

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Sarah Ludwig
August 19, 2013
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PREFACE

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SARAH LUDWIG

August 19, 2013

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview with Sarah Ludwig conducted by Gail Schwartz on August 19, 2013 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Sarah Ludwig: Sarah Ludwig.

Q: And what was the name that you were born with?

A: Sarah **Racimora**.

Q: Where were you born?

A: Radom, Poland.

Q: And when?

A: I was born May 18, 1940.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family, your parents. Your father's name?

A: Leon Racimora.

Q: And where was he originally from there?

A: Yes he was.

Q: What's the story of his family, a little bit about that.

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A: His parents had a restaurant in Radom. Radom was a very big city in Poland. One of the largest cities. There was a large Jewish population there, very close knitted. They were very friendly and most other people who lived in Radom used to come to my grandparents' restaurant. I don't know the name. I would like to find out what the name is. We're still researching and they were very well, how can I put it, friendly with all the families. Every family knew each other, not only the parents, but also the children and the grandparents. So it was a very nice knit Jewish community.

Q: Was your father born in Radom?

A: Yes, he was. 1912, May 20th, 1912. And I think that he went to school, up to high school in Radom. I'm not sure. My mother's name is Stella. **Shititsky**. That was her maiden name. And when she married my father she became Stella Racimora. Her Hebrew name was Esther **Malka**.

Q: And her family?

A: Her family. Her mother was Deborah Shititsky. Her father was Sam Shititsky and she had, she was the oldest daughter. Then she had a sister named **Tove**, or **Topka**. Then she had a brother. He was **Shmulek**. And then she had a younger sister **Fella**, that we just found out yesterday who she was from her picture. Her brother was a Jewish policeman in Radom where the Germans kept touch with him to see what's going on with the Jewish community. Shmulek was the one who took care of me.

Q: We'll get to that in a minute. So you have a large extended family?

A: Yes.

Q: In Radom. And were your parents, do you know, obviously you weren't born at the time, but do you know if they were very religious?

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A: Yes, they came from an Orthodox background.

Q: And were they Zionists?

A: Yes, although at that time they lived in Poland. I don't think that they were that aware about Israel to be very honest with you. It was Palestine at that time.

Q: So you had this large extended family and had the restaurant. Now you are born you said in 1940.

A: Correct.

Q: And what are your first memories?

A: Very little, to be very honest with you. I was born in a very –

Q: The Germans had already invaded Poland, obviously.

A: Exactly.

Q: So you were born after the invasion.

A: Exactly. The community in Radom did not believe that anything would happen to them. They just sat still, didn't do a – nothing about it. There was no warning. They figured, you know, they lived a nice life. They were happy with each other. There was **Simchas** they went to and everything else. Nothing will happen to us. Until the Germans invaded Radom.

Q: This is in 1942.

A: Yes.

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Q: So did your parents tell you anything about your first two years of life?

A: I was too young.

Q: No, no you were too young. I'm just saying did your parents ever tell you later about those first two years.

A: My mother never spoke about it. My father was the one that was instrumental in setting up a society, a Radom society with all the survivors in New York. Presently you know. And they used to get together on all the Simchas. And there are quite a few survivors that survived and that's how they kept their memories about Radom. They became Zionists. They started sending money to Israel. They bought an ambulance for Israel. Mogen David.

Q: So now the Germans invade and then what happened.

A: The Germans invaded and of course they, the ghetto was set up.

Q: You were born in the ghetto?

A: No I was born in Radom. The Germans invaded. We were all evacuated from Radom and we went to **Pionki** which was a, a labor camp.

Q: How did you get there?

A: Well I couldn't get there. They didn't allow any children there to the labor camp. No children were allowed in the labor camp.

Q: So your parents left first?

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A: They left Radom and --

Q: Your parents left together?

A: Together and we came to this big lot and we were separated. The women were in one row and the men were in the other row. And what they did, they tattooed us.

Q: I think that's a little bit later. I think that's a little bit later. Let's move back in time. You were in the ghetto and then --

A: We were evacuated from the ghetto.

Q: But was your father taken away first, did your father, was he taken away first?

A: Probably, probably I don't recall, I was --

Q: I know. I'm just saying this is information obviously you've gotten later on. So he was taken away and then your mother, was she then taken away later or --

A: No my mother was with me.

Q: Stayed in --

A: Radom, until we were evacuated from Radom.

Q: Can you maybe tell me more specifically what happened in Radom when you were in the ghetto and how your parents got out?

A: Ok.

Q: And your uncles --

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A: Shmulek was my mother's brother and Shmulek was a Jewish policeman under the Nazis, under this thing. I could not go into the labor camp. No children were allowed in the labor camp, so Shmulek said to my father, I'll take care of Sarah and he took care of me. For quite a while. I don't know how long to be very honest with you. Then the time came and he called my father up and he says Leon my position was diminished and I cannot take care of Sarah anymore.

Q: Your father is now in Pionki and you're in Radom.

A: Yes.

Q: And your mother is where?

A: Pionki also.

