

The following is an interview of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Josephine Becker. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on March 26, 2017, and it's taking place in Chevy Chase, Maryland. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Josephine--

And your--

Becker.

And the name you were born with?

Veelli, V-E-L-E-L-L-I.

And where were you born?

I was born in Patras, Greece.

And when were you born?

1936. In May of 1936.

May what?

May the 5th.

May the 5th. OK. And let's talk a little bit about your family, now, your parents. Their names?

My mother's name was Emily.

Do you know her--

Her maiden name was Osmo, O-S-M-O. And then she-- by getting married was it was Veelli.

Right. And your father's name?

Emmanuel.

And what kind of work did he do?

He did a couple of things. He was working for a big relative's business, an uncle's business that was selling material at that time for people to buy it and make-- and dressmakers, all kinds of clothing or curtains for the windows there and everything else. Until the war came for the Jewish people, and we had to go hide, run away. So the business didn't last there. It went out. And my father opened up, when we came back, his own store to sell material for people to buy there that did not do good. It did bad. People didn't have money.

We'll talk about that a little later. How far back can you trace your family?

When you say my family, my grandparents--

Grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Oh, my grandparents a lot. A lot because when I was born they were very young, and they did a lot for me. They had a

baby. I was the first one in the family, the first child in the family. And my grandparents they had all these boys. They had four sons and a daughter.

These are your maternal or paternal? On you your father's side or on your mother's side?

On my father's side. But what happened is by hiding in a village from the Germans during the time, his two brothers, my father's two brothers that were my grandparent's two sons, the youngest one that was 20 and the oldest one that was in his upper 20s, like 28, 29. They got taken by Germans and by hillbillies also.

We'll get to the war years later. I want to talk a little bit first about pre-war. About your family pre-war.

The pre-war was that life was beginning to get very different because everybody was saying-- the town that I grew up in did not have that many Jewish people. But we did have--

Did you live right in town?

Yes.

In the center. Did you live in a house?

We lived in my-- yes. In a house that my parents had bought when they got married, that's where I was born. But then after we moved with my-- anyway, that I'll talk about later.

We'll talk about it later. Yeah, OK.

The business in my hometown was very, very good when I was first born. When I was a little girl, from what I know is that everybody was doing well, and everybody had a maid in the house to come and clean up and all kinds of things. But after the business with the war with the Jewish people, everything went bad.

Right. Right. Was your family a religious family?

I would say my father was. Yes, my mother and father both. And my grandparents both. But my father was the one that remained much, much more when we came back from hiding. From hiding in the villages.

Yeah, and again we'll get to that later.

Yeah.

Yeah. What about the neighborhood, were there Jews in the neighborhood where you lived?

In our street when I was born, no. We were the only Jewish people. The other Jewish people lived closer to where their business was. Stores that they were selling this, not the other, the theater and all that. But the house we had was a very small house that we bought, but I was the only child for a while. So it was plenty--

I was going to ask you, did you have any siblings?

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I have two sisters and a brother.

OK. And when were they born?

Well my one sister that lives in Florida now was born when I was eight years old.

Oh. So you were a single child until eight?

And she was taken to the hiding village when she was eight months old. I went walking, and she was being carried. But the others were born when we came back. After we came back. Because my brother is now 70, and my other sister is 68, and I'm 80.

OK. So what memories do you have before the war? Before the war started, before things started.

What mem--

Memories.

Oh, memories.

Do have any-- I you know you were very young, obviously.

The memories were great. They were great.

Pre-war we're talking about.

Pre-war. Yes, yes, yes. I was taken--

What are some of the things you, I mean, you were so young. So what are some of the things--

Yeah, well, we would go to take a bus, my mother would take a bus and take me to the beach. I was seven years old. We had a different theater there that would play for children, we would go to that. Or we would go to a movie here and there. Where I grew up there was only one theater. One theater. But there were three or four movies, and every time they had something for the children they would take me there.

We would go to the-- here you would call it Constitution square, over there it was called, what is it called in American, in English? It was called [GREEK] George Square. George Square. And we used to go there. They had like a cafe restaurant around it or they had tables to sit outside and chairs, and we would go there and sit around. And my father's store was two steps away so I was running to the store, that kind of stuff.

How far back can you trace your family? How many generations in Greece were there? Do you know?

Well my father's family and my mother's family.

And preceding that, do you know where those families--

Yes. I remember my grandmother, my mother's mother's mother. My mother's mother's mother that was 98 years old at that time

Your great grandmother.

A big lady, very tall lady wearing the longest clothes I have ever seen in my life. She used to step on them, very long. With big pockets.

Was she born in Greece?

No. Now where they were born, I don't know if they were born in Turkey, if they were born farther away.

You don't know.

I don't know. They were born somewhere that they were speaking a lot of Italian.

Oh, OK.

But I don't know if she was born in Italy, I was very young at that time. I was eight years old.

I know, I just-- yeah. What language did you speak at home when you were little?

Greek.

Greek.

Greek. And then my grandmother, my father's mother, was born something that they were speaking Italian. Some language that they were speaking in Italian. I don't know what place exactly she was born in because she came to Greece when she was very young. And my grandfather too, you know, her husband also.

Do you know why they came to Greece? Do you have any-- were you told?

Yes, I was told that they wanted to come to Greece because where they were born there were not that many Jewish people. There was maybe one here and one there. And they wanted to come and meet more Jewish people. But some of the family did not come to the hometown I was. They went to Athens. They went to Athens, the capital.

That's where my mother's brother ended up with a big business and got married there. And it was a little different later on. As good as everything was for the Jewish people when I was born and all, it got worse and worse and worse. After the war.

No, no, no, I know. But as I said, we're talking pre-war at the moment.

Yeah. Otherwise we didn't have any problems with--

Did you have friends?

Oh yes.

Girlfriends--

Oh, yes.

Before the war?

A lot of friends. I went to an all girls private school. They didn't want me to go to a school where I would be the only Jewish person. I was the only Jewish person at an all girls private school, but they trusted it better. So I was the only Jewish person there, and if the teacher was talking about history in Greece and she was talking about the Catholics or the other they that made me go out of the class. The teacher used to say, you go out while we're talking about this. And then you can come back in when we're finished.

How did that make you feel? Did it bother you?

It bothered me when I was young. That was after the war that all this happened.

Oh this is after the war?

After the war. Because when I came back, I was close to nine years old, eight and a half years old.

Yeah, yeah. OK. So you said pre-war it was a happy life.

It was, yeah, before we knew what was going on. And what was happening. And when it started to happen things were very bad.

What is the first thing you remember of a change?

Oh, I tell you that right now.

The first change.

My mother had two sisters that lived in an island called Corfu. You ever hear of the Corfu Island?

Yes.

