, because she wanted the children to know a little bit. You know how it's going. There was (?tied?) or she did it.

Q: She managed.

A: She managed. Yeah.

Q: So you finished 7th grade. You were 15 years old.

A: Right.

Q: And then you went to work.

A: I went right away to work, because my father was working in that factory. My father was -- he cut the -- this -- the soles.

Q: Soles of the shoes.

A: Right. This was -- since I know him, this was his job. And my mother -- my mother made the best what she could.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: What he brought home.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: So I start working there, and I've been working there ten years till the bomb start to fall.

Q: Before we get to the war, what was your life like outside of work? What did you --

A: We didn't know how nice. We didn't know ____ -- it was good for us. The family was together. We didn't know our family to split. A child goes here, and another child goes here. Every one family got their families. We was in the same way. We didn't know another different way. There was nice families. Everyone was together. Except someone was older, married, they go their way to live. Or not, we've been sticking to the family together. You was 30 years old, you still was with the family.

Q: So what happened when the war started?

A: When the war started, my two brothers was grown up, and they took him away to the -
- to the Polish military.

Q: So they went into the Polish military right away.

A: Yeah. They took them both away. And my mother, father, and the three girls. Well, when the -- a year we still been together 1940. I was injured right in the eight days, 1939 September, when they start to -- they start September the first, and September the eighth I was injured already.

Q: You were injured in your foot -- leg.

A: Yes. The foot and the hand.

Q: And you were in the hospital?

A: I've been at the hospital for six weeks.

Q: Six weeks.

A: Me, my sister, and a brother of mine came back from the military. And he was injured leg -- the same thing. Been in hospital four weeks. And after the four weeks, the Germans took over the hospital for themselves.

Q: And so, you had to leave the hospital.

A: Though we've been home. And all the money what I saved working the years -- the (?fotostadt?) -- my mother used that money for our brother.

Q: And these were still Polish doctors?

A: Still Polish doctors -- yeah. No Germans. If the Germans saw me the first when they took me to the hospital, they wanted me amputate -- take down the foot completely. Though I said, "If you do that, kill me right away."

Q: So you were able to get over it without that amputation.

A: Yeah. I got my foot. I wanted to live. I said, "Try something to do me to die, because without foot I do not live."

Q: How long were you laid up with your foot?

A: A year.

Q: A year.

A: A year till I step down.

Q: And your family was still living in your house?

A: The house was still house -- yes. The house stopped about 1941 -- late '41. And we got to leave this everything you're going to get.

Q: And that was a ghetto in Rotham?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was your housing like in the ghetto?

A: Seven people in one small home like my dining home.

Q: So that was your mother and father --

A: There was still my mother, father, and my two brothers came back, because one came back -- injured one came back right away. And the other one came back the same thing, but he lives now still in Toronto. He came back, and we all been in the same home -- yes. We made from chairs nighttime to sleep on the floor. And one bed was inside, because there was no place for another.

Q: And what did you about food -- cooking?

A: What they gave us. And the -- being in the ghetto was tough.

Q: So there was a central kitchen? You said "what they gave you." What kind of food did they give you?

A: Oh, they -- well, my mother tried to do by herself anything what she could. What we could bring in. I start to work around, and I start to work for the Germans. And what they gave me, there was a fortune to bring home. It was a fortune to bring home.

Q: So what kind of thing would they give you? What kind of --

A: A piece of bread.

Q: Bread.

A: A piece of bread. One time a German saw I still was limping, not going too well -- limping, you know? And he asked me why I'm limping. I didn't say that a bomb hit me. I was afraid to say that, because they would say that the Polish bombs helped Germany kill. So I said I was injured in Germany. I was injured in the ghetto with a sharp nail. And he something feel sorry for me. And every day my mother saw I bring in a German soldier. She said "Now we're going to get killed, all of us." Oh, he was a nice man. Every morning he bring us bread -- a bread to the house. Every morning. Till he disappeared -- I don't know where and what. Took a nice few months. Every morning he came with that bread to the house. And my mother was thanking God. He came with me up on the second floor. He came with me up. And he want to kill us. Oh, was a nice man. Was a nice man. He bring us every morning -- every morning he bring in a bread to the house. And this was a big save for the family. Well, we suffered a lot till they destroyed us completely.

