

Eva Anderman, March 24, 1986

Q: Today is Monday, March 24, 1986 and I am at home with Mrs. Eva Anderman in Sarasota, Florida. Mrs. Anderman is a survivor of the Holocaust and she has graciously consented to talk with us about some of her experiences during that very terrible time.

Mrs. Anderman, before we started the tape recording you told me that you had come originally from Poland. Would you tell me a little bit about your early life, did you come from a large family, a small town or a large town, what did your parents do for a living, and anything else you would like to tell me about that time.

A: I was born in Cracow. It was a very lovely town at that time and my father was a business man, and my mother worked right along with him. We used to be in the center of the town, his business was in the same building where we had our apartment. I was the oldest, I have two brothers, they are still here, in Sarasota, they survived the war. One brother lives in Sarasota and one brother lives in Detroit. I was the oldest, we were about seven and nine years apart because in between was the first World War and my father went to war. I lived there for some time until I got married in Cracow to my first husband. I have one daughter.

Q: Excuse me, I want to go back a little bit. What kind of business were your parents in.

A: That was a dry-goods business.

Q: And were you a very religious family?

A: My father was on the religious side, my mother was not. She was very assimilated because she came from this kind of a home and we never spoke so much Jewish at home. I never knew the language but I understood. My mother said "you have to speak the language of the country".

Q: Did you have any religious training or education?

A: Yes. I had to learn how to read Hebrew, I had a tutor coming to our home, but I forgot all about it.

Q: And your brothers, were they Bar Mitzvah?

A: Yes, both of them, they were.

Q: Did you observe the Jewish holidays?

A: Yes, very much so, I am very traditional, even right now.

Q: How much formal education did you have?

A: Being the oldest I had some responsibility at home, in fact I had the choice of helping my mother in the house with the chores and the children, or to help my father in the store. So I chose to be in the store which I have enjoyed always very much. But it took too much of my time. I finished high school and I wanted to continue studying but I had a problem, I couldn't win. I was studious, but I couldn't win.

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: I mean my parents were dead against it. My father especially used to say, a girl doesn't need a formal education. That was the trend in those days. Maybe I wasn't strong enough, I just gave up. But I achieved one thing. They let me go for two years to a business academy. If I would have finished four years, that was a four year study, I would have had quite a formal education. But they wanted me to just learn the business part and I just took Algebra and different things. I did very well, I was going for two years and after two years my parents said 'you have to stop'. They said they needed me. Not that they couldn't afford it, they could afford it, they were not poor people. But my brothers -- my older brother, he was younger than I was, he went to the Gymnasium, I don't know what grade it is here to compare with, but from Gymnasium he went straight to college. He finished the Gymnasium mostly by correspondence. My younger brother was too young to speak of, but he educated himself when he came to this country, he was young enough. He went to school and continued to study when he was already in business. He never gave up. When I came to this country I didn't know how to speak English, but I started to go to evening classes.  
I finished high school here.

Q: So it's never too late to learn. Let me go back again, I'm trying to keep this in as much sequence as possible. While you were growing up were you conscious of any anti-semitism occurring either in Crakow or in general or to you and your family in particular?

A: Yes, I say yes.

Q: Do you remember any specific incidence?

A: The people who came to deal with my father, they would say, 'let's go to the Jew, he is pretty honest' because they couldn't bargain in his store. My father never believed in bargaining. He set the price and that was it. Or I have friends that were in college boyfriends and they used to go with the canes to protect themselves because they used to be attacked going to school. There were terrible things going on. We knew that the situation wasn't too good, but there wasn't any immediate danger or anything like this.

- Q: When did you begin to feel that there was immediate danger?
- A: It was starting in about 1938, 1937, when Hitler --- my husband had two sisters, one in Vienna and one in Berlin and there were letters coming what they were going through, so my husband predicted that we were going to have the same problem here.”
- Q: But not until 1938? The reason I’m questioning this is that Hitler came to power in 1933 in Germany.
- A: Before it didn’t happen to us but it did happen to some other people. They were breaking into the store demolishing some goods and it happened, it happened. There were certain holidays, I forgot already what they were, in November, not a Jewish holiday, a working class holiday. Those days were dangerous days, people were unhappy. They thought Jewish people take away something from them.
- Q: So you saw the Jews as the scapegoats for their unhappiness?
- A: Yes, exactly.
- Q: And what were the kind of things that were likely to occur when they became upset and unhappy?
- A: There was lots of drinking and breaking glasses and windows in stores and things like that. They didn’t attack women or anything like that, but mostly there were problems in schools and colleges. We had a very well known college in Cracow.
- Q: You mentioned a few minutes ago that you got married in Cracow. How old were you when you got married and how did you meet your husband and what was your life like after marriage?
- A: I was married in Cracow, right. When we got engaged I was 18 1/2 years old and when I got married I was about 19 years old. Very young.
- Q: And what work did your husband do?
- A: He was a dentist.
- Q: He was also Jewish?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Was it hard for a man, a Jewish man, to become a dentist, was there discrimination?

