United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Rose Kamin
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PREFACE

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ROSE KAMIN
August 12, 2013

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer collection interview with Rose Kamin, conducted by Gail Schwartz on August 12, 2013 over the telephone at the Holocaust Museum and in Toronto, Canada. This is track number one. What is your name that you were born with?

Rose Kamin: Rose Silber, S-I-L-B-E-R.

Q: And your name now is?

A: My name now Rose Kamin, K-A-M-I-N.

Q: When were you born?

A: 1928.

Q: What day?

A: August the third, according to the documents.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Warsaw.

Q: In Poland. Let's talk a little bit about your family. Your parents' names?

A: My mother was Leah **Grazutis.** She came from Latvia. **Litvia** or small village, and my father was born in Poland, in Warsaw and had a large family in Warsaw.

Q: Oh he did. Ok. And they met when they were in Warsaw.

A: No, they met in Moscow during the world war, during the revolution.

Q: Oh my.

A: And he married her in Moscow and wanted to take her to Poland to his family.

Q: What were they doing in Moscow?

A: He was in the Russian army. The whole singing and loving it, those years. You know he was very young.

Q: Your mother was there?

A: My mother was an orphan. She was raised in a Russian communist orphanage and she was working with the family as a help, raising children. In Moscow.

Q: In Moscow ok. And did you have any brothers or sisters?

A: Yes, my brother was born on, when they got married first on the way to Warsaw, in **Baranovich**. And he was six years later I was born in Warsaw.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: He was a custom tailor. That was his profession from home.

Q: Did your mother work also?

A: No, she didn't work. She had health problems most of the time.

Q: What was your brother's name?

A: My brother was Stanislaw, Stan, because they gave him, it's not Shlomo, not a Yiddish name but Stan Silber. He was an engineer. He became an engineer later on in his life in Poland.

Q: Was your family a religious family?

A: Not at all because my daughter, my mother was raised in an orphanage, which is more communistically minded. And they actually trained her to eat everything because there was no food. If you don't eat whatever we have, you're going to die. So because she refused to eat non-kosher food. So but she turned around, but she never ate pork or anything that is obvious to her being against.

Q: What kind of schooling did you have?

A: I had very little limited. Actually I have, I was 11 years old when the Germans walked in, in Warsaw. So I only had three or four grades, according to the Polish school, which I remember the name of the teacher, but the school itself I don't.

Q: What was the name of the teacher?

A: The teacher, **Tufania Lydia**. That's a Polish name, Lydia and I remember we were only two Jewish children in the class. We had to go out during the prayers. Because every morning the Christian children were praying. And we had to stay in the hall. That's memories.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism at school? This is before 39.

A: Not. I didn't understand yet.

Q: You had friends who were not –

A: I had friends that were not Jewish most of the time. We lived in a nice area in Warsaw. Next to the park. So I didn't see any Jewish children. Only my cousins were coming to see me every day.

Q: You had a large extended family?

A: From my father's side yes.

Q: Aunts and uncles and cousins.

A: Three uncles and an aunt. Mostly two of them were ultra-orthodox and very, very poor.

Q: But you would say your family was middle class.

A: Not even. He was a tailor because they needed a tailor in the building. We were the only Jews in that family, in that building, was it close to my park, which I loved. I became a little skater at that time. So I was keen of skating. My cousin used to take me, competing with me. So I was very physically active.

Q: It sounds like you were quite athletic. Did you have any other interests besides –

A: Not that, not –

Q: Not at that age.

A: School yes, but my handwriting was on the board. I must have been good in school.

Q: So you have good memories up til 39?

A: Up til 39, til the Germans walked in because this stays with me forever.

Q: Let's start now. What's the first memory you have in 39?

A: The heavy bombing.

Q: Heavy bombing. This is --

A: And running to the basement and seeing everybody praying.

Q: This is in September 39.

A: In September 39 and I was, had to move to the basement with everybody else because of the explosions all around us.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: I spoke Polish.

Q: At home?

A: Yeah, I never spoke a Yiddish word here.

Q: Never spoke. And you didn't obviously know any German at that point.

A: No, of course not.

Q: So had you heard of a man, in 1939 before they came, had you heard of a man named Hitler?

A: Oh yes. Because my mother was very knowledgeable, very readable. She was giving, telling us everything he brought he is going to do. We have to try everything to get out. She was really talking about it constantly.

Q: So you knew about Adolf Hitler before the Germans came in.