Q: Now, you said that you had a job. You went out to work when you were in the ghetto?

A: Yeah. Like I said, in the field, you know? The flowers -- like, putting flowers in and help them clean -- just like that. We got about 12:00 a bowl of soup.

Q: A bowl of soup.

A: Yes.

Q: And what hours did you work? How long was the day?

A: I worked from 8:00 in the morning till 4:00. 4:00. 5:00. Back in the home. They walk me down in the ghetto.

Q: So this was in the summertime?

A: This was in the summertime, yeah. In the wintertime, there was nothing.

Q: So how long was your family in the ghetto?

A: Till 1942. They took out my father one time _____. And he came home and he died.

Q: He came home and he died.

A: The same night.

Q: Do you know what happened?

A: He went to sleep and never got well.

Q: Did you know why that was?

A: He said as anything what he do he was kick.

Q: I have a picture.

A: How old was he?

Q: At that time -- I don't know -- 50's.

A: Mm-hmm. I have a picture.

Q: So, when you left the ghetto, there was you, your mother --

A: When we left -- when we went to the ghetto, we went the whole family.

Q: Yeah.

A: They took away the place. We couldn't stay in the Polish side -- they call the Polish side -- with the Poland together.

Q: And when you left the ghetto.

A: When I left the ghetto -- when I left the ghetto, I was -- well, my way was -- oh, I going to say you to understand. I went to a factory, and the factory took me right away to the place. And I was there settled down. I couldn't go home anymore. I couldn't go home. I left the family. I'd been sleeping there, they give me to eat, and I worked.

Q: Now, when was this?

A: This was 1940.

Q: 1940.

A: Till 1940, I go with the family. My father died at that time, but the rest was living. And before they took out -- this was the ghetto -- before they took out the Jewish people completely today, I wasn't affected. I wasn't affected. Later on I couldn't go there either,

because I been in the factory not to work out anymore. Or I started complain "I am sick. I need a hospital. I need this; I need that." They took me to the ghetto. And then I met my two brothers, my two sisters there. They had been working for the Germans too. Anyhow, but the end -- two years later, I was survive to Sweden -- the Swedish family took me up. That's go to the liberation already.

Q: No, but back to the ghetto. When you left the ghetto, who was left in your family when you left the ghetto? Your mother --

A: My mother. My father died. And my mother was, the two brothers and two sisters and me. And everyone was -- went to another place to work.

Q: So you all went out during the day to work.

A: You cannot -- you couldn't be there. They would shoot you. You was live, you get a place work to go out.

Q: So then the ghetto was closed, and you all were --

A: When the ghetto was closed, all the people went to bed. Thirty-two people in one night. 32,000 people in one night. Thirty-two in one night. I was there already in the factory. I didn't belong to them. Oh, next day they told me, "You are lucky your two brothers survived and two sisters." Little by little they finished them too. They went out to work and never came back.

Q: So, when the ghetto was liquidated, you went where?

A: When the ghetto -- I was in the factory.

Q: You were in the factory.

A: In the factory. Day and night, yes.

Q: And how long were you in the factory?

A: I think like four or five months -- something like that.

Q: And then what happened?

A: And then they took me out to see -- to Auschwitz.

Q: To Auschwitz.

A: They took me to Auschwitz.

Q: And how did they take you to Auschwitz?

A: They take all the Jews -- the rest of the Jews -- on the autobahn.

Q: On a transport?

A: Yes. Trains, you know?

Q: Trains -- cattle cars.