A: No. He wasn't a doctor, he was practicing dentistry and he had a laboratory where he made artificial teeth and things like that. We had a nice life. It lasted about seven years. My child was born in Cracow, one daughter. We had a nice social life, a nice place to live, and my parents were very happy having him for a son-in-law. I had to learn many things, he was about 12 years older than I was so I learned a lot about different things, how to behave, how to dress. I was a kid.

Q: At that age, between 18 and 30 . . .

A: He had a bunch of friends, they were about his age, too. In the beginning I felt a little bit funny but it worked out fine. Everything was wonderful.

Q: Where did you meet him?

A: In his office.

Q: So you say everything was fine for about seven years.

A: Yes, we got married in 1931.

Q: And then, what began to happen?

A: Well, the war. We got married in 1931, we were married more than 7 years, about nine years when the war came, 1939, and there was a bit panic in Cracow. They said the Germans were coming and they were going to kill off all the men. All the Jewish men, of course. Later on they were killing anybody they could lay their hands on. My husband didn't want to leave me, they said women were safe, but . . . that was the first very traumatic thing that happened to me. It was 1939 and the Germans were ready to invade. They were in Poland already but they were taking over our town. They were not in our town yet, but you could hear bombs and things like that. But they didn't destroy the city because the city was too valuable to Polish people, so they gave the Germans the keys, the mayor of the town. But before all that happened --- he said, I am going to stay, I don't care what is going to happen I am going to stay with you. So I didn't want to give him advice. He asked me what to do , I couldn't tell him. I know one thing, I couldn't go with him. We had no car, no horses, no wagon, nothing. The child is small she was about 4 1/2 years old, she was a very fragile child. It was impossible. We would never make it.

Q: Where would you want to go?

A: On the Russian side, to run away, to be safe. Well, my father left already.

Q: Where did he go?

A: Also trying to get away my older brother. And they never made it, they came back. Nothing happened to him. And we made peace with ourselves, he is not going. All of a sudden somebody from the building came and said, 'Are you staying here, are you crazy, they'll kill you'. So he said, ' what should I do'. 'I said, if they are going to kill you you'd better go. I didn't care what was going to happen to me, I know I couldn't leave, it was impossible. So he left. When he left, and here I was in the middle of the room and I looked at the place and I said ' why did I let him go'. I ran out and I started to yell, but I couldn't find him any more. And I never saw him again in my life. That was a terrible thing, a terrible thing.

Q: Where was he planning to go?

A: Wherever the Russians were, toward the Lemberg area, that way, towards East, in the Southern part of Poland. He was going towards Russia, but there were already some cities which did belong to Russia at that time. So he went that way, they were all going that way. Some people made it, some people didn't make it. He made it, I know, because people were passing the border line and they came with the news that they saw him. And there were some people who were smuggling -- there were all kinds of things going on at that time. So I was left alone, my parents were in the same city.

Q: Your mother was still there?

A: My mother was with us. Although we didn't live together I still kept the place and I kept his office and everything in tact. In fact I -- for a while I rented his office to some kind of a dentist so I got some rent from it to help me out. But then things became very very difficult.

Q: Can you say more about it, in what way they became difficult to help us understand what it was like to live through that period.

A: Well, it was already a shortage of food and you never knew what to expect the next day. I had everything, and a beautifully furnished place, fur coats, and everything. One day there is a sign on the wall "all the Jews who have any kind of fur coats have to bring them back." O.K, that was one thing. They were coming to different homes and if there was anything suspicious about some people, they were taking them away, they were shooting them and killing them. There was lots of killing going on. And they were pulling people out of their homes. I was in my own house and nothing happened, thanks God, at that time. The next thing was, at the end of 1939 when Cracow was invaded, 1940 they liquidated . . . they asked all the Jews together and go to Ghetto, to get out. They were forming a Ghetto and we were afraid of it so we . . ."

