00:00:07,410 --> 00:00:09,930
This is a continuation of
the United States Holocaust
00:00:09,930 --> 00:00:12,450
Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview

## 4

00:00:12,450 --> 00:00:14,340 with Barbara Goldberg.

```
5
```

00:00:14,340 --> 00:00:18,660
This is track number 2, and we
were talking about your poetry,
6
00:00:18,660 --> 00:00:22,740
and would it be possible for
you to read some of your poems?
7
00:00:22,740 --> 00:00:26,190
Yes, I'd like to,
because it says in
8
00:00:26,190 --> 00:00:30,150
such a more profound way
what I've been saying.
9
00:00:30,150 --> 00:00:35,614
It seems to not have the
kind of life that a poem has.
10
00:00:35,614 --> 00:00:37,105
I'm gonna turn it on.
11
00:00:37,105 --> 00:00:40,590
12
00:00:40,590 --> 00:00:42,630

```
1 3
00:00:42,630 --> 00:00:46,950
```

In the summer, when the
days were light longer,
14
00:00:46,950 --> 00:00:51,180
we'd pile in the car and
drive down Metropolitan Avenue
15
00:00:51,180 --> 00:00:54,540
for soft ice cream at Carvels.
16
00:00:54,540 --> 00:00:58,560
Those nights, we could have
been a regular American family
17
00:00:58,560 --> 00:01:01,650
out for a spin,
whose father maybe
18
00:01:01,650 --> 00:01:05,880
tossed a ball with his
kids or tousled their hair
19
00:01:05,880 --> 00:01:09,270
or let himself be
tickled, but we
20
00:01:09,270 --> 00:01:13,320
knew his moods would return
when we'd tiptoe around
21
00:01:13,320 --> 00:01:16,530
the house, lay low.
22
00:01:16,530 --> 00:01:18,600
This was the '50s.
23
00:01:18,600 --> 00:01:25,440
There was Korea, but it was far
away, and it wasn't our war,
murdering our people.
25
00:01:29,640 --> 00:01:35,880
Later I'd learn-- but only much later after he was long gone--

26
00:01:35,880 --> 00:01:38,460
that he gave our
blue Persian carpet
27
00:01:38,460 --> 00:01:42,840
to Franz [PERSONAL NAME] who
was broke and could sell it

## 28

00:01:42,840 --> 00:01:44,850
for cash.
29
00:01:44,850 --> 00:01:47,970
He also gave money to his mother's seven brothers

30
00:01:47,970 --> 00:01:51,990 and sisters, and
some got out in time,
31
00:01:51,990 --> 00:01:56,580
dispersing to Israel,
Australia, South Africa,
32
00:01:56,580 --> 00:02:01,350
or the year he paid the bills for the Swiss sanitarium

33
00:02:01,350 --> 00:02:06,870
my uncle stayed at after
the war to put on fat.
34
00:02:06,870 --> 00:02:09,030
These kindnesses.

35

These things my father did without thinking twice.

```
36
00:02:13,290 --> 00:02:15,540
```

What to say about them--
37
00:02:15,540 --> 00:02:21,510
about him except that how a
man treats his own children
38
00:02:21,510 --> 00:02:26,505
is only one part of the
story, and there are others.
39
00:02:26,505 --> 00:02:30,520
40
00:02:30,520 --> 00:02:31,750
And that is from your book?
41
00:02:31,750 --> 00:02:34,120
That's from my book
The Royal Baker's
42
00:02:34,120 --> 00:02:38,230
Daughter, and the whole
first section of that book
43
00:02:38,230 --> 00:02:46,030
is kind of about growing up in
a house where atrocity is always
44
00:02:46,030 --> 00:02:49,410
the undertone.
45
00:02:49,410 --> 00:02:54,600
The next poem I'll read
is from Cautionary Tales,
46
00:02:54,600 --> 00:02:58,890
and this poem is
about my mother,
They say I should
feed you, child

## 51

00:03:11,910 --> 00:03:15,690 with the gift of tongues, but darting through woods
00:03:21,330 --> 00:03:26,190
Days spent undercover
in a field of eiderdown.
00:03:26,190 --> 00:03:31,560

My fingers search for traces of my own lost mother.

