

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Maryla Korn. This is tape number 2, side A. And we were talking about your being in Israel and how much you loved being there.

Absolutely. I think it was one of the best times in Israel. The country was in the sense of 1951. There was everything you could get if you had the money. And it was a normal society. I found it had everything-- it was my first normal type of a life.

I lived with friend of ours who had this wonderful apartment in the middle of Tel Aviv. They were a very well-known family in Israel. It was normalcy-- normalcy in every possible respect, plus I was exploring. I met wonderful people. The Golden Youth of Tel Aviv was good, bad, or indifferent, OK? This wasn't the Dolce Vita of Italy, but they were living it up.

There were interesting people. They had education. They had a background. There was a solidity. And they were not the traumatized characters in some way that I had had in Belgium surrounding me, because these were children of people who had come to Palestine long before. So it was a wonderful time, really, of my life. And so then after I came back to Belgium, I always knew that this was not it. As much as I had my friends there-- and in Belgium I did date somebody that I care very much about-- but somehow somewhere, I was saying to myself, this is not what I want in life.

We were never Belgian citizens because we could never become Belgian citizens. Every six months, we had to prolong our permission to stay. Nobody was going to kick us out, but the fact was we were refugees. And so I felt at home in Israel and went back definitely the minute I could. And I always said to my mother, I will not stay here. I went would--

You will not stay in Belgium.

In Belgium. I went back and met-- this was after Passover, because I went Passover with my aunt and uncle to Nice, and then I thought it was my last hooray. And then I went to Israel. Sometimes-- and it was May, or sometimes I think around May-- went to Israel, and at that time said, OK, the play's over. Now the game is over.

Now there is no more playing around, and having this wonderful time, and getting money from Europe. And I have to take it seriously now. If I'm going to stay here, I better take a very serious course in Hebrew. I better get myself into a different frame of mind. It's not that I didn't have it before-- I had very strong values and very strong what's right, what's wrong, but I had had a good time the first time in Israel.

I was really having a wonderful time. I was partying, and I was going out, and wonderful. And now I realize, wait a minute, this is not it. So I went very seriously toward [? Pan ?] Akiva. I had a room with an old lady in Tel Aviv where I'd come back for the weekends. I did not want to stay with my family and be overprotected again. I wanted to strike it out on my own and see how it works-- still was getting money-- strike on my own, still was getting money from mom and dad from Europe, don't kid yourself.

But I was taking my studying very seriously. And I got involved with a group of people, although they were connected to the first group, but it was stabilizing itself already. They were already getting married. A very strong friendship came out-- one woman was really considered my sister. And it came from that group. I started dating a young doctor that, unfortunately, had lost his wife and had a little baby.

He had lost his wife when she was giving birth to the second child, which I had met the first time when I was in Israel. So this young couple that I had met, then when I came back the second time, he was alone. And so I knew this little boy, except that my parents thought it was the most horrible thing that could happen. What on earth did this 22, 23-year-old need, even if he is a doctor, which is wonderful-- and a Jewish doctor-- who on earth needs this type of-- I wasn't taking it to-- anyway.

I was really putting my roots down. And I was very happy. And I belonged there. I still feel very strongly, this is the one place in my life where I will always belong. Anyway, my parents, the summer that I went to Israel, went to Badgastein

in Austria for a vacation. And my father took a walk. And on the street, he met a lady that he had not seen since 1939 from Kolbuszowa. And her name was Sonia Korn.

And she was in America, and she was coming back from Israel and going to Badgastein for vacation. And they recognized each other after all of these years. And they knew they had survived, but they didn't see each other. And she was in America with her son and was at that point already remarried, because my father-in-law had died in '47 in Switzerland after coming from Russia.

And she has a son. Oh my god, and this one has a daughter-- oh my god. She is in America, and this one is there. So to make a long story short, they decided it was a good idea. Well, it might have been a good idea, except one was in Israel, one was in America, and a very independent one in Israel.

So my mother wrote to me-- first, she called me at Ulpan and she told me that they had met. And I said, very nice-- wonderful. Well, can he write to you? I said, you must be kidding all of you guys. But you know what? They're dating the doctor, right. You must be kidding, but he is in America. I am in Israel. Boy, is this a safe one-- just get off my back.

And if he wants to write, welcome. OK, never thinking anything more than that. Say do me a favor. He wrote. And I thought it was the most hysterical thing ever, because he was writing from here, he was writing in French, because when they came back from Russia, they were in Poland, and in France, and then America. That's their story. And to make a long story short, I thought it was ridiculous.

But there were my parents bombarding me with this. And my whole family in Israel, very happy about my going out with this wonderful doctor, but not very happy with my going with this wonderful doctor, OK? They were saying, this is a responsibility. What do you need this? OK.

Anyway, to make a long story short, I decided that I needed some space to figure that one out-- not necessarily to break it off, but to figure it out, because it started to click that this was a package. And so somehow David, future husband, decided that he was going to come for Pesach to Belgium, and I was going to come back. And I left all my clothing, all my stuff, everything in Israel, because, come on, you must be joking.

And to me, America was always this crazy country-- the crazy Americans. My mother had had the opportunity of coming to America with me in '51, and I said to her-- I remember saying to her-- where are you going? What do you need these crazy Americans walking around with these long pleather jackets, OK? It was, again, another world-- who needed this?