Q: Explain please. You did not already have a Ghetto, a Ghetto being all the people .  
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- A: They wanted all the Jews in one place. Yes. But before that happened we decided that we were going to escape that. Maybe people thought that war would be very very brief, that very soon the war would be over because of the Blitzkrieg. So we went out to suburb of Cracow and we rented a small kind of place and I moved in with my father and mother and both brothers and my child and we left everything we had. Of course they liquidated all the tangibles, everything that we left behind, that was his office and everything.
- Q: Did they take your father's business away from him?
- A: Yes, they took my father's business, and it was terrible. My father was 45 years in that business and it was all his life. So we lived together and it was a hectic life.
- Q: How long did you live there?
- A: About a few months and then . . . I don't know, I don't remember how we wound up in the ghetto anyway. But I just don't remember anymore how.
- Q: The Germans established an area where all of the Jews were to live?
- A: Yes, that's right. And we had one room for all of us.
- Q: And that was 1940?
- A: Yes, that was 1940 and from the Ghetto you couldn't get out.
- Q: So, there were your parents, your brothers, and yourself and your child. There were six people living in one room. Did you share a bathroom with people, where did you cook . . .
- A: The bathroom was outside. They were very primitive apartments, it was a very old section.
- Q: Was there running water?
- A: Yes, there was running water. Well, we were trying to survive. Everybody was trying to find something to do, work, to make an extra few zlotky. I remember it was hard to get coal for the winter to heat our place. It was like a kitchen stove, to give us a little warmth and at the same time you could cook. It was very primitive.
- Q: And it gets pretty cold there in winter.
- A: Yes, very cold. It is hard for me to talk about it. I didn't realize it would be so hard. Do I have to go into all those details, can I skip some things and come to the point. Ghetto was hell, that's all I can tell you.

Q: The reason I was asking the questions was so that the people who will eventually hear these tapes will understand what poor quality of life you had to experience. All these people in one room and the bathroom outdoors. Did you have trouble getting sufficient food?

A: Well, if you had any provision -- I had some Jewelry that I saved and so I was able to sell it and that helped us in the beginning. Then I found another person that we were -- I don't know -- we were trying to bring some coal from the outside to the Ghetto. I don't know how we maneuvered with that I don't remember anymore. But it worked a few times so we could sell the coal and get a few zlotkys.

Q: How long did you remain in the Ghetto?

A: Almost two years, almost two years. It was terrible. There was one big problem we had, that they asked everybody, but everybody to come to the main building but they were just like animals. They put us on an empty lot and we had to stand and wait for what was going to happen. And I don't know how I escaped from it. I don't really remember, but I know I got out of that mess.

Q: How long were you in that building?

A: In that building -- about one or two hours. And whoever was left there was taken away to be killed. And once they had another thing like this and people for some reason, there was a Jewish policeman, some Jewish policemen that were doing some of the dirty work for them. They wanted to save their lives, that's true, but that was terrible. And through those people sometimes some news came in advance what was going to happen. So the worst thing they said was they are going to liquidate the Ghetto and everybody will be sent to concentration camp they built in Ploshen, in Poland, that was a suburb of Cracow.

Q: had you heard about concentration camps before this?

A: Yes, we knew that there were places where they were killing people.

Q: And you knew that the Germans were going to liquidate the Jews.

A: Yes, and I happen to meet -- you had to wear a band on your arm with the Jewish star, always -- and one day they set up a place for working people who had a profession outside of the Ghetto in a very nice building in a nice street, and they said they wanted to show how good they are to Jews that they let them produce and work and take orders. I don't know why they did this, I still don't understand, but I registered for that because I had learned how to make corsetry. I went to school before even the war started, my husband made me go, he said 'you don't know nothing what is going to happen. If I go to war you have to have a

profession, what would you like to do'. We finally realized that I like this, after talking it over. And I got my diploma and everything. And I had something to display. I don't know how I got the materials and things like this, or maybe I had it left from before while I was taking the lessons. And in came a very nice lady, a Polish woman, and she started to talk to me, and she said 'you know what I wonder how you people survive' she wanted to know what happened there. I had to be careful because there were many German officers there. Probably I said that we had a threat that the Ghetto would soon be liquidated and I told her of my child, my mother and two brothers and we didn't know what was going to happen to us. She said, 'you know what' she bought a couple of brassieres to make for her. She came back to pick up those brassieres and she said 'you know what, I like you and I think if anything happens could you bring your child to us, we are going to keep your child.' She gave me her address and she said 'I talked to my husband and he said it was alright' a young woman, not much younger than I was, I was young then, too, and I thanked her and I was waiting for what was going to happen. The final day was next day. So what I did I smuggled myself through the cellar, took off the band from my arm, I got dressed the best I could, and so I took my daughter and we went through the window in the cellar, a small window, and the street was very empty, there was nobody there, and we started to walk. And I kept saying to my daughter 'keep smiling, a big smile we are going somewhere' and we came to that place, to those people and they were so good, so nice. You know some children spoke with the Jewish jargon but she spoke very beautifully, so did I, and the lady said I wouldn't be afraid to keep her here. The war will be over soon anyway.' And I left my child. I said good-bye and I left. I came back the same way, through that window. I was very lucky that nobody caught me. That was a very terrible thing. The next day of course they liquidated the Ghetto.

Q: What did they do when they liquidated the Ghetto.