At night when the bulb shines through the parchment

## 56

00:03:36,360 --> 00:03:39,870 and I scrub my body down with soap,

```
6 0
00:03:50,760 --> 00:03:52,860
```

of this house.
61
00:03:52,860 --> 00:03:59,430
Here by Union Turnpike, a car
is parked in the driveway.
62
00:03:59,430 --> 00:04:01,020
We'd all fit in--
63
00:04:01,020 --> 00:04:04,950
all if we had to
make a quick journey.
64
00:04:04,950 --> 00:04:09,990
I keep a bar of gold
under my pillow.
65
00:04:09,990 --> 00:04:14,640
They bring you to me, my
locket clasped in your fist.
66
00:04:14,640 --> 00:04:17,040
I want to feed you.
67
00:04:17,040 --> 00:04:21,899
It's those spike needles that
scrape against the glass.
68
00:04:21,899 --> 00:04:25,950
Those shadows that won't
sleep behind the drapes.
69
00:04:25,950 --> 00:04:31,620

It's that woodsman walking through this forest swinging

70
00:04:31,620 --> 00:04:32,160
his axe.

## 71

00:04:32,160 --> 00:04:40,490

72
00:04:40,490 --> 00:04:45,230
I said just a little while
ago, where the undertone is
73
00:04:45,230 --> 00:04:49,550
everything, and this poem
is called "Uninvited Guests"
74
00:04:49,550 --> 00:04:54,740
and it's also from cautionary tales, and it has an epigraph.

75
00:04:54,740 --> 00:05:00,410
Three can keep a secret
if two are corpses.

## 76

00:05:00,410 --> 00:05:02,840
That's a Yiddish folk saying.
77
00:05:02,840 --> 00:05:06,170
Even the dead can't
keep a secret.
78
00:05:06,170 --> 00:05:11,880
They barge in, sit at your table, demanding to be served.

## 79

00:05:11,880 --> 00:05:15,260
They bang their spoons like children crying,

## 80

00:05:15,260 --> 00:05:20,840
feed me, feed me, and you have never prepared enough.

```
81
00:05:20,840 --> 00:05:24,650
```

Once, you would have welcomed the dead, begged mother

82
00:05:24,650 --> 00:05:27,470
to set out extra plates.
83
00:05:27,470 --> 00:05:32,450
But now they consume what was promised to the living.

## 84

00:05:32,450 --> 00:05:38,430
They climb into the marriage bed with their own unearthly linen,

## 85

00:05:38,430 --> 00:05:43,530
whispering old secrets you wish they would keep to themselves.

86
00:05:43,530 --> 00:05:49,010

87
00:05:49,010 --> 00:05:52,390
Do you think that you will be continuing to write poetry

```
88
```

00:05:52,390 --> 00:05:55,530
with this underlying--
89
00:05:55,530 --> 00:05:58,870
these underlying things?

```
90
00:05:58,870 --> 00:05:59,370
Well--
91
00:05:59,370 --> 00:06:00,745
You still feel
the need to write?
92
00:06:00,745 --> 00:06:05,180
No, I don't, actually, because
```


## 93

00:06:05,180 --> 00:06:10,760
my fourth book of poetry, and The Royal Baker's Daughter

## 94

00:06:10,760 --> 00:06:15,980 is to me, that's the close of a chapter,

95
00:06:15,980 --> 00:06:20,540
because it's only been out for the last couple of years,

96
00:06:20,540 --> 00:06:25,100
and it really
reflects a lifetime
97
00:06:25,100 --> 00:06:29,480 of not just observing but trying to understand

98
00:06:29,480 --> 00:06:30,305
what their lives--
99
00:06:30,305 --> 00:06:32,810

100
00:06:32,810 --> 00:06:37,940
how their lives and their
histories were taken in by me.
101
00:06:37,940 --> 00:06:40,920
And it's possible I might write fiction about it,

## 102

00:06:40,920 --> 00:06:49,250
but as far as the poems,
I don't think I will.
103
00:06:49,250 --> 00:06:49,993
Maybe I'm wrong.