Anyway, he came to Belgium. I arrived two weeks before him. My mother knew exactly where I stood, because I had my return ticket to Israel. And I kept saying to her, I know this whole thing doesn't make much sense, but I will figure it out. They never say to me, don't marry him. They always said, look what you're getting yourself into, OK? Or is that what you want? Is that what you need? You can have children of your own.

But again, I'm wondering sometimes-- to me, maybe this child represented me as a child when I was younger. It wasn't strange to me to have this little boy around. Anyway, David came. And to make a long story short, about 10 days later, we decided we were going to get married-- or at least I was going to come to America. And he went back, and I came here in May, and we got married in June.

That's my trip to America. And as I said to everybody, I did not come up as a refugee. I did not come off the boat, although I came by ship I came in totally different circumstances. And I came here, and we knew that we couldn't get married in Belgium because then the laws were very strange. If we had gotten married in Belgium, I wouldn't have been able to come to the United States for six months to a year.

But if we married here, nobody asks anything. And two days later or whatever, I had my green card. And that one was totally kosher. It was fine.

Were your parents able to come to your wedding here?

Yes, my parents came to my wedding. At that point already, my father's sister, her husband, and daughter who had come from Poland in '56 to Israel had emigrated to America. They were already in New York. And what is interesting is that my husband's family and my father's family were totally intermingled. The children went to school together. The two families were competitors.

My husband's family, the Kornes, and my grandfather were almost in the same business. And they were competitors. They knew each other. Everybody knew everybody. When the two families get together, it's like one big family because they knew each other from childhood. They were all from that little-- except my mother-- they were all from that little town.

Before we get into your life in the United States, you said you had gone to Israel. Was it hard to leave your mother? But you were a young adult by that time.

I was a young adult. The first time I went, no, it was already a different type of-- look, I was already a grown up. And I knew that my mother represented everything to me, but it wasn't this clinging type of a relationship. She was, and she is until today paralyzed speechless. She's still my security blanket, OK?

But it wasn't one of, I couldn't survive without having-- I'm a very independent person. Now, what came first, I have no idea. But I never understood how come she let me go to America. And I don't understand how I left. This was not Israel. This was not Israel.

Israel is three hours away. Israel is where my soul is. This was foreign. This was far away. This was over the Atlantic, not over the Mediterranean. I have questions why she ever allowed it, and why did I ever do it at that point, especially that I wanted to go back to Israel. So who knows?

Did you go back to Israel to get your stuff?

No. That one was sent that time. It was sent. I knew the minute I landed in Belgium that it was not going to work out with the doctor and the child. That suddenly, I had seven days on the ship, I came back by ship, I had the time to think. I had the time, probably, to internalize the whole thing and say, no, this is not right.

But then what is right? And that's where it stopped. By the way, years later, he remarried. He had two or three children with his wife. And then he died in a tragic accident-- killed by a crazy patient of his who came in into the hospital and shot him. So who knows, right?

Where did you settle in the United States?

My husband was then teaching and taking his PhD courses in Georgetown. And so the day after we were married, we came to Washington. He was here. He was commuting between Washington and Norfolk, where he was teaching at the university. He is a Russian scholar.

His name?

David Korn.

And so David was at that time, leave of absence from Norfolk to finish his PhD here where he had started it. He had done his bachelor's here, his master's here, and he was starting his PhD. He had already taken some courses. So he was taking off this one year, he had a fellowship to go to Harvard, to go to Penn, or to come here. And he decided that this is where he was going to do it. He knew everybody here. So this is where we came.

So you have lived in Washington ever since.

Ever since I came to America basically.

And then what did your husband do after that?

David was a university professor--

At Georgetown?

Georgetown, and then he became chairman of the German Russian department in Howard University, where he stayed until 1986. He branched out-- the most diversified man that I have ever known. Not only was he a university professor, but he was in the government. He is a Republican, and he was with Nixon, and he was with Reagan.

He was special assistant to Secretary Haig. And he was in the Health Education and Welfare Department. Several times he was in the re-election committees-- one of Nixon's and the other one of Reagan and of Bush-- Reagan and then Bush in charge of minorities. In Bush's, it was a minority, in Reagan's also was in there.

And then he went into business. And so he had a lot of real estate here. So he was pretty much in all direction very much here. He was the founder in Washington through the Jewish community council-- the establish [INAUDIBLE] of the Save the Russian Jews, and was a chairman for all the years. He was the first one who established it here. He was on the board of the Jewish Community Council-- and of the social service agency.

And extraordinarily involved years ago-- maybe you're too young, I don't know-- there was a time when one had to pay for Soviet Jews to come out. It was David who in the middle of the night discovered this. And that was given to the newspapers. He was extraordinarily involved in this. He had survived in Russia, and he always felt that he wasn't allowing to happen what happened to us to happen to the Soviet Jews-- that what Roosevelt did, he wasn't going to allow if he had anything to do.

And one of the men who most supported this whole thing was Nixon. There were I don't know how many thousands of telephones every night out of our home for years paid by the White House I mean the White House was paying for this-- was allowing it underline. He worked from the White House under Nixon, allowing all of this activity going on.

There is a picture that hangs here that if you like seeing it later-- one of the rallies where Bush, who was then in the United Nations, came with Isaak Frank to the big rally-- very much involved in this. So our lives-- first, I was a little bit in shock when I came here. First of all, there was nobody-- no member of the family lived here, everybody lived in New York-- very isolated.

So our friends that we acquired through the years became our family, more than the family that was in New York. David's mother was in New York-- by that time, his stepfather had died. My aunts and uncles were there, but they were there busy with their own life. His family-- sure, we went there, but it was here that we really established very much the routes. And I started going to the university, and then I got pregnant, and then there was one child, and there was another.

