

Interview with Miru Alcana August 30, 1992
Los Angeles, California

Q: Okay let's begin by -- if you can tell me your name.

A: Yes. My name is Miru Alcana. I born in the island of Rhodes in 1915 and I was deported in 1944, July 23rd, 1944. And from Rhodes, we spent three days in one building and after they took us to -- to different couple of boats to take us to Pireo and from Pireo we went to Athen. In Athen was a camp of concentration and the name was Haidari. We spent over there three days in Haidari and three of our family, relative, they pass away because was thirsty and they couldn't survive. And the name of this people who pass away was Mazeltov Hasson, is cousin of my mother. And also Allegra Buaff and her mother. I don't remember her name. So, after three days we was in Athen, in Haidari, they put us in wagon like animals with no water, no food. Only they put some bread, very, very hard. And they put boxes of the li, lil' -- little onion, white onions. Also boxes of honey and, and also something else. And we couldn't eat because the bread was very hard, we can't chews and besides that no water; how we can eat the honey? How we can eat the -- the onions without water? How we would dump the bread with no water? So [indecipherable] we arrive in Auschwitz after three weeks, traveling during the night, and daytime we was hiding different places but we didn't know where it was. So, finally we arrive in Auschwitz but during the -- the trip, three men they pass away, in Serbia. One was Rahamim Galanti, another Alchadef [indecipherable], Alchadef Yomtov and the other was Yehuda Notrica. So, those three mens, they died because they was thirsty. Without water, they couldn't survive. So, finally we arrive Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, they separated from our parents. They told us we would see every night but you young people, you will go to work and then every night, you will meet your parents. So -- was nothing like that. The only thing, when we arrive, they choose us for work and they put us in line. In the meantime, we was hungry and thirsty and finally we smelled the meat. Smelled the meat and we said I hope those SS they should choke because they having barbecue, they having broiled steak with music but we didn't know what was 'oing, goes, go -- going on. The only thing the other people, the French people who was in line with us, they said, when did you arrive? We say a few hours ago. So there are your parents, are cremated. Cremated, what mean? We don't know that word, cremated. In our country, we never heard that. They say those people who doesn't -- that are not too strong to work, they put in the ovens. You can imagine how we feel to hear that, to -- to smell they are burning our parents with the music. Because not to hear the --the screaming. So, we start to cry, screaming, nothing we can do. And after they start to count and they, their -- they send us to take shower and after they put in our block, in every, into - - number 20 the first time. Four o'clock or before, they start to call "sel appel, sel appel" That mean they have to count. And that is the story of Auschwitz and our life. [indecipherable] So, I don't know what to say else. The only thing when we was working, they choose us to work in the factory. I was working in gleeov but I don't know how to explain what means gleeov. The only thing was big trunk to put pieces of -- pieces of material to make machine gun; to some -- electricity to make very, very hard. It just like in - - in one little room where there are 500 millin kilowatts for twenty minutes. And then after we have to take out and bring to the other girls to work. And then put the other box over there. So, that was all the -- the work in Auschwitz. In the meantime, we didn't have nothing. On Sunday, "kein arbeit, kein brot". They don't give us anything to eat. But every 12 hour, we was working, they used to give little soup and one tiny piece of bread, and we

have to keep for the next day for to work. In the meantime, there was people who they steal your bread and nothing you can -- because we couldn't talk German and we can't defend ourselves in Yiddish. And really, we have very, very hard life. So, that is the history of our life.

Q: Can you, can you tell, can you tell me what you remember about when the war first broke out? Do you have any recollections about what was happening at that time?

A: When I was working?

Q: Yeah, what were you doing then when you first heard that the war had broken out?

A: In Auschwitz I used to go to bring bricks, or -- in Auschwitz, and also the barracks, the food to, for us. But we [indecipherable], in Auschwitz we have bitter experience. We used to accept three slice of tiny bread and to buy a panty, a brief, a panty. When we washed and we was waiting for a little bit sun. Sun, we never saw in Auschwitz and we tried to put -- to be in the air. And the Polish, they grabbed the panty and they go to the blockkova to say, look the Italian, they stole my panty. Was not true, we can't talk and then the blockkova came and they punish us and they beat us without no reason because we didn't know the language. We didn't know Yiddish and we suffered worst than the Hitler. So, in Germany when I was in Buchenwald, working in the factory, I used to help the other girls. Because they couldn't do their own job so when I have 20 minutes to -- the rest until the -- until the trunk was in the oven; so I used to help some girls to do their own job. So, and I tried to save the girls, otherwise, they will be killed, they will be cremated. So thank God, they are alive and when I was liberated in Theresienstadt I went to Prague. And, from Prague, I took the train. I went to -- to Budapest to look for medicines for the girls because they have dissenteria. And they gave me, but before I had problem with the -- in the office because they don't want to give me anything. They say "Bring your sister here and we will help." I say, "They are in the hospital." The Russian, they don't have nothing to help them. I saved them and I want to take home back with me. So, I spoke with the -- the manager and I say, "Listen, I came from Prague, I spent three nights and two days and a half in the -- in the trains and now I need help from you. I want to save my sister." I say, "Here is my names. My name is Miru Alcana" and they say, "What is this? [indecipherable] -- Diana Galanti?" the other. I say "They are my sister, my -- my father passed away, my mother got married, and so they are Galanti," those -- the other sister, half-sisters. So, finally, they gave me medicine and also they gave me 1,200 marengo for each one. So, I came back to Prague -- not to Prague. I find they was in Rattot. I came back. I looked where -- what's Rattot to see where is the -- the camp to meet them again And finally I have hard time. I don't know how many kilometer I walk and finally I -- we was together until we came back to Bologna, Italy altogether. So, I accomplished something in my life. They -- they recognized what I did for them and we are in touch with them and they call me often, one, she live in Vancouver, Washington and the other live in Miami. The other live between -- [phone rings, pause]. The other sister she live between Switzerland and France. But when they come to see the sister, we meet each other. And what else? And another girl, she live in Johannesburg. She write me and once in a while, she send me something, present. So, at least they recognize what I did -- I did for them. I'm satisfied, not what they send me but at least they recognize and they -- they never forget of me. So, that is all my life. Maybe I got something else but right now I don't remember. Don't forget, I'm old lady.