00:06:49,993 --> 00:06:52,160
I mean, for a whole year I
was writing mother poems,
105
00:06:52,160 --> 00:06:53,450
saying, please, spare me.
106
00:06:53,450 --> 00:06:54,690
Not another mother poem.
107
00:06:54,690 --> 00:06:55,490
[LAUGHTER]
108
00:06:55,490 --> 00:07:00,140
You don't have any control over what you'll be writing about.

109
00:07:00,140 --> 00:07:05,660
What is the significance of The Royal Baker's Daughter phrase?

## 110

00:07:05,660 --> 00:07:09,710
Well, she's obviously
the poor stepchild.

## 111

00:07:09,710 --> 00:07:13,190
She's getting the leftovers
from the royal house,
112
00:07:13,190 --> 00:07:14,990
from the royal king and queen.
113
00:07:14,990 --> 00:07:16,630
Her father's the royal baker.

## 114

00:07:16,630 --> 00:07:17,840
He just makes the stuff.
115
00:07:17,840 --> 00:07:19,700
She's getting the crumbs.

That's putting it quite overtly, but actually, it's

117
00:07:25,220 --> 00:07:30,200 a line from a poem that's in the book that's

## 118

00:07:30,200 --> 00:07:32,040 not really about
my parents at all,

## 119

00:07:32,040 --> 00:07:36,980
but I think it does reflect the fact that, even though I wasn't

## 120

00:07:36,980 --> 00:07:42,920
starving, that I might have
felt that I was starving,
121
00:07:42,920 --> 00:07:46,430
so that's what the
title means to me.
122
00:07:46,430 --> 00:07:51,020 Cautionary Tales, well, I don't know if you've ever heard of--

123
00:07:51,020 --> 00:07:53,000 what's his name?

## 124

00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:56,270
Those books that were read to me when I was a child.

125
00:07:56,270 --> 00:07:57,850
Oh, my God how
could they do that?
126
00:07:57,850 --> 00:07:59,630
Struwwelpeter.
127
00:07:59,630 --> 00:08:04,190

And these terrible tales of what happens to bad children.

## 128

00:08:04,190 --> 00:08:05,990
Like I used to suck
my thumb, and there's

## 129

00:08:05,990 --> 00:08:09,050
a story in there about how a tailor comes at night

$$
130
$$

00:08:09,050 --> 00:08:11,120 and cuts off the thumb.

131
00:08:11,120 --> 00:08:11,780 So--

132
00:08:11,780 --> 00:08:12,990
These are German folk tale?
133
00:08:12,990 --> 00:08:13,490
Yes.

134
00:08:13,490 --> 00:08:15,740
By a German pediatrician of all people.

135
00:08:15,740 --> 00:08:19,700
It would be read
to you in German?
136
00:08:19,700 --> 00:08:22,640
No, I don't think so.
137
00:08:22,640 --> 00:08:27,810
Struwwelpeter, in English, it's shock headed Peter.

138
00:08:27,810 --> 00:08:30,330

## 139

00:08:30,330 --> 00:08:32,390
Well, speaking about the German language,
140
00:08:32,390 --> 00:08:35,090
what are your thoughts
about Germany and German?
141
00:08:35,090 --> 00:08:38,419
Funny you should say
that, because I've never
142
00:08:38,419 --> 00:08:39,980
been to Germany.
143
00:08:39,980 --> 00:08:41,465
Because?
144
00:08:41,465 --> 00:08:43,760
Because my mother
always used to say
145
00:08:43,760 --> 00:08:46,430
she could never go
back to that country,
146
00:08:46,430 --> 00:08:49,370
and she said Austria was
just as bad, if not worse
147
00:08:49,370 --> 00:08:51,340
in terms of the anti-Semitism.
148
00:08:51,340 --> 00:08:55,100
And that if she were in Germany,
she'd never know who did what,
149
00:08:55,100 --> 00:08:58,160
and I guess I absorbed
those feelings, too.
150
00:08:58,160 --> 00:09:01,400
I remember her being
quite upset with my sister

```
151
00:09:01,400 --> 00:09:02,690
```