And other times, different times, really, I gave up going to school. Then I went back in the 1970s and I finished the University in Georgetown. And in the meantime, I had been working part-time either as a substitute in public schools, or private schools, or I was working as a translator, or I was working as a tour guide in Washington in all these languages. So I pretty much did everything.

But the family never came home. None of the children ever came home with me not being at home. Nobody carried a key to come home. I really felt very strongly that this family had to be the space-- maybe overreacting to my own childhood, who knows? God forbid they did not have their dinner on the table.

And when I think about it, it's sometimes asinine, because you give up your own thing, because that dinner has to be on the table, excuse me-- as if pizza hadn't been good enough, or McDonald's, or whatever. But it had to be there. It had to be this perfectly set up household. And David was very busy with everything else. I tried to be as helpful as I was.

But it was really his thing. The Soviet Jewry was his thing with all my support. And our house was an open I call it railroad station. One came in, and the other one came out. All the Russians came through. He was bringing them to speak to the community, et cetera-- so very much involved with Israel-- very much involved with Israel, politically and in any other form, David especially-- I mean from Golda Meir to everybody else, very much so, again, through the Soviet Jewry, through anything else that he was doing.

And then I went back to school and decided to finish it, because my husband was pushing me-- do it, do it, do it, do it. And so I graduated in '79 from Georgetown, went to work teaching French--

What'd you major in?

French and Hebrew. And then I came upon something that I think really was the most wonderful part of my life personally and beyond the family. I found an ad in the newspaper that Georgetown, the campus ministry, the Jewish chaplaincy was looking for a program director. So I went over there, and Rabbi White, who is still there, was my teacher when I was in Georgetown.

And we were so connected to Georgetown with David and myself, et cetera-- anyway, I got a job as program director. And I stayed there for 13 years. I thoroughly enjoyed it-- the setting, the university, the kids, and everything that went with it. My family at that point, my children had graduated from college already. Once they were gone, it was an empty nest. So it came in just at the right time.

I started working there in January of '82. Joe had gone to college in '80. Monique was going to go in '83. So it was the perfect setup. And David was still involved very much at that time. He was Secretary Haig's special assistant. I had my time.

I could do my own thing, but still very much in the sense that dinner had still to be on the table. It still was there. Maybe that's the downfall of my personal thing. I got them used to it. I was used to it, whatever comes first. OK? And so I worked there-- absolutely the perfect time, until basically everything started.

And what started falling apart is pretty much that my husband got sick, other priorities took over-- other family priorities. Anyway, I decided overnight-- I was saying to my kids at this point-- Joe had gotten married a month earlier-- of course, November of '94, our daughter was going through her [INAUDIBLE] and graduated and was a lawyer-- had gone through her own personal uproars, et cetera.

And David got sick, and I just felt that I was choking. It was just impossible. I could not concentrate on this. And overnight, as much as I had told them for the past six months, I think I'm giving it up, I think I'm-- and everybody was joking saying, mom, you're going to die on the job at age 99, OK? One day we went to New York, and I came back-- this was after Thanksgiving-- and I turned to David and I said, I am leaving in June.

I'm going to finish the academic year. And he turned to me and he said, if you're going to do this, why don't you do it now before December, and let's go to Florida where we had an apartment. Let's go there and let's just call it quits. But don't postpone it the six months or whatever. So I sat down, I wrote a letter-- nobody still believed me I was going to do it.

I wrote the letter resignation, took it over to Georgetown, put it in Harold's cubicle and in our boss's cubicle, and two days later, walked out-- the best decision in my life, because there comes a time when you have to say, enough is enough is enough. And I really felt I had given something of myself-- very much involved-- but I had given something. It had given me a lot-- probably given me a lot than maybe I have even given it. But it was time to switch gears.

What were your duties there?

Oh, I was program director for the Jewish Chaplaincy. They don't have a Hillel. It's all paid by the universities. So the Jewish chaplaincy is part of campus ministry. It's part of the university. And it was establishing the programs, running the Jewish house that is there.

It was aversified. Because at the beginning, we had all these Israeli connections. So I was pulling them all in to give talks at the university, at which time I also lost interest. And it gets a bit repetitive. And I wanted to do something else. And so what was it? I became treasurer of WTO, which I don't know what this is-- Women Treasurer's Organization. I had been President of Young WTO in Belgium when I was 18 years old. So this was just normal. And everybody's laughing because it's probably for life that I am the treasurer. Involved with this just gives me enough-- became involved immediately with the Holocaust Museum.

We'll talk about that.

The minute I was leaving, I knew that this is what I wanted to do to whatever extent I was going to do it.

You had said that you gave a lot to your position, but it also gave a lot to you. What did it give to you?

I worked with the young people. It gave me a self-confidence. I also honestly believe that no matter how financially everybody is fine, it gives you a certain something to yourself that you are the one who brings in the check. The other thing what it did is they told my family, you are the first, but you are not any more-- there is a job that has to be, and it has to be done.

So it gave me this little bit of this distance where I wasn't any more Maryla, and mom, and everybody else, in which I find that, unfortunately or fortunately, it has reversed to exactly to that, because suddenly mom is available. And so mom's time is everybody's time. And Maryla's time is also my time. So I think if you have an outside job-- see, my husband never thinks that being a volunteer is a job. That's a hobby that comes far, far beyond anything else, OK?