It's just beautiful there, beautiful. And the two sisters were there. They both got married to somebody that had grown up in Corfu. Now the one sister did not have any children. She had just gotten married a year ago, she didn't have any children. The other sister had a lot of children. She had two sons and one, two, three, four girls. She had six children. And when you are ready to know what happened, I could tell you now. Do you want to know now?

Well no, I want to follow along chronologically. The first change that you remember.

That's what I remember, that one of her sisters that lived in Corfu had six children. The other one didn't have any children. And when I was about four years old or five years old my mother said we're going to go to Corfu because I want you to meet your cousins.

But things were still OK?

It hasn't started yet. It hasn't started yet. So we went by boat to Corfu because those days there were no airplanes to take you to the other place. So we went with that and we stayed there a week, and my father used to say, why do you want to go there? My mother said I want her to meet my nieces and nephews. So, OK. So we went that one time, but after that, nothing. Because--

You went and then you came back home.

We came back home and then all the mess started.

Again, before that, are there any holidays you remember before things got difficult?

Everything.

Can you tell me some?

Passover.

What was Passover like?

It was a big holiday, Passover, because my grandfather that was then alive in the beginning, not when we came back after the war, he would run the service. And we had because in Greece--

Was it in your house?

In my grandparents' house. We hadn't moved yet with my grandparents. We moved with my grandparents after we came back from the village hiding. After we were hiding, and then we moved in with them.

Pre-war, I'm talking about pre-war holidays.

Yeah, I mean they had this real big house. The dining room was I would say from here to there. And there was a big table, and all the Jewish people used to get invited to come to our house. And each one used to bring whatever they made and all that stuff.

Did you sing songs?

Oh, yes.

Is there any particular song you remember?

Well I don't even remember the songs, but they were singing in Hebrew, and they were singing in Greek, and they were singing in-- I mean, I used to sit there and listen to that. Of course I didn't-- and they used to make all the Jewish cooking. Not matzo ball soup and stuff like that except for-- you didn't have bread of course.

There was no matzo that you could buy there. Nothing. We used to beg the bakery, my parents used to beg the bakery and say could you close for two days, or maybe one day if you can't give us today so we could come and make matzo. Yeah.

So we used to go in there. That happened after the war, and we made all this matzo that was awful. It tasted terrible, hard, you know you couldn't chew it. But then later on we got matzo delivered.

Did your family have any contact with Yiddish speaking Jews in Europe?

No, no Yiddish.

It was strictly separate.

That was amazing because when we came here my mother used to say, what did they say? What did they say? I said, I don't know. Don't ask me.

OK, so let's start moving up when things start to get difficult.

Very.

Yeah. What was the first--

It was in 19--

Did you have restrictions?

Well the restrictions were we couldn't go out of the house and go like we used to go to the square. We couldn't because we didn't know what was going on there. There were the Germans and the Italians were in my hometown at the same time. But it was very dangerous because they were not getting along too good. The Germans and the Italians. It was a lot of fighting. And the Italians--

We're talking about '41 now? 1941?

I was born in '36. Yes. Yes. 1941 and then 1942.

So it was OK up to the time the Germans--

It wasn't OK. I didn't know exactly what was going on because I was so young, but they had their problems. My father always used to say that. Don't do this, and don't do that, and don't go out.

What is that like for a five-year-old child to be told you can't go outside?

They didn't want me to because it was dangerous.

But how did you feel about it? Do you remember being sad?

I used to say, well, why can't I go? You know, I wasn't in school. We didn't have any kindergarten in the school that I went to in all girls private school.

So you hadn't started school yet?

No. No. But then before we went away I got very sick. So we were in the old house, and the doctor used to come to the house to see. I had-- what do you call the sickness that when you have something wrong with your kidneys?

Nephritis?

It might have been that. I was urinating blood, and my mother said there is no way that we could continue with that. So the doctor came to the house and gave us a prescription. And my parents went and bought that. I was in bed. I was so sick from that, terrible.

But then it stopped with the medicine I took and all. Because by the time we went to the village I didn't have that. I had other problems by the time we went to the village. I had whooping cough, and I had, what do you call it when you swell up? What's the sickness--

Mumps.

Yeah.

Mumps. So the first thing you remember are seeing the German and Italian soldiers in your town?

And they were living across the street from my house, from my first house, the Italians. They had a house there. And they were having big fights with the Germans. The Germans used to-- I remember my mother saying don't look at the door and don't do this. They would go and they would try to get them out of there because they wanted to go there. The Italians would come-- my mother went to an all Italian school.

Did you understand Italian?

Yes. Very much. I still do.

Greek and Italian.

Very, very much. And my mother would say, they are knocking on the door because they don't have anything to eat. So I told them to stop by and I would give them something to eat. I don't know, I didn't know what to say to her. Don't do it or don't give it to her, I don't know what my father was telling her. I don't remember. And then the Germans threw them out. So the best friends that we had there were some Italians that lived near us. They went back to Italy. They got away.

Was it very frightening, again, you were young--

Yes.

To see a German soldier in uniform?

Well my mother kept saying-- my mother was home most of the time and my father. Don't talk to them, don't do this

and don't do that because they're dangerous.

So was it very frightening to see them as a child?

Yes. Yes. There were not-- If they said that, I didn't know those people. But we were friendly with the non-Jewish people that lived on the street.

Yes, yes. No, but I meant the German soldiers.

Yeah. The German-- yeah. They were bad. But they were bad because they were told to be bad from Hitler.

Had you heard of a man named Hitler at that point?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

How did you hear about him?

Because my family was taken by then. My mother's two sisters.

No, no, no. I meant before things really started. When did you first start hearing about a man named Hitler?

I hear them talking. I heard people talking. I didn't know anything about it, I didn't ask questions. So the Hitler people were the ones that were terrible during the time that all the Jewish people were in the concentration camp.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But I just was curious when you first started hearing about it. OK, so they come in, the Germans are there.

But they come in, the Italians were calm to talk to. The Germans would come in and say, what are you doing here? Where did you come from? Like they were speaking in German.

Were there swastikas on flags?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

That you saw in the town?

Yes. And you know what else there was?

No.

There were airplanes going by and they were throwing something that was written up. Some kind of paper.

A pamphlet? A leaflet?

Single paper. I want to know what they had written up there so we could see what's going on. And there was a war going on in Greece also. The war was killing at our houses. They would throw whatever, they would throw it from up there. The houses went crazy. You know there was nothing, but that also happened after we came back in the real beginning.

Once things started to change you stayed inside the house?

Yeah, right. We wouldn't go anywhere.

And then what was the next change?

The next change was that after the Jewish people were killed, there were a lot of Jewish people taken to the concentration camp.

While you were still in your house?

Yes, and my mother said--

Are you talking about Jewish people in Greece?

Yes, I'm talking about us. And the family.

In your town?

