

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Etta Waldman
May 26, 2016
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PREFACE

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ETTA WALDMAN May 26, 2016

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview of Etta Waldman. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on May 26, 2016. It is taking place at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and by telephone in New York City. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Etta Waldman: It's Etta. My maiden name is **Bodian** and Waldman is my married name.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in **Tarnopol** in Poland.

Q: When were you born?

A: May 12, 1932.

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

A: My mother's name was Esther **Manya**. Do you want the maiden name?

Q: Yes.

A: **Nussbaum**.

Q: And where was she from? Was she also from –

A: She was from **Dubari** [ph]. I don't know. It's a small town. Nobody ever heard of it but it's supposed to have been a very intelligent town. I don't know. That's what I heard.

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Q: Your father's name?

A: My father's name is **Falick** Bodian.

Q: Was he also, was he from Tarnopol? Or where was he from?

A: You know I don't know if he was born. I think he was born in Tarnopol but I am not sure.

Q: Do you know when they were born?

A: My father was born in 1901 and I think my mother was a year older.

Q: Did you have a lot of extended family – aunts and uncles, cousins?

A: Yes, my mother had brothers which I did not know because they didn't live in Tarnopol but my mother had a sister who had two children. Her husband had died and I remember them.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father was, he was working for a very important Polish man. He was managing his estate and he was exporting also cows and he would make the cows fat. They used to, because in those days fat was very desirable so they would feed the cows and then they would export them to – I think he would export them to – I'm not so sure. And I think for some reason, I think he was exporting them **Katowice**. But I'm not sure of any of those things. It's like a dream that –

Q: How much –

A: He was very comfortable. I don't know how my parents never discussed those things. My mother and father. They were very understated, modest people. They never talked to us about

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any things like that. But we had everything we wanted and a beautiful new house which my parents built in 1936.

Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

A: Yes. I have a sister who's alive.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name is Rebecca Baker and she was born November 18, 1936.

Q: She's younger than you.

A: Yeah, she's four and a half years younger than I am.

Q: Any other siblings?

A: No. We never had any other siblings. My mother had given birth to some children but they would not survive. I mean they didn't live.

Q: Did you live right in the center of town?

A: No we lived outside the town.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your schooling.

A: Well I didn't go to school because I don't remember going to school, even to kindergarten because the Russians had come into us in 1939. I think I might have gone to something but I did have a Hebrew teacher who used to come to our house. And he sticks in my mind because he was wearing glasses and I used to call him four eyes. It was – I would hide. I didn't like him too

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much. I don't know why but I would hide and I would see him coming. I says to my sister, four eyes is coming. There are certain things that are stupid things you remember.

Q: Was your family very religious?

A: No. My parents were observant. My father never worried this but my mother was more religious than my father. But they were observant. My mother lighted candles and she observed all the holidays. And I think anybody in Europe, all these Polish Jews were observant like that. And some were very observant.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: Well this is, that was our great life. We had these two young girls working for us. They were taking care of my sister and me. And I. And we spoke mostly Polish. We spoke a little Ukrainian but Polish was our main language. And we did understand Yiddish but we did not speak Yiddish very well.

Q: You talked to your sister in Polish?

A: Yes, yes. What I remember.

Q: Do you know if your parents were Zionists? I mean I know you were young at the time, obviously but do you know?

A: I don't know but I think we knew about Israel. We heard about **Herzl**. I did anyway, heard about Herzl. I don't know Zionist or what.

Q: I know you were young and I'm talking about up to 39.

A: Right, but I did hear about Israel did hear about Herzl.

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Q: At a very young age, how would you describe yourself? Were you very independent? Again you were young I know but –

A: I was a very independent bright little girl. Very independent. My poor mother lost two children before I was born. I gave her lots of aggravation because climbing trees and doing – running away from the teacher were my favorite things

Q: You were very athletic?

A: Yes. Very, very athletic.

Q: And did you like to read?

A: Pardon me.

Q: Did you like to read as a small child. Were you able to read or –

A: I don't remember the books.

Q: Up til 1939 did you experience any anti-Semitism in your neighborhood.

A: After 1939 my best friend was a little Jewish boy, **Aremele** and a little Polish girl Olga. So I don't think I experienced personally anti-Semitism. But when the Germans came in and I went to visit my friend Olga, she locked the gate and that is very traumatic for me.

Q: She wouldn't let you in you mean? Is that what you're saying?

A: She wouldn't let me in, even – not only into her house but she locked the gates from the outside of the, you know like the court, whatever.

Q: Let's talk about now the change in 39. What was the first thing, do you remember?

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A: Well when the Russians came in, they were taking away all the people. I don't know who but they were taking away a lot of people to Siberia. My father and mother were very much afraid that we will be taken. So we used to, they used to come at night and take them. So we used to sleep in other people's homes until my father got to know like the head of the whatever, and they --

Q: The Russian head?

A: Yeah the head of the Russians, of it. And he became friendly with them and he bought them liquor and this and we started sleeping in our own house. That was nothing so bad, being taken to Siberia. People survived and came back.

Q: He was able to continue working after the Russians came in?

A: Well I -- he must have because we had everything. We never were hungry. We never lacked for anything.

Q: You were still going to school when the Russians came in?

A: No, we didn't have the teacher any more. But I remember, that time I remember going to school. It must have been a kindergarten or first grade because all you're doing, we were doing was painting with crayons.

Q: Was the neighborhood that you lived in a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

A: I'm not so sure. I think probably yes because my best friend was a little Jewish boy. And he lived, they lived like next door to us almost.

Q: But were there also non-Jews in your neighborhood?

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A: Yes, there was non-Jews. Yes.

Q: Now the Russians have come in. And the next change.

A: They were not there long. And they left in 1941. They were there long. They were there two years really. And then they left and the Germans came in.

Q: Between 39 and 41. Again I know you were young. Were there any frightening incidents, experiences?

A: No.

Q: So life went on for you.

A: Life went on for me anyway. And for my sister. And you know I have to tell you, my parents were extremely cautious. They talked about nothing in front of us. They tried to shelter and protect us to the point where it was, I wouldn't do that to my children.

Q: Did they have a radio?

A: I don't know. My father knew all the news and how he knew it I don't know because they talked about the news. My father was very politically astute. They talked about politics continuously in our house, but how I don't know. I don't remember.

Q: Were your grandparents alive at the time?

A: My mother's parents were not alive. But my father's, my father's mother died when he was born. But his father had remarried so my grandfather was alive. My step grandmother and they had two daughters who I absolutely adored. I think they were the reason where I could never talk about this mass grave because that's when they died. And I adored them. I loved them so much.

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Q: What were their names?

A: **Feigal** and **Zosia**.

Q: Now it's 1941. What happens then?

A: Well my first experience with the Germans was I was playing with Aremele, like I said. I was in his house and all of a sudden, I had this horrible, I can still feel it, feeling that I must go home. I must go home. And as I wanted to go home, his mother simply dropped me at the door. I don't know how she knew anything, how she did. She said you're not going to go home until I tell you to. You're not going home and I was so upset. I was crying but she – because I had this awful feeling. Anyway she finally let, she says ok now you can go home. I went home and –

Q: This is the same day, the same day?