So that gave me this freedom of saying, wait a minute, no. Tonight or today-- and I was getting up in the morning, and they knew where I was. So it gave me that-- not that I needed any more independence-- I always felt always very independent, and self-sufficient, and capable, but this gave me almost this permission of not being just the mother and a wife, et cetera.

Your folks are still alive.

Yes. My father is 91, and my mother is 89. And although she had had a very hard last 30 years, both physically, emotionally, mentally in every respect, unfortunately in March, she had a stroke, and she is in the Jewish home in Frankfurt paralyzed and speechless, but her mind is still working very much so. But you can't communicate anything.

And my father probably was getting senile before, and now for sure he is getting senile. There's no question. But he refuses to go to the old age home, so there is a problem there. And then it's a problem from all sides.

You had alluded earlier about what, because of your experiences, what kind of young person you were. Do you feel that if you hadn't gone through those experiences, that you would be a different person than you are today?

Of course, there's no question. There's absolutely no question. I had a conversation with a very close friend of mine because she said-- my granddaughter, we had her over, and they were here-- and she said, she adores you. It's interesting that somebody who was not nurtured in a normal way was even capable of-- you if you do something by example, then she was no example in that sense.

There was no way of, this is right for a child, this is wrong for a child. So when I was bringing my two kids, it's a miracle that they are the wonderful people that they are, because I didn't have a brother or sister being one. My husband is an only child. He is a Holocaust survivor with a different path because he was with his parents-- but still, no normal childhood.

I certainly didn't have a normal childhood. How on earth did we even manage halfway to put together a normal household or have certain things that we did that was in a normal pattern? Yes, but it definitely did. There is no question in my mind-- anybody who survived has marked them in a way-- whatever way that is, or whatever their experiences

after the war-- there's no question that these children were marked, that they will carry it, and that we have, again, after us, we brought up a generation of children that are different from the norm.

My kids were born in Washington. My son, more than my daughter-- but again, she also reacted. She reacted by pulling back, OK? And to her, it's not as if it's of no interest, but it's a pullback. My son, incredibly involved with every Jewish organization-- UJA [NON-ENGLISH] any Jewish organization, anything that it's there and at high level-- we're talking high level in UJA.

That's him interested, went back to Poland, wanted to know his roots, wanted to know-- see the other thing was to show the children their roots. We did not come from nowhere. I was once flabbergasted. Remember, I came to Washington '61. Nobody talked about the Holocaust. American Jews were as close to the subject as anything you got.

We were the strange ones. 1961, it sounds crazy-- and I'm not talking about some pockets in Silver Spring or somewhere where the Holocaust survivors were, I'm talking the American Jews. This was a no subject. That was the strange person who had survived the Holocaust, this odd person. These children were brought up in a society which was normal.

I remember going to friends of ours for Pesach and being basically jealous. They had a family. We had no man's land-- not even a cemetery to go to. It brings back all kinds of incredible-- there was no cemetery. There was no place to go and cry on mothers, or fathers, or grandfathers' tomb, OK? Whether it's good, bad, or indifferent, that's an individual thing, but it's not there.

The first person that died around me was my mother in '79. I must tell you, I am as frightened as any of these type of things, because people, when they are my age, they have had grandparents, aunts, uncles, probably parents that have already died. And so I'm not saying they're used to it, but they have who? Nothing. For the first time, we have a grave, and that grave is my mother-in-law.

So when she died, we made a big thing about it. We brought her from New York to be buried in Washington. And so what happened? I went looking all over the place, because I wanted a cemetery with tombstones so we could put the names of her family from both sides that had died. An American very seldom goes through that type.

So of course it did influence. It influences every minute of one's life. It influences how one feels, how one thinks. And again, it's not totally always conscious. But it is there. And if anybody tells you that they don't think about it or it didn't influence their life, I think that they deny it-- just maybe they don't want to talk about it, that's another story.

You said that for a long time when you heard thunder, you would hide under the table. Are there any other sounds that remind you of your childhood or sites?

No, just don't go and see movies about the Holocaust. I have absolutely no need for those, nor do I have any particular desire for this. I just don't want to see it. It's there, and it's a reality. And I think that those who never saw it, I can't put myself through that trauma.

You had mentioned earlier about your mother working in the factory making shopping bags, and that you had mentioned to me before the interview about similar-- you want to talk a little bit about that.

Well, Birkenau was very close to Krakow. And this factory had something to do with was household goods-- these shopping bags. My mother saw him once coming in there while she was working, and what she said to me-- this was already just about a year or two ago-- after the movie came out, she said, because Schindler ended up in Frankfurt and saw my parents there.

So she saw him after the war-- had very different feeling about him than all of this praising and what have you. And her reaction was he came in this gorgeous chunk of a man. He also seemed to have had some connection, supposedly, first of all, to a couple that lived in Bosnia. He came to visit there quite often. And the other one there were rumors-- and this, again, leave it to the historians-- that he had some connection to that escape route to Hungary, which I heard a

couple of years back. Anything is possible. It was from that same area.

But my mother never knew, being from Krakow, that that factory was doing what it was doing during the war. And after the war when he appeared in Frankfurt, the Jewish community really distanced itself a little bit. You have all kinds of stories-- I was just watching his biography-- the ones that survive under him, you hear about the ones that praise him, but you don't hear about the ones that had something negative to say.

So I think this is a wonderful thing that he did. A friend of ours who was saved by him said, since when was a 16-year-old supposed to be interned and made a slave laborer? So I'm glad that he saved my life, but why was I there to start with? And so you can take it from whichever side you take it. She says, since when was I supposed to be a slave laborer at age 16?