Yeah, in our Patras. In our town. Because they came with a boat from places that had the word like an island. They only had three places around with water and one that did not have water. It has regular earth. But my family, my mother's family, was coming to my home town by boat.

And then after they got off the boat they put them on a train to take them to Germany. And we knew about it because they were advertising all these things. And my mother kept saying, I want to go see my sisters to say hello to them and not to forget to call me when they're there. And my father says, well you're not going anywhere.

So she didn't leave the house?

No. She wanted to take me also, and my father says no. You're not going anyplace. You're not going to do that. So it's a good thing she didn't.

Did you see, while you were inside the house--

Because they took them. They took them down and they put them in certain places. What they did is my mother's younger sister that had all those children, she had three girls and two boys. Five or six children. I can't, I think there were five.

What was her name?

Esther Mordo. M-O-R-D-O. And she was on the train. They didn't give them any food or anything, I don't know what they ate. But when they got to Germany they had an announcement saying that you are going to get food when you come out of here. Yeah, right. When you come out of here, and the men are going to go to a different place to live with their sons. And the mother with the daughters will go to another place, and that's where they all got-- except for one thing.

My mother's two nieces, one niece really, that still lives in Baltimore now, Lena. She was 15 years old, and they did not kill the 15-year-olds. They let them stay and work there. Clean the street from all the dirt and all. And the two boys that were a little bit older. They killed the ones that were under a certain age, under 15 or something.

The two boys survived also working. The one boy got killed, the youngest one. But the older boy that still-- he just died a year ago. They put the younger boy, they were going to take him and throw him out because he died. But the older boy took him and put him in his bed with him because he was dead. That was terrible. Terrible.

So but finally you know he couldn't do it. He gave him up. And my cousin Lena that lives, like I said, in Baltimore, she was working, cleaning the streets and whatever she was doing. And they gave her shots. She had a lot of needles so she wouldn't get her period anymore, and she would have this or that, or the other.

We didn't hear from them, of course, or her brother. Her brother was Sabino Mordo. And you know, we didn't hear from

them. And then after everything was finished they were there a little more than a year.

After it was finished, she ran away from there somehow and went either to-- what is the word Elvetia called in English? Elvetia. It's another country. That's where she went. And she went into a hospital there because she was very sick. And they called my mother's brother that lived in Athens, my uncle, and she said we are here my brother and I, we don't know what to do. We were not treated well and all that. So he says don't do anything, and I'll make sure you come in.

So they both, somehow he took them to Athens. I don't know how they came to Athens. She went to a doctor, and she had all kinds of treatments to become a woman again. And she got married there, and he left and went to Israel. He didn't want to live there. He lived in Israel the rest of his life after that. Which I met when I went to Israel, you know, I saw him.

Let's get back to your story. So you're in the house, the Germans are there, you're not going outside. And then what changed? What was the next--

And then we left. We were--

How did you know, do you know how your parents knew how to leave?

Yes. The people that were not Jewish. They were Greek Orthodox, whatever the Greek religion is. It's not like they have here, they're not Jewish people. And they were doing business, the father, the man of the family was doing business with the bank that my father's brother who had a big job there.

So my father's brother said I'm not going to be here. In a few days we're going to be running away to a village. He says, we don't know where to go. And he says we have a house in Micalaca. Micalaca was the name of the country. And you can have the house to live there, he says, the house is not well finished.

They lived in another house but that one was not-- it was built up, and it had a door and everything. It had nothing, no bathroom. If you had to go to the bathroom you had to go outside in the wintertime. My grandfather used to find a chair that had a hole in the middle, it didn't have any-- so he used to go to that in the middle of the night. It was very cold. We had snow there.

And they had some kind of a place where they could light some wood. And if my mother wanted to warm up something that we got she had to light whatever the matches are. That, I don't know. And they did that. And we didn't have any milk, we didn't have nothing. Somehow they were making bread. Where did they get the flour from, I don't know.

Let's talk about your leaving your first house. What was it like?

Well we came back.

No, no, no not when you came back. When you were leaving to go out in hiding. How did you feel about that? When was this, in 1940-- when did you leave your house to go into the country?

Wait I'll tell you in a minute. I was born in 1936, 1940, I think it was 1942.

OK, so you're six years old.

Right.

And you're told that you have to leave your house.

We were leaving, yeah.

Do you remember this at all?

Oh, yes. Like it was yesterday.

Well what was it like for a six-year-old to have to leave?

Well my uncle came back from the bank. Two of my uncles were working at the bank. The youngest one, and he was the oldest one. And he said we get everything ready because we're leaving right away.

Did you want to leave?

Yeah, I don't know. I didn't know it was dangerous. I was scared.

You know enough that it was-- at six years old.

Yes. I didn't know that they were killing people. I didn't know what they were doing like that. Why they took them there I still didn't know. They didn't tell us that.

Did you take anything special with you? Any special toys or books or dolls?

No toys, no dolls, no books. A couple of clothing, you know, like different--

Just clothes.

Yeah and some shoes. I came back without shoes. I came back barefoot because the shoes were worn out. And he--

What time of year was this in '42, was it spring?

It was, yeah.

Spring '42.

It was like the beginning-- the summer was coming after that. But the uncle that was at the bank, he said to this non-Jewish person that was doing business-- they were so nice, those people.

Do you remember the non-Jewish person's name?

Oh yeah. They live in Baltimore. Michaelis.

Michaelis. And the first name?

The mother's name was Catherine Michaelis. And the other one was-- how do you call it in-- Elias. And he said, this man said to my uncle, don't worry I'll find you some horses to take you there. Because the roads were that narrow. Now they're all fixed up.

How far from Patras?

Oh it was quite a few hours.

A few hours. Oh, OK.

With the horses. And the horses couldn't even walk there because it was so narrow and they would tip. But who sat on the horses?

Oh you didn't go in a wagon, you went on the horse itself?

I didn't go to nothing, I walked. I walked holding my father's hand or my mother's hand. My mother was carrying my sister that was seven months old at the time. And my grandmother and grandfather sat on the horses.

And it was terrible to get out of there. We got there that day, that night. And we went to that house and we had taken with us some blankets, and I don't know who carried them I have no idea if they tied them on the horse or something to take them. I don't know.

Yeah. So now you get to the house.

We got to the house and that's where we started to say. And it was beginning to be the fall after that.

And what did you do every day? What was a typical day like?

I met the Michaelis' family that gave us the house. They had two daughters, one exactly my age, two days apart. And she said to me, we can go to the school here in the church. There's a church there and the priest was teaching a little bit, you know, I mean whatever. So we would go there every day, we would walk together.

Because when we got there, it was the end of summer just about. And then he was doing this all the time, and she had another sister, then the brother that was much too young. So she and her sister used to come in there, and we used to hear what they were saying. The two teachers. I mean, how can you learn, you were seven years old, six years old, whatever.