Q: She left also?

A: Right.

Q: So you were by yourself with your uncle.

A: Right.

Q: In the Radom ghetto.

A: Right.

Q: Ok and so then he contacted your father –

A: And he said Leon my job was diminished and I cannot take care of Sarah anymore. You have to find a solution to take care of Sarah. My father was a very industrious human being, knew

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how to solve problems. He called one of his friends and he says listen guys we got to get Sarah into Pionki. So they managed to get a truck and in the truck with potato sacks. They put me in a potato sack and my father caught me on this truck and smuggled me into Pionki.

Q: They threw you out in a potato sack. Into your father's --

A: They threw me in the potato sack, in fact and put me in the potato sack and someone threw the potato sack at my father --

Q: Into your father's arms?

A: To catch it, right. Exactly. And they --

Q: When you say your uncle called your father and so forth, what do you mean by that?

A: Well they let him know that he couldn't take care of my anymore.

Q: How was the contact?

A: I have no idea.

Q: Yeah ok fine.

A: I have no idea how they contacted each other. You know I don't know but he contacted my father that he cannot take care of my anymore but it was his responsibility to get me into the labor camp. Cause children were not allowed. It was only adults.

Q: So now you're there.

A: We're there. Took me out of the potato sack and I was there. They obviously had some kind of a room where my father and mother stayed and I lived there with my parents and the only

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thing that my parents said to me, they said Sarah when you hear the footsteps of boots, those are Germans. You have to make sure that you hide under the bed so they will not discover cause you're really not allowed to be here. And that's how I survived that whole era. In Pionki.

Q: Do you have any memories of being under the bed?

A: I remember, that I remember.

Q: What was it like?

A: What was it like? It was scary. As a young child, to say to you, you can't, you can't play. When you hear those footsteps and my mother made sure that I understood what was going on. I wasn't a rebellious child. I listened. My mother said you got to do that Sarah if you want to survive. And whenever I heard the footsteps and the boots of the Germans, I hid under the bed.

Q: And they obviously never found you.

A: No. No. that's why I'm here telling the story now.

Q: What kind of work did your parents do in Pionki?

A: My father worked for his parents in the restaurant. I told you they had a restaurant. In Radom.

Q: No, no in Pionki.

A: In Pionki. He went into the food business. He went out and he bought food and he started a kitchen in Pionki to feed the people that were there in the labor camp.

Q: And your mother did the same thing?

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A: Yeah, they worked together.

Q: And so you were there for, so do you have any memories of what you did when you weren't under the bed.

A: I don't. I really don't.

Q: No memories. Of course you were very young.

A: I didn't no, no. I had no toys, I know that. It's not like I had maybe a, a doll or something you know. I had nothing. No. It was survival of the fittest. You know.

Q: Did you ever go outside the room?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: If you tell me it, and you know describe the room, I couldn't describe it to be very honest with you. Because my mother never spoke about it.

Q: Later.

A: Yeah later.

Q: But do you have any sense that it was a scary time?

A: Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: You have that sense?

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A: Oh sure. Absolutely.

Q: Ok so you're there when you're two or three and possibly four and is there anything else you wanted to say about Pionki. Your parents stayed for how long.

A: In Pionki we were how long.

Q: I know you didn't leave til probably August 44. But did your father leave before that?

A: But from Pionki I went to Auschwitz, didn't I?

Q: Yes, that's what I'm saying. You were there from 42 to 44. And –

A: No, no not that long. Yeah, ok, 42 to 44.

Q: Do you remember leaving Pionki?

A: No.

Q: You don't.

A: I don't remember.

Q: And then the three of you were taken to Auschwitz. Your mother, your father and you.

A: Not really, no. I was taken to Auschwitz but before we went to Auschwitz, they tattooed us. They put numbers on our arms.

Q: Are you sure that wasn't in Auschwitz?

A: No, before we went into Auschwitz, the tattooing began before we went to Auschwitz.

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Q: Do you know where that was?

A: Auschwitz?

Q: No, no, no where the tattooing took place.

A: Right here.

Q: No, no the city or the town.

A: The city, probably Radom. They evacuated all of Radom.

Q: You went from Radom to Pionki, from Pionki to Auschwitz.

A: Right.

Q: Now I understand.

A: But before we entered Auschwitz, we were tattooed.

Q: Ok we can talk about that a little later. So now the three of you are leaving together from Radom going on your way to Auschwitz and you said before you got to Auschwitz they put on the tattoo on your arm. What was that like for a child, do you remember that getting the –

A: I remember that standing online there was a big line. I remember my mother, they put a tattoo on my mother's hand first and then my mother held me and they tattooed me.

Q: And you got a number.

A: Yes.

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Q: What was the number, do you know what the number is?

A: Do you remember?

Q: What the number is?

A: We have it somewhere you know.

Q: So what was the trip like between Pionki and Auschwitz?

A: The trip was they got cattle cars, trains. The Germans used to take cattle to different places and all of us had to go into this cattle trains, that I remember the stink.

Q: You do remember?