That was the only connection that we had to this Schindler thing that I thought was of some interest. He had somewhere crossed our lives maybe on the peripheries.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection Interview with Maryla Korn. This is tape number 2, side B. What are your thoughts about Germany today?

Unfortunately, I have to go there quite often since my parents are still alive and living there. I don't think I will ever put foot there again after they are gone. I am not in the business of forgiving. I don't think from my perspective there's anything-- look, if my children feel that strongly about Germany, so let no person tell me that the people, the Germans who were there during the war and then had their children, that they didn't influence their children and grandchildren.

So maybe they try to say whatever they are saying, that they have-- of course, they wouldn't maybe be given the opportunity of changing, of doing it again. And so they think whatever they think at this point. As far as I'm concerned, it's not a question of collective guilt. I don't think that the young ones are responsible for what the older ones did, but I don't think that their mentalities have changed.

And again, I go there very often. I have a very different perspective. Every time I come there, I shiver by the time I land up at the Frankfurt airport, and I find it debilitating. I wouldn't have a German friend, and I go there because I have to go there. And as far as I'm concerned, they cannot be forgiven, and it cannot be forgotten, and it cannot be forgiven, and it cannot be understood, and it cannot be explained.

And I said years ago something that horrified some people, but that's fine with me too. I said that as far as I was concerned, I had nothing against the Japanese, Truman did the wrong thing. He should have shot one on Germany and Poland and put it altogether. And I really meant it in that way, because I don't think that those crimes can be explained, understood in any form forgiven.

So when I hear German, even at the Holocaust Museum, I jump, I must admit. I don't have it in me to say whatever it takes to-- I don't know. I've never talked about it with anybody else. There is a certain hatred among Polish Jews to Poland. But interestingly enough, what I find is that German Jews don't feel the same way against the German.

To me, the Polish phenomena is a phenomena by itself, but they wouldn't have had done it-- OK, they collaborated, they did it-- if the Germans had not put the machinery in place. So whom do you blame first? As far as I'm concerned, it's one or the other, and it's all pretty much the same. I don't consider Poland my homeland.

And you asked me what I think about the Germans-- the same thing-- there is no way that this can be forgiven or whatever the term it is. Look, they finished off our family to an extent that is irreplaceable. They finished off-- I'm thinking my kids would have had now-- forget about first cousins, maybe we would have remained for only children. They're with 10 uncles on one side.

My mother-in-law lost seven brothers and sisters-- we're talking numbers. If each one of those kids had had two, can you imagine what would have gone on? There was a family. They annihilated everything going down the generations. They didn't just kill six million, they finished off-- and I always keep saying the same thing-- in the turns of numbers,

six millions in the humanity doesn't mean [INAUDIBLE]. Six millions, OK, so?

How many die here? How many die there? But in terms of what they killed, the intellect, the history, the philosophy, the theology-- all of these Yeshiva that are springing up, they have lost a hole in there where there were no teachers. Every so often, you have this yeshiva that jumps out [INAUDIBLE] somebody. The fact is that the knowledge had disappeared.

What they killed was something-- I don't think that one recoups. I don't know whether my children recoup from not having this family. I certainly didn't. My husband certainly didn't. So to us, they certainly went beyond this. We're lucky our parents survived, but they were traumatized in their own way. Everybody went their own way.

Who would have been in America if this hadn't happened? We'd all have been in Europe, good, bad, or indifferent, in that little place or in another big place. The children were getting education, and they weren't going out. So that's my feeling about Germany. If I don't see it again, I won't cry.

You said before on the tape that you lost your childhood. Are you angry that you did and other people your age were living here in this country?

No. No, but I lost my childhood. I'm not jealous that they had theirs. But my daughter-in-law said something very interesting to me-- I said, I'm bored in Florida. So she says, take it as a summer camp. Do all the fun things in a summer camp. And I looked at her and I said, I love you too-- what summer camp?

I have never been to a summer camp. In order to enjoy a summer camp at age 60, you have to know what it was at age 10. So.

Did you really talk things over with your children as they were growing up-- going into the difficulties and your thoughts that you experienced?

They were never shielded from that, good, bad, or indifferent. We were not a family that did not talk. We always did, both my husband-- he had memories from Poland, because he was five-- to his experiences in Russia. There was no shielding. It's a question of how deep one went.

By the way, my kids have never seen-- they have it, but they haven't seen the Shoah tapes I gave it to them--

Shoah interview tape.

I said whenever you are ready, there you have the whole story is there for both my husband and myself. I said, this is it. I don't know whether they have ever seen it. But they certainly are marked by it, there's no question.

In what way?

They were brought up differently. Parents had different concerns-- maybe overpowering, maybe all kinds of things. To me, I always said to them, I survived so that you could be around. So you can't just throw this to the wolves. You can't say, I'm like any other American kid where the parent says, you want to inter-marry? Be my guest. OK, whatever.

I said, doesn't fly. They did not die so that you can do it at this point. It had its marks. It really had its marks. It wasn't just talk. When something happened, I reacted in a way that our rabbi said to me, Maryla, I have been a rabbi 40 years, I have never seen a parent reacting this way.

Such as.

Such as at one point our daughter did spring on us, and she got married to a non-Jew. And I said to her, this door is always open to you, but he doesn't come into my home whatever happens. We almost lost her. The fact is that I was right that this whole relationship was crazy, and she got divorced. But it took our guts out. My husband was suicidal,

and then he got sick-- wonderful, so the whole package came together.