A: Yes, yes when I saw the motorcycles driving in, three people were, three sold, three Germans with the uniforms with the bullets, that frightened me. Then there was a line for bread every morning. This is a heavy story. And my mother sent me to the line to wait til she comes out. When I was standing in the line and a German soldier was coming and checking the line. Who, who is Juden, who is Jewish and kicking out of the line. But my, as a child I didn't look like Jewish or not Jewish. They didn't kick me out but they kicked out another little boy that didn't, that looked Jewish and wasn't. And he was screaming I am not Juden. And they still kicked him out. I got frightened and I told the man behind me that was standing a beautiful gray haired man with glasses and he told me he is a Doctor Dolinsky and tell your mother that my line is with in front of him. If I go back to my mother because I got frightened of the German soldiers. So I ran back to my mother and I was almost hysterical. I can't stay there because I'm afraid of the being kicked out from the German soldier.
So she came back and she met this Doctor Dolinsky. He is a person that saved our life because he said today is my last day in the line for bread. I am going to cross the border. To the Russian side. So my mother got very, very happy and she said I wish I can do that but we were poor. We had no money.
So he said I'm going to tell the farmer that takes me across, that you have no money but he should take whatever you have in the house. And you know my mother didn't believe it's going to happen. And next morning 6:00 the farmer did call on the door and he told me that Doctor Dolinsky sent me. I took him on the other side of the border. Was a neutral border between Poland and Russia that was open, supposed to be open 12 or 14 days. So she, the farmer knocked on the door and he says yes, I know you have no money. So he took what we had, a sewing machine and a customer's fur coat that was hanging behind a screen. That's all he was able to take. And put us in the wagon, the four of us. Covered us with hay and took us to the neutral zone.

Q: This is your mother, your father and your brother.

A: And my brother.

Q: And you.

A: He was six years older. It was a memory that – then we come to the border the same day, the officer saying we are too late. The border is going to be closed. So my mother stepped in with her strong personality. She spoke a perfect Russian. And she says you better kill us right here before you send us back. So he says if you feel that, that strong I'm going to let you sleep over at the farmer's house again. We slept in the farmer's house on the neutral border. And the only thing I remember was he was give us, gave us to eat because we were starving. White bread with ham. Ham, salt ham, not bacon. Kind of a slice of ham. The taste I have still today. It's amazing how strong taste could be. And my mother wouldn't touch it. Course not.
So next morning we were going back to the border. It was 5:00 in the morning before it gets daylight and the soldiers looked away not to bother us. On purpose.

Q: I was going to say purposely looked away.

A: Yeah so they and they sent us to a little village and there to stay there. It was on the Russian side.

Q: Who –

A: I think it was a **Gomel**. I don't remember exactly the name of the village.

Q: Who was the they, when you said –

A: The soldiers.

Q: The Russian soldiers.

A: Yes showed us where to go.

Q: Were you the only people or were there other people? Other –

A: In this group, we were the only ones.

Q: You were the only ones.

A: Because we were late. The border was closed.

Q: Was closing. Did you bring anything special with you from home or –

A: Nothing. Just nothing really. We were walking from the farmer to the border.

Q: No, but I meant when you left your house?

A: No.

Q: You brought nothing with you?

A: But amazing I have pictures from my childhood.

Q: So your mother brought those?

A: Maybe I have them in a little bag.

Q: So she brought pictures?

A: Pictures, yeah. Not from the school, from, from people, from me in a sleigh. In a sleigh on the, on the **saschova** which is the park.

Q: Do you remember the name of the street you lived on in Warsaw?

A: Yes.

Q: What as it?

A: **Kula** Alberta, Kula it means the king Albert. Then they changed it to **Nyetsala**. Nyetsala it means not whole. But my friends that went to visit Poland, they said it doesn't exist anymore. Only my uncle one of them that was the wealthy, lived on the famous street **Wanushka**, that is now a museum. But that family was my, the closest family because they were taking me to their country home when I was visiting them a lot with my little cousin. That was my life in prize in my life.

Q: So let's go back. You crossed the border and the Russians –

A: And we stayed in that village til the Germans attacked Russia. I don't know how long we lived there, maybe six months, no more.

Q: That was June 41 so it must have been two years that you were there.

A: Yeah I went to school there. I was babysitting for somebody. This I remember and the child died. And I didn't know how to handle the situation, of course not. And then the bombing started.

Q: Were there many other Jewish refugees with you in this village?

A: In that village? Not really. Then we were put on a train, when the bombing started.

Q: This is June of 41, when Germany attacked Russia, yeah.

A: And the train took us to Ural Mountains very, very far. This is, was like a dream, a village with Uzbeks. You know Uzbeks. The people are high cheekbones and darker skin and it's a

whole village, a small village. There were Jewish people there, starving. We were all starving, no food.

Ural Mountains in, it was un, undescribable that village. Because there was a lake that I used to bring the water from the lake. I used to go down to take the water and the stick with the two pails and there was no fish in that lake so we were always talking about that I wish there would be fish. Yeah and the people were starving. And there I was babysitting for another child that the mother couldn't handle the child. She had no strength to go four steps.

Q: Again were there other Jewish refugees there?

A: Yes, we were, there are at least four or five Jewish families. And my father started to work as a tailor there for the army, for the Russian army.

Q: For the Russian army.

A: Til they took him to the army. They took him to the army as a soldier. So we were left alone, the three of us and they took my brother away to Siberia. He was older so they sent him to the coal mine. So my mother and I were left alone here.

Q: Do you know where in Siberia your brother was?

A: Yes in K, well we later on joined him, **Karaganda**. It's a coal mine city.