A: That I remember.

Q: With your mother and your father.

A: With my mother and father, our whole family.

Q: Was it more relatives?

A: Yeah my grandparents, my grandparents, all of us. It was very crowded, smelly. There were no facilities for bathrooms. There was no air coming in or anything like that.

Q: This is August 1944.

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A: Right. And they took us to Auschwitz from there. Now when we got to Auschwitz we were separated. The children went to the **kinderhaus** in Auschwitz. My mother we found out now that she was in Czechoslovakia. We did some research you know.

Q: Do you remember the arrival in Auschwitz at all, do you have any memories of that as a child, very young child?

A: I you know I couldn't tell you specifically. All I knew that we were on this train for quite a few days. It was smelly. I couldn't wait to get out of there. And the next thing I knew we were in Auschwitz. And then I was separated from my mother, my father and I was taken to the **kinderhaus**.

Q: Was your mother or father able to say goodbye to you?

A: I don't remember specifically. I really don't. I'm sure that we hugged and everything else. You know what I mean?

Q: So now you're in the children's house. What memories do you have of that?

A: None. None whatsoever to be very honest with you. Who took care of me, we were discussing it. I had no idea who took care of the children in Auschwitz.

Q: And what did you do? Do you remember?

A: What did we do, I couldn't tell you. I don't remember. To be very honest with you. Were there people who helped me? I don't know. But we found out later on when we went on the internet some more information that we know now what was happening to me.

Q: Which was?

A: Which was the Russians came in.

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Q: This is towards the end.

A: Towards the end and but the Russians were instrumental enough to bring in help to care for the kids there. so they brought nannies and some of the prisoners that were in prison in Auschwitz, they were helping to take care of the kids. They made sure that the children were taken care of.

Q: You remember the Russians?

A: I don't remember the Russians but I knew there was help. There were people who helped us you know. There were women who helped us if we needed anything. You asked me what did they feed you? I don't know. Did you sleep? I don't know but there were adults there to supervise us. Because the Russians were there.

Q: And the other children were just as young as you?

A: They were all ages. They were all ages you know.

Q: Do you have any memories of any of these children?

A: Not really.

Q: What language did you speak?

A: I spoke Polish and I spoke Yiddish, yeah those two languages.

Q: So now the Russians have come so it's January obviously of 45 and you hadn't, did you see your parents or do you know if you saw your parents when you were in the –

A: We didn't see any one no.

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Q: In the children's house, while you were in the children's house.

A: Until liberation.

Q: Until liberation. What happened with your parents? Did they tell you later, after you were separated? When you went to Auschwitz and you were separated, you went into the children's house. What happened to your parents?

A: Well I know that my father was in Dachau. And my mother we found out that she was in Czechoslovakia through research now that we found out. You know. That's where she was sent.

Q: She was sent so they did not stay in – you were the only one to stay?

A: In Auschwitz.

Q: What about grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins.

A: Um, my father's parents perished.

Q: In Auschwitz.

A: In Auschwitz and my mother's father survived. His wife did not survive, Deborah did not survive. My mother's, my mother had, she was the oldest of four children. So she survived. Her sister Topka survived. Shmulek that saved me. He was the policeman. He did not survive.

Q: And he had gone to Auschwitz.

A: I have no idea, I have no idea where he landed but he did not survive. Then there was a younger sister that we found out about it yesterday, Fella. She was in the picture and I used to

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say to Betsy, I have to find out. This was my mother's younger sister. Her name was Fella. And we found out about her yesterday.

Q: It's liberation time. You're being taken care of by the Russian nannies or something and then what happened.

A: Then what happened the children were evacuated from Auschwitz.

Q: Do you know about how many?

A: I have no idea, I couldn't give you numbers.

Q: I know

A: But I was put in a kinderhaus in Kraków. And my mother was liberated from Czechoslovakia. At that time the Jewish community put out lists. There was a list of all the men that survived. There was a list of all the women that survived. And a list of all the children that survived and where you can locate them. My mother was instrumental. She got on the train and she was on the way to Kraków. (sniffing, pause) Not knowing there was a man from Radom there.

Q: On the train?

A: On the train. They said to her Stella your father is here. And she said, my father. She didn't know that he survived. She got off the train. They met right in this train station and they walked together to the orphanage. They saw my name on the list.

Q: They knew, she had known you were in this orphanage.

A: Right. From the list that it was, it was divided in a very reasonable way so that survivors could find their relatives. And my grandfather and my mom came to Kraków. In the orphanage,

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they were prepared already for survivors to come and claim the children. (pause) They lined you up. My mother walked in and my grandfather walked in. I hadn't seen my mother in a long time. I recognized her and I said **Mamushka**. That's Polish for Mother. And that's how they found me.

Q: What was the name of the orphanage?

A: That I don't know. I don't know. It was in Kraków, in Kraków. You know. I don't know how many you have surviving children where, I have no idea. We didn't research it yet. We're still researching it.

Q: So after that very emotional reunion, what happened?