But I wasn't playing any games here. And so everybody who came here-- and this went on for two years. It destroyed us. It destroyed our son. It destroyed absolutely everybody in the process. They kept saying, why such a-- I said, because if I give in with her, I give in on myself, and I give in on Joe. I give him who is not married the permission of doing the same thing. And then what was this all for?

So you do have reactions that maybe somebody else doesn't-- good, bad, or indifferent-- called it principles. Love is a principle. Somebody can say to me, but at least she would be there. OK, so she would be there, but she was lost to what to me was a reason. My reaction always is, if I survived, there must have been some kind of a reason for this, OK? So no guilt feeling for survival, but what is this?

Were you very protective of the children when they were little?

Yes, very much so. And there is an episode that I think maybe even shows how far subconsciously some of these things-- there was a movie in 1965 that came out that was the "Shop on the Main Street," Ida Kaminska. And I was pregnant with Monique, and I went to see this movie with my husband, surprise, surprise-- that and "The Pound Broker," the two movies. After that, I never went again-- certainly not documentary.

And I almost went into shock seeing the "Shop on the Main Street." Somehow, Ida Kaminska represented my grandmother. And I remember coming home and running to Joe's room-- the middle of the night, please-- grabbing this child, and seeing a trip on the train with these mothers and with their children. That was pretty much when it almost came consciously.

Before that, I lived with it around me, but that was 1965. And that was total conscious. When it was over, I said, whoa, this was a movie, and this was brought out at me.

Do you feel that you're two different persons-- someone on the outside living in today's world and someone different on the inside for what you went through?

No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I think I always-- maybe because I married a Polish Jew, and it was in that same family-- no. I feel I am me, good, bad, or indifferent-- maybe reacting a little bit differently, maybe having different values and different needs. I don't know too many crazy grandmothers who go from Florida by plane in the morning to pick up a baby to bring her the next morning to Florida to have her 10 days, and then take her back in the morning, and take a plane back to Florida the same day so that the baby is with us today.

You have reactions-- it's not that other grandmothers don't want their grandchildren there, but I don't know too many who would be doing this hopping around, especially in one day back and forth just so that the baby would be there. They maybe would be happy to have their children and grandchildren come. But what I'm saying, you have sometimes different reactions. And you don't know if it's you, it's your personality, or whether it's something that comes out from the back. You know what I'm saying?

It's very difficult to decide what is the influence from there. I am a very strongly emotional Jew-- very much so. But I'm not an Orthodox Jew. I have orthodox beliefs. I have very strong beliefs. And yesterday we got some bad news with my husband, so I said, you know what? God, he's the only one up there who can answer.

And he looked at me and he says, here goes Maryla. And I said, either you believe or you don't. And everything has some kind-- maybe a meaning. Somebody said, how do you feel now? And I said, I feel like saying to God, get off my back a little bit. OK, but it's halfway done in jest. Fine. But I need this. Judaism to me is something that's central to my life.

Because of what you went through.

I think so-- beside the fact that my mother is emotionally very Jewish. But yes, I am convinced that it has something to

do with it. But then how much are we product of the past? I like to collect tchotchkes. So my mother once came in and she says, no wonder. I wouldn't have believed her. She says, this is your grandfather, he used to drive my mother crazy, he would bring all of these things home.

Now, come on, I wasn't influenced by my grandfather picking up tchotchkes all over the place, but I am that. So is this by osmosis genomes? How much do we know what is what marked us? But my childhood marked me, I have no doubt. It has to-- and not always in a negative way. You have to be much stronger, I think.

You didn't have this peaceful thing. It created a character. It gave strength to a character, whatever it is-- good, bad, or indifferent. It doesn't mean that I don't get frightened. But I do take things, I think, very differently from a lot of people. And I take them more at heart than many people do.

Such as?

I have a friend who was dying of cancer-- very dear friend. Her husband says to me, Maryla, you do the best that you can in life, and that's all you can do. And my reaction is, I have, unfortunately, a husband-- don't know how long I will have him. I don't do this. I fight. I don't just say, OK, so there is this doctor, he says that. I do fight with it, and I do have problems, and I don't think that doing my best is good enough.

And I think part of this, it is this fighter, survivor, whatever this whole thing is-- whatever it is. I think that you have to give to the Jewish Community, not necessarily giving them money, which is thrown around mercilessly in all directions and not always the right ones-- and think if you give your time, it's much more important than whether the UJA or somebody puts up a plaque that you gave them \$1 million.

Let those for whom the \$1 million, or the \$10,000, or whatever is the way they want to do it, that's OK, because it's needed too. But I find that the people who give of their time, of their knowledge, of their support to a Jewish community-- be the synagogue, be the old age home, being whatever-- I think that this is what's needed.

You have to have this connection. You can't just be taking from it. Or you can't just go twice a year or three times a year to the synagogue and think that you have done your thing.

Do you think your political views are because of what you experienced as a child?

I am a total mixture of conservative, ultra conservative, liberal, and ultra liberal. I vote Republican except in the last elections. And now look what we have-- not that the Republican couldn't do the same thing, don't misunderstand, OK? That's not the issue. But where I'm saying, I voted always the conservative route.

I don't believe that the state owes me anything. I don't think that the country owes me anything. And I think that you have to stand on your own feet. Now, is that part of upbringing? Probably. My political views-- I don't know how much that shapes it, again, because you have these ultra liberals, and Holocaust survivors, and you have the others.