A: That's right. They took me over there. There I passed again the name of Mengele, because I'm an Asian how I look. Oh, my body was nice. And good thing I been in four, because four people have been going this way -- one, two, three, four -- and I always, because my leg, always been in the middle. He didn't notice the leg. He would notice the leg, I would went right away in the left side. The left side was dead.

Q: And -- the left side was dead.

A: Dead.

Q: They went to the --

A: -- to the crematory.

Q: Yeah.

A: Was right, left, right, left.

Q: So you stayed in the middle, so they wouldn't see --

A: So he didn't see my leg. That was survival.

Q: And he was the one that selected.

A: -- that selected, yeah.

Q: How did you know it was Mengele?

A: People talked. The people -- I didn't know that's Mengele. Or they said, "This is Mengele."

Q: And what did you know about Mengele at that time?

A: I didn't know till I saw a little man in -- goes, just not talking. Goes, just finger -- right, left. And you got to look in his finger what he is doing. You going this side; you going this side. You was -- you didn't know what you're doing. You didn't know to this side good or to this side good, or just he make -- this, this; this, this. And later on they -- the right side they said was "live," and the left side was to "dead."

Q: So several times you went through that.

A: Oh yeah. A lot of times. That's not one time. A lot of times. And I was the lucky one.

Q: So how long were you in Auschwitz?

A: Six months, seven months. And then they took me to Ravensbrück. Before Auschwitz I was in concentration too.

Q: Where?

A: I really don't know. There was still in the Polish direction around. I still -- I don't know. I start to know when I come in the dead side. Though I start to know that he said "Auschwitz, this is the place where people are dying in the thousands." I know I am in Auschwitz.

Q: And while you were in Auschwitz, did you have a job?

A: No. No. No job over there. Yeah, the job was they took you in the morning, you was ____ -- they took you out to a place like three, four mile walking to pick up stones in two pails. And you bring the two pails to the place from where they took you. Next day after uphill -- you know what uphill is? When they counted you. After they counted you, you took the two pail stones, and you went back to the -- where you picked them up -- and again back, and again -- like that. Or you was lucky and they took you. Because you came home and there was missing a lot of people and never came back. So they took you out, at least you've been alive still to come back. And this was the work, you know.

Q: And how long were you in Auschwitz?

A: For seven months.

Q: Seven months.

A: And I've been other camps before.

Q: Mm-hmm. And so, they took you after -- after Auschwitz, they took you --

A: To Ravensbrück.

Q: To Ravensbrück.

A: To Ravensbrück. That's a concentration camp too. In Ravensbrück I been like three weeks. This was 1944.

Q: Okay.

A: About three weeks. And they start to talk, "Hold on, don't die -- hold on, because the German -- we're going to survive very shortly. Hold on. Hold on." When I was liberated, I weighed 32 pounds. How long could I survive more?

Q: Who was it that was saying?

A: The -- the, the Americans.

Q: But who said to you, "Hold on?"

A: Hold on. Just one to the other. Just one to the other.

Q: Was there a special person who was --

A: Said "Hold on?" No, there was not a person.

Q: Not a special person.

A: No. No.

Q: Did you have any special friends in the camp?

A: What kind of friends you had over there? When you can steal away the piece of bread, you steal it.

Q: Mm-hmm. So you -- it wasn't possible to have a friend, because anybody could steal a piece of bread.

A: No. Everyone wants the same thing. Everyone looks for the -- for the -- for the first bite.

Q: So what kept you going?

A: I don't know. I don't know. Like, an animal. You're not killing me, I'm still alive. You're going to kill me, I'm dead. Like an animal. You was not a human being over there. You remembered you had been a human being. Because one to the other said, "Listen -- hold on. We going to still be people. Hold on." Like one to the other.

Q: Mm-hmm. So you were in Ravensbrück.

A: Ravensbrück.

Q: Ravensbrück. You were there --

A: There -- there I was liberated.

Q: You were liberated there. And what was that like -- the liberation?