A: What happened. We found out that my father was very sick when he was liberated from Dachau by the Americans. And the Red Cross took care of him. He was in the hospital and they brought him back to good health. There was a sergeant there, a Jewish sergeant and he took a liking to my dad and he said to him, you know Leon, I'm going to be stationed in Germany. The name of the town was **Filson Fairbourg** [ph]. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly. And he says I'm going to give you a house there. I want you to stay there until you relocate with your whole family. And he says you know you'll do some jobs for me. You know like what can you do and my father said, whatever you want me to do, I'll do. But this young man was an American sergeant, and he says, don't worry I'll take care of you. And you just stay in this house until you gather your whole family. And that's what my father did. My father found out through the Red Cross that he survived and he was in this town in Germany Filson Fairbourg. So she took me and my grandfather and we went to meet my father.

Q: You said she took me.

A: My mother, my mother, my grandfather and I, we went to Filson Fairbourg, to my father's house. And we were reunited there.

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Q: Do you have memories of that time, that –

A: I just know that we went there you know because afterwards my parents told me exactly what happened.

Q: That's what I'm saying. You don't have memories of –

A: No, I don't have memories of it. But I remember that we went to, back to Germany. My mother's sister, Topka survived and she found out that too. So she came to Filson Fairbourg too. How do I know this? Cause I have old pictures, you know. We're all there. And we stayed there for quite a while. And –

Q: Was this summer of 45? Do you have any idea?

A: Yeah I think so. It must have been 45. Yeah, yeah. It was 45.

Q: So you stayed there?

A: We stayed there. Then of course my father was the youngest child in the Racimora family. Before the war, his older sister, Ruth, married an older man and she left for the United States. So she wasn't even involved in the Holocaust. She had a b – my father had a brother Morris and he decided, he married in Poland. And he took his wife and they went to Belgium. He settled in Belgium. Then he had another sister, **Rivka**. Rivka married a young man and they made Aliyah. They went to Israel. And they settled in Israel. My father was the only one left from the Holocaust. My aunt Ruth who lived in the United States called Poland and she said to her father, dad why don't you come to the United States. It's very nice. Well my grandfather had a beard. He was an orthodox Jew and everything else. You know, he was very pious and Ruth invited Grandpa to stay with her. So he came to the United States and he stayed here. He didn't like the United States. However, he changed his whole image. He shaved his beard. He came back to Poland just with a little moustache. I have a picture of it. And he came back to Poland. Had he been wise enough, he would have said

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kindellach, we're going to the United States. They were very comfortable. This was their home, Poland. And they figured no one is going to touch them. So he came back to Poland and of course we were all involved in the Holocaust. You know. My father's father perished and his mother **Chaya** perished. I don't know what happened to them exactly but they did not survive. My grandfather, my mother's father survived. His wife, Deborah, did not survive. Shmulek of course did not survive, as I told you. And my mother's youngest sister did not survive.

Q: So now you're all together in Germany.

A: In Germany. And we all well and everything else. His brother, Morris, contacts him. He lives in Belgium. He was in the pocketbook business there. Very prosperous, in Brussels. He had two children and Morris said to him, Leon why don't you come to Belgium to stay with us? My father wanted to see his home. (pause)
So he traveled to Belgium.

Q: Were you ever in a DP camp in Germany?

A: No.

Q: You never were.

A: No. We traveled to Belgium and my father settled down. We got a nice apartment. And he worked for his brother for two years. He was very prosperous, Morris. The big factory, pocketbook factory. He had two sons and I had a good time with my cousins, Albert and Shamus.

Q: You have good memories of that?

A: Yes, that I do, yeah that I do. And we stayed in Belgium for two years.

Q: Now you still had the tattoo on your arm? At that point?

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A: I'll tell you later on what happened to that. Rivka calls Morris and she says what do you mean, keeping Leon in Belgium? I want to see him. So of course speaks to my father. And my father was like the wandering Jew. He wanted to see his whole family. So Rivka said, Leon you survived. You come to Israel. (pause)

So we picked up again and we went to Israel.

Q: This is when?

A: This must have been after Israel became a state.

Q: After 48?

A: Yes, after 48. And we lived with Rivka for quite a while. She had a nice house.

Q: Where in Israel?

A: In Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv. And the government at that time was building a **Shikun**, you know what a shikun is?

Q: Yes.

A: Ok. For survivors of the Holocaust. So we lived with Aunt Rivka for quite a while until the shikun was ready. The shikun was built in **Giv'At Rambam** which is just the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Once it was ready, we moved to Giv'At Rambam.

Q: You had to learn Hebrew?

A: Yes, so now I've switched. No so now I spoke Polish. I spoke Yiddish. I spoke French. From Belgium. Fluent in French. So my father says you know there's a, there's a school in Yafa, the outskirts of Tel Aviv. I want Sarah to go and not to forget French. It's a nice language you know.