when she bought a Mercedes.
152
00:09:02,690 --> 00:09:04,610
How could she do that?
153
00:09:04,610 --> 00:09:08,960
But this trip I'm taking with
my sister, it's a pleasure trip.
154
00:09:08,960 --> 00:09:13,100
It's not a history trip, but
we're taking a river cruise
155
00:09:13,100 --> 00:09:13,820
up the Rhine.
156
00:09:13,820 --> 00:09:17,930
So it will be my first time
in Germany, which I always
157
00:09:17,930 --> 00:09:21,230
kind of said was unconscionably
beautiful from what
158
00:09:21,230 --> 00:09:23,420
I could see.
159
00:09:23,420 --> 00:09:32,540
But again, those woods,
so I guess I will see.
160
00:09:32,540 --> 00:09:36,380
And I know that I have
some time after the trip,
161
00:09:36,380 --> 00:09:38,810
and I feel a
compulsion to go to--
162
00:09:38,810 --> 00:09:40,960
compulsion because we end up in Amsterdam,

163
00:09:40,960 --> 00:09:46,250
but I want to go to Berlin, because I understand that it's

## 164

00:09:46,250 --> 00:09:48,200
a very interesting
city, and it is

165
00:09:48,200 --> 00:09:51,440
a city where my father
lived for some time,

166
00:09:51,440 --> 00:09:52,990
so I'll be doing that too.

167
00:09:52,990 --> 00:09:57,860
And I do speak a kind of child's German, so I won't feel--

## 168

00:09:57,860 --> 00:09:59,840
I'm not comfortable
going to a country

## 169

00:09:59,840 --> 00:10:01,280
where I don't
speak the language,
170
00:10:01,280 --> 00:10:04,560
but I will understand most of it.

171
00:10:04,560 --> 00:10:06,860
So when you hear a
German being spoken,
172
00:10:06,860 --> 00:10:08,840
do you have any
visceral reaction?

174
00:10:10,270 --> 00:10:12,260
In what way?
175
00:10:12,260 --> 00:10:14,810
Well, I'm very curious where people come from,

## 176

00:10:14,810 --> 00:10:16,730 and I always ask.

## 177

00:10:16,730 --> 00:10:19,160
I'll always say, well, what's your country of origin

## 178

00:10:19,160 --> 00:10:23,300
or whatever, and
when I hear German,
179
00:10:23,300 --> 00:10:27,680
it's like it's not my mother
tongue because my mother
180
00:10:27,680 --> 00:10:30,440
tongue, I guess, is
English, but in a way,
181
00:10:30,440 --> 00:10:33,290 it is because it's what I heard before I could speak.

182
00:10:33,290 --> 00:10:37,220
So I feel--
183
00:10:37,220 --> 00:10:38,810 I don't feel, oh, my God, a Nazi.

184
00:10:38,810 --> 00:10:42,110
When I went for therapy or whatever,

00:10:42,110 --> 00:10:48,140
I went with an analyst who was Austrian German,

## 186

00:10:48,140 --> 00:10:50,570
because the accent just
made me feel at home
187
00:10:50,570 --> 00:10:52,220 and that she would understand--

## 188

00:10:52,220 --> 00:10:54,890
there are words that exist
in German that I don't even
189
00:10:54,890 --> 00:10:56,750
know what they are in English.

## 190

00:10:56,750 --> 00:11:02,360
[GERMAN] My mother always used to say nach mir keine [GERMAN]

191
00:11:02,360 --> 00:11:08,600
I don't make any accusations.
192
00:11:08,600 --> 00:11:09,566
I don't know.
193
00:11:09,566 --> 00:11:11,690
Don't give me a hard time.
194
00:11:11,690 --> 00:11:13,370
I just don't even
know how to do it,
195
00:11:13,370 --> 00:11:15,245
and I'm sure there are
things in English that
196
00:11:15,245 --> 00:11:18,140
are untranslatable too.

00:11:18,140 --> 00:11:21,140
But if I knew that if I threw in a German word because

## 198

00:11:21,140 --> 00:11:24,073 of the English didn't occur to me it would be understood.

00:11:27,860 --> 00:11:30,170
Did the therapy help you?
201
00:11:30,170 --> 00:11:31,460
I've thought about that a lot.
202
00:11:31,460 --> 00:11:33,410
I think I have to
have been the longest.
203
00:11:33,410 --> 00:11:35,210
This is analysis we're talking about it.