But there was a lot of trouble there also. They took my father's two brothers, the youngest and the oldest one. They came in where we stayed and they took them. It wasn't only the Germans, it was the hillbillies.

The what?

The hillbillies.

Hillbillies?

Together with the Germans. They took them to a place--

The native Greeks, is that what you're saying?

Yeah, they never had any education, never knew about nothing. They knew about Christ. So they took them in the village and they killed them. They were going to kill them there. What they did is-- it's a terrible thing to say.

When my father and his other brother that they didn't take, he was with him, they decided to go and see where they were, where they took them. And they found them because I had heard from other people where they went, and they found them there. So they took the brothers by the hands to get them to join and come back with them.

Whoever it was, my father would say it was not the Germans, it was the hillbillies that did that. They took the oldest brother that was older than my father, and they grabbed him back and they put his eyes out. They poked his eyes out. And my father remembers seeing that.

What was his name? The one who was killed.

The oldest brother? Victor. That's what my brother's name is now. They named him after him. And the youngest one, that was Joseph. I don't know what they did to him. So my father came back with his other brother because he couldn't-- you know, they were throwing them out. And that was the end of that.

So my grandparents went crazy because they lost their children. And then they had different things that were going on.

They were coming to the house we were at to find who was there so they could do bad things. But we used to run away.

They being the Germans? Or they being the--

Together. Together. The Germans and the hillbillies. So we were petrified. So we would leave. So where did we go one time? In the church that they had. Because the priest said come here, we have a room. What do you think they had? A room with horses and with, what do you call the stuff, that sometimes you get--

Hay?

Hay. That's where we stayed, on the hay, until we left from there. And we went to another place, because they put fire on the other houses that we had.

You left that first house that you went to?

Yeah. They put fire in that, they burned it. And they burned some other houses there too.

Were you home when that happened?

No no. We had left right away. My father said we're going to get away from here because it's dangerous.

Oh, I see. So where did you-- where was the second place?

To another house in another small town. But the houses that are not finished, you know, nothing. And we stayed there the rest of the time.

What was the name of that town or village? You don't know.

It didn't have a name. I don't even think it had a name. It must have been there near the Micalaca. The place I remember. But we used to go out with my friends, with the non-Jewish people. When I say out, outside, and they had a river there. And we would pull some water out and to play with some rocks.

But it was bad because guess what was in the water? There's one time my mother was so excited because somebody said to her you can have meat tonight. It was killed animals that they were throwing them in there for people to take them.

There was what?

Killed animals.

Oh, killed animals.

So my father says throw it out. He says you're not doing anything with it. We were a year and a half there. Because we went in the summer of 1940-- when was Regina born, do you know what year?

She is seven years younger than you.

I know but what year was she born?

So you were born in '36.

So '43.

'43. '43. I mean, we were just going to come back because by then it was beginning to be the change. They caught the Germans and they were running away, going back home and all that because Hitler, he was sick.

OK. At that time did your parents ever talk to you, I know, again, you were young, but did they talk to you about what was happening?

Yes. Yes. I knew what happened--

Do remember always being frightened or did you some fun times?

Yes. When I came back home--

No, before you came back home.

Yes. Oh, yes. I definitely did. I definitely did. Yes. I knew what was--

Would you describe yourself at that young age as independent?

Not independent at all.

You'd been very dependent on your mother and father.

I was dependent on the non-Jewish people, the Michaelis people. You know, they were so nice. And they live in Baltimore now those people. And I'm still friendly with them. They were very nice. They were not Jewish people. They were very nice. Why are they doing that, they would say. Why?

How was your health when you were in the country in the second house?

Not good. Not good.

You got sick there also?

Very bad cold and coughing. When I fell off a horse because there was a horse, I was carrying grapes to take them someplace to make wine, and I was out walking. It was summer. So I was climbing up on the horse to get some grapes, and the horse was wild, big and started running and pushed me down.

And I had a terrible, terrible trouble with my leg. Bleeding and everything. Nothing, not a Band-Aid, not nothing. No alcohol, nothing. So it was a handkerchief that my mother turned it like that and tied it down. And I still have it in my leg.

Did you always keep your name when you were in the country or do you have another name? No. The family always kept--

Yeah.

There were no false names?

Yeah. Always, yeah. But my grandmother and grandfather went crazy because their two kids were killed. They were going to come home without them. And it was terrible, and my grandfather lost his mind. And he died very young, shortly after that.

Do you know if there were other Jewish families around?

Not in that village. No. Yes, in other villages, but not in the same one.

How did you all know that? Or how did your parents know that?

Because there was some people that we were friendly with in my hometown. Going to the same synagogue, and they had businesses and all that. Still now they're in Baltimore. They came to Baltimore with us.

Yeah. But they were hiding in another village?

Yes, but they didn't have as much bad things happen in there.

So you are living in that second house, and you were able to go outside, you said, because you were--

I went to the private school. The all girls private school.

Where was that?

Up the street from the house.

The house you were hiding in?

No. No, no, no. Not our house that I was born at.

I know that. And then you went to--

To my grandparents' house. That they'd lost the children.

No, I understand that. But then you said you were taken into the countryside, and then you stayed in that house, and then you went to a second house in hiding. OK. Did you go to school then?

Oh yes. I was seven years old when I came back.

No, not when you came back home.

Oh, I went to the church school.

You're still in hiding.

In the village I went to the church school. It wasn't a school because there was not any young people there. It was this Michaelis family, their two daughters, and me. And a couple of other goyim, you know, non-Jewish people. They sent their children there and this priest used to talk to us.

Right, OK. So that was your schooling?

Yeah. He used to say bring a book and a pencil, and write down what I'm saying and maybe tomorrow, you know-- we couldn't write. We didn't know what to write. But he was very nice, this priest guy. I guess he was a priest, he didn't feel like being mean to people that are hiding there. And then after we came home that's when I started going to my private school.

No, no, no. You're not back home yet. I want to still talk about what you--

That's what we did.

Yeah. So you would just go outside and walk around?

You mean where, at home?

In hiding.

In the village. Yeah.

And did you feel safe?

Yes and no. I wasn't by myself. With those are the girls that were not even Jewish.

But they knew you were Jewish?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

So you didn't have to hide anything?

No, no, no, no, no, no. They were very nice people. And it got to the point that a lot of people that were not Jewish they would say, how do you hang around with them?

And I said, but you don't know what kind of people they were where we were with them. They were wonderful people. And then when we came to Baltimore they met us right away. They invited us in their house. They were very nice people. The mother has died, my friend Elaine died several years ago. She got cancer and died.

So how long were you in hiding from--

A year and a half.

Spring of '42.

And we came back close to the fall of '43. Yeah, later.