A: The liberation, when they took us out, we didn't know where they take us, because they -- they every day they went in another place. Every day they pushed us in another place till I was liberated. And I was liberated to -- to -- not exactly to Sweden. To a -- I forgot the place. I need a second. Not far away from Sweden.

Q: And it was the Swedish people who liberated you?

A: Swedish people liberated me. Never to forget them. Never to forget them.

Q: What do you remember?

A: About them? The nicest people in the whole world. They give us life.

Q: And how did --

A: They give us a shower. We released that day. {phone ringing}.

Q: We'll stop the tape here.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were talking about the Swedes and how they helped you.

A: Well, the Swedish people took us out. And they give us right away -- my God. They took us out. And the first meal when they give us is not to forget. Anyhow, they took me --

Q: What was the meal they gave you?

A: Soup. Piece of bread. Oh, it never was enough for us. Never was enough. You could eat the whole -- the whole kitchen up in one time. Oh, you going to die an hour later, you got to eat.

Q: Did you get sick after eating the food?

A: Well, I was holding back a lot because they took me right away to the hospital.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: And this was Denmark.

Q: Denmark.

A: I forgot the name. Denmark. They took us to the hospital. And some people was so - - so crazy that they break the door in the kitchen nighttime and they stealed out all the food. And these people --

Q: These were survivors?

A: They didn't survive.

Q: No, but they had survived until then.

A: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, later on they killed themselves with the stealing the food. The doctor came, and he stopped -- tried. He tried. He said, "People, you survived. We have here a lot of food to give you, but we cannot give you in one time. Just little by little. Don't steal, because you're killing yourself." Oh, I was a person which I'm okay. Anyhow this was in Denmark already. And from Denmark they bring us to Sweden

hospital. After maybe a week, two weeks. They bring us to Sweden. Sweden to a hospital. I've been hospital too, because I've been wounded. I don't know. I didn't work anymore. Thirty-two pounds was my whole body, and they took me for this to hospital. And came over Swedish people -- Jewish people -- and they looked around, maybe they can find families or something like that. And everyone "Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh." And I been in bed. And one Jewish man noticed. He would like to see this lady, but she is over there. This girl, what she is in bed and she knocked on the bed. Came a nurse and she took me down to the window. And he looked at me and he looked at me and he said, "Child, tell me where did you live in Poland?" And I said here and here. And he said, "You are so familiar to me. You got -- your parents told you they got someone in Sweden or something like that?" I say, "Never." Never they said we have -- because Sweden, United States was for me -- United States -- America, you know? Not United States; it was America. "I never heard my parents should say they have somebody out from Poland." He said, "Well, I have a ____ which I was born in Sweden. My father came from Poland. And came from such and such." And he didn't remember. Or he was -- like I say a shochet, you know what? A shochet is when you buying a live chicken to a live something else, you cannot kill yourself. You got to go to a special what he is -- is killing. And this call a shochet. You had to go to a shochet. I say "I know what you are talking." He said "My father was this." And something -- I don't know -- a few days later came to me again a man to the bed. And he said "You know what? I like you to take out for me and I take care of you. I am Jewish. My whole family is Jewish. And you're going to stay with us. A place to stay three months a year. I'm going to hold you in my house. How about that?" I say, "I would love to." And he did that. The family took me out, and they -- volunteered to say. I couldn't go, but three people for three months. Oh, he took care for me till I could go out and see people. When I went out to see people, I got plenty there what they been with me concentration camp. And they been survivors over there. Families -- Jewish families, all them. Oh, they went to work already, to factories. And they said "See for my money I bought this. For my money I bought this." And the lady what she took me out -- the family what she took me out, she gave me some clothes from her. And I said, "I feel now okay. I feel good. And I would like to start in a factory working." And they said -- the man -- the family was the name of Schein. They said, "We can give you in a factory. Oh, you got to live with us -- not to go out from us." I said, "I appreciate it. This is my home. This is not my home. I don't know another home." And I got a beautiful home. Oh, I want to make some money to buy me some clothes for myself. I appreciate the lady gave me. I am -- I don't wear anymore they -- what we call pasha. You know what this? The clothes with the blue and white stripes what the Germans gave me. I say, "I would appreciate -- I appreciate this what you gave me. Oh, to buy new one when I make money I would -- I would like the day I can." And they sent me to a factory to work in a textile factory. And I make some Swedish monies -- krona. And I make like here dollars. And I make some money. And I