A: Yes, the same day and as I ran home, it was very close by. I still remember it. I ran home and our side entrance for the house was straight into the kitchen. I ran to the side entrance and when I entered the kitchen there was water and blood all over the kitchen floor. And the neighbor next door to us, whose husband was the mayor of the city. And my mother was very close friends with her. She was not Jewish. Was standing outside her door and motioning to me to come. And I ran to her. I said what happened. She said, she didn't want to talk. We were inside the house. And you know the old fashioned kitchens had like in the back of the stove there's something there that a person could sleep and it was very warm. And my mother was laying there, covered with leaves. I don't know what kind of leaves those were. I know nothing about it. But she was covered with leaves.

Q: With leaves from a tree?

A: Yes, leaves from trees. Leaves from whatever, but they were big leaves. She was covered with them and just, she just took my hand, my mother and I didn't say anything to her. She didn't

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say anything to me. And I, for the life of me I've never remembered where my sister was. Of course my father was not there either. Then, and I slept there. And she gave my mother milk. She gave me milk. I hated milk to begin with and I certainly wasn't ready to drink it. And so the next day my mother was feeling better but she still told us to stay. She changed the leaves and the next leaves were dry with no blood, no nothing. The leaves were miracle things. And so like I don't know how many days I stayed there with my mother, but, I would think two or three days. We went back to our house. And by this time our house was completely cleaned up. I don't know who cleaned it or who did anything but it was cleaned up. The kitchen floor was clean. Everything was clean. And then I knew that the Germans had come looking for my father and they beat my mother so hard and at the end she had passed out so they took a pail of water and poured it over. That's why the kitchen was full of blood and water. And that was my next experience, my first experience with the Germans. And the next experience was that they came to our house.

Q: Your mother and you stayed for a couple of days in your neighbor's house and then you went back –

A: Yes.

Q: Then you went back to your house.

A: And we were in our house and then –

Q: Was that you and your mother and your sister?

A: I don't remember my sister. It's just completely blocked out. I don't remember it. She must have –

Q: Where was your father?

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A: My father I know now that was later that was, went into hiding because they were collecting all the able bodied men. So he had gone into hiding.

Q: Now you and your mother are back in your house?

A: Back in our house and then the Germans came. I told you we had sort of a new house and nice furniture in it. And they started taking out all of the furniture but what really impressed me, not impress you, but you know in a bad way is that my mother took my sister's crib and put it into the kitchen because it was warmer in the kitchen. And they threw out all her stuff from the crib and they took the crib. And I said to my mother, Ma, what do they need, mommy what do they need the crib. And she said don't ask. Do I know? It's just cruelty. And then we stayed in the house until they made us move to a – first we went to a place that they were collecting all the Jews. So we went there and we had a tiny little house, little rooms. But we all, my sister, my mother and I got sick, got typhoid fever.

Q: Is this still 1941?

A: This might have been already 1942. I'm not sure of dates. And but I think the way I'm reconstructing that yes, because soon enough we went into the ghetto. So it might have been 42 and we were sick. And my father closed up the apartment, put down the shades because if they knew somebody was sick they took you and killed you. So he kept us closed up. He shaved our heads cause we were losing our hair. But the man took care of the three of us and got us through the sickness. He was a miracle man, my father. Truly a miracle man.

Q: So your father came back from hiding?

A: Oh yes, we went into this **jenitsa** [ph], the place where they collecting the Jews, with my father, yes.

Q: So the four of you are together?

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A: Yeah and the four of us, we were always together after that.

Q: Good. So in that place, did you have enough food, do you remember?

A: You know what, yes. We always had enough food. We were not even hungry in the ghetto. My father would go out of the – I don't know. This man was an unusual person. He would go out of the ghetto and somehow he brought back food. We had, he brought back meat which my mother would not eat and even my father. I don't remember. Because it wasn't kosher. But my sister and I ate the meat.

Q: You were in that arrangement for how long? Do you know?

A: We were there in the ghetto. We were there til 1943.

Q: I was talking about previous to the ghetto. Do you know how long –

A: We were there. I cannot remember exactly but I think it was two, three, four months. I don't know.

Q: And then you went into the ghetto.

A: Yes.

Q: Ok. And what –

A: And my father found a place. This was his –

Q: This was the ghetto in Tarnopol.

A: Yes. It was right near the border, like you know near where the ghetto exits and the other people and the Polish side began. We stayed, he wanted to be close by and he cut the wires and

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we would always, when there was any kind of talking about **Aktion**, we would run away at night. He didn't trust all those bunkers and all those things. He, and sure enough we're far from there.

Q: Sure enough, what?

A: Pardon me.

Q: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you. Sure enough.

A: Sure enough all those bunkers were worth nothing.

Q: What did you do during the day in the ghetto?

A: Pardon me.

Q: What did you do during the day in the ghetto?

A: Well during the day believe it or not my sister and I were outside the door and we were playing and there was a few other children. That we were playing and, and you know we sort of l, but then we would watch. When we would see a Jewish policeman. You know the ghetto had Jewish policemen, we would run into the house. And we never saw Germans.

Q: You did not?

A: And we were right next door to my grandparents. They had a big apartment because their apartment just belonged to the ghetto so we could, they didn't have to move so they stayed in their apartment which was not really big but it was a big room.

Q: Was it a fenced in ghetto, did you say?

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A: Yes, there was. There was you know wires.

Q: Wires all around?

A: That's what I saw. We never walked away from the house. We never walked anyplace but we were outside playing.

Q: And you had enough food and you had enough warm clothes?

A: Yes, we -- Warm clothes. I don't remember that we had any warm clothes because when we went into hiding I know we had -- my sister had two dresses and I had two dresses. And I don't remember anything else. And we must have had shoes too. But I don't remember anything else.

Q: Do you remember it as a particularly frightening time or just a different experience?

A: I know and the ghetto was very frightening. We were very scared all the time because there was all the time Aktions going on. You know we would run away from the ghetto and then come back in the middle of the night. The same way we went. We came back the same way. It was very frightening thing and we knew that people were being taken away, away but we didn't know where.

Q: You're ten and 11 in the ghetto, right?

A: Right.

Q: You were ten and 11. So you could read the signs?

A: Yes, I read. I knew how to read. Exactly. I knew how to read Polish. I don't know how I learned but I learned and I knew how to read Polish. Yes.

Q: So you understood what the signs said?

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A: Yes, I understood but you know what. We were so constantly kept with my mother and father that we didn't do anything else. Except played with the kids and that.

Q: How did you parents explain to you as a ten year old, an 11 year old what was happening?

A: My father, their thing was that you see my -- the solar (?) was going on and I think my sister and I both survived. My sister was so much younger. She kept saying ma, why do they hate the Jews so much. Why do they want to kill us? My mother's expression was they were jealous of us. Because we were more success, we did everything perfect. Whatever happened. You know. It's funny but I've got to tell you we were in this country. My husband's friend was going out with an American born girl and her father was in jail so my mother says she's not Jewish. I said ma, why do you say, she's -- Sandy is Jewish. Not Jewish. A Jew doesn't go to jail. This was the way my mother brought us up which was you know, her way and maybe was a good way. Maybe it was a bad way. I don't know.

Q: Did you parents know what was happening to Jews in other towns?