A: They lined up all the people -- now let me think, I didn't come back, or did I come back, I don't remember. I ran out again and I don't know, it is so hard to tell. Oh my God, what I did, it is araised from my mind.

Q: Did you know when you took your daughter to that lady that the next day they were going to come and get everyone?

A: We didn't know exactly what day, but we knew that it was coming, it's coming. I had to make up my mind, this or that. And we had a house, not a house but an apartment building in Cracow and my mother said 'those people were a safe return' that was part of my parents and part was my husband's. The rest of the building, they should be the owners of the building, we should give it to them, to save my child. I thought of that when I left my child. But they didn't do this for money. They were wonderful people, I keep still in touch with them.

Q: How long was your child with them?

- A: Until 1945, almost five years, a long time.
- Q: A very long time. How old was she when you took her there.
- A: When I picked her up she was 12 years, not quite 12. So she was about seven, or eight years.
- Q: And you were running a risk in doing this.
- A: Yes, I could have been killed. They went through many hardships.
- Q: Because of her?
- A: The neighbors started to be curious, they had to take her out to where their relatives had a farm, near the Ukrain some place. And they took her on the other side to stay on that farm. Then they had to run with her back again. That was terrible. But they hired a private tutor for her so she wouldn't be illiterate.
- Q: They really treated her well.
- A: In the beginning she was doing very bad, she couldn't eat and she was anemic and everything, but they really saved her life. And they were good to me, too, when I came back home. But I am skipping a lot.
- Q: Would it be easier if I would ask you questions?
- A: Perhaps.
- Q: What happened to you when they liquidated the Ghetto, what did they do, where did you go? How did you get there?
- A: I was trying to escape. I got Aryan papers. Well, I was supposed to get those papers but I really didn't get them. There were some people smuggled to Hungary and I thought that maybe that way I got some tips and I was trying to contact those people and I was on the outside without my armband and I was caught because I was away from the city for a while and I got into an area where it was restricted, only a military zone or something, I just got into the wrong section. And I was caught and they beat me up pretty bad all over my head. And of course they put me in jail. So in the meantime, while all that happened my mother -- my father died not in the Ghetto but in one of those places where we used to live before we went to Ghetto, outside. He died from a stroke and then we were left without him.
- Q: Was the Ghetto literally surrounded by a wall, or just certain streets, or was there an actual wall?

A: Yes.

Q: So the getting out of the Ghetto was difficult, you had to go through a gate.

A: Yes, I had to go through a gate, that is true. Because one thought leads to another I just keep messing it up.

Q: You said you were put in jail because you tried to run away. How long were you in jail?

A: Not too long because those people in jail were supposed to be killed and they were taking us to the concentration camp in Plashow. There were maybe 250 people. And from here we go, I was young, but there were some older people, there were children. They were hitting people with the clubs.

Q: Did you have to walk?

A: We had to walk. We had to walk, it was just like you were walking for your own funeral. And they took us to a spot there where it was all dug out, the ground, but before that happened all of a sudden they started to segregate people and they were coming to each one asking "what are you doing, what are you, this and that" and I said I was a seamstress. They picked out 60 people from this group, I was among them, and they took us to the Camp. And while we were walking away from the others we heard them shooting all the rest. Isn't that terrible -- and they had them take off all the clothes, naked, and shoot them all. I was saved. My brothers were already there, and my mother, too. And they were all in the concentration camp. There were regular barracks there were wooden bunk beds. And I was working as a machine operator patching up the uniforms. They were full of lice and blood and we had to work on that. I don't know if they ever cleaned them afterwards.

Q: Did you know that your mother and your brothers were in that camp at the time?

A: Yes, I met them. Well, you could walk in the camp. If you didn't go to work, but you had to work, but when you were free there was a big room, also a wooden barrack there was running water, you could wash yourself but not much to wear.

Q: Did you have adequate clothing for the winter?

A: Not really, not really.

Q: What were you allowed to bring with you?

A: I had nothing with me. I don't know if the other people took anything. My brothers were watchmakers so they were working in the watchmaking

department. They had all kinds of trades there. My mother got a job as a maid for some commander and his wife, and sometimes she was working in the kitchen peeling potatoes. So for a while we survived in that camp.

Q: How long were you there, you say for a while, how long a while?

A: It was end of 1941 until 1944.

Q: For four years you were in this one camp, no for three years, and every time they would segregate people make other appeals, I don't know what you call this, when they got people together and checked them out.

A: Like a repeated selection process?

Q: Yes.

Q: How would they decide who was to survive, did you know?

A: Well, so far the working people didn't have to fear too much at that time. But the children, there were youngsters like 14, 13, 12 years old, those they just cleaned them out, right away. If I would have had my child with me I would never survive.