Q: Okay, let's -- let's go now back to before you went to Auschwitz.

A: Yes.

Q: At the very beginning of the war. You can tell me what you remember about that time and what you were doing at that time?

A: In that time, I was work -- I was at the hospital study to be midwife but I couldn't because with the -- the situation of the Jews they were not allowed to continue to study, so I was nurse -- nurse, I used to do shots for so many people and I used to do tests of the urine for diabetes and albumin. And also I had store, one of the best of Rhodes -- Of Rhodes. Profumeria Rosa di Rodi, they used to call. Was a store of classic perfume. So, for many years, I was very pleased to manage that store, but until the Germans -- first of all, when I was -- before that I was working with the government, the Manu Foreste. But I couldn't work over there, they say, because I was Jewish, so I lost the job. And after I went to work in that the -- in that store where they sell the perfumery. And from there I used to go to the hospital to finish the course. In the meantime, I used to make good money for the shots I used to give to people. And also with -- [phone rings, pause]. So, I used to make good money. One of the best worker in, or selling lady or employee you can tell was myself because I used to make good, good, good money. And after we start with the problem of the Germans, so until we finish to be in the -- in the hands of the Nazis. And now when I hear still the Nazis is growing up, really I'm -- I' getting nervous. I'm sick. But nothing you can do. People, they are cruel, people they don't know what they want. It just that they are envy and mean.

Q: Sharon told me that before the war you were involved in Ort, O-R-T?

A: Pardon me?

Q: I wrote down O-R-T. ORT. Is that -- she said before the war.

A: Yes.

Q: Can you talk about that?

A: I don't remember what you [indecipherable] --. Let me see.

Q: So, can you talk about that a little bit -- in, into the tape?

A: I hope she will change something. She will not copy everything.

Q: No.

A: Huh?

Q: Yes. They'll summarize.

A: Because so many things --.

Q: Yeah, it's okay.

A: Okay.

A: So, after -- did you open?

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: After I came back from concentration camp, I used to work. I used to be in the Jewish community in Bologna, via Gombruti nove, nine. And I used to help all those girls to cook and to ea -- to be together, because I thought it was my duty to help them because they was orphalens, orph -- with no parents. But I was also without parents but I tried to help them, so in the meantime, I used to go to the hospital to see the people who came back from concentration camp was very, in very bad shape. I used to bring something to them every single day. I used to go in -- in via Instituto Rizzoli and also to Santa Orsola [indecipherable]hospital to help them. So, in the meantime, we used to have la guizzo, la vizzo, like Hadassah over here, 'uizzo. And we used to -- I was very active, I was member and I used to make cookies to have tea, to give tea and then to -- to make money to send to Eretz Israel. So, because Israel -- I was very Zionist in my country because my brother was -- wa president of the Maccabi and my grandparents, my grandp-father died in Jerusalem; my grandmother, also. They was very, very Zionist. And also, I continued to be Zionist and I was revisionist in my country in Rhodos -- in Rhodes. So when I was, after the concentration camp, I used to be running from one place to the 'nother to -- to bring cass -- cassette, how do you say it? [pause] I used to go from one house to the 'nother to bring the Keren Kayemeth box, the blue box to -- to receive some, to get some money to send to Eretz Israel. And so, also in this country, I do the same thing. Twice yearly, I have to bring the cassette, the boxes of -- the blue box to the Jewish Fund for Israel. So, I think for today, I don't have else what to say or maybe --.

Q: Okay, let's -- let's talk a little bit about what it was like to grow up in Rhodes. When you were a child --?

A: In Rhodes?

Q: Yeah, can you tell me like about -- like the neighborhood where you lived and what life was like there?