A: I think that my father and mother knew, yes. Because my father had bought a gun and my father, his favorite thing was to say if he heard a plane coming, he says oh I hope it's a bomb and let them kill us like human beings. See this was his wish. Two things. If somebody survives to tell the story I think that's why he rushed so fast to tell his story. And that somebody survive and that we die like human beings. This was his wish. So we knew that there was, yes and that other people were going crematoriums. We didn't know anything about it. At least my sister and I didn't.

Q: Were there any classes in the ghetto?

A: No. I did not go to any school. I don't know how I learned to read but I knew how to read.

Q: The days just went by in the ghetto.

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A: Well the days went by and many times we were, we ran away and coming back and that was

—

Q: Where would you run to?

A: We ran away to a village that was not too far from the ghetto. I and that —

Q: How did you get out of the ghetto?

A: My father had cut the wires, you know which led into a beautiful back yard from Polish people. I don't know if they didn't know or they pretended they didn't know. But when we escaped we always went through their back yard and we just went.

Q: So you'd go back and forth? You would leave the ghetto?

A: Yes. My father would never let us. Once there was a, talk of an Aktion. We never stayed. Well we did stay one time in the ghetto cause we got caught so we had this tiny room. I cannot tell you how small that room was. There was a big bed and a stove and all of a sudden in the early morning we heard Germans talking. So my father says, get under the bed, get under the bed. So we all, my sister I and my mother got under the bed. My father threw everything that was in, under, in this kitchen. There's pots and the pans and the clothes, whatever we had on the bed. And then he slid under the bed too. Yes, and we stayed there all day long. And we heard Germans talking and we knew that there was an Aktion going on. But and they told us, the evening. My father had a cousin. I'm not proud to say. He was a policeman in there. There were policemen and there were policemen. He was a jerk because my mother forbade us to talk to him. So he came in and he says Falick come home. It's all over. And my mother was about to say something and my father grabbed her mouth and the Aktion wasn't over for another hour or two. But he was such a jerk. He tried to trick us.

Q: So you would leave the ghetto during the Aktions?

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A: Yes, we would leave before when there was a rumor.

Q: Life went on and then the next –

A: Life went on. We ate, we slept. And that was it.

Q: Then the next change?

A: Well the next thing was that mass grave where I witnessed.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

A: Hello?

Q: Can you tell me some more about that?

A: Well it was one of those things that there was rumor of an Aktion and we had run away from the city. And we were away a few days. I don't know how many days. The days were like – each day was the same and I cannot remember how many –

Q: Do you remember where you stayed when you ran away.

A: Yes. You see my father had a hive with bees. All summer he used to have bees. We had this little, far way away from Tarnopol. It was pretty far away and he used to have – there was a hive with bees and he would take the honey and he would, he enjoyed it. It was a one room house that wasn't very big and there was an older couple there taking care and everything and that's where we would run away to. Cause nobody knew where we had this or that – you know so we would run away always to that. They gave us food and they gave us fruit. They had plum trees, they had apple trees.

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Q: Do you know the family name at all?

A: No, I don't know the name. I can't even – strange thing is that the woman if I would see her, I would see her. She looked the same way I remember, recognize her. But I don't remember anything else about it.

Q: So you'd run to this place where the bees are?

A: Well we went to them and we stayed there. And then my father said it's not going to be Aktion. This was a false rumor which happens often too. So we were going back to town and as we were approaching town, it was getting already light. Somehow we started out too late. I don't know what. It was getting light. My father knew the gentiles all over the place because he did business with them and he was, not because he's my father, an unusual nice person. He'd never cheat people. And he did very well without it. So he met this guy coming with a horse and carriage and he said, Falick where are you going? That's, the Germans they just came into town with the trucks. So my father said oh my god, look at that. What are we going to do? And as I told you, his wish was for somebody to survive. So he said to him where are you going? He says I am going to my sister's house. Anyway, my father said, Etta will go with you and we will go into the fields and hopefully we stayed. And he made up with him where they are going to meet. So I got on, next to him, sitting on the carriage next to him and we passed by. Unfortunately we had to pass by the ghetto. And I saw the SS people and I saw how they were shooting Jews. I saw all these things but it wasn't long thankfully. And we passed the ghetto and we came to his sister, who was absolutely an angel woman. When she saw me, she knew immediately of course I was Jewish. And she came over. She gave me a little, you know these were all very poor people. She gave me something on my shoulders because I was shivering. I think I was more shivering more of being scared than cold. And she gave me that and took me to the house and she made the beautiful bread, fresh bread that she had baked with butter and milk. And she had two children and she kept saying the kids, they should play with me. And I don't know why or what. I couldn't eat. I says I'll eat later and I thanked her. And I went outside. Her house stood on a hill. I mean this whole area stood on a hill and there was a gate and on the bottom was the

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Jewish cemetery. And I was like drawn to it. I went to that gate and I stood there and I stood there I remember not long there before, where I saw Jewish men being brought there, started digging. They were digging a grave. And the SS was standing over them and hitting them. But I – and she kept coming over to me. She said come, play with the children. This is no interest for you. What are you doing here? And however she tried, she couldn't get me away. She gave up. And I stood there hours. But and I saw the shooting. I saw people coming and they were shooting the people and they were throwing into the graves. I saw all that. I stood there like a statue for hours. But then it started getting dark. It wasn't dark from the outside but from the shooting. From the powder. The weapons became so dark that I couldn't see anything but I still didn't walk away until her brother came back and he said we're going to go home. So I went with him and she let me keep that little. I don't know what it was. Something, an old sweater or something. She says I should keep it. And then we went home. And we met up with my parents and when we – and we went straight into the ghetto. We knew it was all over. When we came to the ghetto, my grandparents lived and my aunts right near, near us. So I, the first thing I did, I ran to their house and when I came into their – I yelled for my grandmother. I yelled for my aunts. Nobody answered. I knew immediately that they were killed that day in that grave but the shock of my life was when I came running back to my house. My mother said Etta take off your clothes. It's so late. You're so tired. Didn't ask me where I went, didn't say anything. Neither did my father. They operated not to say, not to talk.

Q: Did they know what you had seen?

A: I am sure, 100 percent that they knew, yes. Because why couldn't, didn't they ask me is anybody there. How they knew, I don't know but they knew. So the next day I heard people talking outside that 1200 Jews were killed. But when I read my father's papers, he named the date and he named -- and he said it was a thousand Jews got killed that day.

Q: What was the date?

A: It was April third, my father remembered that. I did not –

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Q: 1943 or –

A: Yes, 1943. And that is what my – the most traumatic. I couldn't – because my two aunts who I adored, when I think of them even today, I cry. And that's why you know I didn't go to – Spielberg had called me about three different times. I think it must have been because of my father or they knew you know that we were unusual family to survive. Anyway they called at least three times but I wasn't going to give any kind of – say anything because this mass grave I could not talk about. This day I could never talk about it. Only the last three or four years I started talking about it because it weighed on my mind that my grandparents might be buried someplace where nobody knows. But thanks to my father, they knew and maybe somebody else. Because he gave that testimony in 1949. Yes.

Q: You continued to stay in the ghetto after?

A: No and after a few months. I think maybe a month or two they made **Judenfrei**. Yeah and but by that time my father had lined up two farmers. One to take us in and one to take some other Jews who had the money to pay. So we went to a farmer that was in Ukraine. But they went to a very lovely Polish people. Their name was **Sobelevsky**. The people that were hiding us, I don't remember because they were not very kind. She especially was not kind and he was so afraid of her that she's going to tell her family and they were **bandar** officers. Cause you know just like today the terrorists that's what they were. They killed plenty of Jews, her brothers. .