'43 you came back? Or '44.

I'm trying to remember. I think when we came back I was seven years old.

OK. So that's '43.

Yes.

So you came back to your original house.

No, we went to my grandparents' house. We never went to our own house.

Oh, OK. How did you know to come back? Because the Germans had left?

Because it was finished, the war was finished.

For you all.

The war was finished. And we came back, and it was a terrible thing because here is my poor grandparents, they're coming in not two children. And their daughter lived in Athens. She was married and she lived in Athens. So that was OK. You know, she got saved.

You sure this wasn't '44?

I think when I came back I was seven.

OK. So back in '43. OK.

I went in '43, in the summer of '43. In '44 in the fall. We came back after the summer was finished before the winter came with bad weather.

How did it feel to come back?

It felt good to come back, and it felt good to be registered in a private school.

So that's when you started that private school.

Right, in an all girls private school. It was very nice.

Were there any other Jewish students who had come back?

Not from there. There were not in that village, we were the only ones. But the Jewish children did not go to the private school. It was only me, it was very expensive.

Yeah, but your parents had enough money obviously.

No they didn't, but somehow my father, he was making it work, and my grandmother-- my grandfather had a business in our hometown that he was-- anytime a boat came in, the soldiers, whoever was on the boat, they would come out and go to his store. If they wanted money, they would give him jewelry and he would give them money. If he wanted to give them money, to give my grandfather money, he would give them jewelry to give to their girlfriends.

But then he lost the business after that, during the war. He had that way before the war started. And then he had built in the house, in the wall, a real big thing where you can put stuff inside to save it. That was gone all the way the wall, and he put all his business stuff in there. Tried to find it when we came back, they took it all.

Do you know if your parents knew during the war what was happening to the other Greek Jews? Did they know?

They were listening here and there.

Did they always have a radio?

Are you kidding?

No.

We got a radio when we came back.

Oh, you didn't have one when you were in the village.

We had nothing. When we came back my father bought a radio and we would hear news. A Philips radio.

OK. So now you're back home.

Oh, of course. I've been here.

No, no, no I'm saying in '43. And you're in school. You're in school.

Everything started getting better, but we had a money problem. Because my father's business was not doing well. Because after the war, people didn't have any money. It's not only Jewish people, it's everybody that were bad.

So somehow, whatever he did and whatever he could try to save, he would say we have to do something about this, we have to do something about this. We couldn't go anywhere until my grandparents died. They didn't want to leave where they were, where their children were raised and everything. So my grandfather died first, and my grandmother died-- we came here in 1956, and my grandmother died in 1955.

OK. Now the war was over in '45. The World War II was over in May '45.

'45.

But D-day was June '44. Did that mean anything to you? Did your family know about the invasion in France, what they called D-day?

Yeah, I heard about it, but I didn't know what was going on.

But while it was happening your parents, you didn't know about it?

We didn't know what was going on.

OK. So you didn't really know at that time what was going on. Just what was happening--

All we knew was when we came back be careful to be safe. Don't listen to strangers that you don't know. They'll talk to you here. We heard that when we got older also. That everybody's not normal.

Everybody, they want money or they want this or they want that. So it was at the point where, when it was Hanukkah coming or Christmas, everybody had tables in a big street that they had little things to sell. My mother would buy for me, she bought me a doll. But that was before all this started.

After we came back and everything got kind of straightened up and they had the same things on the streets there was already two children. And she was going to have more, I think she was pregnant in the beginning or something. We didn't buy anything like that. We didn't have any money. We had nothing.

I used to buy a dress, one dress. And the dress is what we were wearing under the uniform. The school had a blue uniform with white in the neck and with buttons down the front.

And when I went home from school in the afternoon, my mother would take the white part off, it had buttons, and she would wash it and iron it to have it again for the next day. Before she washed the uniform. And underneath was a normal dress. And we always had to wear a pair of socks and shoes. A lot of times it was like a tennis shoe because we were taking gym in school.

So what was it like when the big World War II was over in '45, spring of '45. Did you celebrate? Were there celebrations?

We couldn't celebrate. I mean yes, we were lucky we all didn't get killed.

'46, you were nine years old by then.

Was it '46? No it was after.

'45. '45.

I was seven or eight when I came back.

When you came back, but I'm saying World War II was over in the spring of '45.

Oh, it was over then.

So you were nine.

Yeah.

Do you have any memories of that? Were there celebrations in the town?

A lot of people that had gone to the army, some of them got killed. Some of them came back halfway normal, they cut out a leg, or they cut out a-- you know, it was bad.

So you don't remember any big celebrations in your town for liberation?

They had celebrations gradually in February. Because in February was what we do here on Halloween or something with the uniforms and all that. Yeah. And we were not allowed to go out from my parents. I wasn't allowed to go out to see what they were doing going around with these big trucks. They had all kinds of things there. No, you stand on the balcony to see. Don't go. We don't have to go.

So your parents were very protective?

Extremely so.

Extremely protective.

Extremely so. Yeah, but they were not protective if it was during the day that you wanted to walk to a girl's house, to your friend's house. The school was up the street from my house so it was OK.

So now it's the end of the war. And you're still living in your grandparent's house.

And then in 19-- we moved in with my grandparents because they were in such bad shape. They'd lost their children and all. My grandfather died shortly after that, and my grandmother was not real old when she died. She was in her-- 52, 51. She was like a stick, so skinny.

And then she couldn't even walk in the end, and she was laying in bed, and the doctor would come in to see her in the house. And then my mother was taking care of her. And she was told by the doctor she's not going to last much longer. She had nothing.

So that's when they thought they wanted to move out of there and come to America. My parents. When she died. They were not going to leave her there. After she died then that's when we came here. She died in the fall of 1955, and we came here in 1956.

But let's talk a little bit about your life between 1945 and 1956. I mean that's 11 years that you were there. So what did you do?

Well after I finished school.

How much schooling did you have?

12 years.

OK.

I finished high school and everything.

In Greece?

Yes, in my hometown.

In your hometown.

There was a private school. And my uncle--

When you started and you got back in with your older friends, did you tell them about your hiding in the village and what it was like? Were they interested in that?

Very much so. I'm still friendly with them. I still talk to them on the phone. She met them when she was there with me.

And what was it like for you and your family when you heard what happened in the camps? You know, when that came out in '45, '46.

It was awful. Terrible. My mother lost two sisters. They got killed like that. And the children--

How did they find out what happened to their relatives?

Because the other sister, the daughter Lena that lives in our hometown, when she called on the phone she told them that everybody's dead. So, you know, you had to know. You had to find out. But what happened was I remember that when we would go to the synagogue-- we had one synagogue there then. We had a rabbi, and the rabbi left and somebody else came, and he left.