start to say "Come with me, and I want buy me a dress for myself. I want to buy shoes for myself." Things like that. And I start to be a human being again. Oh, I still been with this -- with this people, with this -- yeah, till I was a human being again. And later on I said, "Maybe it's too much for you. When I've been around you, I start to work household. I start to clean. And I start this and this. Now I can see people what they survive together with me working in a factory. And they are dressed already, and they are got something. I would like to come to this position again." They said, "Yes. We going to give you to the factory, or you're going to live with us?" And I live with these people a year and eight months.

Q: Let's stop here. We have to turn over the tape.

A: Continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial interview with Rose Weisfeld, Tape 1, Side B. Mrs. Weisfeld, you said that you stayed with these people for a year and eight months in Sweden, and then what?

A: And then I had a people -- no -- how I came to the United States? I met my husband in Sweden. At that time I met my husband in Sweden, and to the eight days we married. From the day --

Q: Eight days?

A: From the day I met him to marriage, eight days. Because he was single, a survivor, and I -- and I was the single survivor. I lived in like they call Norrköping. He was in Boras. Like he live in New York -- something like that. And we met. And he start to tell his story. He is a survivor, the same thing. And he live -- he'd been living over there. And I don't know. A bachelor he got something in him. He liked -- he liked me. He said, "I like to take you over. I live here. I work in same factory like you do. And come and see how I live." My husband. I went over there. A nice room like mine. Living in a nice room. He'd been living there with the cousin. The cousin is now in Toronto living. Live with the cousin. The cousin is now in Toronto living. The cousin. And he something liked me. I came to one city -- to the city where I met him, because was vacation time. In the vacation time is whole Sweden got in the same time vacation. So we could met each other. And I met him. And he said right away, "You know, I like you. And I can see, if you like me, we can make a home together." And I said, "Jewish man -- a survivor like me." And he took me over to the room where he lives. He been staying in a nice room working in a textile factory like I've been working in the other. And he said "My girlfriend." He took me down to the eight days, because you cannot just say, "Okay, I am leaving -- I'm staying with you." You got to say from what you want to leave, why you're leaving the factory. And I told them -- that was vacation time, and I met a man from old home -- from the old country home. And he is single and I am single. And we going to get married. In the same day he took me down from the train, an

hour later, we married. We married. Not the original marriage to take his name. On the Jewish tradition, I am married in the same hour. Not to be -- not to live with him without marriage, you know? Right away. This and this. This was the other --

Q: You have to say for the tape what you're showing me. He gave you the ring?

A: The first -- when he took me down from the train to his house, he -- I didn't got a place where to live. Just for him. Then I said, "I promise my parents I never going to live with a man before I married." I married right away the first hour with him. Oh, the marriage was as I couldn't have his name. I was still my name, Friedman, you know? And -- oh, in the Jewish religion, I married him.

Q: And how did you marry him in the Jewish religion? What did you do?

A: By a rabbi.

Q: Oh, by a rabbi.

A: By a rabbi.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: He took me down --

Q: So you had a ceremony --

A: A ceremony in the house and a rabbi married me.

Q: But not yet the civil ceremony.

A: No.

Q: But the religious ceremony.

A: The religious ceremony I married him, --

Q: Okay.

A: -- and I got a home where to live. I did because I married him, he was a husband to me.

Q: So you were married.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: After -- not a whole year, three quarter of the year, I had my marriage license to marry him efficiency [sic], because they look for me in Poland. That I didn't got a husband, that I didn't got children, that I didn't got -- I didn't, clean, they give me the Swedish marriage

license. It's all Sweden, the same thing. We married efficiency. An official, we married in Stockholm. Official I became his name.