Q: What were the living conditions?

A: Well we had a little bunker that we could not stand straight and my sister forgot how to walk.

Q: Was this in their house or in a separate house?

A: It was in their house, in the basement.

Q: In their basement?

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A: Yeah they got, my father and him dug out this bunker and he did that strictly for money. But at the end he ran out of money. He had no more money and my father promised him the house which at the end, we saw the house, nothing left. Not a brick was left of the house because it stood on a hill and the bombs were – it was like a target for the bombs.

Q: When you say the house, you mean the house your family built in 1936?

A: Yes, yes that house, right.

Q: You're living in this bunker?

A: Yes, we lived in this bunker for 13 months.

Q: And how often did you go outside?

A: We didn't go outside. The only time we went outside was that woman, that Mrs. Sobelevsky. She's an older woman, very kind, lovely two people. They did it for money but I don't know if they wouldn't have thrown other people and they had – I don't know. They were very nice people and she, when she found out that there were two little girls in the other farmer's house she knew that they weren't feeding us good. They would just give us potatoes and water. Soup. Potato soup and water. That was our fare and maybe once a week they gave us pieces of bread. So she, so my father took us to her, to them and we stayed in their attic when it was warm and she would feed us you know and my mother was always afraid that she will feed us and we are not used to eating. We'd get sick. Well but she was careful and we would stay there a few days and really this. But otherwise we were never outside.

Q: What did you do all day long?

A: Nothing. I don't remember doing anything. Just sleeping and sitting. And washing maybe.

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Q: What were the sanitary facilities like?

A: Horrible. There was a pail. It was awful. It was as bad as it could be.

Q: Was there any light, down there in the bunker? Candles?

A: I don't think there was any artificial light but there was a light coming in from the street.

Q: And the sleeping arrangements?

A: We had like bunks and we slept on that. And then after 13 months we had to move from there because the Germans had stuff on our sides. Further on our sides. We made like a you know a stop there the Germans. They tried to hold off the Russians and the Russians were still on the other side. We had to evacuate because we were – I mean the Polaks, you know the people, the gentiles, had to evacuate there because the Germans came around and told them to leave the houses.

Q: So that's when you had to leave too?

A: We had to leave too and for – and then we, this took three months before the Russians come in, came in and we simply stayed out side there, outside in the fields.

Q: So this is what, 44?

A: 44. Yes.

Q: So it's summer of 44 you're talking about?

A: This was the spring and summer. We were liberated in July of 44. By the Russians.

Q: You're living outside in the fields?

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A: Yes, we were living outside and we fed ourselves. I used to go to the German, they had kitchens set up all over. And I got to tell you they never, never once refused me. I would go and beg for food. They would give me cans of soup and as soon as I had some bread and cans of soup I would go back to my parents and I always found my way fine but my mother would sit there and cry all the time I was gone.

Q: Yes, of course.

A: She was so scared and my father did the same. But my mother would divide up the food and for as many days as was possible to stretch it, she stretched it so I don't have to go again. But this is how we fed ourselves.

Q: Did you speak German?

A: No. I did not, I didn't speak German. I didn't understand it. But the last ten days you know. And I don't think we would have survived. We were held by a German Wehrmacht man. We were so lucky. You know when I think about it, luck was everything with us. And all of the time, it was there. Because we were on the fields and it was rain, there was a train that we had nothing. We were, only had, my mother had a shawl and that was – we were covered up with that shawl. My father would squeeze it out and cover us. The four of us huddled together. My mother said to my father, if we don't get out of here and look for an abandoned house, the kids will die of pneumonia. I will die, you will die. We can't continue staying here so we got up and we walked, went looking for an abandoned house. And we saw an abandoned house and we walked into it. My father found potatoes and he made a fire and started baking the potatoes because we were starving and hello can you hear me.

Q: Yes.

A: And as he was baking the potatoes comes in a German. And he comes in and he said, and my father explained to us what he said. He said I know you're Jewish. He took a look at those four

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people. My father with a long beard because he didn't shave for three months. My mother was swollen something awful because of lack of salt. The two of us, scrawny two little kids. He says I know you're Jewish, don't get panicky. I'm going to help you to the best that I can. I'll do everything for you. Maybe God will help. They'll do the same thing for my family. And he was true to his word. He came the next day, even though we had run away from the house because my mother was very scared. So my father says if he wanted to kill us, couldn't he have done it yesterday. He had the guns with him. He had all kind of weapons with him. So but we had run away anyway. We stood and we watched and we saw him come with packages. He left the packages and he left. So we went back to the house. Sure enough there was a lot of salt. There was a shaving thing for my father to shave because he told my father. Somebody takes a look at, he'll know immediately you're Jewish because my father never had a beard. And he gave us shaving, and he brought bread and he brought some other kind of meat. He brought so many things that it was just unbelievable how this man, how he got it all together. And we ate and we stayed. And the next day he came the same time because he was a courier between the front and the back. And for ten days he took such good care of us. He brought us food. And he told my father where he lived. He was from Katowice. My father knew Katowice very well for some reason. And after the war when we came, we were trying to get closer to the American zone and we had moved into **Beton** which is right near Katowice. My father went there, looked for his family. Three days he spent, he could not find anybody because they were afraid. Whoever my father asked, they said they don't know them. They thought maybe god only knows why he's looking for them. But he saved our lives. That was the last day.

Q: Do you know his name?

A: I don't know his name. And my father might have known his name. He told my father – of course, I don't have any idea about his name. But the last day when he came, he told my father, tomorrow the Russians will be here. We're not putting up any fight. We're just letting them come. We have lost the war. He told my father just like that. And he says but I want you and your wife and children, stay upstairs in the attic. Don't make any fire. Don't go out. Let nobody see you because the Russian soldiers are coming. Those are not human beings. Those are animals. You stay until the tanks come. Then you come down. And that's what we did. We

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stayed until we heard the tanks and as we came down the first person we met from the tanks jumped down. He right away said to my father, are you Hebrew. My father said yes. And he started kissing my father. He kissed all of us and he says go, be careful but he didn't know anything about the **bandarases**, You know the people who were killing Jews because Hitler didn't kill enough. The Ukraines. So that was their mission to kill more Jews. They were just like the terrorists today.

Q: So this is July 44. Right?

A: Yes and we went that night. We went back to our house and then we saw that the house, there was nothing left from the house. But we had no place to go so we stayed outside the house. It was a warm night. I remember, a beautiful night. Then early morning we heard a wagon passing by. You know with a horse and wagon. So my father ran out. Sure enough he knew the man. And the man was so happy to see my father and greeted him but he said what are you doing here? The Bandarases, which they called bandarases are the terrorists. They'll kill you Come quick.

Q: How do you spell that word? I had not heard of it.

A: Bandarases. I would spell B-A-N-D-O-R, I don't know, W-S-K-I. I don't know. Bandarases.

Q: They're Ukrainians.

A: Yes, they're Ukrainian. And we got on his wagon. He covered us up. We all lay down. He covered us up with some, he had some kind of garbage up there. And he took us to **Nikilinz** [ph]. That was a little town that was liberated three months earlier and all the Jews were collecting there. So we went there and right away my mother, by coincidence, happened to meet her best friend. Yes, who had lost her son and a daughter but she survived with one husband, her husband and one daughter. And we took over a Jewish house and that's where we stayed for a while and then –

Q: How do you spell the name of that town?