I don't think that you have to give people handouts. Now, is this my Jewish approach, or is this my political thing? I don't want to sound cruel, but after a woman has had two children at age 14 and 15 or whatever, I would do something to her so that she doesn't produce a third, fourth, and 10th. I don't think I'm there to support that type of a thing. I think people can work.

If they don't have any work, then let the state pay them and let them clean the streets, but let them have the self-respect that they do something, and not that they get this getting type of thing. So how much is this of my Jewish beliefs that you help somebody to better himself or herself compared to any other feelings in this? I have no idea.

But I think I'm an incredible mixture-- depends for what. If somebody gets raped, then they better get an abortion if that's what they choose to. Who on earth wants to penalize a woman? So that's my one side, OK?

What about the Civil Rights movement? Were you involved with that-- because of what you--

Absolutely not. Absolutely not. My husband worked at that time in Howard University, Black institution-- absolutely not. It didn't touch me, because I believed--

You were discriminated against as a child.

But I came to this country in '61, where I still saw bathrooms on the way to Norfolk, where we visited-- because my basic thing is, what are they talking about? Everybody's equal. So what is all of this? At the same time, everybody has the right of living in their own place, in their own home, in their own whatever, and not be imposed by some laws or something-- this is my person. You will excuse me, but that's somebody at the door downstairs.

What were your responses during the Eichmann trial in Israel?

He was caught. He was tried. And that's fine. And Israel should not be dumped all of those-- controlling Demjanjuk later on should not be dumped there. But he was needed in order to bring the consciousness, awareness of what had happened. And I think that episode woke up the public, the world a little bit more to the reality. It needed to be done.

Was that a painful time for you?

Not anymore, no. It was just one more. Look, there were so many trials, there were so many other things. I think I was almost following more the Mengele than I was Eichmann. I followed Eichmann, but it was a trial. And I think that Mengele's story brought up some other things in me-- the experiments on the children, et cetera. And so that one in some way was much more-- I wouldn't say it's scary, but troubling.

And these things had to be done. They haven't been done enough. At this point I think is basically looking for a pin in a haystack. And they are all dying out, and that's a chapter that ends. What bothers me more than anything else is that-- I really said it when I was hit with one of the first episode at the university level of the denials-- this was the first I was hit with that.

And by the way, one of the reasons I resigned from Georgetown was because when the second bunch of advertisements came, I really reacted very violently to it. Because the first one was handled well by the university, the second one was published. And my boss was away, who is a priest, and Harold White was away at a conference, and I was hit with that thing. And I reacted.

And when my boss came back, I had to explain to him why I had raised such a hullabaloo all the way through, and called in university professors to do something about it-- which, by the way, they did. We were one of the universities [? the guys ?] were sanctioned and was sent to the Holocaust Museum to visit after they said, well, I wasn't sure that it existed, so freedom of speech, whatever.

And my reaction was, never did I think in my life-- let's put it this way-- when I thought about the Holocaust, I thought it would end up being two paragraphs in a history book. But I never thought I would live to see denials, not in my lifetime-- not with what is available. This is not the Turkish story. This is something that's on tape that's there-- although the Turks say that they all died of influenza.

And there is enough there to trap citizens to show that it wasn't. So therefore, I just thought that this would not happen. But by the way, going back, when my boss came back, he says, why did you react like this? Because I called up the university professor, and I said, would you please get off your seat and do something about it? Anyway, when asked, I turned to him-- a wonderful priest, wonderful man-- and he said, why did you react so strongly?

And I looked at him in his eyes and I said, you know what, Bob? If your grandparents, aunts, and uncles had gone up in smoke like mine did, maybe you too would have reacted or overreacted. And something died in me-- and I realized that immediately-- when it came to working in that environment.

Now, it didn't take terribly long-- took a year for this to settle. But that was one of those decisive times when I said, I

can't do it. So maybe I overreacted. Maybe it is not the way to do it. But that was my reaction. So that's pretty much where I think these trials were needed-- just like two days ago-- we were talking yesterday.

The one who awakened in me a literature about the Holocaust was Elie Wiesel in French was *Le Jour et Le Nuit* the two books. Until then, it was part of my life, but it wasn't in there. And by the way, that of the judges who heard the appeal of Eichmann was my husband's cousin in Israel. So we were connected to it in that way.

When you pick up the newspaper or see on the television things that happened over the years in Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia, do you who is on the run yourself relate to any of this?

I feel sorry. But I'm starting to believe that there is a part of me that became amnesticized. And the one and only thing that matters is Jews and Jewish people. When something happens in Israel, I jump. When the plane crashed in Halifax, I looked for Jewish names-- good, bad, indifferent.

Maybe people don't even say it, but that's where I am at. I am not there to save the world, as much as I would like to. That's the connection. And I'm sure that this has something to do with the Holocaust, OK? Maybe the older generations-

Again, I don't know how many people express it, or how many feel it, or maybe somebody becomes-- maybe this is why being a child, I was marked by this. This is what matters to me. Connected maybe back again to the same thing-- we did survive. We survived for some reason. And I really don't make any apologies for it.

I found it very interesting-- we were in Israel one day, and there were some young people collecting some money for I think it was somewhere in Africa. And I said, it's wonderful, because they have the consciousness. But maybe I did not have the luxury of that type. So that's where it is.

Are you more comfortable around other people who are survivors?