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It sounds good and everything else. Rivka was very angry and she says well what do you mean. You're in Israel. She's got to speak Hebrew. So my father let it go. He didn't push it and I got involved in school and I went to school in Israel. We lived in Israel for five years and I spoke Hebrew fluently. So I spoke Yiddish, I still spoke Polish. I still remember that. French, I started to forget and of course Hebrew you know. Well things were changing in the United States at that time, under Roosevelt.

Q: This is in the 50s.

A: Yes. First he did not allow the people from Poland to come in. There was a quota. It's not like now. Anyone can come in. And we had to wait. One year Rivka calls us to Belgium and she says, no, no. To Israel, I'm sorry. To Israel and she says things have changed in the United States. The Polish quota was lifted. I'm coming to tell you all about it Leon. So Ruth took a trip to Israel, her first trip. And we sat down and she told us that now you can come to the United States, as long as you have a sponsor. And she said to my father, I'm going to be your sponsor. So when you come to the United States, I'll take care of you Leon. Don't worry. You'll move in with me. My aunt lived in the Bronx. On Walton Avenue, beautiful building and one bedroom apartment. She says you'll move in with me. We moved in. So we moved with –

Q: So you left Israel. How did you feel about leaving Israel?

A: Leaving Israel. I liked Israel. That was my best memories of my life. I was sad to leave Israel. By then I was already bat mitzvah. I had my bat mitzvah in Israel and by then I was I think 13, 13 years old. And we left Israel.

Q: When you were in Israel, did you mix with any other refugee children from the Holocaust?

A: No.

Q: Did you talk to your young friends about what you went through?

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A: No, no, no.

Q: You did not.

A: No. I just concentrated with the Hebrew. Having a lot of fun. I had a lot of friends in Israel and learning the language.

Q: Did you speak about your Holocaust experiences at that time with your parents?

A: No. My mother never spoke about it. My mother never spoke.

Q: What about your father?

A: My father was busy earning a living and we just didn't have time to dwell on it. You know.

Q: So you were moving on –

A: On with your life.

Q: So now you leave Israel. You come to the United States and live with your aunt.

A: Right. We lived with my aunt for a year and my mother's sister Tove, had a wonderful position with a garment what do you call it. Factory. Her husband that she married was, had an uncle in the AFL and he was prominent to get him a job there and my aunt got a job in the garment district. Became very well known. She traveled all for the country, the United States to see what the factories were manufacturing and she was in charge. At that time my mother was a terrific seamstress and she said Stella do you want a job. And my mother said yes. What am I going to do? I'm going to sit around here? So she got her a job and she became the sample maker there. They manufactured robes and then they went into the dress business. So my mother always made the sample dress. From the sample dress, my mother had to supervise the people in

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the factory in Manhattan to make sure that the product that they made was equivalent to her sample and so she was in charge of that.

Q: And where did you go to school?

A: In New York, I went to the public school. Public school yeah.

Q: What was that like?

A: In the Bronx. Well --

Q: Were there other refugee children your class?

A: No, no.

Q: You were the only one?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did the kids ask about your experiences?

A: This is what I want to tell you. I was in public school in the Bronx. One of 35 kids in a classroom. I'm a teacher so that I can tell you from the educational point of view it wasn't a kind of educational situation for a child that just came out of the Holocaust. I had a number on my hand. In those days in New York they never taught the Holocaust. It wasn't mandated like in the state of New Jersey. And the kids looked at the number. And they said Sarah what's that number on your hand. And I said well let me tell you I was in the Holocaust in Germany. And the Germans put this number on me. I wasn't Sarah Racimora. I was this number. That's how they referred to me. You talking crazy. There was no such thing as the Holocaust. New York never taught the Holocaust. This was 1954. Those kids were never educated, never heard the word Holo – what's Holocaust. Well I didn't like to talk about it. And I went to my parents and

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I said you know what, I have to have this number removed. Because I am just too inundated with questions that I cannot answer. So we went to Montefiore hospital. They got a surgeon and unfortunately the surgeon got sick and they brought someone else. Did a lousy job of this. This should have been just a thin strip. And that's why I have a scar here. I had it removed. I felt better because the kids stopped talking about it. I went to my education in New York, finished high school and then I met my husband.

How did I meet my husband? I went to **Moodus**, Connecticut. Did you ever hear of that place? It was a place where young people were able to meet young Jewish young men. And I went with a friend of mine. I took courses at Hunter College. And then we went for a week to Moodus, Connecticut to meet some guys. We got there and we didn't meet anyone the whole week. And then I said, Sunday we were supposed to leave. We had a cab take us there. So I said to my friend, Brenda, I said you know I'm hungry. Let's go to the dining room. I feel like a salami sandwich. So we went down and I stood on line and this, there was a young man there. He says hi, how are you? What are you ordering? I said a salami sandwich. He says me too. He says I'm here with my friends. He came with four or five of his friends from New Jersey. They were ready to meet young people. He says why don't you come over to the table and sit with us, get your sandwich. So Brenda and I got a sandwich. We sat down with them. And we got to talking and he says, where are you from? You have an accent. I said well I'm from Israel. He says you from Israel. He said yes you have an accent. I said well can you understand me. I can still speak English. He made a derogatory comment about Israel and I was very angry. I'm a rebel. I picked up the bottle of wine and I was ready to with the bottle. My husband Billy, later on we got married, grabbed my hand and he says put that bottle down. He's not worth it. Well we sat there and spent the evening with his friends. We had a very nice evening. And then the next day we were leaving Moodus, Connecticut. Dana lodge. I don't think it exists anymore. And Billy says you know what I'll take you home. Where do you live? I said I live in the Bronx right across the street from Yankee stadium. Oh, he says, I know that area, don't worry. I'll get you home safe. So Brenda took the cab home cause we paid for that and he took me home. And that's the history. After that it was a romance. We dated for a year or so. He says you know what I really want you to move to New Jersey. You can continue education. So I switched colleges and I went to Newark State, was a teaching college. Now it's Kean University and I finished my education there, got my degree from, certified in New Jersey, kindergarten through eighth grade. And I got