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A: Nikilinz. I would spell wait a minute. N-I-I think it's spelled with a K-Yes. N-I-K-I-L-I-N-Z. That's how I spell it. I don't – it's a small town in Galicia.

Q: You stayed there for how long?

A: We stayed there for a little while. We went to school, my sister and I. My mother got her some kind of clothes, but mostly my father dug up a barrel of honey and it was like so expensive because there was no sugar. There was no nothing. And my mother sold it by the cup and so we were able to have some money and they got us some clothes.

Q: Did you notice a change in your mother's attitude? Was she very relieved? Did she change in her –

A: My mother was very happy that we were liberated but she was not happy because the whole family was gone. Nobody was alive. And everybody was very sad.

Q: Did she talk about it with you or –

A: No my parents –

Q: I mean you're 12 years old now. Now you're 12.

A: Yes, but they didn't talk anything with us. What we had and what we learned was we picked it up on the street. Not from my parents. Did you know I didn't know there were concentration camps until 1949 cause we were in _____. And I saw a woman with a number. And I stopped her and I says please tell me what is this? And she was very forthcoming. She talked for maybe an hour. I had my eyes and ears and everything open and I came home and I said to my mother. Ma, did you know all these things? She says yes, but what was the purpose in telling you.

Q: To get back to where you were. So you're in this small town and this is after –

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A: Yeah we stayed there and then there was some kind of Israeli people. I don't know if it was **Palmach** or who that was. But I know they were Israeli. And they came to the town and they said they would help us get closer to the American zone. That was the whole thing, to get out from the Russians and get to the American zone so we can get either to Israel or America. And so they brought papers. The papers were from Jews, from German Jews that died during the Holocaust. And the papers of course didn't match but they had bought up the border people. The police that stayed at the border was all bought off, paid off because we got on to trains. We took whatever possessions we had which were very meager but he took them. That was like I would say about a year later or maybe not a whole year but it wasn't very long we stayed in Nikilinz but we went to school. And we got to --

Q: This is 1945.

A: This has got to be 45. And I think the war was over then. And then we went to **Beton**.

Q: To where?

A: To Beton. And we went you know. The papers were so ridiculous. My mother's friend the one I told you was pregnant. She was much younger than my mother. She was pregnant and she had papers for a 13 year old girl. I remember we were all laughing at it. But anyway we got to Beton and in Beton we got established.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: Boton, B-O-T-O-N. And that's where my father went to Katowice, looking for that German man or his family.

Q: What did you do there?

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A: There my sister and I went to school. My father had a little stand on the market like you know yes. And we were doing ok there too. We had what to eat. My mother bought us new clothes and it was ok. We had a house that has full of bugs. I guess now I know that this must have been bedbugs but we stayed there.

Q: What was your father selling in his –

A: He was selling food. He always liked food. Flour I remember and all this kind of thing. Flour and other stuff. And he was making a nice living there and we stayed there I think til 1947 and we were in school because from one class, from sixth grade I graduated but you know I did not go to my graduation because I was so scared. And I was the smartest kid in class. I was afraid they were going to kill me. My parents went but I did not go.

Q: Who did you think was going to kill you?

A: Anybody. The Polacks, the Ukraines, they were all anti-Semites.

Q: What about the other students? Did you –

A: They were all Polish. They were all Polacks.

Q: Did you have any friends, any Polish friends?

A: Pardon me.

Q: Did you have any friends?

A: I had one Polish girl, very lovely. I still remember her. She invited me to her house but I would never go. Never, never went to her house. It was absolutely not. Because I was so scared.

Q: Did you tell your mother you were scared?

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A: Yeah, my mother understood. My mother understood. She was scared too. She wasn't so happy for me to go to anybody's house.

Q: So then you stayed for how long there?

A: We were there I think til 1947. Oh god, you don't understand this. We were there til 1947. And my father wanted to stay there for a while longer because he was doing nicely but in 1947 one morning my sister and I got up to go to school. It was maybe 7:30 in the morning. And as we were going to school there was something on the floor and we came closer. It was a soldier who was in the Polish army laying on the floor. We ran back to tell my parents. They came out. By the time they came out, they had taken away the body but later on we heard that he was Jewish soldier. They killed him. And that put an end to that. Now our aim was to get closer and closer and we got into the DP camps. We started going to, we went into DP camps. And that was in the American zone.

Q: How did you get there?

A: I don't know. Also on papers probably that were not real. But we got there.

Q: Did you go by train?

A: Yes, by train. We came to a camp named **Poking** [ph] and there was like a lot of, it was like a collection camp. And we stayed there also a while because wherever we went after the war, we went to school, my sister and I. it wasn't much but we got some education.

Q: What names were you using at that time?

A: Our own names.

Q: So you were Etta.

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A: Yes. I was Ethel. I was not Etta. I was Ethel.

Q: Ethel, did you say?

A: Yes.

Q: And your sister?

A: Rebecca.

Q: So you didn't change your names or anything?

A: No we didn't change our names. And we –

Q: So you were in that first DP camp. This was in Germany.

A: Yes, this was in Germany in the American zone. This was the whole idea of getting out of the Russian and we managed to get out and we came to and then we started. We were in quite a few DP camps until we wound up in **Fohrenwald**.

Q: Where was the next camp? Which camps were you in?

A: There are three. There were so many. I don't even remember their names. But we were going from one camp to the other.

Q: Why were you continually changing camps?

A: We were not changing. They were changing us. They were, you know the people went into – left for Israel. The people left you know at that time it was I know still illegal to go to Israel but they did. People left for America so there were less and less people staying all the time.

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Q: So they closed down the camps?

A: So they closed down the camps. We haven't changed willingly you know cause we wanted and the schools were closed down and everything was closed down.

Q: So then the second camp. Do you remember that time?

A: I remember only three.

Q: What are they?

A: I don't remember the camps' names because there were so many but eventually we wound up in Fohrenwald. That also is like a collection camp because a lot of people came there when their camps were closed. And in Fohrenwald we came in 1948.

Q: Can you spell that?

A: Fohrenwald? How would you spell that? Let me see. I think it's spelled, that's my way. F-E-R-A-N-W-A-L-D.

Q: Oh Fohrenwald. Ok, I didn't hear it correctly, ok yes that's very well known. Yes.

A: And from there we came to the United States.

Q: When was that? When did you?

A: In 1949 but there we had a very bad experience.

Q: Did your parents ever consider going to Israel after 1948?