Q: OK so you're still back, you're still with your mother?

A: I'm still with my mother for a while because my father in the army, he got typhoid fever. That saved him because all the 12 guys that went with him got killed and he came home, weak not able to work but recuperated in a few months and one of the Uzbekistani women was helping him to work. To repair the uniforms. But the army still sent him back. After he recuperated they took him. They send him to a **Bielbejan**, the hole in devil on earth. To build railroads. Can you imagine so nobody survived that. It was like a camp.

Q: How old was your father then?

A: He was a young man, in the, 30s, 40s.

Q: Do you know what year he was born?

A: No, my mother 1903. He must have been two years older. Yeah but they were then in the, he worked on the railroad, building the railroad for the, it was like a camp, like a survive – I don't know camp or a jail. So with good luck he broke the arm. The right arm that he couldn't work anymore. And they put it badly together, and then they sent him home. So we were like hanging in the air without food, without support. So we asked to be sent to Karaganda, the government because that way we'll be next to my brother. And we there, we got a little hole in the ground apartment. House was like a hole in the ground. With a stove at the entrance.

Q: How did you get from one village to the other? By train?

A: By train.

Q: By train, yeah.

A: Cattle train. Not regular train. They were cattle trains. Anyway this was an experience in Siberia for four years. It's a long time yeah. And you just wonder how we survived.

Q: So you joined your brother.

A: We joined my brother. He live his, in this town. I was by then 14, 15. I went to school there. Four years. Because it took me four years. We were there four years. And they didn't take me to work in the coal mine because I was too, too fragile. And I would be afraid to go down, even to take the lamps down. Some of the people were taking the lamps down. So they gave me a choice. To clean the army guns. I had to do something for the army. The army guns or I became

a barber for the soldiers. For the officers. Thanks to an old man that was a Jewish guy, had a barber shop. He said you're going to work with me and you're not going home with anybody. You're going home with me. He helped me. Only for six months. That was the law at that time.

Q: So you cut the soldiers' hair.

A: With a little machine. It's not, it's hand machine like. It's not a razor but it's a little machine. And he was closing the shop and he was making sure I go home, go to my place. But this place had a lot of prisoners from Germany and Japanese. Where my brother had them in the coal mine. So what an experience he had. He was telling us stories that they were dying from hunger and work. Even the horses were blind. I didn't know that the horses worked too much in the dark, they get blind. So this is what the survival.
In the school was only four children that were Jewish and I, from Russian school from Siberia, I have pictures. Yeah.

Q: Who were the teachers?

A: There was one English, one Russian, one Oriental. I have the pictures of all the teachers. I don't know if I –

Q: By that time you were speaking Russian, right?

A: I spoke only Russian.

Q: You knew Russian.

A: I turned from Polish – they didn't know what is a Jew there. Would you believe that nobody understood. So I said I'm Polish. They accepted Polish but not Jewish. And then they made a meeting for us, the four children. The four that they know to be Jewish. Don't date anybody here because anybody here you're never going to get out federally. Because these are people that lost their citizenship. That part of the city. It was terrible. There were soldiers. You know

you're, in the history was, it's a long history of Russian army. I don't remember the general. He took the 600 people to the German side. He thought that Germany is going to win. So they become and when the Russians took them over they become prisoners of the country, like enemies. And no passports, no, no legal citizenship. But they were walking free but I'm sure after Stalin disappeared they let them out. Because this was during the war.
It was a, it was a heavy experience.

Q: You were working in the barber shop and you went to –

A: For six months only.

Q: For six months, and then you just went to school.

A: I was going still to school yes

Q: And you were living by that time with your mother?

A: Only my mother, my brother. Yes.

Q: And what was your mother doing?

A: I don't remember what my, I don't remember her doing anything. There was no job and I don't remember what my father did. He couldn't work with a broken arm that never healed properly, was crooked I guess. So we were living in a, like a basement in the ground in Siberia. And the few neighbors that, two families were Jewish.

Q: Tell me again the name of the town that you were –

A: Karaganda with a K. East Siberia, but very cold.

Q: Where did you get the warm clothes for the winter from.

A: Who, I don't know who gave it to us. There were quilts made of cotton inside, quilted like they have now, this stuff quilted. And the shoes, boots were called **valenkis**, made of sheep's wool rolled up. And every night we had to dry them because they got wet. But they had, the heel was made from a cork and it's interesting that that boot felt warm. Til every night we had to put it next to the oven to, to dry.

Q: How many rooms did you have?

A: No, one room.

Q: Just one room.

A: One bedroom. The windows were under, very low.

Q: Where was the bathroom?

A: Ah, there was no bathroom. Outside, outside so it was outside. I was more sick than alive because I am a celiac on top of that. So I went to school and they say I had stomach problems, bleeding. And I missed a lot of school.

Q: Where did your mother get the food from to feed you all?