A: Oh, the life in Rhodes was beautiful, beautiful. We had wonderful life. We -- first of all, we went to school. Our parents they was very religious and they was -- they gave lots advice. They teach us how to be human being, to be generous, to be unselfish. And so at the school, I used to do good girl and after the school I used to work. And after I finish the school, I went to the hospital to learn midwife but unfortunately, like I -- I will repeat, I didn't have luck to finish because in account of the religion -- of the Nazis. And from there I started to work, to make living, to help our parents. So --.

Q: Can you talk about what it was like at the school?

A: The school we used to have --. This school was Jewish school. We have part Italian, they have teachers in Italian, teacher in Hebrew and also teacher in French. But the most important, the -- the more classes we had, was Italian subject and then French, and after Hebrew. Hebrew we have three times weekly for one hour. So, three hours weekly we have in Hebrew. So, at least we learned something. In fact when I go in Israel, I have no problem with my language because when I studied the digdug in Hebrew, the only thing I learned with point. I didn't learn without. But this -- they teach us for little island of Rhodes, no matter how many they used to before teach the boys. The boys they used to send to the chabra or to college -- to college, college, Hebrew college, but the girls, they were not allowed. Only the boys they should. But later they start to teach us, the girls, three hours weekly. It, was not so bad. At least we learn something, an -- the most important what we learned, to respect the people, to respect our parents and to know the Ten Commandments, what is very, very important. So, at the school they used to teach us Hebrew history and so we continue to keep that in our mind. No matter what we went through in our life, still we keep what we learn from our parents and from the school. So, that was wonderful experience in our life.

Q: Okay. As a child growing up, also, can you talk about what other sorts of things you did? Like did you -- did you learn any music or did you have any hobbies?

A: Not ha, habbies -- no hobbies. The only thing is to study and to be, to be -- to work in the house, to help the parents. To my mother, to help in the family, in the house. But no habbit, only we had gymnastic, we have exercise with the school, you know, like boy scout. So, and, that is all, we didn't have too much like over here. We was more conservative. We didn't have too much liberty, no.

Q: Can you describe what the neighborhood was like, what it looked like?

A: Oh, wonderful neighborhood we have. Everyone very friendly, like one family. All -- no matter how many neighbors we have, everyone is just like family. Within, in fact, we used to say Auntie Rosa, Auntie Straya, Auntie Rebecca, but we didn't know if they was relative or not. Because our parents they say, say hello to Auntie Rebecca or say hello to Auntie Rifka. So, to the -- to everyone we have to say Auntie. So, to -- for us all the neighbors was family.

Q: So, the neighborhood was all Jewish then, right?

A: Yes, everyone. We didn't have no strangers.

Q: Okay. Can you talk about your brothers and your sister some?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Can you talk about your brothers and your sister?

A: My brother was good, good shoemaker. He make boots, boots.

Q: Which brother are we --?

A: Josef, Josef. And, he -- very expensive. And also Nissim was mechanic. He used to work with ingegner Lanari, Italian fellow. He was with him. And my sister, Miriam, she had three children. Two girls and one boy, beautiful children, very smart. Unfortunately they went in - - they was killed by the Nazis, they put in the ovens. And my brother-in-law was wonderful, wonderful fellow. He respected every one of us. And really we was in good harmony, the whole family. And I had -- my father had another two brothers, another sister. And the brothers was very, very wealthy. One, he had ten children, five boys and five girls. And everyone they was married except two young boys. They escapate during the -- the capitulation of Mussolini. He -- he went with a little boat in Turkey and they are saved in Israel. So, but the others, the big family, everyone killed by the Nazis. And my aunt, wonderful, she had five children. And the girl was married with one baby. And my brother Nissim, he was married and he had little girl year and a half. So, no one they came back.

Q: So -- Just one more thing about growing up. Can you just -- what language did you speak, like at home? You've mentioned so many languages --.

A: Yeah, but the most important is the Span -- Ladino, because is my mother tongue, my mother tongue -- lingua, language. Because in the house, we speak Spanish, Ladino. And also at this school, Italian and French. And, with -- Hebrew we learn at the school and also Greek with some French and a little bit Turkish. We did -- milkman who is to bring us every day milk and yoghurt, so we learned Turkish. And the woman who come to help for the -- washing the clothes, she used to speak Turkish. And you know, when you are young, is easy to catch the language. So -- but the most important what I talk is Italian, Ladino, and French. Yeah, that is it -- I think is enough. And also now Hebrew, I can manage very good and Greek also.

Q: That's a lot of languages. Can you talk about what it was like being a Greek Jew growing up --.

A: Oh, very important, the best. No matter, after my experience traveling all over the world, I find out is no religion better than ours, the religion, the Jews, because I used to live in Italy with the Italians. Wonderful, wonderful people. Very nice, I respect them but it not like our, like us. And now here with the Mexicans who hate the Jews, and the Protestant, the -- so many people who I met over here, when I find out how they are mean and they hate the Jews, I find out the best is our. Because we don't hate no one. Only we respect and so that is the most important. And we try to help each -- everyone with no interest but the other religion is just -- they do for interest. Otherwise, they don't do nothing for nothing. So, I respect my religion and I will die the way I am --so is the best.