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A: My parents did consider very much but especially the only family that survived on my father's side was cousins which they followed us around in Germany and all that very much considered. They wouldn't hear of anything else but Israel and they went to Israel. But my mother was very sick. She got everything. You name it. She had it. But most of all she got malaria and my father said she will never survive in Israel. There is no air conditioning. This is we are talking about 48 and 49. So that became out. My father was doing very good business on the black market. My father was a very enterprising smart man. And he was doing business on the black market and he took himself, right, a little, you know we were living in the barracks. A little, one room in the part of the big barracks. The one room I didn't know if he paid rent. I know nothing about it. But I know has one room and he has shelves he made up and his storage. He had chocolate, he had cigarettes, he had whiskey and he had nylon stockings. Now those were the most desirable items and he was doing business in that. And I have to tell you he did extremely well. But we were getting – we had our papers all of a sudden. Finally we got our papers. That's what we worked for. For the papers to go to America. We got the papers. Everything was getting this. We were supposed to leave in like in six weeks. One night, this is a shameful tell in even. We had English speaking. So we all got dressed. My parents, my sister and I we went outside. It was the middle of the night. I don't remember 12, one o'clock, two o'clock and we saw that they had, were emptying out my father's storage space, the stuff. They were carrying it all out into the trucks. They filled up two trucks. It wasn't that much but it was a full truck. They emptied it out and they left. In the meantime my father and mother got very scared. My mother said go, run away so I was going to **minchen** [ph] in Munich to the high school which didn't last long either because it was already towards the end and the teachers were leaving and all that but in the meantime my father had gotten me a room to stay during the week. Go home Friday night and come back Sunday to stay with this old German woman. So my father ran away to her, there, to join. Because he was afraid they should arrest him. Fortunately this person who tattled on my father didn't tell who it was. Now the whole camp respected one person and my parents too. And my father. Let me tell you. I think he had a little nervous breakdown because he went through so much, so much. More than you know the average person. He had three other people on his head. Two little girls. It was you know typhoid. All kinds of things he went, he was so weak emotionally. And when this happened I think he had a nervous breakdown. He says how could, after what we went through. Are we such bad people? Maybe

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we deserve it. That's what he kept saying. Maybe we deserve it. When a man could be so jealous or so envious for the few dollars I was making. Actually he had already made a deal to sell that and he was getting \$20,000. It was not a few dollars. But it was not the money. My parents were not money kind of people. They wanted to have everything they needed. But it was not the money. I know this for sure. But he was so disappointed. His, why he kept wondering. How could one Jew do this to another. After what we went through. It devastated him. I think he lost a lot of his zest for life and it was a very horrible time for my father. And no matter what my mother did and said and they were such an extremely close couple that it was just on serious. . And so but he was devastated.

Q: And so?

A: And so but thank God nobody told this is -- who it belonged to and after six weeks we took our papers and we left for America. (both talking) We had absolutely no money.

Q: What did America mean to you at that age?

A: You know what. It meant a lot.

Q: You're 17 now, right?

A: Yes. I was really, it was a fabulous country. You saw a country truly a fabulous country.

Q: You knew where you were going, you knew the kind of country you were going to?

A: Yes, we knew.

Q: Did you speak any English at that point?

A: I did speak a little English, yes. But you know I spoke an English, English. Not like the American English.

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Q: You mean British English?

A: Yes, British English and when we came to my cousins, they said that's the wrong word to say something. That's you know what the heck did they know?

Q: How did it feel to leave Europe? Did you feel –

A: You know at one point, my father because he was doing so well, and he said to my mother, I'd like to make some money. Go to America with some money. Open up a business. Buy some, buy things or do things but my mother said never will we stay. I am and the children are going to America. We will never stay. This ground is soaked with Jewish blood.

Q: Did you come by boat?

A: Yes, we came with the, army boat named **Ballou** [ph].

Q: Named what?

A: And don't ask me how, Ballou. It was an army boat.

Q: And you docked in New York?

A: No, we were supposed to come to New York but something had happened so we went to Boston and we got on a train and then we came to New York. And it was really the HIAS that took us in and helped us get established.

Q: What was it like to get off the boat and step on American soil? Did that have any special meaning for you?

A: Of course. It was very, very moving. And you know when I used to go into the subway. I

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went to a business school here and I got a job as a comptometry operator. I'm sure you don't know what this is.

Q: No, I don't know. What is it?

A: No, I know. It was a little machine that you added figures by touch. You know the girls when they did the day's business. I worked for a big company. They did, you know the first anti-Semitism after the war, I encountered in the United States. Believe it or not. I got a job with Safeway stores. They had, and that's where I worked as a comptometry operator. And the manager there only tried to find out how I came to this country. And whatever he would ask him, I told him, I told him the truth but I didn't commit myself to anything. He says you didn't marry a GI. You're too young. You didn't do this, you didn't do that. And but he couldn't find out for sure that I was Jewish. But he was real, and a real anti-Semite. But he didn't fire me. He didn't do anything and I was so good at that machine.

Q: You lived with your parents in New York? You came from Boston to New York and lived with your parents?

A: We came the next day from Boston to New York.

Q: And lived with your parents and had this job?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you go to school at all?

A: I did. I went to evening school. At first I was trying, my mother only wanted me to go to medical school. And believe it or not it was not difficult because they were making all kinds of adjustments for those kids and those people. They really were. I went out, really did a lot. So I think it, going to school, the evening school. I was trying to get a diploma. But my cousins, my cousin who had two of the ugliest daughters said to my mother what. You're going to send her to

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school. She'll never get married. You remember the shortage. And there probably was a big shortage of young men because this was 1949, after the war. A lot of young people got killed. So my mother got scared you know. She was no youngster my mother. She was oh my god. She was. So she said all right. If you want to do something later on, get married. And of course I was lucky enough to meet my husband and I truly was lucky.

Q: How did you meet him?

A: I met him through a friend of mine. Through another man that I was dating but I didn't like him. You know it was just --

Q: What he an American or was he also from Europe?

A: No, he -- when we came here we mingled only with survivors. We had much more in common with each other. And it was very easy and we were always going together and sticking together and getting together and we were meeting each other. I'll give you a for instance. My father was, got acquainted with this man Philip on Orchard street. My mother wanted him to open up a stand on Orchard Street and start a business. Unfortunately with my mother who got very sick and my father forgot all about everything but concentrated and had to stay with my mother. And he did. She was his number one important thing. But he met this man who was a very lovely man and he says you know. My father showed him the picture of my sister and I. He says you have such two nice daughters. Why don't you make a **shita**? You know what a shita is. Introduce him to my son. My father, just met the son. He was a college graduate. He has a very successful business. He was in the business with his father. So my father came home and told my mother. My mother says there must be something wrong with him. What would he do if he would meet Etta. Here and of course my parents thought I was everything. I could understand him falling in love with her but like this. He doesn't know her. There's something wrong with him. I don't want Etta to meet him. You know so we were also prejudiced.

Q: Then you met your husband you said?

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A: I met my husband and I got married.

Q: And his name.

A: His name was Irwin Waldman and he was a survivor. He lost his whole family. He lost, he had seven sisters and brothers.

Q: What country was he –

A: The only survivor. He could never talk about it and he also never collected one single penny from the Germans.

Q: What country, where was he born?

A: He was born in Poland. He was born in **Wolin**.

Q: In where?

A: Wolin.

Q: You got married?

A: Yes.

Q: What year did you get married?

A: I got married in 1952.

Q: 52 and then did you do any work or you raised children or what?

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A: I helped my husband first and he had a little business. I helped him first and then I became pregnant and then he did ok.

Q: How many children?

A: I have three daughters and six grandchildren.

Q: And you've lived in New York ever since?

A: I have lived in Brooklyn and I have lived in New York. I haven't lived anyplace else. Oh yes, we lived for 13 years in New Jersey.

Q: Can we now just talk a little bit about some of your thoughts and some of your feelings about what you went through?