Q: About how old were you when you went to the Camp?

A: I was born in 1911, so I was about 29 or 30 years old. I wasn't 30 yet, I was in my late 20's. The food was awful. They just gave us thin soup and a piece of bread a day. So I was forever hungry, everybody else was hungry. My younger brother got malaria, so we brought in our portion, whatever we got to save his life. After my brother survived, got better, then I got sick, it was 1944, and I had to go to the hospital, but if you stay longer than three days in the hospital you are subject to be killed. So I was very fortunate again. There was a doctor in the hospital, a Jewish doctor who knew my husband and when he saw me he was changing the dates on my bed. I had an open wound and I had a drainer. They operated on it and cleaned it out and put a drainer and the pus was coming out. I was there for something like two weeks with high fever and I was very ill, very ill. One day again they said the Nazis are coming to the hospital to see the situation of the patients. The Nazi doctor is coming. I picked myself up in the morning and went with that leg, open wound, to the appeal. Before you went to work they have to count everybody.

Q: Like a roll call.

A: Right. So the doctor, when I was leaving said 'you know you are taking your life in your hands'. I said, 'I don't care, they are going to shoot me, at least I have a chance, maybe I survive. I left the hospital with the wound. And I was standing, it was November, cold, in the muddy ground with the bare feet, it wasn't snow yet,

but it was lots of rain and mud. And then I went to the place where I used to work. And I had two girlfriends in that camp and we really were looking after each other. I call them my war sisters. They both are far away, one is in Brazil now and one is in Argentine. They were among the survivors from the 60 people, they were not killed. They were with the mother. The mother was killed, the two were survivors. I wish I could say that something cheerful happened during that time, but nothing cheerful happened.

Q: I think it is remarkable that you survived. Were you able to buy food to supplement the inadequate diet you had?

A: My mother was working in the kitchen and would peel the potatoes, she sometimes snatched a couple of potatoes, raw potatoes, so we ate raw potatoes. Sometimes we would make a soup out of the potatoe peels.

Q: Every little bit helped". Could you buy things, could you bribe the guards?

A: There was nothing to buy. Some men were hired to work outside the Camp. They sent them out on some project, so those people sometimes would bring something and they would sell it. But I couldn't buy a thing there, at that time I had my mother's diamond earrings, I threw them out of the car because I knew they were going to search me and I didn't want them to have it. I was on a big truck, I threw out the earrings on the street. Isn't that terrible?

Q: No nothing is terrible when it is your life.

A: It wouldn't have saved my life, really, but I didn't want them to have it. They were too precious to me.

Q: Did the Red Cross ever come around?

A: No, there wasn't such a thing. My brother once got assignment outside the city and they managed to contact the people where my daughter was and they brought me news that she was alright. That was a pleasant thing to hear. That was wonderful. I was happy then and full of smiles.

Q: So you were at Plechow until the war ended in Europe?

A: Well -- they took us -- they needed the Cracow concentration camp. Then they sent us to Auschwitz.

Q: And when was that?

A: The end of 1944 .... middle of 1944, and my mother was sent somewhere else. We were not anymore with my mother and I wasn't anymore with my brothers. I went in a different direction, everyone went in a different direction. I know where

I went. They took us to Milo Sachsen, near Dresden, there was a small little factory, and they took us there. We worked at big machines making parts for the war parts.

Q: And every night you would go back?

A: We would go back to the barracks. That was in the same building. That was a big factory, upstairs the women were lodged, downstairs was the factory. We never got fresh air for six months that I was there. I never saw fresh air and of course already they were there. And bombs were falling and we were so happy -- nobody was afraid of the bombs, everybody wanted to see that they bombed away the factory.

Q: You weren't afraid they would kill you in the process?

A: I couldn't care less anymore about it. I was desperate.

Q: Was the food any better in that situation?

A: No.

Q: You must all have been very thin?

A: Yes. Some people were going crazy. Some people just lost their mind. I must have been very strong basically that I survived there. And there was night shift and day shift, I tried to keep myself clean but it was impossible because there were so many ill women they didn't care --- their lice was a big disaster. After the war I still was looking for them because I had them for so long.

Q: Was there soap, or how did you keep clean?

A: There was a little soap, I had one dress and one shirt and wooden shoes and always, when we were not working and when we were sitting on our bunk we talked about different food we used to cook.

Q: You were entertaining yourselves. It sounds like a way of torturing yourselves.

A: Yes, terrible, terrible. And there was once a big, big . . . it was February 1945. It was a tremendous air attack. Americans bombing. They knew there is that ammunition factory there but they didn't know exactly the place. The Germans, the women overseers were vicious, they were terrible and when they started the bombs the bombs started to fall they were so frightened they had bunks to go and save themselves . . . bunkers underground. So they would lock us up in that room with the iron doors and the windows were breaking the bombing was so close, and all of a sudden there were 500 women there. Do you know there was such a tremendous force that we forced ourselves through the iron door and ran out

barefoot to the ditches, there was snow on the ground and the bombs were falling, you could see the fire, and there was forest surrounding it.