Q: Can you describe what it was like being Jewish when -- before the war though, in Rhodes?

A: Eh -- we was very religious. We used to light the candles on Shabbat and we never warm up on Shabbat. We didn't open gas, we didn't -- we had, we used to keep warm the food from Friday night for Saturday. So, and -- we used to read, stay in the house. Or in the morning, they used to go to the temple. Then they com -- when they used to come, we had

breakfast and lunchtime and they used to go in the morning tefillah; and lunch, they used to say the berakhot. And Saturday, for instance, the Havdalah, every Saturday night -- Saturday night, the Havdalah and when was Shabbat, we used to light the candle and to say the Kiddush. But in our house, in every house in Rhodes, they was the same thing. Four o'clock, 5 o'clock, no lights, no nothing. Everything was ready for Shabbat. We waited for the guys, the mens who come from the shop, take a shower and then ready for the Kiddush or -- and to be on the tables.

Q: Did you find that it was difficult to be Jewish? You mentioned how you couldn't keep certain jobs because you were Jewish.

A: Yeah, over here, over here, yes. When I applied to the Bank of America they told me to write down. When I wrote I'm Jewish, they say we will call you back. So, they never called me. I applied in Safeway for job. When they saw Jewish, they didn't gave me job. So, in many places, I applied and they didn't give me.

Q: But you had mentioned how before the war, you had that problem also?

A: No, no.

Q: I thought you said you --.

A: No, not in Rhodes. Never, never, never. We did have no problem with the Italians. The only thing -- no, the Greeks was anti-Sem, Semit, ant-Sem -- was against of us but we didn't have nothing in common with them. So, now, they are very anti-Semit, Semitise -- how did you say? They, they can't stand the Jews. They don't like it. It's written in the wall, no Jews, no Americans. That is in my country.

Q: Okay [pause] -- let me turn the tape over. (End of Side A, Tape 1). [pause] Okay, the tape is back on.

A: Yeah. I say myself, thank God we got Eretz Israel. And I hope with the strength of God will be with us and they will be safe, Eretz Israel. Because without Israel all the Jews, they will be kaput. They will be lost. Today we should work hard to keep that Eretz Israel and I hope someday we will have shalom, we will have peace in Eretz Israel. Thank you, Kenny.

Q: I have some more things if that's all right.

A: What?

Q: Some more questions. If we can go to the -- back to the beginning of the war, can you tell me what you remember when the Germans -- what happened when the Germans invaded? What it was like then?

A: Did you lost this?

Q: No, it's on. The tape is on.

A: Is on? But

Q: Yes. Do you understand my question?

A: Yes. I supposed to do before. When I start to talk.

Q: But I'm talking now about specifically when, when --.

A: The Germans, they came?

Q: Yes, when -- specifically when they came.

A: Okay. The Germans, they came to Rhodes. They was allied with the Italians. So, when -- after Mussolini fell down, so the Germans they said, now we are the boss and you will do whatever we would say. So, when they came to the Jewish quartier, they say we have to bring the men, they have to come with the licenses of their job and then they have to work for us. And every night they will come back. So everyone they took the license of their job. They went there to that building and they didn't came out. So, after three days they spoke out again. They came, they say, the womens and the children, they have to come to that -- they have to go that, to that building. In case they don't go, all the men they will be killed. So, and they say they have to bring all what you have, gold, money, silver, anything what you got in the house because you will be concentrated in one village. And with your money, you will eat and you will be safe. So, everyone, they took all the -- what -- all the jewelry, whatever they had, they brought with them. So, we went there and they came out with two big

[pause to speak with man in the background]

A: So, they came -- they came out with big tray and we put the money, we put the gold, we put the silver, everything what they -- we had and we gave it to them. So many people, they didn't want to give the money so they put it in the bathroom and they flushed the waters. So, was -- the building where we went was a comando, a, how do you say, a building for the pilots, the officer, pilots, officer. So, you can imagine how many toilets they have. Everything was full of money, full of gold. So, from there, the Germans, they took everything what we had and they used to beat us if they don't give whatever they had. And after the -- like I say, they put us in -- they gave the alarm and they start, we start to walk to the port, you know, to the -- to take the boat. Like that they took us to Pireo, took three days or five days to take to Pireo. So, you can imagine, was the, the twenty -- 23 of July; we arrived the August 16, or 12th, the 12th was from Rhodes to Athen; from Athen to Auschwitz, the 23rd and we arrived the 16th in Auschwitz, yeah. To -- to Haidari was in twenty -- July 23rd.

Q: How much time was there between the time when the Germans invaded and the time you were deported?

A: How many hours?

Q: How long was it? How much time? Was it hours, days, weeks?

A: Only they gave us three days to be in -- in the building and then after they took us they gave the alarm and we walked, walked, walked, walked, so many people, with -- they have pillows, they have blankets, they have clothes, you know, to -- to change. We walking like a caravan to the depot to take the boat. So how many, I don't know, they gave the alarm -- not to see us.