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a position in Scotch Plains Fanwood teaching third grade. I taught there a year, a year and a half, I became pregnant with my daughter Debby. So I had to stop teaching. And I said Billy I can have some. There was a very nice woman living next to us in the apartment house and she said she was willing to take care of Debby while I went to work. My husband says no one is going to take over my daughter. You stay home. So I had to give up teaching. And I stayed home and I raised my daughter. Later on we saved enough money. We lived in the Village for quite a while. We lived there I think ten years. And we bought a house in Livingston, New Jersey, a very affluent community, a Jewish community. And we're there now over 40 years. My daughter lives in **Renalopin** [ph]. She has two children, boys. They are now in college at University of Indiana. They both decided to go to the same college. Cody is a senior. Tyler is a freshman. She just took off to class. She's not even home. And my son became a spinal surgeon in Baltimore, has a very nice group of doctors. Does a lot of traveling throughout the world, educating other doctors in orthopedic surgery. He went to China, he went to Japan. He does a lot of traveling. And he has two children, Katy the little princess. Katy is now 11. Ethan is 13. And they both go to private schools because the Baltimore school system is not that great so they're both in two different schools. They're not in the same school. Katy goes to an all-girls school where my daughter in law graduated from. And Ethan is in a school from, very big school from kindergarten through high school. And the whole school, money was donated by Jewish families. How do I know? Every building has a Jewish name. We went to visit the school to see where Ethan was. They have a very nice life. Now they're traveling by bikes. They are in Switzerland and going through all the other countries, going to be away for two weeks so I won't see them.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your story. Do you think about your war time experiences, the Holocaust more now that so many years have passed, or do you feel is it less?

A: Absolutely. For a very long time I was busy with my career, raising my kids. And I just put everything aside. I didn't want to think about it. My father brought the video, after he made a video with Steven Spielberg. He showed it to my children. We spoke about it and whenever dad came to visit me in New Jersey. He lived in New York at that time, my mother had died. He remarried a Holocaust survivor, the second wife. And he used to visit so everything else was fine. And we didn't discuss it that much. Years later, recently I picked up and I said I have to do

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something about it. And this is why I ended up being a teacher, being involved in teaching about the Holocaust.

I learned from my father's video which I know you have a copy of that here, the whole story how he saved me. And this was the basic of my foundation for these PowerPoint sessions. I contacted my good friend, Elizabeth Bess who was the principal at a very prestigious reformed temple and we got together and we wrote this program. And now what we're doing, we are managing to go out and talk about the Holocaust in a very, very educational way. And also in a creative way. The children learn about it. Walking out of one of these sessions that they can go home and say to their parents, this is what we're doing.

A lot of people in the United States, even though they belong to a synagogue, they're not that educated on the Holocaust. So this is what we're doing now. That's why we came out here, Elizabeth and I to seek more information. We found out a lot of information yesterday as I told you about my family. And we're rewriting the whole curriculum for the Holocaust. Programs that we're going to be doing.

Q: Do you think you were at an advantage being so young and not remembering as opposed to if you had been older during the Holocaust?

A: I can't tell you. It would just be a guess. My whole survival is I use the word when I speak to my students, it was **Bashert**. A lot of them don't know the word. It's a Yiddish word and I said I guess I was chosen to survive to tell the story, to come here and teach you about the Holocaust. So you can share it with your parents. Many of these children are not Jewish, where we go. We go to many affluent day schools. Some of them are Jewish, some aren't. Some don't know anything about the Holocaust. But the main thing that Elizabeth and I see is that we are reaching that population. When they walk out of one of our sessions they say Sarah, we learned so much today that we didn't know before. I had them write an evaluation. We went, I don't know if you're familiar with the Princeton Day School in New Jersey, very affluent school. My cousin's daughter teaches there which is a big plus also. She set her class up for us to give our spiel. The kids were mesmerized. They walked out. They wrote evaluation. What did they want to know the most? Tell us more stories about your father. You, exactly what happened.

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They loved the story when he put me in a potato sack and he threw me there. What happened to you? Did you survive? I said I did tell them the story. It was very personal and we are getting very successful with it. We work very hard.