So in the end, there was just very few people left there. And my father used to run the service and then go open the store after that. So whoever went to the service it was couple of men and maybe a couple of women here and there. On Saturday.

So between 1945 and 1956, before you left--

The synagogue got worse and worse. Who was going to go there? There weren't that many people. And on Friday I used to go with another girl that just got married, was older than me. She was just going to get married, but we used to go Friday and clean up. So they would be coming in to a clean place.

And then when they had the [? Sukkot ?] coming in, and you could have some food or something. We used to buy something and have it there. Make something and everybody would sit outside in a garden that was in the back of the building.

Did you know anything about Israel at the time?

Yes because my uncle went to Israel. The one that survived.

Yeah, so were your parents Zionists? Do you know if they were Zionists?

I don't think so. I don't think so. My grandmother, when her son left to go to Israel, she was very unhappy. She didn't want him to go because she was afraid something was going to happen and he wouldn't survive. Which he survived. If you lose two children, you don't know what's going to happen in the end.

Did your mother ever go out to work?

Not in Greece.

Not in Greece. OK. So life went on from '45 to '56--

To raise her children because she had two more children after that.

Right. She was having children. And then what made your family decide to leave?

Because life was getting worse and worse because of the situation with money. Greece was getting poor, that's why they're so poor now. And they--

Did you know anything about America? What did you think about America? What was your vision?

I didn't know anybody in America then, but my cousin--

What did it mean to you as a young person?

It was a big country, we knew that.

You knew it was big.

Our country was small. And we knew that they had a lot of synagogues here, and a lot of Jewish people going there. And they had bar mitzvahs and stuff like that. But there was nothing like that over there. There was nothing going on like that.

Children did not have bar mitzvahs in Greece?

We didn't have anything. I didn't have a bar mitzvah. I was older when I came here, I was 20.

Yeah. No, no, I know, but the boys? None of the boys?

My brother had his bar mitzvah here.

OK. So your parents tell you that you're-- you're still living with your parents at age 20.

Well, no. When I graduated high school at 18, my uncle, my mother's brother was in a big business in Athens. He had started small and got bigger and bigger and bigger. And they were making all kinds of materials there and selling them, and then he said to me, why don't you come to Athens to live with us and work.

So I went to Athens and I worked. When I was 18 in May, and I went there in September. And I lived with them, and I worked in the business. And I was getting paid, not a lot of money, but it doesn't matter because I didn't have to pay where I was living. And then I worked there until we left to come here. I was 20.

At that point what were your thoughts about Germany?

Oh, I hated to hear the word. I hate to hear about Germans. To me they reminded me of somebody like you see sometimes in a movie, people that like to kill other people. And what I heard was something else that I didn't-- I didn't know anything about it, they were talking about that. A lot of women didn't get killed right away because there were a couple of men and Hitler that they had to go to sleep with him. And then if they wanted to survive they let them, if not they killed them. You know, lovely.

Did you understand any German?

No.

Never understood German.

I didn't even want to know.

Yeah. So you're working in Athens.

I work until I was 20.

And then your father said we're moving to the United States?

Then they told me that he's making arrangements to do that. And I have to leave this house, my uncle's house and come back home so we can get ready in a few months. And I started crying because I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to come here.

Did you know any English at that point?

No. I went to school when he said that. When my father said that I went to a school with a lady teaching us. It was a private-- yeah, I learned a few words, but I couldn't speak English. I learned here.

So what month did you leave?

We came here in October.

October. And where did you settle?

We settled in Baltimore. Here in-- not here in Baltimore. The Jewish school--

How did you get over?

What happened is we came in into New York by boat.

What was the name of your boat?

Well, no, it wasn't a boat the whole time. We came in with a plane.

You flew.

You flew. And then something with a boat that brought us from one place to the other. I don't know. The plane we flew in, god forbid I should ever get into a plane like that. God forbid. They had the terrible seats there and these other families had a baby, and it was awful. And then--

When you landed in New York, what was that like?

The Jewish Family Services met us where we landed.

Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

Yes.

Did that mean anything to you? You were 20. Didn't have much meaning? OK.

But they took us around the people that we knew. People from my hometown came to New York. And they took us around to see things they had in New York, but we couldn't come to Baltimore on the weekend because they said Jewish people don't fly on the weekends, or don't get on a bus. So we came here on Monday. We came in New York on Friday.

Because it was the Sabbath and you don't travel.

Yes. Saturday and Sunday. And we came to Baltimore on Monday. And of course the stuff that we brought from Greece, I still wonder who's got those blankets. They were in a big suitcase, you remember the suitcase my mother had? Yeah. And it was blankets. And my mother would say when I got married, you want to take one of those blankets? I said no ma, those blankets were itchy. They were very-- the old fashioned stuff. I don't want that.

OK so now you're settled in Baltimore. And you're living with your parents. And what?

When I came in?

When you came here, yeah.

No, I lived with my parents for a very short while.

Short while, and then what?

I got married.

How did you meet your husband?

That's a good question. I met him at a Valentine's Day.

Oh, OK. At a party?

At a dance that I went with some Greek people.

Was he American or was he--

Oh yeah.

He was American?

Very much so.

Had he been in the service?

Yes.

He had fought in the war?

No, not that kind of service. He was in the service but he wasn't far away from Baltimore. Sometimes he would go home on the weekend to see his family, to see his mother.

OK. And then you got married.

We got married in August. We came here in October of 1956. And we got married in August of 1957.

Oh my. That was very quick.

And I had a child a few months later. She's making a face. She's not happy about it.

Trying to figure out if I was--

So then you had your daughter.

I had three children.

Three children. OK.

Yeah. Everything started getting normal.

And did you have contact with people in Greece?

Oh my god, I still have contact with all my school mates.

At that time, when you first came, you kept up in contact?

Oh my goodness, yes. Don't go, don't leave, we like you, we want you here. I said yeah, right.

And when did you become a citizen?

That's a good question. I had a lot of disagreements with your father. Because in the beginning he kept saying to me sit down with the book, and I'm going to take you to become a citizen. No, I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to. But then I became a citizen a while later.

About five, six years later, seven years later because I didn't have trouble staying here because she was American. So she wasn't going to get rid of me. But in order for me to become a citizen I had to read. I had to know what I was going to answer. Where they took me. And I did. So I became a citizen.

So you picked up English quickly when you came here?

I had to. If I didn't speak English what would I do? You know to go shopping or to--

So you picked up English and obviously your husband didn't speak Greek, did he? He learned some of it--

But when you first met him?

No, no, no, no. And did you work at all?

I worked a few months after I was here.

What kind of work did you do?

A terrible job. A factory that were making covers for furniture and covers for bed covers, and what I had to do was fold them and put them in a drawer. I hated that. I hated that. I wanted to get out of there. I did. When I met him he says to me, you have to quit that job. I said no, I need to work, and then I quit after we got married. But then I got another job later on.