A: I have no idea. No idea at all how we s – I don't remember a bread. I don't remember a potato, or a tomato. During the war they felt sorry for the children. I was sent to a children's camp for one week. That was –

Q: In the summer time or –

A: In the summer time and it was shocking. Because 200 children in one room. With a little water container at the entrance to wash the feet. And you know I was afraid of the children. They

had all sores to, to wash myself. Anyway this was a short time. My mother comes to visit me with a tomato, one tomato. When I was crying. I said I can't eat a tomato without anything, no bread. So she couldn't get bread. So this type of situation was very horrifying cause I know many other people had even worse.

Q: Did you know or did your parents know what was happening in the rest of Europe at the time?

A: Oh yes, yes. I somehow we had a radio.

Q: Oh you had a radio.

A: Yes. And I had a neighbor that a Russian soldier that lost a leg. And he was a friend of my brother. So he always used to come over to take me walking and I didn't know he lost a leg because he came, he went with me to my school dance. And he pretended to be able to dance. And then he, one day he asked me to come to his place. That was, he was living with his sister and the family. And he was a young boy, maybe 17 or 18. So he was crying and he was, he had a bottle of vodka on the table and he told me I have to tell you my story. He was a pilot. I didn't even know. Well he was too young to be a pilot and he lost a leg. So I said so but you lived that. The artificial leg was standing in the corner. You know I was so young. I, I ran out. I was crying. I couldn't handle it. So anyway, so this was Boris, my brother's friend.

Q: Did you have any identification papers at that time?

A: No documents but she, my mother kept the Polish documents somehow. She said we're going to get out of Siberia with these papers because we were not prisoners like many other Jewish people were taken to Siberia, but we went ourselves. We asked to be sent because of my brother. Being there. So it's one coincidence helped us.

Q: Did you talk about your situation with the other Jewish children?

A: No, I couldn't explain to the other children because they were not from Poland. So they were Jewish children from the Russian atmosphere. Surrounding so there was nothing to explain to them. They knew about the war and about the bombing and they were worried that Hitler shouldn't win. And we had these discussions in school.

Q: I was going to say did you talk about the war?

A: In the school, in the school the teachers were, was telling us how is it going. Who is winning and even when Stalingrad was the biggest end of the war, we were talk, we were told about it. If Stalingrad they win, then the war is finished. So it was shocking to take it. Nobody thanks to my mother's brain. She knew everything. We used to call her Golda Meir because she was very intelligent, very super smart.

Q: Any religious practice during this time?

A: No, no. We never practiced at home either. She was non-religious. Even she was raised from an ultra-orthodox family but her mother died after birth. And they were twins. Her brother and her were sent to different orphanages so she didn't have any background of religion But she had a brain and the book. All the time with a book. This is the most important thing in my life, too, books.

Q: You're going to school and –

A: I'm trying to – I am grade nine going into grade ten. When the grade ten in Russia is like university. The education is very high. But I was, had a little bit of murmur and they considered that is serious problem and they didn't –

Q: You mean a heart murmur.

A: Yes. They considered it serious problem, the doctors and they didn't strain me with the, with exams. They were so good to me. They let me go to all that, because I was normally maybe a good student without it.

Q: That was, these were the Russian teachers.

A: The Russian.

Q: So then you finished grade nine.

A: No I think I, I almost finished the grade ten when the war ended.

Q: Tell me about that time when you knew that the war was –

A: That was amazing. The first thing they asked us, where we want to go. So we said back to Poland.

Q: How did you know the war was ending?

A: Oh we did listen to the radio.

Q: Through the radio is how –

A: Through the radio, yes.

Q: Were there any newspapers?

A: And discussions in the, in the schools and everywhere.

Q: Were there any newspapers?

A: No, not that time. We didn't have any papers. I don't know where – there are many things in my mind, it's like erased. I don't know why because usually I have a good memory.

Q: So then they asked you where you wanted to go and you say –

A: Where do we want to go.

Q: And you say Poland.

A: So we said Poland but they put on **Eshelon**, Eshelon is the train. It was a wagon train that they make comfortable. One wagon was for the food. One wagon for the people. Or a few, and even one wagon for people that were artistic. They organized music for, for this train for three months. And we start two weeks. It was a schlep. A long schlep. And a lot of Jewish people on the way were picked up.

Q: Did you get off the train?

A: No, we don't go out. You go back to sleep on the train. On the benches.

Q: You stay on the train.

A: Yeah but the train stops and the farmers bring with the basket whatever they have to sell you and we didn't have anything to sell so whatever the train has for us, we had to, we got some kind of a food, I don't know what. I don't remember what we were eating. It's like breaking out. Anyways, but each train oh and the worst thing I meant to tell you. How we survived going to Russia.
During the bombing, my father and my brother went to look for food. Because everything was open. The stores, nobody was there to take care of there, they were afraid of the bombs. So they brought back a sack of tobacco and one sack of rice. They carried on their shoulders. And that kept us going to go to Russia. Can you imagine. And each, every time that we needed some

bread a little tobacco we were able to get in Russia, a piece of bread. So this was very important things that my father and brother did.
Anyways, it's nice to talk about it and it's nice to forget a lot.

Q: You're leaving Russia going towards Poland and you're on the train.