204
00:11:35,210 --> 00:11:36,290
It was many years ago.
205
00:11:36,290 --> 00:11:39,680
It was 10 years, and at the time,

206
00:11:39,680 --> 00:11:42,890
I was just very committed to it and took it seriously

207
00:11:42,890 --> 00:11:47,570
and I said, I don't want a
Band-Aid, I want surgery.
208
00:11:47,570 --> 00:11:53,180
But you don't have
another way of comparing.
209
00:11:53,180 --> 00:11:57,230
I think a lot of the things
might have come to me anyway

## 210

00:11:57,230 --> 00:12:01,070
just by getting older and more experienced having made

211
00:12:01,070 --> 00:12:05,900
my own mistakes, but I think I really

212
00:12:05,900 --> 00:12:09,528
started writing poetry seriously during it, so yes, for that,

213
00:12:09,528 --> 00:12:10,070 I'm grateful.

00:12:10,070 --> 00:12:14,100

215
00:12:14,100 --> 00:12:17,520
I mean, before that I was
writing short stories and stuff
216
00:12:17,520 --> 00:12:19,440
like that.
217
00:12:19,440 --> 00:12:21,360
About your parents or about--
218
00:12:21,360 --> 00:12:22,930
Some of it.
219
00:12:22,930 --> 00:12:29,550
The same things in the prose fashion.

```
221
00:12:31,116 --> 00:12:34,590
```

222
00:12:34,590 --> 00:12:36,720
As I said, it's hard
to walk the line of not
223
00:12:36,720 --> 00:12:40,050
wanting to make it your life,
but yet recognizing that it's
224
00:12:40,050 --> 00:12:41,270
a big part of your life.
225
00:12:41,270 --> 00:12:45,040
226
00:12:45,040 --> 00:12:48,580
Why did you want to
be interviewed today?
227
00:12:48,580 --> 00:12:51,340
Frankly, I wanted
to be interviewed
228
00:12:51,340 --> 00:12:53,170
so the stories
about my uncle could
229
00:12:53,170 --> 00:12:58,420
be preserved, and
about [? Gertie ?]
230
00:12:58,420 --> 00:13:02,770
and these people who-- and
my cousin Tommy who I loved.
231
00:13:02,770 --> 00:13:04,480
He's the only
person in my family

00:13:04,480 --> 00:13:08,950
who I felt was related to me, because he was so forthright.

233
00:13:08,950 --> 00:13:12,730 And my family was so subtle.

00:13:12,730 --> 00:13:16,030
You always had to kind of guess, and I mean,

235
00:13:16,030 --> 00:13:21,280
his stories were amazing, and he had no ambivalence

## 236

00:13:21,280 --> 00:13:23,710 about talking about them.

237
00:13:23,710 --> 00:13:27,140
But I mean, the story
of how it was in terms--
238
00:13:27,140 --> 00:13:29,050
I mean, maybe it's
because I can picture
239
00:13:29,050 --> 00:13:33,450
Mengele so clearly doing that.
240
00:13:33,450 --> 00:13:37,630
The image of it is so
permanent within me,
241
00:13:37,630 --> 00:13:40,930
so I didn't know it was
going to be so much about me.
242
00:13:40,930 --> 00:13:44,470
It was more about my parents, and those were really--
but I mean I really do think it's

00:13:48,490 --> 00:13:55,030 important to know the residual flavor that lingers and goes

## 245

00:13:55,030 --> 00:13:59,050 on in generations to come.

246
00:13:59,050 --> 00:14:02,620
It's all I know are embedded in some way in my children

247
00:14:02,620 --> 00:14:04,645 in ways that are not so obvious.

00:14:04,645 --> 00:14:09,720

249
00:14:09,720 --> 00:14:13,370
Are there any other stories you wanted to tell?