Q: Okay. [pause] Were there any -- were there any specific events that happened that you would be able to talk about that might stand out in your mind? Something that you -- things that maybe you saw that had a very strong impact?

A: The only thing I saw the three women who pass away in Haidari. Really was, and I saw the Nazis how they beat the big shots in Athen without they -- they call the mens downstairs, down from the -- the building. And, before they start to walk to the wagons, the -- they have stones in the floor like point. You -- every time they took out the shoes and they led them to walk in the, in the -- in the stones who was torn, how did you say? Like, you s -- like, I can't explain -- pieces of stone, like marble, pieces, in point.

Q: Like pebbles?

A: You can put -- if you put your feet, you will get blood. You should see the blood running in the, in the, in the -- from the feet. So, that make me sick to see those innocent people die from the -- how do you say -- from thirsty because they ask one drop of water and the mens who was beaten from the Nazis with the whipping and walk in there, in the --. So, that was very bad impression and I say what will be the end of us? What will be when we will be in their hands? In fact, what happened was like that. And we work, we suffered more from the Polish. The Jews, the Jews -- the women of Poland and from Hungaria. They used to beat us, they used to steal our blanket, they used to steal our clothes, our panty, our bread. Those people they do very hard to us. Even if they want to save their -- their own life, but they shouldn't do that what they did it to us. And, and then not only that, they steal and they go to the blockova, the -- the head of the block to say, the Italian they stole us. They stole this, the Italian, they do that, the Italian. And we didn't know the language, we didn't know Yiddish, we didn't know German. We didn't know how to defend ourselves so that was very bad. In fact, one Magda, she, she, she get me one punch in my teeth and she broke four teeth to me. But I'm glad she died in Bergen-Belsen. Otherwise, I would look for her. Yesterday I find lady, no Friday, I met lady. She said "Do you mind shall I sit over here in the bus?" I say "Yes." So, oh, I say "You got foreign accent like me." And, "From where are you?" And she say, "Wait -- wait a few minutes." And after she say, "From Austria, Vienna." I say, "Frau Oberaufseherin." I start to talk German. I say "You are not from Austria, German. You are [indecipherable], I say how long you been here? Do you have a nice apartment in the beach?" She said "No, we got nice house, nice house. Little house, not too big. But I like Brazil." I say, "Oh, very Schoen." I start to talk in German. "Ser Schoen. Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. Oh, ja, ja. I say, you are Nazis! Your husband is one of the Nazis who left Germany to go to Brazil. And now from Brazil, they would recognize him and he came over here in the Spanish because he speaks Spanish. How do you like that?"

Q: What did she say?

A: She say, "No, no." "Do you have children?" She say "No." "Why you are going to now, five o'clock, two o'clock, you going to" -- how do you say -- "to downtown." I told in Spanish "To pick up your husband because they will recognize him. You're going to pick up him and to go home. Not to be alone. But I wish to go with you and to recognize him and I will choke him." Because he Nazis. Look how clever, they went there. They will recognize. They spent so much and after they change the -- they went back to Vienna, they find out they will recognize them and so they come to United -- to Los Angeles. Ah, if I had time, I would go -- I would go to see where she will stop and where she will go back. I will hide myself, but I didn't have time and I didn't want to aggravate it myself. So, look the Nazi. I said "Did you hear on the television? The Nazis now what they want?" "Me, no Nazi, me no." "You are not, your husband, yes."

Q: Okay. If we can -- we ended up jumping around a little bit but if we can go back to when you were in Auschwitz? No, you were in more than one camp, is that correct?

A: No, Auschwitz.

Q: That was the only one?

A: Only Auschwitz, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: From Auschwitz, they send us to Buchenwald, Villestadt, no -- Villestadt, to work in factory. We didn't have no time. We didn't know if it was daytime or nighttime. We worked under the ground.

Q: We would like to have, as much as possible --.

A: What?

Q: Do you want me to stop for a minute?

A: Pardon me?

Q: Do you need me to stop for a minute?

A: What do you mean? [conversation in the background with a man] Go ahead.

Q: They would like to have as many, as much eyewitness testimony as possible about what -- things that you saw in the camp. So, if there is anything else you can talk about that you saw while you were in the camp?

A: What? I said so many things, and -- what the witnesses? I can tell all the girls who was with me.

Q: That's not what I meant. Just if there's any more things that happened that you haven't mentioned yet.

A: The only thing what happened in Villestadt where I was working; one lady, her name was Margot from Berlin. She knew where she was, she jumped in the river and she disappeared. And so, the Oberaufseherin, the chief of the soldiers, they say if she not coming back, ten of them, ten of you, they will be killed. For one, ten. She pick up so many and one of us, Matilda Israel, was one with them. [More conversation with other person]. So, that is – that was very important. So, for 24 hours, we was trembling, shaking, what will be from us. Why they would kill them, the ten for one. So, finally they put the reflectors, the lights, boats, airplanes, they find her. They brought and then they put in -- on the floor and everyone, they have to step on her. They have to kick her. And we have to -- with the whipping. We have to whip to her, to that woman.