A: Months it took us to go back. We stopped in Germany. We didn't go to – we went through Poland and my brother decided to marry one of the girls on the train. Yeah and she was Polish and Polish the family, they were coming from Siberia too. The father was killed because they refused, he refused to work for the Russians. He was an architect. And mother with the two daughters, which Kristina was my sister in law. And they stayed behind in Poland. The two of them got married and lived in Poland because he needed to go back to university to get his engineering degree.

Q: How did your parents feel about that?

A: My parents had nothing to say. My brother was a very strong minded person. And this Polish girl was innocent girl. She went through the whole, the war too. And this is the, I was with her and her mother. The only thing when they left Poland, they stayed in Poland. And he went to university. And that was a hard time. We end up ourselves straight to Germany. To the DP camp. Because you know DP camp we didn't know where we want to go. We were not Zionistically minded. We didn't want to go to Israel because my mother's logic, we had enough war. We don't want to be in a war zone. That made sense to me too. Anyway, that's I'm sure many people feel that way. But they were mostly young people were very patriotic singing all the Hebrew songs which I didn't ever learn. Would be nice to know.

Q: So you got off at a DP camp.

A: DP camp I lived for two years.

Q: The name of that camp.

A: **Hess Lichtenau**. Actually you have it on the documents there. H-E-S-S dash Lichtenau with an L. L-I-C-H-T-E-N-A-U. Lichtenau.

Q: Where was that near?

A: That was about 200 kilometers from Kassel. I don't know how far was Kassel because Kassel, when I got married I gave birth to my daughter. We lived in that DP camp. We did not appreciate all the beautiful food that the Jewish community was giving us because we didn't know what it was. Coffee in containers or sardines. You know everything was strange to us. And you know you take it for granted, but they did a lot. Wonderful.

Q: What did you do in the DP camp?

A: I went to courses. I took designing, because nothing is long enough to finish anything. All my life I didn't have enough time to finish.

Q: You're about 17 years old now.

A: Yes. I wanted to be a designer, a good designer because of my father's sewing, I had a lot of knowledge in sewing. And then it was a nice group of young people. Some took dentistry. Some took engineering just to start with but we didn't have time to finish, because we had to get, plan the future. Where to go. They had a theater organizer with a lot of actors. Once a week they put on a show for us. And it was strange, the feeling because we are, we don't know where you want to be.

Q: And these were all young Jewish people that you –

A: Young Jewish people. My husband I met, refused to move out from the camp, because most of the couples that got married moved out to the village to live a better life. But he was very Jewish and he decided no, I'm not going to live in a German atmosphere. We have to live. So it

was a horrible experience for me to live in the camp. In one room with my mother, father and a husband.

Q: When did you get married?

A: In 1948.

Q: You were still in for three years, you were in ---

A: No, two years.

Q: So 1947.

A: 47, because my daughter was born 1948.

Q: And your husband's name?

A: It's my, different on the papers. It's Solomon Wolfus, W-O-L-F-U-S. He was from Wreblewska another town in, bordering Poland and Germany.

Q: So you got married and –

A: We got married, lived in the same room with mother and father. Was a disaster for me. And the whole idea of sex was a disaster. I was 19 years old, but physically not developed. And physically because under nourished and most of the time. And you know it was disappointing because he was very powerful person and I had to be able to live with that. It was not good. So after my daughter was born, I decided no more children. No, because –

Q: Did you give birth in a hospital?

A: You know what, I gave birth in a town called Kassel. K-A-S-S-E-L and like a closed mind I went by myself to give birth.

Q: To a hospital?

A: To the hospital yeah. It was by train I suppose I went because there was no other way. I didn't tell my mother. I didn't tell my husband because I was very upset, very angry at life. I didn't want that. I mean I thought this was marriage and having a child should be a pleasure. For me, it wasn't. So that was it. But to me it was part of the war. I am still in the war zone. And so it's bad.

Q: It's understandable. You had a daughter you said.

A: I had a beautiful girl and he was very upset because he wanted a **kaddish**. I said you know if you, if you talk to her about it maybe she can tell, sing kaddish for you. No, it made sense. What's the difference? A girl should be as close. They were never close.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name is, at that time he wanted after his mother Bella, but we changed it to Beverly. She is a professional person. She has a PhD psychology. She is a beautiful person. With a very strong personality like him.

Q: You and the baby go back to the DP camp. And –

A: Yes and we waiting for a result, where to go and he was from fur family at home. They had, one of the brothers I think had a fur business. So he decided that fur would be better Canada. So we going to go to Canada instead of United States. He applied for Canada. And we got the passage to go to Canada, slow. You know by boat. To Halifax. Very, everybody was that sick. To my luck I wasn't so I was able to walk around and feed my baby and tell the cook that didn't speak any other language but Greek. What I need for my baby so I had to look myself in the

closet because everybody was dead sick. It was very bad timing. I don't remember what month. It must have been September. It was a disaster the trip for people.

Q: Was it 1948 or something like that.

A: 1948 yeah.

Q: You settled where in Canada?