Q: The ditches would be like trenches and it would have been safe there?

A: Yes. That is where we were laying and when that was over there was no place for us to go we had to go back. We came back to the same problem we had. It was horrible.

Q: So you were in Auschwitz when the war ended? Or near Ausshwitz?

A: I was in Auschwitz. I was in Auschwitz not too long about . . . From Auschwitz they took us to Chopow, that was a small place where there was a factory. In Auschwitz you know that doctor, that pretty doctor, what was his name, Mengele, every day we had the inspection . And he looked for blemish some place, in the face, or somewhere and when he couldn't see --- right away. I was fortunate I was young, that's what saved me. But my leg wasn't healed yet and my girlfriends were standing in front of me to cover my leg and I was lucky. I was just lucky. I wasn't that smart or anything like that, I had no connections of any kind. I just survived.

Q: You had a number of remarkable things from time to time that occurred that would be called luck. Like the doctor in the hospital who would let you stay, and leaving the hospital when you did, and volunteering to work because if you hadn't you would have been killed. There were a number of events like that all helped in your survival. When did you learn that the war was coming to an end.

A: Well, I worked in that factory and there was a huge machine, it was a grinding machine. There were some pieces for the war weapons, they had to be ground because they were making some, whatever it was .... war equipment and I had never worked on a machine like that in my life and they taught me how to do it and I had to be careful because I had to wear something on my head. And the little pieces of the metal as I was grinding it settled all in my face. I was covered with those pieces of metal. But there was a very nice foreman there, an older man, and he said ---- he always called me engineer because I didn't have too much problem, I adopted that machine pretty well, and he said "today is my wife's birthday, I brought a little piece of birthday cake." And he put it under the machine, he said not to take it now, later, and to be careful. Because the people who work there, it would be something . . . . you know when you are hungry it is such a terrible thing, people became vicious, they would become like animals. So I had to excuse myself, went to the bathroom and took the piece of cake with me. I was so touched, it was so nice of him. Then he would come and say "you know our people are not doing so well, pretty soon you will have to save my life." Then he told me his two sons in the war and I hope they didn't kill them. And things like that. That's how I would hear every day to give me courage he would tell me stuff like that. Wasn't that nice?

Q: Yes, it was.

A: He wasn't a Nazi, he was a regular worker.

Q: How did you actually learn that the war was over, do you remember that? How did they let you know that the Germans had surrendered?

A: We knew because they liquidated the factory and they took us in a freight train. They put about 100 women so that we couldn't sit, we had to stand. The train was going for three days and they were bombing the railroad tracks and people were dying. There were many dead people among us. And no water and no going to the bathroom. Can you imagine the stench and everything? Terrible. Finally they brought us to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. And that was supposed to be a show place for the Germans if anyone from the Red Cross would come they would bring them there because there were trees and a park and things like that, they had those barracks there with the bunk beds. And here we came, I was there maybe two weeks and they gave us clean clothes and a shower. That helped a little bit but I was already lifeless. And one day one of my girlfriends, the younger one, her sister was my age and she was 10 years younger, Fella was her name and she came and she said to me "you know, the war is over, the Russians are here already." I said, 'please let me alone'. I was laying like a dead one, I couldn't move. She said, 'I am telling you the truth', and I raised myself up. People were running, the Russians came there and they were throwing food from the tanks for the people. They were picking up the food and they were eating, they didn't know what to do. I didn't show up there because I didn't believe it. It's happened that through all those unpredictable things typhoid broke out. there was an epidemici So we were kind of free but now we were afraid of the typhoid.

Q: Were you afraid of the Russians at all?

A: They were nice to us. We were not enemies, they took care of the Nazis, but not of us. People were laying dead in the streets. The three of us looked at each other and we said, you know we are free the war is over. So we have to do something. If we wait here we get the disease and it will be the end of us.

Q: It would have been ironic to survive that and get typhoid.