Q: Do you feel that you are two people, one on the outside and one on the inside?

A: You can say that. I would never describe it, but it's possible, absolutely. I have a lot of feelings that are hidden within me, absolutely.

Q: To the outside world you're somebody different.

A: Right. A different face.

Q: What were your thoughts, do you remember your thoughts during the Eichmann trial? You were a young adult, do you have any, what your feelings were when Eichmann went on trial?

A: Well I knew when Eichmann went on trial what he did. Exactly. I had very, very good feelings that he was captured to be very honest with you. And I hope that more of those people would be captured and taught a lesson that that should never happen again.

Q: Do you think it could happen again?

A: Absolutely. Betsy and I were just discussing it. Absolutely. With the way the world is now anyone can come into the United States. We had to wait til our visas were cleared. We could have been here earlier in the United States. There was a quota. There are no quotas now. Anyone can come into the United States unfortunately.

Q: What was it like when you became a citizen?

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A: It was marvelous. I was a senior in high school. My father made sure that he knew about the Constitution. I sat down and I prompt them. My father at that time started to read the New York Times. He went to Taft high school, took some lessons in English with my mother. And we went for our citizen papers five years afterward, very proud.

Q: That specific day do you remember?

A: I was very proud. It was in a big room, somewhere downtown in Manhattan. I don't remember exactly. And it was a big group of people who became citizens. He was very proud.

Q: When your children were your age when they were infants and young children and two years old and four years old all the ages that you were when you went through all that terrible time. Did that bring up feelings for you of the war time?

A: No, no. I separated myself, psychologically, I was the mother of children born in the United States.

Q: Yeah but I meant for instance when they were two and when they were four you were going through such terrible times yourself, did that, it did not bring it up?

A: No, I never discussed it with them.

Q: No, I didn't mean discuss it but did it bring up emotionally you know when I was two, when I was four. This is what happened

A: No, no, no. I just set it aside.

Q: How much did you tell them when they were growing up about your experience?

A: Well it didn't come to discussing the Holocaust until my father was interviewed by Steven Spielberg. And my father came to the house. He still lived in New York and showed my father's

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interview and that's when they really learned. I think at that time I think Debby and Steve and they were maybe fourth or fifth graders. You know, not before that.

Q: Nothing before that, they knew nothing about your life.

A: No, no.

Q: Your war time life?

A: No. Well they knew that I was born in Poland. You know and during the war they knew that. Just that. They didn't ask me details. You know then of course as they got older they studied it and they knew what was happening. Later on they asked me questions when they got older.

Q: Are there any sights or sounds or smells that bring back memories of the war time?

A: Well I'll tell you the traveling in those cattle cars.

Q: I was just going to say for instance—

A: Yes, that absolutely.

Q: But are there any sounds today or smells today that trigger that experience?

A: No, not really. No, no. Oh, dogs yes. I am fearful of dogs. Thank you Betsy.

Q: You're fearful of dogs? Because --

A: Because at times the Germans sometimes walked around with a dog you know in Radom.

Q: And so even today when you see any dog --

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A: No it's nothing major you know what I'm saying to you. It's just that oh, I don't like dogs.

Q: Do you think you would have been a different person today if you hadn't had the childhood that you had?

A: Absolutely I'm sure, I'm sure.

Q: In what sense?

A: In what sense? Well I would have been brought up completely differently you know. I wouldn't have missed all those young years. You know that I missed. You know, being fearful, remembering that I had to hide under the bed. I wouldn't experience that. It probably would have been a more positive kind of growing up to be very honest. A happier growing up, not being fearful what would happen. Not being cautious. It would have been a completely different story, absolutely.

Q: How has this affected you spiritually, religiously?

A: Well religiously once my father made the tape with Steven Spielberg, he came back to Judaism. He used to go to shul when he lived in Florida. Every Saturday morning he gathered a couple of his friends. They got in the car. They went to services. Holidays he loved to observe. I used to make all the holidays you know and he used to come to my house and we celebrated all the holidays. There was the pinnacle of happiness. He remembered, he used to say, remember when your grandmother made this, you know. His memories came back. My grandfather the same thing too. I mean Passover was beautiful because my grandfather had a beautiful voice. And at the end of the Seder we used to sit with the **Haggadah** and he used to sing the songs. My kids still remember that. Debby said to me the other day. I remember when great grandpa was singing all these songs from the Haggadah. He had a beautiful voice. And of course my kids were going to Hebrew school so they joined with him.

Q: So you kept up a religious life?

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A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Do you feel totally assimilated in the United States?

A: Yes, absolutely. Yes, in a very positive way. I mean we've lived in Livingston now for over 40 years. In a very Jewish community. I know a lot of people. I've taught at a lot of temples. You know I'm not only conservative, but reform temples also so I'm very well aware of the Jewish religious life. We've been members of the temple. My kids were bar mitzvahed and bat mitzvahed you know at Beth Shalom. My grandchildren, we had them at the **bimah** many of them, very involved.

Q: What are your thoughts about Germany today?