A: We settled right away in Montreal. Well actually it's the best time of my life.

Q: You stayed in Montreal for how long?

A: Oh many years. I am only in Toronto 20 years so she was raised, my daughter went to university. Everything possible I gave her. She took it because she was very lucky with her, very intelligent girl. She was a good student and I had no problems. Without the language, without helping her. Because I couldn't help her in high school or university like other mothers can

Q: And then you picked up English, right?

A: I picked up English yes, But not good enough. You know I had two courses. I should have taken much more.

Q: Did you work at all?

A: I did yeah. I did work. At the fur business. I went with him to the fashion shows, to the buying and selling and then I had another job outside too. Anyways, work was a pleasure for me.

Q: When did you move to Toronto?

A: I moved only 20 years ago. Because my daughter is here much longer.

Q: And your husband, is he still alive?

A: My husband, no he died very young, at 54. From cancer. And frightening he had it was considered to be Hodgkin's but it wasn't Hodgkin's. It's a malignant glands all over the body. And that time was frightening for me because my daughter developed a titus gland situation. The tonsils were not removed and by not removing the tonsils which one doctor recommended, keep it because she is going to need it when she is older. Was a mistake. She developed the serious disease and at 17 they had to remove them and put her on a cortisone for six months. So you have to listen to two doctors. That's why.

Q: Can we talk a little bit before we close about your thoughts and your feelings, how your childhood, your experiences affected you. Do you think you'd be a different person today than if you had not gone through what you went through?

A: Yes, I would be, I am very compassionate and too soft to people sometimes. So I have to pretend that I am wrong. I have compassion when I should have more, I should help more people than I do. I would like, I wanted to adopt children but my husband, no, never, I never going to love somebody else's child. And one of my friends was dying and I had a little boy for six months with me and I wanted to keep him and he refused. That was a big mistake.
I, you know, I didn't got from life what I wanted. A place, education, I'm missing that. Yes, these families think no matter how much I try to educate myself, I still miss the knowledge.

Q: What are your interests today? Do you do –

A: Oh, today I do read a lot. I still take dancing classes.

Q: You take dancing. What kind of dancing?

A: Line dancing. My daughter, 65 going to be. And she's taking four times a week dancing. To her it's an exercise. Wonderful, yes.

Q: Do you do anything else?

A: I do. I socialize in a Yiddish group conversation.

Q: So now you speak Yiddish.

A: I speak perfectly Yiddish. That's why I spoke to Herman in Yiddish and I joined this group of Yiddish educated people and I felt I educate myself by listening to them. But the problem is they fell apart and my favorite guy is blind now and actually Mr. Taub knows him. Because they were ahead with eight years, ten years ahead of me. They had the opportunity to educate themselves when I didn't.

Q: Your husband's name was?

A: He called himself Zalman with a zed. But according to the documents it's Solomon. He came from a very good family from **Wreblewska.** They had a large trees for building, cutting and shipping through the war. That was their family business. But the horror story. I have of them. His father that he brought, I have about, before he was killed. They were underground for 17 people underground working and somebody reported them to the Germans. They threw in a bomb into the underground so this, the story I have from his leadership, between the 17 people. That was a horror story. But I'm sure you know many horror stories.

Q: Are there any sights or noises or smells today that remind you of your war time experience?

A: No, no. Only the pictures if I see the bombing of Poland and fire all over cause my father took me by the hand to see it, to run from one uncle to another to see who is alive. If nobody was hurt. During the bombing before Hitler walked in. The bombing was more frightening for me with the fire all around.

Running from one place to another, nowhere to hide. And then visiting his sister with seven children hiding in a little place. And the orthodox brother refused to see a doctor and the little boy of 14 had to have an appendicitis. He said no god would help. No, he died at home because I didn't know if this was money problem or because he was ultra-orthodox. It could be both. Now this horror story from that family.

Q: Do you think about your experiences now? Do you think about them a lot?

A: I try not to but it comes back. Whenever a situation if I talk to other people, I see oh I realize similar situation to what I had. I know some of my people went to concentration camp, and they don't talk about it. They don't want to talk about it.

Q: Do you feel very Polish?

A: No. I feel Jewish.

Q: Feel Jewish.

A: Yeah I am born Jewish and I respect that and I honor it, but I am not a traditional person, not religious. Because of the upbringing.

Q: Are you a Canadian citizen now?

A: Canadian yeah right away. I am proud of being Canadian. My best time in my life I had in Montreal because I met nice people that helped me even without the language. She introduced me to swimming and skiing and that was 40 years of her life. She was doing for me.

Q: You swim and you ski and what else?

A: Yeah I skied with her and I, you see a met a new world. I never had a chance.

Q: Do you play any musical instruments?

A: Yes, I play the piano.

Q: You play the piano.

A: Yeah, the piano classical but now I'm taking a senior group. They are teaching a little more than classical because we want to play pieces without being so serious. So it's a nice group, Yamaha school of music and they have a senior group.

Q: So you're playing jazz and things like that.

A: A little jazz yes. It's beautiful. The relationship for the piano if I can hold it. If my back doesn't go for two hours.