A: We walked out and it was already the quarantine, and you were not supposed to leave that place, but we left it. I think it was early in the morning, I don't remember the details but we managed to leave. You see what I mean, that is another act of surviving and we kept walking and walking, and walking and we didn't know which way we were walking, but we were in Czechoslovakia and we looked at each other. It was getting dark and we had no place. We saw all of a sudden a place -- that was at one time an eating place, some kind of a little restaurant, a small little place, something like that. So I said, let's stop and find

out if we can stay over night. And there was an elderly couple and the place was closed up for business, and they were Czechoslovakian and we said “ we are on the way home and we don’t have money but we have to stay somewhere overnight”. They put us up, they had some kind of a storage room downstairs with different things like restaurant supplies, like sugar, flour, rice, and things like that. And they put some sacks and they said that we could sleep there. We were glad, and we got hold of the sugar. I’ll never forget, I never ate so much sugar in my life. In the morning they gave us breakfast. They were nice people. So we found out from them where is the train station and we had no money to buy tickets to go on the train so we couldn’t go on the train. And there is a borderline again between Poland and Czechoslovakia. She said ‘my husband went fishing on the Rein river, and when he comes back and catches some fish I’ll make dinner for you’. It was a Sunday, I’ll never forget. Well, we stayed. He caught a fish, a nice big fish, trout and she made a dinner for us and we ate the dinner. And they gave each one of us a piece of bread, a few lumps of sugar, I don’t know what else they gave us, they gave each of us a little something to take with us, and we went to that station, and we couldn’t go in and ask, so we decided to wait until we can catch a freight train. There was on the side a freight train which was supposed to leave later in the day, so we went and found a spot there and sat down and we stayed in that freight train. It wasn’t that far from Cracow, but it took us four days to get back on that freight train. When we finally came, we came to a place called Katowiece, about an hour from Cracow and from there we left, we decided the train wouldn’t go any further and we had to take a regular passenger train. So we got off, we still had a little bit bread left, we were eating so carefully. We went into that passenger train and I don’t know how we managed all those things, I don’t remember the details but there was some engineering going on.

Q: Do you remember how you felt during that time, were you frightened, or happy, or relieved? Or desperate?

A: Just desperate, very angry. I was so angry, begging for tickets. No tickets, ‘get out, the first station you have to get out’. “I said we won’t get out and they said the same, ‘we won’t get out’. We told him ‘we suffered plenty, leave us alone we are going back home now from the awful war and we won’t get out for nothing. So we went to another part of the train and we made it to Cracow.

Q: So desperation paid off.

A: Well, it wasn’t fun, really. Did your war sisters have family back in Cracow?

Q: I went back hoping that my husband is going to come back. People were coming back from all over the world in 1945. The war was officially over, and I wanted to get my child back. With all that iron in my face, with the wooden shoes and some kind of shabby coat which was hanging on me in all different directions, and we looked at each other and I said to those sisters, “you know what I have the

address, I know where my child is, but I am afraid to go. I was afraid that she won't be there.

Q: That would have been the last straw.

A: That would have been my end, I wouldn't be alive anymore if anything would have happened to her." So they said "you wait downstairs, we go up, we'll see." I was sitting there waiting and all of a sudden I hear voices, 'come up, come up'. And I came. Those people, I have to brag about it because I was awfully fortunate. They said that my daughter is fine, she is having now a cold, and we have to prepare her that you are here. We cannot just bring her like this. They took me to the kitchen with those two sisters -- they didn't leave me, those two girls. And we three were sitting there and finally came a little girl, white on face and with the long braids, she had beautiful hair always and taller than I remembered her. That's all what she said "Momma" just like nothing ever happened, although she must have missed me all those years.

Q: It must have been the most wonderful moment in your life.

A: It was. The girls went to look for their brother and those people told me I could stay there. They gave me clean clothes and a bath, and a clean bed and I was able to rest up. I rested up for one week and I stayed with them. But there was a Jewish Gemeinschaft, a Jewish community there and lots of refugee people there and I wanted to find out what's happened to my husband and my mother and my brothers. My brothers I didn't know nothing until somebody came from Germany back home and they had seen my brothers and told me that they are in a small village near Hamburg, both of them, they are alive. So that was fine. My mother died in a concentration camp, in Treblinka, I think. They put her there working on ammunition powder and she got real problems because the odor from it and all that and then they killed her.

Q: You said that when you came back there were metal particles imbedded in your skin.

A: Finally it came off, nature works by itself. I didn't have my regular period either because they were giving us stuff not to have it. The diet would also affect it, but they put some power in our food.

Q: I wish the people who are hearing this tape could see you because your complexion now is beautiful and clear.

A: Yes, it went away, I was a total mess. Those two girls were skilled dressmakers, skilled, beautiful dressmakers, they could design dresses and make anything so they made me a dress, the first nice dress. And then another girl came who I knew from concentration camp and we decided to rent a room and I went to that Jewish community and they gave me -- I don't know how I did that -- but I got a sewing

machine through them and we were both working on that machine making a little money. She was making men's shirts, I was making brassieres. And the room was awful, full of bedbugs, well it was cheap, my child was still with the people, under these circumstances I wouldn't dare.

Q: What is your child's name?

A: Felicia, she is an artist now.

Q: But tell me, how did you come to this country?