A: Could you hold one minute. I'm going to change my telephone because I have another extension that's better because these extensions begin to die.

Ok. I had a new extension. I can hear you so much better.

Q: I said I wanted to talk a little bit about some of your thoughts and did you ever go back to Europe? Did you ever?

A: Yes I did. I go, went back. See my husband got sick, had a very bad heart attack in Italy. And that was in 1950, 1984. He was a young man but he had a very bad heart attack. And they didn't think he was going to survive more than two years but he lived 28 years. He was an unusual person too. I was very lucky. I had to do with two unusual men in my life. My father and my husband. I was extremely lucky. And but he was very, he was very sick and very healthy. My doctor used to, his cardiologist called him the healthiest sick man I know.

Q: When your children were growing up, your daughters were growing up, did you tell them about what you went through and what your –

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A: Pardon me.

Q: When your daughters were growing up, did you tell them about what your childhood was like and what you went through?

A: I went through, yes I told them. But they don't know as much as they should have known because it was the same thing. Every time I came to the idea of this mass grave that I saw my two aunts and my grandfather and step grandmother who was very nice to me too, died. I could not talk about it. And that really stood in my way because I've been asked many times to go and talk to children in schools. And I always refused because you know I speak English very well. And but I always was, it's like held me back. I was in Prague with the hidden children. It was the same thing. They came over and they wanted me to give them my story. I said no I don't want to. But I did give my story in Florida finally.

Q: What made you finally decide to do that?

A: You know what. I finally decided to talk about it was a read an article that there are so many mass graves all over Europe that are not known. And then I said to myself. My god, my aunts who I adored, truly adored and my, because I was their plaything. They took me to the circus. They took me to everything that there was a children's fair. They really offered me to be conscious. They tried to teach me songs. That was before the war when I was a little nothing.

Q: Tell me their names again. The two aunts.

A: Feigal and Zosia.

Q: You did say that. I know you said you were staying there for hours, looking at the grave. Did you actually –

A: The whole time. I never walked away even when it was already dark from the –

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Q: But did you actually see your relatives –

A: Yes.

Q: You actually saw them?

A: There was you know the cemetery was on the bottom of the hill. I was now I'm thinking I can still see it in my mind. But it was like maybe a tenth of a mile away.

Q: But you actually saw your relatives at the grave?

A: I didn't see my relatives. I just saw the Jews being shot and falling into that grave and the Germans – oh. And the SS standing there and just shooting.

Q: What are your thoughts about Germany today?

A: I was in Germany. It was, I wanted to see all the newsreels and we had a, the hidden children had a gathering there. And there was a lot of controversy to go or not to go but 400 people did show up which was a lot because even though we are the youngest, there are still people dying already. So dying and getting sick and this and that. And you know what. If you go to the gathering of the children, you see how some, how much damage these people especially who didn't have anybody. If you even had a cousin you know. Somebody to hold on after the war, it helped you. But some people they're just a few years older than I am because they were in the concentration camps and you put them in a concentration camp unless you were 14 years old. You could, there's so much damage done. So much. And yet I mean I don't care really. It doesn't matter to me, believe me. I shall even survive. They didn't help us with the least. They gave us the least. They took, as far as money is concerned, they paid us the least. And we shouldn't because we lost our childhood. We should be getting the most. And they didn't jump and organize. There was nobody to speak for us.

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Q: I was going to ask you if you felt you lost your childhood.

A: Of course I lost my childhood.

Q: Did you ever get it back?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so. I know you know I only see my children **kanyna hora** [ph] knock on wood. They're all very educated. My oldest daughter's a lawyer but that's not why she's a lawyer. She has worked for many years as a lawyer but that, I mean she has a child. She didn't want to – she, marriage is her business, and our business. And then my second daughter is a doctor of psychology. She has a PhD. And my youngest daughter has an MBA, business administration and she was working for Philip Morris. She was pretty high up but then she has had twins so she decided to quit. I thought it was the biggest mistake she made.

Q: Did you ever go back to school or did you work after, later on?

A: I worked, yes. I started a business.

Q: What kind of business?

A: My husband had a very good business and of course I used his money. I bought real estate and that's what really, that's what really supports us now. Especially me.

Q: Do you feel very American?

A: Yes, I feel. I think that we survivors and that I really could say without any kind of exaggeration, are more American and more patriotic than the Americans. Maybe they are more patriotic than we are but you know basically we don't know a lot of Americans. I only started getting to know Americans in the last few years. When I, in this building I met a lot of -- a few American women. And in Florida, especially I, you know because we survivors are dying out.

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Q: Up to a few years ago your friends were mostly survivors, is that what you're saying?

A: Mostly survivors. Mostly survivors and you know what. We have, my husband had two friends who married American girls. They also stuck with the survivors.

Q: What was it like for you to become a citizen? An American citizen?

A: It was wonderful. As soon as I could I became an American citizen. I didn't postpone. I didn't this. Oh as soon as I could. When we came here, I don't know maybe we were living in a little dream too. We thought that this was, and we still, I still think this is paradise. We were all very lucky to come here. And my cousins I have to say who are in Israel are very successful, my father's cousin. And my father's relatives. It was a very smart family.

Q: Did what you went through affect your thoughts about religion and being Jewish and –

A: I never think about – my mother was, kept a kosher home after the war. The people that I know were not religious, but they became religious. Many people that I know became religious because of the children. They send the children. In order for the women to go to work. They send the children to yeshivas. They send them to the **Chabad** you know and then they went there. They became very orthodox and I have two friends like that, that I'm still friends with them because we know each other forever and we are keeping up our friendship but it's a little difficult. They, my husband used to work Saturdays. They used to work Sundays. It's a little more difficult. Or eating in each other's houses and I have no problem with eating in their houses. But they have problem eating in my house, even though for the longest time my house was kosher. As long as my father was alive. My father died in 1990. My house was kosher because he wouldn't eat anything but kosher.

Q: Did he talk about the war years? In his later life?

A: Surprisingly not. He gave testimony. What kind of papers. I don't know if you are aware of it. The Museum sent me. He didn't give it to the Museum. He gave testimony in 1949 to Yad

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Vashem. And they sent it to the Museum and the Museum sent me a copy of his papers. And you know what they called the papers, an encyclopedia of survival. It's so direct. It's how this man remembered everything. But so we didn't talk. My father, I kept telling my father, my children were extremely close to my father because you know this was their only grandparent that they had. And they adored him. And I suppose papa talked to them about the war. Tell them. And he would tell them before the war, how he used to walk to school when he was a little boy. He didn't have shoes. You know these kind of things that he came from an extremely poor family.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through such trauma while other children your age in the United States didn't have to experience any of that?

A: Well you know I consider the children in the United States very lucky but I don't resent it because you know this was their luck and it was my great luck to survive. Six million Jews died and that I survived was great, great luck.

Q: I have asked you before what your thoughts about Germany are today.

A: Today my thought about Germany are not kind. I don't, I went to Germany with my children and I made them promise me that they would buy nothing in Germany. And they didn't. They respected me and they didn't even look at anything. But the luxury and the richness in Berlin. Have you been to Berlin?

Q: No.

A: It's indescribable. We saw a department store there. New York is a big city, has luxuries beyond description but we saw department stores there that no department store in New York City compares to that.

Q: Why did you tell them not to buy anything?

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A: I didn't want them to spend money in Germany.