Q: Did you talk about your childhood experiences with your daughter when she was little?

A: You know she has a little biography from me and she knows a lot but she doesn't want to talk about it. Like today yesterday I was visiting my niece. That was my, from my brother, from the Polish wife. And she is more interested in my daughter in that. No, because she doesn't know that much.

Q: Does your daughter have children?

A: Oh yeah she has two daughters.

Q: Do they ask you about your experience?

A: No, they're children. They are not interested at all. I don't talk about it. I think Hannah the younger one would be. I think my daughter is too hard person to discuss it. Leave it alone she says. And I don't think she's right.

Q: Do you get any reparations?

A: I didn't get til now. I was applying and they sent a horrible letter I got from Germany. There was no reason for me to leave from Poland. Can you imagine a letter like that. When I showed it to the lawyer here, but now they asking we should reapply. So I reapplied and they sent from Australia 5000 dollars. Ok the lawyer took up 3200. Can you imagine? Then actually this layer that I have now, Mr. Shapiro was very upset. He sent another letter to them. How dare you charge for that, for the compensation. So they sent me another 3000 dollars. That was the whole compensation. No I didn't got monthly like other people did because many people, I know some people that didn't tell the truth. And I am a straightforward person. I don't want to, I never lied in my life.

Q: What are your thoughts about Israel?

A: The country is ok if you're very patriotic, Zionistic. They are harsh people. They destroyed the Jewish language. Because they feel we are beneath them and this I resent about Israel.

Q: You mean, are you talking about Yiddish.

A: Yiddish yeah. They built it up, they built up their own language to this and I have a big article. I wish, maybe I still have it. That was a mistake. Right when the country became a country, should have been taught equal Yiddish and Hebrew, but no to them Yiddish is only European Jews are speaking Yiddish. And Hasidim, some of them. Sections.
So I resent that about Israel but they are apologizing now. They keep saying they're teaching the children Yiddish now. I said no you're teaching the children Yiddish now but you neglected it so many years. It's going to disappear with us.
But Herman told things it's growing better, the Yiddish. I don't know if maybe he's right. The university they teach and Yiddish is only strictly for the European Jews.

Q: Do you think that the world has learned the lessons of the Holocaust?

A: Never, they never learned the lessons. Because there, everybody was closed for us. The worst thing that England didn't do anything. Canada didn't do anything. The boats were sent back. It was shocking, absolutely shocking.

Q: Today do you think people have learned the lessons?

A: I don't think so. Because if you see around the world it's happening different nations. There is so much discrimination even now. Jewish or other nationalities and I don't know if you knew in the states about this artist's reminder of the ugly times. He built a lot of buildings all over Canada. Lieber, I can see it, I can see his name. I have it right in front of me, Liberhart, Liberstrom. And he's an art. Daniel.

Q: Liebeskind.

A: You heard about him. Reminder of ugly times. But he made a lot of, he is very much against English politics way back. England and Roosevelt they didn't do anything. It's absolutely horrible.

Q: Are you comfortable among other survivors? Do you prefer to be with other survivors?

A: Not necessarily because I don't, I'm more comfortable with the survivors than the born Canadians that don't know anything what's happening. But are ignorant at the, and I find that they don't know. Only my friends that lived in Montreal that belonged to Jewish communities, they know a little bit. But they don't know the history of Europe. She tells me, one of my friends, I don't want to know about it. So it means you cannot communicate. You communicate better with the survivors. You have a better conversation, understanding I would say.

Q: Do you have any desire to go back to Poland?

A: No. it's amazing. My daughter wants to go to see where I went to school, the park. If the street doesn't exist. And I really felt that why should we waste money in Poland. So I said to her it doesn't make sense. You want to take me on a trip, we'll go somewhere else. That's it. Maybe I made a mistake. At 80, was the right time. Now I'm 85. No, most of my friends went back.

Q: Did go back?

A: And they are disappointed. Some of the Polish people feel why are you coming back to get back your houses. It's horrible. Horrible. Yeah you must have read about Felix Zeidman. His story is unbelievable. And he was full of hate all those years. Until at the end he forgive the Polish family helped him to survive. He made honors, he honored them, took them to Israel. So you read the whole story?

Q: I am familiar with his story.

A: It's an unbelievable story. Listen the stories of life are beautiful but you don't have to live with it. To live with it, you get depressed. You know you get down. And I am a very easy person to get depressed. So I have to be careful. I am going very often into a depression.

Q: Do you get any professional help?

A: No, no, no.

Q: You just handle it yourself

A: I have to pull it out myself. I look around. I see other people have worse and I am still the lucky one so that's why I figure it out. So when I told my daughter, you are depressed. No, no, no you don't tranquilizer for that. No, no, no. you have to do it yourself. Physical exercise. I do a lot of yoga. I'm a physical person. Maybe that's why I survived.

Q: Where is your brother?

A: Oh he died. Five years ago. My best picture is with him. Such a strong life, a love for me, unbelievable.

Q: Did he come to Canada too?