Q: Okay.

A: I became his name. No more, Freedman is my maiden name, and Weisfeld is my marriage name. And since then we've been together till he die.

Q: Mm-hmm. And when I first spoke with you on the phone, you said your husband had just died.

A: Yes.

Q: So that's very recent.

A: A year.

Q: How many years were you together?

A: Forty-eight.

Q: Forty-eight.

A: Forty-eight years.

Q: And you have children?

A: I have two children.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: We'll shut off the tape for you.

Q: You were just showing me the pictures of your family, and they looked very happy and beautiful and you seem very proud of them. Could you tell us about your family? You have a daughter whose name is --

A: I have a daughter. She got two children.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: Her profession is communication. And my son (?alos?), my son (?alos?) is scientist computing.

Q: And your daughter's name is --

A: Toby, T-O-B-Y.

Q: And your son --

A: My son's name is Max, M-A-X.

Q: And he has children?

A: He got three children -- two boys and a girl.

Q: So let's go back to Sweden. You and your husband got married, and then what happened?

A: We've been working in a factory together.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: And later on my son was born. I been with my son --

Q: Your son was born in Sweden?

A: In Sweden. He is a boy -- Swedish boy. I been with him a year together. I raised him. And later on I give him to a day care. You know, I went back to work.

Q: Was that hard for you to give him to day care and go back to work?

A: Yes. He -- that was very hard. Later on after three months I took him to the doctor and he lost three pounds and I said to my husband, "I'm not going to work anymore. The child is losing weight."

Q: Was that all right with your husband for you to stay home from work?

A: There was no choice. I needed the money, or there was no choice. I got to handle the way I could handle. I mean, he couldn't be outside. I got to raise him myself. I said, "I didn't got -- I didn't know the value of it." Oh, when he was born, I got to raise him. And I'm staying home. I didn't ask nobody for nothing.

Q: So you were able to manage.

A: Yeah. When I went away from other things what people didn't, I came to everything. I came to everything.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: People say come Saturday. I know. Because being in Poland, I went to movies too. I went to all kind of occasions when -- oh, I couldn't afford it, it was before to have a home.

Q: So you knew what was important.

A: This -- what was important, yes. Yeah, to have a home. When I came to my husband, there was nothing in the house. And little by little every week when we got the money, I bought another thing to have in the house. I didn't got nothing. The factory give us to use the factory took every week away money from it. I said for this money what I going to

save, I can buy and have mine. And this was the life in the beginning. We built the life ourselves.

Q: Now, how long did you and your husband stay in Sweden?

A: Six years.

Q: And why did you leave?

A: Because my husband found two sisters here in the United States. His brothers over here.

Q: He did not know before that his sisters were here?

A: No. No.

Q: How did he find them?

A: Over the course of this, and they looked for him and he looked for them. And so, we found each other. Took me four years till I found my brother.

Q: Through the Red Cross you found your brother?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: So, because you had family over here, that's why you left Sweden?

A: No. No. We didn't got family. Yes, we got family. The family couldn't help us. No. No. Oh, we came here because, you know the expression, "You're going to America."

Q: And what did that mean to you to go to America?

A: Well, I've been like that. My husband was very much to go to America. I said, "Go to America." Oh, Sweden was nice. Very, very quiet. Very beautiful. Very nice. Very -- I don't know now. Oh, the time when we've been over there was very, very nice. Very nice. This was my home, which they make me stay again on my feet.

Q: And so, why did you leave?

A: Just for them. Oh, I left Sweden because a brother of mine survived in Germany, and he married there a girl that he knows from home. They've been boyfriend girlfriend. And she got a brother in the United States. The brother took him over. And because my brother, I came here to the United States for my brother.

Q: And so, how was it for you to make a new life in the United States?

A: Hard -- very hard.

Q: In what way? How was it hard?