And when were your children born?

Were you born in 1957?

No, '58. You got married in '57.

In '58. She was born in--

And then you said you had two more children.

The other one, she's three years younger than her. She was born I think in '61. And my son, what year was your brother born?

He's 10 years younger than me so '68.

And then can we now, I'd like to ask you some questions about your thoughts.

About what?

About your life, your experiences. Do you feel Greek at all?

Somehow. Somehow. I feel Greek in certain things that I do.

In what sense?

The cooking. The cooking that I like better than what some of the American people make. Am I right? Yeah. I used to love to spend time with my mother and my father, time with them. After I was here, after I was married already and I didn't live at home, I liked to spend time with them.

We used to eat at my mother's house quite a bit in the beginning. She would make a big dinner on Friday night. And my mother got a job right away also as a seamstress. She was never a seamstress in Greece, but she did it here. Because she wanted to make money.

When your children were young did it bring-- and they were the ages that you were when you were going through the difficult times when the Germans-- at that time did it bring back memories of your childhood?

Yes, it brought back a lot of memories.

When you would look at them and think at their age I was hiding, and the Germans--

Yes. Yes, sure. I kept saying to myself, I didn't say it loud, maybe I said it when my husband was around I don't know, but I'm so lucky to have children that are growing up in a normal place. That they don't have all this don't do this and don't do that and this is not a good thing.

That's what I went through when I was growing up. My mother would say, you're going to be with your friends-- my father used to say, you have to be home by 8:00 or by whatever. Because they were afraid of what was going on.

And you always sensed that fear even though you-- did you sense it when you were that young? The fear and their--

Not that I sensed that, but I was not happy to be going out and to meet, on the way out, some of the goyim, non-Jewish people. The people that went to my school, the private school, were very nice. They came from classy families. You know, that was very nice.

And I mean one girl, her parents had a bakery. Another girl in those days they decided to sell radios and stuff like that, then gradually they were selling washing machines and dryers, you know. And they were very classy people. They had a lot of-- their parents, their families were classy. They had a lot of good thoughts, you know, what they should do and how their lives should go.

The ones that were really bad that we were afraid of was the real poor people. The poor people that couldn't even speak, they didn't even know what they were saying. They never went to school.

And they would come and knock on the door all the time, they wanted some money. To give them money. It was different. Now, they're not like that. Now, they're in bad shape because they have no jobs. They lost their jobs because

they don't have any money, and they don't know what they're going to do.

Are there any sights or sounds that you hear today that bring back memories of being in hiding and the difficult war years?

I think about that a lot. A lot.

As you've gotten older or was it always like that?

Always. Always, always, always.

Think about what you went through.

If I met somebody I used to tell them, oh I'm lucky to be alive, to be here. And then of course my husband would ask questions when we were going together. He would ask questions about where were you and what happened and how was this and how was that. And he still would say, are you sure? I said, yes I'm sure. I think that people that were here didn't have that kind of problem.

On that topic, are you angry that you had to go through what you went through, whereas the young people your age here didn't have to go through that?

You're talking about to hide.

Yeah, you had to go into hiding while--

That was not a good thing.

While children your age here were playing in their backyard.

That was not a good thing. It was very bad because--

Are you angry that you had to do that?

I was upset, very upset because the weather in that village that we went to hide was awful. The snow was up to here, I only wore a pair of shoes. I didn't have any other shoes with me. I couldn't go out. I don't know if my father would go out.

There was no place that you could go buy food there. If you wanted to go buy something you had to go farther away. And it wasn't that easy to do stuff like that if the weather was bad in snow and stuff like that. And then after his two brothers died, that was terrible. It was a bad thing that we went through.

No, no, no, but my question is are you angry that you had to go through that, whereas children in the United States did not have to go through that?

I'm not going to say that I was angry. I felt different.

Yes, I'm sure you did.

I felt different. When I first came here, if I met people here you know that I was becoming friendly with and all that, they would say, well, what happened here? What did you do? What did you do at night? I said, what did I do at night? We didn't have any light.

There was something with a match you could light it and whatever. You couldn't. You couldn't do anything, you couldn't read at night. The truth of the matter is that no matter what I think, and how was it like this-- now, my son, who

is much younger than they are--

I mean, he's going to be 50 soon. He is going to Greece this summer with his wife and his four children. He lives in Wisconsin. And he made up his mind that he wants me to go to Greece with him, and I don't want to go.

Have you been back to Greece?

Yeah I've been there three times.

Oh you have?

Three times I've been there, yeah. Once or twice I was with your father. And then I went with you last year or two years ago.

Three summers ago we went.

Yeah. Three and that's number four that I would go.

What was it like to go back to Greece?

I went to Athens mostly because my mother's brother's family lives in Athens.

Did you ever go back to the village that you were hiding in?

No. That's what my son wants now.

To go back to the village?

He wants to go to the village for me to show him, but they have changed. They have built stuff there now. So to stay overnight and to see, to look around, and then the other thing he wants to do is go to my hometown to Patras and look at this. Look at where the synagogue was which is now everything knocked down. There's not there anymore. And I don't want to go, and he got very upset.

Why don't you?

Because I have some problems with my-- I had an accident. Not in Greece, not in Greece. I had an accident here.

No, but you mean for physical reasons you don't want to go.

Yeah, I'm afraid.

Not emotional. Not emotional.

No, and I had another accident. I was at my sister's in Florida a couple of months ago, a month ago or something. And in her house I went to spend some time with her. And I skidded in her house. And I fell.

Do you belong to any survivor groups of, let's say hidden children or anything like that? No, you don't.

No.

Are you more comfortable around people who survived the war? Do you feel more comfortable?

Yeah, but we met a lot of people here that were survivors. My mother's good friend, she's still alive. She's a survivor. She's now in very bad shape, she's lying in bed.

But just generally, do you feel more of an attachment or an understanding with people who--

No, I don't have any friends that are very close because they were survivors. I don't because the survivors have died. The patterns.

Do you receive reparations at all? Payment from Germany?

Yes.

You do?

Yes.

Yeah. And what are your thoughts about that?

It's OK that they decided to send something. I think the Germans that are there now, they feel very bad for what happened in Germany. What the people in Germany were doing before them. They must feel guilty.

They didn't do anything, but there is some people, and I would be the same way if somebody said to me, do you want to go to Germany to visit? I have no interest and no desire to go to Germany. I don't want to go. What for? To see what this place looks like that they were killing people left-to-right?

And maybe I'm not right, maybe I'm wrong, but I don't want to go. I would never want to go. You know, people in France, they had a lot of things happen to them during the war. You know how many people got killed in France? My grandmother had relatives there she doesn't know what happened to them. You know, everybody's dead.