Q: They made you do that?

A: We did it because she gave us. And she was crying and crying and crying. She used to talk in German because she was from Berlin. She used to say, I never will do again. I never will do again. Please forgive me, forgive me, but -- and she used to cry, all the lady I feel sorry for Mar -- Margot. So, I remember that -- was very emotional. We was very depressed for that case. So, that was very important too. And when I was working and my nail -- the nail went down and then was broken. And they say I do purposely and so they punish me for no reason. You know, it not the right way what I did it. I don't think so. Maybe she will change and she will put different way?

Q: Oh, Sharon?

A: Eh?

Q: You mean Sharon?

A: I say because when I start, for instance, my name is Miru and so, I was in the island of Rhodes and they pick me up from German, from the Nazis but -- and I spoke over here how -- how many days I was in that building. But I should do before, when I start the beginning, no?

Q: Well, we went a little bit out of order because when you started, I didn't want to interrupt you.

A: Yeah. Yes, I know. Was not the writer.

Q: They can rearrange.

A: So how she will do?

Q: Okay, well maybe if you just want to right now, talk about, just go over briefly the order in which things happened to make it easier so that, so that --. You know what I'm saying?

A: Because when I start the beginning, I should tell about the -- the building where we was for three days and before they called the mens and after the womens. And we brought all the

money, everything, we should start, step by step, but I don't know why I didn't. The last time, I did it but today I don't know what happened to me.

Q: That's okay.

A: I should do.

Q: That's partly my fault, too.

A: No, no. Because the beginning I should -- when I start to say I'm from the island of Rhodes, Greece now. In 19-- oh, for instance, July, 1912 -- '13, they called the Germans camp to the Jewish quartier -- quarter and they ask the men they should come with their license to -- to be present in that building. And that building was the headquarter of the -- of the pilots, the officer, the aviation. So, I should do that before and then the men they went there for three days and after three days, they start to ask all the women and the children, they should come too and to bring all the -- the possession they had, the silver, the money, the gold to bring in together. And then they would stay all day long there, they would stay long in -- they would be in one building, in one village. And with -- your money, you will support yourselves. So, I should start like that. And from there they took us after three days, they gave the alarm and we went to walking like a caravan, like you see in the movie, they walking with all the belonging together like blankets, pillowc -- pillows, all the clothes, whatever they had. And luggage, together and we went to the boat and after five days we arrive to Pireo and from Pireo they took us to Athen where the camp was there waiting for the -- the train, for the wagons. So, we stayed in that place, that camp they call Haidari. We stayed three days there in the Haidari and after they put us in the wagons. And from -- in the wagons, during the three days in Athen, in Athen, three women they pass away because they was thirsty. And after we went to in the wagons. When we reach in Serbia, three mens pass away: Manos Santov Alchadef, Yehuda Notrica, and Rahamim Galanti. The three men pass away because was thirsty and they died. And they throw in one hole over there. And after we start, we -- they hided us for many days. During the day, we was hiding. At nighttime, we was in the train walking. We didn't know what was the destiny of us. And finally we arrive in Auschwitz. Auschwitz was the -- the end of the life of our parents. So, I should start like this.

Q: Okay. So now you did. Your brothers and sister as well, were they with you at that time?

A: Yes, in the train we was with all my family: my father, my mother. My father, he used to read the, the -- I don't know -- Perek, not the Perek, the -- some Pasuk, some part of the Tehillim. He used to read continuously, continuously, continuously until we arrived. So, my mother, she was sitting there. We didn't have room to move. We didn't have no toilets. We didn't have nothing. My brothers, my sister, my brother-in-law, even we want to make our necessity and we say, turn your face. In the same train, in the same people, in the same where we was sitting because they didn't have no room. So, my three nephews -- oh, my sister-in-law, she was very young, twenty-five years old. And her little girl was year and a half. My brother at that time was 28 years, I don't know. So, my father was 71, my mother 60 -- 61 when they arrive in Auschwitz, and -- they promise us we will see every night. And during the day, they will go to work. But was nothing like that. Only we heard by the French when we smell the meat, barbecue. They used to look like they have steak in the, in