A: That's very interesting that you ask that. I have very negative feelings against Germany. Absolutely. My grandson Cody was just on a trip this summer in some of the European countries. And what he said to me, grandma I'm going to go to Poland. I want to see Auschwitz. He went to Poland and I haven't had time to discuss with him because he's so busy getting ready to go back to school. He saw the world, he saw what the world was like. Not like in the United States. Different ways of living. He visited a lot of countries, had a terrific experience through a very nice program that the college ran for students. And he spent I think a month or so in Europe. He's back in school now. I haven't had a chance to speak to him.

Q: Have you been back to Poland?

A: Yes, I went on the March of the Living and before I went there I called my daughter up and I said Debby I can't go by myself. I need you to go. She said let me check with my boss and I said Debby it's going to be only a week. The March of the Living. Went to Poland first and then to Israel. And the man that led this group of students I had his children at day school where I taught and Joel called me up and he said Sarah why don't you come with me to Israel. Not to Israel, I'm sorry. To Poland. And I said Debby can afford only one week to be away from her

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job. Is it ok if we just come to Poland with you? He says absolutely. He had two survivors, myself and another man, an older man. And it was a marvelous, marvelous trip. Good experience.

And I said Debby you have to come with me because this is **L'Dor V'Dor** [ph]. And we only went to Poland.

Q: And to Auschwitz?

A: Well we went to, we did Poland the whole thing, the whole trip.

Q: So when you were in Auschwitz did it stimulate any memories?

A: No. When we went to Auschwitz, I just said, he says mom you sit down. Debby was my photographer. She took all the pictures of our trip to Poland and for my birthday she gave me an album of all of the pictures. We visited a school in Poland, a Jewish school, had a marvelous experience talking to the rabbi who was in charge of the school, talked to the teachers. They were teaching Hebrew there, beautiful.

Q: Was there any familiarity when you were in Auschwitz? Did anything look familiar to you?

A: It was just, it was just a building and I didn't go into the building to be very honest. I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. Debby says mom you sit here outside. I'm going to go in and I'll take all the pictures. Don't worry about it. She did a marvelous job. I have a terrific album.

Q: What about you say Germany you have very negative feelings.

A: Oh absolutely.

Q: Do you get reparations?

A: Yes I do.

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Q: And your parents got reparations?

A: Well what happened, my father applied for himself and my mother said she doesn't want any of that dirty money. She said Leon do not fill out the papers for me. She was very, very strict. So my mother never got reparation. My father got reparation and I get reparation. Now something new is working now with the Israeli government where they want to give reparation for people who are older and Israel is trying to work out something with Germany. I haven't heard anything yet.

Q: Are you more comfortable around survivors?

A: No, I have nothing to do with, I mean with the survivors it was only my father's friends. When I used to come.

Q: No, but in today's world when you meet other survivors.

A: No, no if I meet them. Fine. It's not that I'm more comfortable.

Q: With them than –

A: Than. No, no there's no distinction between survivors and Americans. I'm an American. I'm an educator. You know I don't dwell about the survival to be really honest with you. I couldn't wait to come to Washington to the Holocaust museum. My father was the first one when the Holocaust museum opened. With his friends. They got a bus of all the survivors from Radom and they came to Washington DC. He made sure of that. He was a do-er.

Q: Before we close are there any messages to your grandchildren you would like to leave on this interview, anything you'd like to say to them for the future?

A: Well I told my grandchildren. My granddaughter came back from camp and I called her up

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and I said Katy, how was camp? How did you do? Grandma it was terrific. I said Katy I want you to know I'm going with my friend to the Holocaust museum in Washington DC. Grandma, that's terrific and I said when I come back we will make a date and you and Ethan and Daddy and Mommy are going to go with me to the Holocaust museum because I want to show you some things and some pictures that are now in the newspapers that I didn't even know. I said I'm going with a friend of mine, Elizabeth Bess, very good friend of mine. We're going to do a lot of research there. And when I come back I'm going to show you all the things. Grandma that's terrific. I can't wait to see it. She was very enthusiastic about it. So I will pass, how can I say it, these feelings, the positive feelings about it. What I have learned with this.

Q: What you have learned?

A: What did I learn?

Q: Yes.

A: I learned that it could happen again. That don't look away and say that happened many years ago. You lived through it. You survived it. You were able to come to the Holocaust museum and tell your story. I am not that sure that it wouldn't happen again to be very honest with you. The way the world is going now. Unfortunately. I'm very pessimistic to be very honest with you. To see there are no quotas to come into the United States. We had to wait all that time you know to come here after the Holocaust. Roosevelt had a quota for, for the Polish quota. There's no quotas. Anyone can come in. The borders are open. All you hear on tv and anywhere that you go, all the atrocities that are happening unfortunately. Every day it's a new gimmick. Robbing people, killing people. The world is terrible now and I'm very sad about it.

Q: Let's hope this interview contributes to something positive. By your telling your story.

A: Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

Q: Thank you for doing the interview.

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A: My pleasure.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Sarah Ludwig.

(end)