Absolutely. No question. First of all, I'm not comfortable among non-Jews, even as friends. We always had somebody when my husband was connected to, but they were not friends, they were acquaintances. Our close friends are exclusively-- and even I will go further-- our friends are exclusively non-American Jews except with very few exceptions-- two, three couples, the rest, we are all Europeans-- whether it's from South Africa, or South America, or whatever, but we are not American Jews. Yeah, very much so-- it's very interesting--

Why is that?

Because you feel more comfortable, because you don't have to explain, because there is a certain connection. My husband has a wonderful friend-- they were together in Russia. She lives in Canada. She just was here last weekend. There's a connection there.

I was talking with her yesterday. She said, why didn't you call? I said, bad news, why didn't you call? I said, I didn't call you on purpose. I didn't want to call. So she says, if you don't tell me, where are you going to turn?

And I said, you're right. But I find that there is a different level of friendship when it comes-- maybe American society is a little bit superficial. Whatever it is, but it's not mine. I ended a couple of years ago, we were in Israel. And it was in Tel Aviv. And I came out of the hotel with my husband. And after about 15 minutes of walking down Ben Yehuda, I said to him, I feel I'm at home. And I feel that these are my brothers and sisters.

So he turns to me and says, OK, but do they think that you are their sister? And we started laughing. I don't know, but I don't care. That's basically where it comes. And it's going to be if I have to have my friends, my real friends at home, and go out with them and be connected, I do find that I have a better connection. Somehow, I don't know whether that's the right word, but I have a strange feeling sometimes that we care more-- whatever it is.

Care more about what?

Care more about each other. We care more about what happens to each other. It's not like this polite, oh, everything is OK type of a thing, you know what I'm saying? Oh, it's wonderful seeing you-- hope to see you whatever. It's not that. It's a much more tight friendship-- good, bad, or indifferent, because sometime you can play on your nerves too. But I think that that's what it is.

As you get older, do you think about your early childhood more-- about what you went through?

Sometimes on occasions when something happens-- when something-- yeah, absolutely. I find that the older I got, and the more I was thinking about it, and the more things were happening in my life, and the more I was thinking about-- now if I get into panic, boy, do I have some reasons to get into panic here from all sides. I must tell you, I much less was panicking about my parents, because they have lived their life, and it gets to be normal.

So somewhere your brain starts worrying. When I see David-- and I really got into panic last night. Can't show it to him, can't say anything. And then what comes back is but you know that you're going to be all right. And I know I will be all right, not because that's the way people do it, but because I know myself. I know I will be all right.

There's the hump, and let's see what it does. And let's see where it comes. But it's interesting. Then my other reaction is, but you're going to be all right. Is that part of that? Is that not part of it. I have no idea. Maybe because I survived so many times that, OK.

Do you ever dream about your experiences as a child?

No. No, absolutely not. The only time I told you was after that movie. No, absolutely not, which I find sometimes very interesting.

Besides the thunder, are there any other sounds that recall your childhood.

Oh, yes, very much so-- the German ambulance, police, have the same signal that the Gestapo had-- it's there, it's ringing. Interestingly enough, years ago-- you see, the first time that I went to visit my parents in Germany was in 1964. It was our baby. It was Joe at the time. And I was sitting on a living room chair, and I sat down, and I ended up sitting on the floor.

And my parents were in the room and my father said, what happened to you? And I looked all over-- what happened? And my mother who stood there started shaking her head, she says, I know what happened. And what happened was a very interesting thing. I had heard that sound outside, and something in me obviously reacted after so many years, and I slid down from that chair.

That's a sound make, any time I hear it now, I say, you bastards. So that was another sound, which to me was absolutely incredible when I realized that this is what had shaken me out of sitting there on this living room sofa was a chair. Are there any odors that bring back, let's say, the ghetto?

No, absolutely nothing-- no, absolutely nothing.

What language do you think in?

That's interesting. When I count, I count in French. Very often, depending on the circumstances-- if we are with our family, we still speak Polish, and we will react in Polish. Otherwise, it's very much French and English at this point.

What do you speak to your husband in?

Now English. We used to speak French. It didn't work with the children. We gave it up and we spoke English-- and Polish every so often.

Do you get reparations?

Yes.

How do you feel about that?

Never enough. It's money spent for those who needed to live on. It's too little but better than nothing. And for any of us who are getting it, it's play money. This should give you pleasure. Otherwise--

What do you use it for?

I use it for whatever I feel like doing-- from buying things for my children, for buying for myself, for all my charity, the deduction, for whatever it is. I have absolutely no attachment to it, except there will never be enough.

Why?

For what they did. Because they took away health. They didn't give it out of [INAUDIBLE]. They took away because health was affected in some way or another. Also they can never replace-- we would have had an extraordinarily comfortable life. I was the oldest grandchild of this extraordinarily wealthy man-- lived in a village. But grandfather was extraordinarily wealthy. This crazy guy went--

Honestly don't believe that they can ever pay enough. My grandfather in September of 1939 bought for blocks in Krakow-- this is my paternal grandfather-- and put down hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash. If he had taken that to Switzerland, he would have been much better off. But he thought that since he was born in Poland, he would die in Poland, which is exactly what happened. I don't think that they will ever be able.

And if this helps the shrinking number of survivors-- how many children did they have? OK, the rest is falling by the wayside. If this is what helped them to put their lives together, it certainly did. Israel here may be proportionately less-- although we have a case in the family where it really makes a difference between poverty and making it. Why not? They took it away. Not only did they take life away, they took everything else away. So where are we?