A: Yeah, yeah he was living in Canada but he was living in Montreal for a while. And he never succeeded here because he didn't have a diploma from here. So he had to work as a draughtsman instead of engineer. And but in Poland, we were supporting him. I was supporting him for 15, 20 dollars a month. That was enough for him to survive. But then when he came to Canada he had a struggle. Because she was not able to help. I can get any type of job, whatever I wanted. I was able to get. And some people cannot help. So I am too helpful sometimes. And then I go into this depression. Not long. Anyways. I hope you are not tired of talking to me.

Q: No, I'm very grateful to you. Is there anything you would like to add before we close? Any thoughts that you have or message to your grandchildren or anything you wanted to say?

A: They think I succeeded in life more than other people with education. So at my 80th birthday that's what they told me. Even my daughter said. What you have I don't have with a PhD.

Q: The knowledge about life.

A: The knowledge about life. Yeah but you know you're never happy with anything when you go through this war. You're really not happy person, no. You make the best of every situation but you're not a happy person. But you have to analyze that you could be worse. And you're lucky what you have. Anyways, I always feel I didn't do enough for other people.

Q: You're talking about during the war or –

A: No, no, no after the war. After the war. I could have done much more but my late husband would stop me all the time. If I wanted to go to university, he did not approve of it. You're going

to be away too much. But when he died, I did go. I took five courses in one year and I got so sick and tired physically. I overdid it. So I took two years at university and I didn't continue. I put too much pressure on myself. That's a pressure person. And that's enough. Now I have to make the best of everything. To see anybody that survived like me because most of the people I see depressed and going into dementia and it's frightening. I still drive.

Q: Do you?

A: Oh yes, to me the best pleasure is when I drive on my own and I listen to classical music, yes. This is very important. That's why I came to Washington by car.

Q: What are your thoughts about the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

A: It's absolutely beautiful. Except til I saw the fire in Poland. I cannot look at them you know. Actually the tragedy, the uniforms the shoes. I had to avoid looking at that. Because that's like a pain in the chest. How people survived many of them. But Hitler it's a shock how people could be cruel, but it's happening all over again in different countries. So how can we change the world? I like to see it change. Like the orthodox do believe the messiah. Where is he? I like to believe in it. Anyways, theater would be good for you to relax your brain. They're playing a lot of plays here, Yiddish plays in my area. And the reading a lot, that helps.

Q: How old are your grandchildren?

A: My granddaughter, the older one is 28, going to be and the younger one 22. The 22 is not settled. She's finishing her last year university. She doesn't taking psychology. She is taking philosophy. I says where you going to go with that. She would like to get the same degree that her mother has but it's not necessary. Not everybody has the same capability. So she has to decide this year. She's undecided girl, but the most adorable person. The older one is graduated from university in social work. Actually she's working for the government for seeing the mistakes university are doing. If they need help they call the office where she works to reorganize it. That's a good job for her. But not, she went to private school so she has an easier

time to face life than the younger one. So my daughter made a mistake with the younger one, not sending her to private school for four years. Because the preparation is easier. You are prepared for university pressure. And when you don't have the push you cannot take the pressure. The younger one couldn't take the pressure so she had to stretch from four years to five which is ok. But still they are wonderful children. Can't complain.

Q: That's a nice note to end on.

A: That you have only good children.

Q: Anything else you wanted to add before we close.

A: No. No, because you know there are so many things on the mind that come and go. And you cannot remember everything, but whatever I remember it's very hard to face for other people. When I hear somebody say starving, I'm starving. I say please don't use that word starving. Because they don't know the meaning of it. Starving, not to see a piece of bread for four years, not to see a tomato. Not to see altogether, I didn't have anything. For four years. How I survived, I'm still here, I must have been very, very strong person, even being a celiac. Anyway, because people think they don't eat on time. I'm starving, I have to go to a restaurant to eat. Absolutely not. Control your brain. Take a glass of water before you starve so you don't starve. I don't like that word starving. Because nobody knows the meaning unless you do it. Anyways I talk too much. That's my problem. I do, I do. I'm very outspoken and one of my friends, I just had a Canadian girl with a pace maker, she gets depressed because she is doing a lot of work, amazing woman. But she is absent minded person. And she calls me up to relax. So she said after I talk to you we, cause she cannot get used to the pace maker. And she not a week, not a day it's going to take months. And she wants to go back to dancing now. I said you can do it but be careful. So she fell and I'm trying to help her but there is a limit how much I can do. You have to do it yourself. Right. Maybe I am too logical. Really. Nobody can analyze me. Only yourself, you have to analyze. We have to just try and make the best and not to be depressed. I do go into the depression. I can cry easy. Is that better? I am just listening if I cry easy. Very easy. Something on television that reminds me of Europe, I can cry. Yeah, of course.

Q: You certainly have been through a lot.

A: Of course.

Q: Well.

A: I think you have enough of me.

Q: Ok. I'm just going to finish off the interview by saying that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Rose Kamin.

A: It was my pleasure you can give my best to Mr. Herman Taub. He is very known here.

(end)