the -- steak barbecue. We say, look they eating barbecue with the music and the French people who was over there before us, they say no. They are your parents, they are cremated. At that time, we didn't know what mean cremated. Because in our country, in our little island, we was very naïve. We ignore what means cremation because in our Bible they say cre -- cremated, cremation is against of the law. So, we never thought they would cremated those people. So, my brother, they took my brothers and my brother-in-law, they was -- they choose to -- to work and also myself. But, my brother Josef went to Mauthausen, Nissim was in Dachau, my brother-in-law was in Rideltow, and those things I find out because I wrote to Red Cross and they answered me and they told me where they -- they was dead. So, that is the reason I know how -- where I lost my brothers. So, myself, I was working in Villestadt before for two months, years. I was working, working in Auschwitz bringing barrels of food to the kitchen or bring water to the kitchen. And after bricks, and after they send us to Villestadt -- Villestadt. Was factory of munition. And my job was gleeov and I can -- I can't translate what mean gleeov. The only thing I know was a big trunk. I put pieces of, of -- how did you say -- of metal. The machine gun I don't know. Put it there and then put in the -- in one place, 500 mil kilowatt to make hard. Every 20 minute, I have to change the trunk and put the other. In the meantime, the 20 minute until they would be cool off I used to help the other girls who they couldn't make it. So, and we worked 12 hours daily and -- for one week and one night, 12 hours. Tachi and Nachi they used to call. But we never saw when was daytime, when was nighttime because we was working under tunnel. We never saw sunshine. We never saw the time, what time, what day. We didn't know nothing. We was working like slave -- so until the Russian they start to come and they move us in other place to work in pieces of assembly of airplane. We -- we stayed there three, four days or one week and from there they took us another place into for five -- they put in the wagons, almost the end I thought, I think. They left us in wagons, closed of Villestadt, no Theresienstadt. They closed the wagons for five days. How many girls was dead and we didn't have no toilette, no air, only they was locked with chain. And after five days over there, you should see the colera they have -- the cholera and the Russian camp, they liberated us. And they say to us, "kein arbeit, kein brot"; if you don't work for you, you can't have bread. The strong girls, they have to go to work. You have to go. To me, they pick up myself to work in -- to make bread. And another also in -- to make bread. The other in the kitchen to cook, so we worked just for us. And some afternoon, we used to go to the Russian comando to clean the rooms and to cook for them. And every time when I used to go there, I used to steal one knife, knife, one fork and one time I stole little cushion. So, until they -- they sent us to Prague. And from Prague I escapated twice. I went to Budapest to ask help for the, my -- my friends who was very sick with dissenteria. So, we started all over.

Q: Okay. Where were you at the time of the liberation?

A: The liberation, in Theresienstadt. I was liberated in Theresienstadt, in May 13, 1945.

Q: Can you describe those events?

A: And -- there I was working like I told you, working in the, in the -- to make bread; the factory to make bread. And then afternoon, I had to work in the comando of the -- the Russians' comando, to clean the rooms and to prepare food for them, to cook foods for them. And after we used to go to our barrack. So, for -- for little bit, I don't know for how

long, and after they sent us to Prague. To Prague we went to the Italian consul. The Italian consul to help -- they help us. They gave nice, nice place to live like --how do you say? -- like, like a academy school. A school because the kids was on vacation and they gave us the -- the bed. Then they gave us money and we can go for shopping or to see. We didn't pay the carfare because when we showed the number of our arm, and they saw -- they didn't say nothing. We used to run from one bus to the other, free. Free rides we had. And then after --

Q: How long --?

A: I don't know how long.

Q: You don't know how long you were there?

A: I can't, I don't remember, I can't recall. The only thing they took us like before I say to Rattotine, Hungaria, but I went myself to Budapest to pick up medicine. [indecipherable] for the girls who had dissenteria. And also they gave me -- how did you say -- 1,200 marengos, money. And I bought apples, sugar, something to give nutrition to the girls. So, when I came back after three days and a half and two nights, walk -- by train because the train -- the station was torn, and I arrived, I couldn't find them. And after they told me where they are. And I went -- I walked so many kilometers and I don't know. I can't describe how I arrive. So, finally I met them. I gave the medicines. I gave the -- what I brought, so like that I did my best to save human being. But those girls they remember me. When is Mother's Day, when is Rosh Hashanah or -- or Pesach, anyway they call me often. I call them because one she live in -- in Vancouver, Washington; the other live in Miami, and the other live in other part of Miami, and one live in [indecipherable], in Johannesburg, the other in -- between Switzerland and French, and France. So, I am in contact with them, once in a while we see each other. We meet each other, we talk. So, that is part of what I went through with those Germans. How we should forget them? How they can denied that didn't exist Auschwitz, no Birkenau. And who -- who put our numbers in our arm? My number is vier-und-zwanzig, zwei-hundert-fünfzig [24250]. That I have to learn by memory because I didn't know before. They used to, with the whipping; they gave me so -- they whipped so many times to me, I have to learn. So, we say no more Nazis, no more but the Nazis still they are around. And we have here in California, so many. In fact, a couple of days ago I met somebody. [pause] You think it's enough?

Q: Yeah, I'm just looking [pause]. Can you tell? After -- Okay. After you were in Italy, where did you go from there, did you say?