250
00:14:13,370 --> 00:14:15,400
Relatives?
251
00:14:15,400 --> 00:14:20,450
Well, I adopted
Hans and [? Ilse ?]..
252
00:14:20,450 --> 00:14:27,093
And then there's-- in terms of these events, salons, 253
00:14:27,093 --> 00:14:29,510 or whatever you want to call it that happened at my house,


00:14:29,510 --> 00:14:30,500
there was one--

```
256
00:14:34,730 --> 00:14:37,460
```

There was a cabaret
singer who would
257
00:14:37,460 --> 00:14:41,690
sit on the piano with black and
sing these old cabaret songs.
258
00:14:41,690 --> 00:14:42,620
This is in your house?
259

00:14:42,620 --> 00:14:46,820
In my house, and I knew she was a survivor.

260
00:14:46,820 --> 00:14:51,322
And Lily Robinson with the beauty mark here, who had a--

00:14:51,322 --> 00:14:52,280 shouldn't say her name.

## 262

00:14:52,280 --> 00:14:56,120
A what's it called?
263
00:14:56,120 --> 00:14:59,660
Had a threesome going.
264
00:14:59,660 --> 00:15:07,100
Everyone was very happy, and it's hard to put--

265
00:15:07,100 --> 00:15:11,360
it's just so odd to think
that these were all people who

00:15:11,360 --> 00:15:14,270
had suffered trauma, even if they themselves

00:15:16,880 --> 00:15:18,840 from their lives.

269
00:15:18,840 --> 00:15:21,470
And it was like the Israelis in a way.

00:15:21,470 --> 00:15:24,260
They were parting
with a vengeance,

## 271

00:15:24,260 --> 00:15:26,840
because Israel is
like that a lot.
272
00:15:26,840 --> 00:15:28,550
I mean, everything
is so intense,
273
00:15:28,550 --> 00:15:31,790
and you feel you have
to live to make up
274
00:15:31,790 --> 00:15:34,430
for everything
that's come before,
275
00:15:34,430 --> 00:15:36,560
and you may not see another day.

00:15:36,560 --> 00:15:43,620

I guess I'm more or less hawkish internationally, while very

279
00:15:55,170 --> 00:15:57,450
liberal domestically.
280
00:15:57,450 --> 00:16:00,361
My son, by the way, is in the State Department.

281
00:16:00,361 --> 00:16:03,250

282
00:16:03,250 --> 00:16:08,320
He loved languages, although his language is Japanese.

283
00:16:08,320 --> 00:16:10,900
I remember [? Moshe ?]
saying, Japanese?
284
00:16:10,900 --> 00:16:14,060
Why couldn't it
have been Hebrew?
285
00:16:14,060 --> 00:16:16,270
And my other son
is a scientist--
286
00:16:16,270 --> 00:16:17,200
neuroscientist.

287
00:16:17,200 --> 00:16:28,620

00:16:28,620 --> 00:16:31,960
They're just my pride and joy along with my grandkids.

00:16:37,047 --> 00:16:39,630
Oh, if there's nothing else you
want to add, that's a lovely--
291
00:16:39,630 --> 00:16:41,730
No, I'm going to call
at 5:00 in the morning.
292
00:16:41,730 --> 00:16:42,230
No.
293
00:16:42,230 --> 00:16:42,950 [LAUGHTER]

294
00:16:42,950 --> 00:16:44,420
Something else.
295
00:16:44,420 --> 00:16:45,830
That's a lovely note to end on.
296
00:16:45,830 --> 00:16:49,670
Your pride and joy is a
lovely note to end on.
297
00:16:49,670 --> 00:16:51,020 Well, they're my joy.

298
00:16:51,020 --> 00:16:54,110
I'd rather have it
be that, because I
299
00:16:54,110 --> 00:16:56,060 don't know what effect--

300
00:16:56,060 --> 00:17:03,110
direct effect-- I had
on their formation.
301
00:17:03,110 --> 00:17:03,900
Well, thank you--

Thank you.
303
00:17:04,250 --> 00:17:05,002
--very much for--
304
00:17:05,002 --> 00:17:05,960
Glad to have done this.
305
00:17:05,960 --> 00:17:07,880 --doing the interview.

306
00:17:07,880 --> 00:17:10,869
This concludes the United
States Holocaust Memorial Museum
307
00:17:10,869 --> 00:17:13,899
interview with Barbara Goldberg.
308
00:17:13,899 --> 00:17:16,000