A: There was hard, because I came with a child. I wanted help working, and I couldn't. I give it all away -- it was hard. In the beginning till you was used. Now, when somebody would tell me, "You go away," I wouldn't go. I wouldn't go. In the beginning it was hard. Before you get yours -- like here -- sell this house and go in another. I say, "I wouldn't sell. I am used already to this house." You know? I wouldn't sell. I know already where I am. And to go in another house, you got to get used again. And I would avoid this. I wouldn't want to go. When one want to go too, I run. Or to go for six rooms back to one room, I wouldn't want it. You know what I mean.

Q: Yes. So the change is hard.

A: Hard. Yeah. Oh, when I didn't got nothing, I said, "Maybe there I have better life." Because here -- Sweden, I had settled down in Sweden. It was nice. It was beautiful. The people was beautiful. The people never took ad -- was nice. Beautiful. And I don't know. Then we just run for better, that's all. Oh, the better you got to work out yourself. Nobody give you like to say you get nothing for nothing. He came here -- my husband came here because he found two sisters, which they are liberated to the United States. Because that.

Q: You said that you grew up in a family that was religious.

A: Not so deep religious, you know? Like the deep -- deep, deep Jews. Oh, we have a nice family, Jewish family, always Jewish.

Q: And what about now?

A: I go in the same way.

Q: You go --

A: The same direction. And I teach my children the same direction.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: Yeah.

Q: And how did your whole experience during the war -- did that have an affect on your religion?

A: I don't know. I talk now for me -- yes and no. No. You been -- like to say I was born Jew. I am a Jew. I am a Jew. Being in the concentration camp when somebody would come and say, "You get bread -- how much you get. Not to be hungry and give up your religion to be a Gentile." I would not just -- I would do -- everyone would do -- oh, when I would survive, I would go back to my raising, you know?

Q: And that happened in the camp? They said, "You can have extra bread if you -- ?"

A: No. Because everyone -- if. If.

Q: Okay. If that happened.

A: Yeah. If that happened, for a piece of bread, yes -- yes, I would give up everything to have more a piece of bread. Yes, I would. Oh, later I would change when I would not hungry, I would go back the way I was raised. I wouldn't stay the way I pick to stay.

Q: Do you belong to any survivor groups now?

A: Do I belong?

Q: Organizations of survivors, do you?

A: The most survivors.

Q: Are most of your friends survivors?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q: And do you have other friends also who are not survivors?

A: Like American -- yeah. Yeah.

Q: But most of your friends are survivors.

A: Well, I can say mixed. I am -- yeah, but one people. They hold me just like they are, and they are American from generations. They hold me just the same. I cannot say they treat me a different.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: I am going my way; they are going their way.

Q: Okay. Before we stop, what else would you like to say -- or what did I not think to ask you?

A: Sure to say I've been raised from a beautiful family. Not rich. Oh, nice. Nice. A beautiful family. Not too poor either. Nice family. And later on Hitler -- Hitler split us, and what we found there was both of us -- till I settled down again. And I came back the way I been raised, and I raised my children the same way. I raised my children the same direction what I've been raised. They are no -- they are Jewish people. And they get taught everything. I raised my son in a very beautiful way. I bring them out in a very beautiful way. He got a nice family, a nice son. And so is my daughter. Two beautiful children, a nice home, a nice husband. She been in the White House already talking, holding a speech. She was in a lot of places. She was in a lot -- I got pictures at home with the president, with the wife. So is my son. He got three offices. They don't needed

help from me, and I don't needed help from them. Thank God. No, I don't need finance. We make a home really from nothing. We didn't got nothing, and I built a home.

Q: Mm-hmm. How do you feel about that?

A: I feel very proud of me. It's already children say, "Mom, we very proud of you. The way you pass, and the way you got what the Germans are living." And I lost the whole family by then. "And now, we are part of you." Oh yeah. My children, they are part of me. My children don't complain.

Q: Okay.

A: That's it.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial interview with Rose Weisfeld.

Conclusion of Interview