And other people that they had relatives someplace else, they're dead. Without knowing what happened, why did they do that to them. The reason that Hitler did these arrangements, why did people listen to him, I don't know. Do you know why? What have you learned from other people? I'd like to know.

We can talk about that later. Has it affected your feeling of being Jewish? That all this--

Never. Never.

That all this happened because you and your family are Jewish.

No, never. I like being Jewish. I like being Jewish. I like listening to-- unfortunately, I can't follow around the book in Hebrew because I never went to Hebrew school. They have it in English, sometimes they explain it in English so that's better. I like going to synagogue every Saturday.

Did you raise your children Jewishly?

Oh yeah. They were all bat mitzvah and bar mitzvahs and all that stuff. And she she teaches Hebrew to kids. So it's very nice, very nice. I don't mind any of that stuff at all. The only thing that a lot of times I have, especially if I dream about something you know, why did the Jewish people have such a bad treatment? Why? What was the reason?

Do you dream a lot about your childhood, your experiences?

Yeah here and there, yes. But I don't understand why those days the Jewish people were being pushed on the side. Why? What was the reason? That because they thought that the Jewish people had more money than other people. Maybe they wanted the money. I don't know.

Have you been to Israel?

Yeah, I've been to Israel.

What are your thoughts about Israel?

I liked it there. I mean, I don't know, it's nice, it's beautiful. The people--

Did your parents ever consider going to Israel?

No, no, no, no never. My father's brother lived there, the one that survived. He has family there. He's dead now, but he has family there. But no, I wouldn't want to live in Israel. I could never live in Israel.

I was thinking in the 1950's they wouldn't.

No. The way some of the people from my hometown went to Israel, they went secretly. They didn't have a-- what do you call it, permission to go. They got on a boat, and they got off on the way, and they were hiding until they got on again until they got there. Because they didn't have any way to get there. When they got to Israel what do you think they were doing? Cleaning the streets.

Do you remember the Eichmann Trial at all? Eichmann, Adolf Eichmann. The Eichmann Trial. You don't. I was just wondering. From Germany.

I have no desire to know anything about Germany. And I know some people that married German girls.

That what?

German women.

Yeah, I know a couple.

You do?

Yeah, one is divorced already.

You mean in Baltimore?

Yes. Yes. My friend's son. You know, Ruth's son married a German girl, and he's divorced.

Do you think you would have been a different person today if you hadn't gone through what you did as a child?

I don't know what I would grow up to be. Maybe by going through this it makes you a little more thoughtful, a little more interested in what you want to do, or what you want to raise your family, or-- I always had in my mind when I was growing up, before I was 20 years old I'll say, after I finish school, I always had in my mind that if I get married one day, which I have to marry a Jewish person, I would never ever have in my mind that I wouldn't marry somebody who's not Jewish, which is something they do all the time now.

My son married a non-Jewish girl, but she's more Jewish than me. So that takes care of it. But I never had any interest for anything else different. I wanted to do everything that has to do with the Jewish people.

Even though you had difficulties in your childhood because of that?

Yes. Yes. Yes, and when I hear that my son is talking about his son's bar mitzvah that's going to be next year, not this year, and I'm happy about it. Because this is what I always wanted to have in my family.

Do your grandchildren ask you about your experiences, and if so do you tell them about it?

I don't think so. Do you think your children know anything?

They may be too young.

No, they're not too young.

They know a lot of things because they hear me talking. Yeah.

You've talked to them.

I mean, I'm not going to spend a whole day sitting down with them and, you know. And my other grandchildren that my son has, they're much too young for that. They don't live here anyway.

Do you think the world has learned anything from the Holocaust?

I think so. I think so. I think there must be a lot of thoughts going on that nobody should become Jewish, and just become Jewish because they want to be Jewish and not doing anything else. I don't think they're so great, people that are not born Jewish, that they become Jewish. Some are, yeah, but I wouldn't say everybody is as Jewish as they want to be.

Do you think that's going to happen again, the Holocaust?

Oh god forbid, I hope not. I hope not. Hitler is not around anymore. He was a sick person. He was sick upstairs, in his head. I don't know what other people think, but I think what happened then it's something that I don't think it's ever going to happen again. Why did Germany become so friendly with America? Why?

Have you been to the Holocaust Museum or any Holocaust museum?

I went to the Holocaust Museum in Baltimore. Awhile back. Did you ever go there?

We went to the Jewish Museum.

To the Jewish Museum. You've been to DC to the Holocaust--

Where?

You've been to DC, the Holocaust Museum.

Yes. I went on a trip. It was very interesting you know and all that. And you know what I heard the other day, my other daughter's son is in Israel now. I don't know if you heard about that, Ben is in Israel because they had a friend that was getting married that went to school with him.

So he went to the wedding and then after the friend got married he didn't come back right away. He stayed extra days. So he went where they have in cemeteries different things that they have written up. And he called his mother and father and he said, guess what, he says, there is written up something there that says this is in memory and to be so pleased about what the Michaelis family did to the Jewish people.

We saw that at the Holocaust Museum.

They were honored by-- the people who--

Us, we send money.

Yeah, no but I meant they honored you. I mean they honored that family.

The Jewish people from here send some money there. So you know he was so excited, he says, oh I can't believe the name is there. He took pictures to show us when he comes home.

Wonderful. Well is there anything you wanted to say that we haven't covered? Do you feel like--

What I want to say is the good thing that I did in my life is to come here. To come to America to be with a lot of Jewish people.

Rather than staying in Greece?

Yeah, to be the only family there? That's what we were then. I didn't want that. Not to be able to go to a synagogue? And not to be able to see-- the Jewish people, what they do, where they get together and they have, what do you call all these groups that they call-- like the money, they help Israel with stuff like that.

No, I think this is a very good thing to do. I mean, now the younger people do a lot of things that we had a chance to do. But when you get to be that old things change. So it's not the same.

But I really feel happy to know a lot of Jewish people. I feel good about it. To be in my synagogue. And you know when I go to synagogue on Saturday and they're always there and then they have a big lunch for all the people afterwards. So that helps you feel good. It helps me feel good.

But you said you do not belong to any survivor groups, let's say, in Baltimore?

No, I haven't joined anything.

Purposely, or you just--

I didn't know of anybody that was coming to say to me do you want to join? If somebody would ask me, I would say yes. You know, some of these very Jewish people do things that I'm not so excited about. They're doing a big-- they have the big lunch that they charge you \$45 each person, because they're going to have this lunch, whatever they serve, this lunch or that.

And some of this money, after it pays for what they're having, the rest of the money will go to Israel. I don't believe that. I think they'll just tell you that so you can join. You think I'm funny, right? You don't believe me.

Well, thank you very much for doing the interview.

Thank you for including me in this, and I hope you got what you thought would be interesting.

Yes. Yes. So this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Josephine Becker.