A: I had two sister-in-laws here in the U.S. One from Berlin and one from Vienna, they managed to get to this country. First they went to Spain, you know like people do, and then they sent me the affidavit. And on my affidavit I took both of my brothers, I wouldn't leave them.

Q: How long after you returned to Cracow did all this take place? It must have been a long time.

A: Oh, Cracow. I had a little problem because my daughter was trained to go to church and pray and go to Mass, so one day she asked me, 'Mom, why don't you go with me to church'. So I told her that right now I don't blame you if you want to go to church, just go ahead, but I am Jewish and I'll stay that way. I went once in a while with her, I don't mind. So one day she said, 'you know, Mom, I want to be Jewish, too. And that was the time when I took her back with me to the bedroom and all that, but at that time I knew already, I had news that my husband had died in Techeron. He was trying to go to Army Anders, I don't know if you heard of it, it was a Polish army, like an underground Army, he was trying, he was really trying to get to Israel and that way he would get away, so they were stationed in Techeron and he got a job in a hospital because he was a dentist. He attended people there and his friend was also a dentist. And it happened that they had an epidemic there and he got it and died. His friend wrote me to Cracow. "Don't wait if you think he is coming back because I saw him, he died." Well, there was nothing for me to wait for, so I went.

Q: And what year did you come to this country?

A: In 1946.

Q: And did you come right away to New York or did you go to Rome first, as many people did, how did you come?

A: Oh, that is interesting. First I went to get my brothers to get together with us. I had to pass I don't know how many different borders, also without tickets without nothing. I went in those freight trains with my daughter, she was a marvellous person, but she got very sick on the way. We almost made it to Hamburg. My

brothers were not in Hamburg, they were in another little town and you couldn't communicate, I had to communicate through the Jewish agency. So my daughter wasn't able to walk anymore, she had a high fever, very sick, so I carried her on my hands and I had a knapsack with me, that is all I took with me. We had the most horrifying experience on that trip. You see after the war those are the aftershocks you get. And I was standing there, I was standing on the corner carrying the child, it was already late afternoon and I was so helpless I started to cry. I don't cry easy but I started to cry. And came up a woman to me and she said to me in German "was ist los?" I said, well I have a sick child and I know she needs a hospital and I don't know where there is a hospital. And she took the child from my hands and said, 'follow me'. And she took me to the nearest hospital. And it happened that she got the typhoid, my daughter. I was teasing her, sleeping with her together, I was carrying her, we ate from the same plate, and I didn't catch it. I never had any disease like this during the war, fortunately. My daughter was very seriously ill. I was sitting in that hospital and didn't want to go no place. They almost threw me out. And I went to the Jewish Agency and I told them about my problem, that my child is so sick, and they found my brothers. My brothers came, and things got better. We got a place to stay, she got well, once when I came there she was laying on the floor, she was delirious. And nobody picked her up. I picked her up and put her back to bed. The nurses came later and they started to yell, 'get out, get out'. Well, I got my girl and lots of pleasure out of her. I knew when I came to this country that it is the best place in the world. One should never complain about anything.

Q: So after your daughter was better and you were reunited with your brothers . . .

A: Yes, we all stayed together in Hamburg and then I contacted my family they were sending us packages with food. We were getting enough to eat but it was institutional food, nothing but starches and things like that.

Q: And what year did you leave Germany to come here?

A: We moved from Hamburg to Stuttgart and from Stuttgart we went to Bremerhaven, a port, that where we sailed from. We had a horrible journey because there was a big storm. The New York Times had a big article that there is a ship coming full of refugees in a big storm and nobody knows how much delay and when that ship is going to arrive. So we travelled maybe three or four days longer. Most of the time everybody was so sick. That was really not a nice ship, that was one of the battle ships, a troop carrier. You had bunks downstairs.

Q: Nothing was easy for you at every turn.

A: It wasn't easy here either, for a while, for a long time. My best years were when I was married to Mr. Anderman, that was the happiest time in my life. He was a wonderful husband, very caring, smart, intelligent.

Q: How did you meet him?

A: I was in business, in Detroit, and his wife was my customer.

Q: You said you were in New York just a few months, then your brothers moved to Detroit and you followed.

A: Yes, I was in Detroit. My brothers both were in Detroit. We were trying to be together after all those years. In the meantime my older brother got married, he met a girl in Stuttgart, so I had to wait much for an affidavit for her to come here.

Q: Did your family here have to provide the tickets for you to come?

A: No, the Joint Distribution Center got the ticket, a Jewish Agency. All I had was \$7 they gave us per person for the beginning. \$14 I had when I came to the U.S.

Q: Well, at some point there was a turning point in your life, when you met your second husband.

A: It is a terrible loss and he really was wonderful, he had a nice family, he also had one daughter, like I, a lovely lady.