Q: Because?

A: Because I don't want to make the Germans richer than they already are. But the first day of our conference we had this, a psychologist come and he said why did you people come? Why did you women come? You came with your children, with your grandchildren. I was there with my youngest granddaughter, children. My three daughters and my youngest granddaughter. And we all said the same thing. We are not comfortable but we wanted to come and see the museums, to see how they feel. And we didn't feel comfortable and I was amazed that my three daughters and my granddaughter who was 16 at the time, 15 at the time, said nana, I just want to leave here. I don't know why but I don't feel comfortable. And my kids. We were there four days and it was four days too many. And yet and we went to Poland; we were more comfortable. Yes, we were more comfortable in Poland. And maybe had a lot to do with every museum we went to in Poland, we met young Polish people under 40. We didn't meet a person over 40. But under 40 and every museum was full of Polish people. I stopped one man who was holding a little baby and his wife was holding another little baby and I said tell me, why did you come? He said I'll tell you why we came. He happens to be a professor at Warsaw University. Because my parents, I don't know. He says that they really don't remember. If they don't know but they pretend they don't. They tell me they don't know. My grandparents are dead. I want to see what really happened. And that's the, all over you saw Polish people. You never saw a German person at any of the Jewish museums, never.

Q: How often do you think about your childhood experiences? Do you think about them?

A: Unfortunately, very often. Because lately we are for some reason more reminded. In the beginning when we got together we never spoke of it. But the last ten years when we get together, no matter where we are, what, I don't know what leads to it, we start on it.

Q: When you say we, who do you mean? Friends?

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A: My friends and I. It gets, winds up talking about the Germans and right now talking about this one is sick, and this one is you know. It's just, it just happens.

Q: Do you get reparations?

A: Yes, I do because my father applied for it. My sister was a very sick girl. Mother got a penny vacation. I didn't either. But we might be the only two who never got a penny vacation but my father applied for that and we got it. He applied in 1949.

Q: Do you talk a lot about your childhood with your sister now?

A: My sister was supposed, said she wanted to be here today but she sold her apartment and she had to close it and she couldn't come. But she – I'm sure you'll give me a tape.

Q: Yes, yes. What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial? Do you have anything to say?

A: I wanted him to be killed immediately. We don't feel kindly towards the Germans. And it's not, like you see the younger generation but I think they're very anti-Semitic. I think the Germans are very anti-Semitic.

Q: Still you're saying?

A: And we felt it. You know we went into a restaurant to have dinner and one, and he says you have to, and he puts on the bill 19 percent sales tax but we were staying in the Hilton. And we had had lunch there. And I said there was no tax at all. So I said to my daughter, Pat there's no tax. She says I know that. So she calls him over. She says you know that there is no tax on food. He said what the rich Jews don't want to pay? And that was in the middle of Berlin. And they all knew that we were there because all the newspapers were so proud of themselves writing how the surviving younger children came to Berlin.

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Q: Would you have been a different person do you think if you hadn't gone through what you had to go through?

A: I'm sure.

Q: In what way?

A: Well first of all, my parents would have planned my wedding. My wedding. When I was a little girl, my mother was starting who I got to marry. And I listened to my mother even to the day she died. I adored my mother. She was very special to me.

Q: When did she pass away?

A: She finished the gymnasium. She was very, very special and she was extremely beautiful.

Q: When did she die?

A: She died very early. She died in 1960. She was very young and she died.

Q: Do you think this made you more independent.

A: Could you hold one minute. My daughter is going to drive me crazy. This is maybe the tenth time she calls. I'll just tell her. (speaking to daughter)

Q: I was going to say, do you think this experience made you more independent.

A: I don't know if it made me more, I don't think it made me anything better, more. I think I'm more fearful. Especially now that I'm growing older. I think I'm, no I don't think, I think I would have been a better person. I don't mean better, kinder. I don't mean in that respect. But I think I would have been more of a human. I don't know.

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Q: More what?

A: I would have been more of an independent person. I think I'm pretty independent. I don't know. I can't figure it out. It's hard because considering how some people have suffered and how they are affected. And my sister, well especially me. I think I've done better than the average. Cause I have friends that are really messed up. I mean in messed up. They're so insecure and one friend who is, deserves so much credit. She was 16 years old. She survived all by herself. She's bright, she's a fabulous cook, She's very accomplished in her own way. And yet she's so insecure. She makes up stories which never happened cause I know this woman very well. And sometimes I just feel for her. Because that's such insecurity she suffers and no wonder. How could you be a whole person? When you went through **Strajesta** [ph] this camp and you went through Auschwitz, this camp. It's a miracle. If you're half normal I always say.

Q: Aare there any sounds or sights or smells that trigger your thoughts of your experience?

A: No. No. no. I just, I think about it much more often lately than I used to think. And especially my husband hated to talk about it. He never made any kind. He would never talk. He would never do anything because he was so, he was so emotional. Like if you push him he would start crying so they would stop. All right daddy don't say nothing.

Q: Have you been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

A: In Washington? Of course. We're charter members. We went to the opening. Yes. I think the last year I was invited to a dinner at the Museum. I didn't go because it was – in Washington. If I went to New York, I would have gone with one of my children or my sister. But I was in Florida and it came in the next to go from Florida to Washington.

Q: Do you feel that the lessons, any lessons have been learned from the Holocaust?

A: I don't think the world has learned anything. They saved the Jews and you know what. Now they're printing my mother's story. Of course my kids are so agitated. They don't believe me but

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I used to believe my mother. That somebody was in jail, he was not Jewish. It's not possible. And I said this thing. Unfortunately my mother died so young. I never got a chance of sometimes I'd really like to ask her. But she really believed that. That the Jews could not go to jail.

Q: Is there anything else before we finish that you'd like to say that we haven't covered or any message you want to give to your grandchildren?

A: Well I want my grandchildren to grow and be good and try to keep on their Jewishness. So far I have been lucky. My granddaughter married a Jewish boy. I would like them all to marry Jews. I tell them that but I don't think it will work. And but still I want them to keep up the Jewish. We suffered so much for it.

Q: Anything else you wanted to say before we close?

A: Not really. I don't know what to say. I'm very glad I did this because I think I will feel better because it's constantly on my mind and constantly, constantly. When I – but know that they know about the grave because the girls from the museum told me and it was Yad Vashem knows about it so it's not forgotten. And that was constantly on my mind that it should not be forgotten.

Q: Do you feel that you're two different people, one person on the inside and another one to the outside world?

A: Sometimes I look at myself and I say is that really me? Is that the little girl that played in the bunker? Is that the little girl that my sister couldn't walk. My father had to carry her on his shoulders? But we survived and that is our greatest gift that I still have, that we survived.

Q: That's certainly a good note to end on so I want to thank you for doing --

A: And we're lucky to be in this country.

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Q: Yes.

A: We truly are lucky. Many times I go someplace and do something and I say oh it's wonderful. I don't have to worry how somebody's going – it just makes you feel good. And I know that there's plenty of anti-Semitism here too. I'm not saying with my head in the -- you know. But yet we live very free lives.

Q: As I said before that's an important note to end on. I want to thank you for doing the interview.

A: And I want to thank you too because I think it's going to help me personally.

Q: I hope so.

A: Thank you very much Gail.

Q: Let me just conclude by saying this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Etta Waldman.

(end)