A: After many months, we was in -- so, March, just a minute, May 30 -- 30, we was liberated and we arrive in August, the end of the August to Italy. We went to the -- to Bologna, Italy to the Jewish community in via Gombruti num -- number nine. Because over there is Milan, they didn't have room for us. Modena, they didn't have room for us. And I say the only place we should go to Bologna to see if we will find any place to stay there. And so, was -- the building was destroyed but they didn't have no windows; they didn't have doors. We used to sleep in the hallway, we was 52 between boys and girls sleeping in the floor. And the Jewish community, they gave us blankets and also they gave few materass and they used to give us three liras to go to eat once -- to hot kitchen. They call hot

kitchen and -- and we used to cook ourselves. They used to give few dollars, few liras to cook in our place, in our community. And so like that, until everyone they start to be settled. Some they went to South Africa and some they went to Congo Belgium, some they went to United States and some they stay in Milan. And so -- some they went to Buenos Aires, but we are in touch with everyone. And some they are in Israel.

Q: So, from there where did you go?

A: Myself I came to United States.

Q: Do you know what year that was?

A: But I had hard time because I didn't know the language and I couldn't find job. I had hard, very, very hard time. And beside in -- with my family I was not so happy. They didn't -- we came -- I didn't get along with them because their mentality was different of mine. So, I decide to take one room with -- in some place and I used to pay \$40 monthly. In the meantime, I wrote -- I wrote to Italy to send me money to friend of mine like that until I will find job. So --

Q: Do you remember what year it was when you came here?

A: Here I came in 1950: July 18, 1950.

Q: And, what -- what type of work did you plan on doing?

A: From New York -- Ah, first of all I was, before to come here to United States I supposed to come with DP, displaced person from Germany. Because, [indecipherable], I was Italian but Rhodes, the island of Rhodes.

[End of Tape 1]

Q: Okay. You were saying displaced persons --?

A: Ah, I had Italian passport but Rhodes passed to the Greece in 1948. And so, I didn't want to be Greek. I pick up, I choose to be DP, displaced person to come in United States. So, I have to go to Bremer -- Bremen in Germany because the American they used to send soldiers in -- to Germany, and the boats empty. The -- the boats, the navy, they used to come back and bring refugees from Germany. So, I was in Germany again for three weeks to see those lousy face of Germans. But I never came out from the -- there, from my room. I never going to eat out because I don't want to hear the steps of the Germans and I don't want to hear their voice. So, I came -- when the time came we went to the boat, to the navy and so I came to United States, to New York. From New York, I -- I came to Los Angeles, three nights and two days by train. I came to Chicago, the train -- I missed the train. So, I have to stay another 24 hours there with no food, no nothing. Because I didn't know the language. I didn't know what to ask to say give me tuna sandwich or cheese sandwich; I didn't know, so until I arrived to Los Angeles. When I arrived to Los Angeles, my aunt she say, you know, I was in the depot. She came to pick me up. She say, the first thing, "You know, now you are in America. Your name is no Miru any more. We have to go and change

to Mary.” I say, “I’m very sorry; my parents they gave me Miru, I want to keep Miru. If you don’t like Miru, call Mary.” First of all I say, “Aunt, I got your mother’s name. I’m the only survive who got your mother’s name. We had four Mirus in the family. I’m the only survive, why you don’t like?” So, I say “Okay, you call me anything you want” and I did like this because I was exhausted from the trains with no food. I came and you -- you start to -- to give me lec -- to give me lecture, to say not Miru, Mary! So, and I stay a few months over there, seven months with my aunt. I didn’t get along. I went -- I took one room with somebody. And in the meantime, I didn’t have no money. I brought with me \$500 but was easy to spend. So, I wrote to Italy. I say when I will work, I will pay you. They send me every month \$100. Like that. I can pay \$40 and the \$60 I can eat and take the carfare. So, I had more hard time in United States than in -- in Germany. Because in Germany I know I was obligated, with no choice. But over here, I couldn’t speak the language, I couldn’t find job and I didn’t have no place to stay. I had terrible -- very bad life. For one year I was desperated until I decide to go back to Italy. So, I -- I say I wish to find a job to make my ticket and to go back. So, a friend of mine, my cousin who I saved from Auschwitz, who got diarrhea, she say come to Seattle and I -- I will find job for you. So, I went to Seattle; I start to fa -- to work but I had hard time because I didn’t know the language. I was working in [indecipherable], but very hard to explain to me. And I took time from the other people who teach me, to tell me what to do, and my time also. So, they fire me. And finally I look in the telephone book, Italian family, Italian place and I find in grocery store and I start to work in grocery store. So, after five years, I became American citizen. I say, goodbye everyone. I’m going to Europe to see where will be my destiny. So, I was going to Israel and in Israel they have war after war. I say not for me. So, when I went to Italy, I find out the life was, was very hard to find job. I say, I will come back to United States. I will work more. When I will have more money, I’ll go back to Israel. So, that is what I did. So, now in the meantime, my health is no good. My health is very deteriorated. So --

Q: Okay. Is there anything else you can think of that you’d like to add?

A: Eh?

Q: Is there anything else that you can think of that you would like to add before we finish?

A: I don’t know what to say.

Q: Okay, then I’ll just say that this interview is recorded on August 30th -- August 30th, 1992 in Los Angeles, California.

A: Yes. Yeah.

Q: That’s it.