Interview with Dr. Marsha Rozenblit
August 6, 1992
Silver Spring, MD

Q: The date is August 6, 1992 and we're speaking with Dr. Marsha Rozenblit in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. Rozenblit is going to tell us about her father and his family, and any family members that she can recall. So please, could you tell me your father's name, his date of birth and then anything you can about his childhood and his family.

A: Okay, my father whose name was Mendel Rozenblit was born on November 13, 1907 in a town called Lukow in Poland. Anyway this town was in the area of Lublin, I don't know exactly in which direction or …… Okay, so my father was born in Lukow which was near Lublin in 1907. He was born into a pretty religious family. I think that parts of the family were associated with the Hasidim. But he did not grow up technically as a Hasidic child. He was just an ordinary traditionally religious Polish Jewish boy. His father died when he was very young, well not very young I guess. Well let me go backwards a little bit. My father was one of about six or seven children and he was in the middle. He was not the oldest or the youngest; he was one of the middle children. His father died when he was a young boy. I think, if my memory serves me correctly, he was about twelve when his father died, which means his father died just after World War I of asthma. But I think he was sickly for most of his life. But my grandmother, that is my father's mother whose name was --well I should say that my father's father's name was Avraham Rozenblit -- and his mother Masha Markusfeld Rozenblit, after whom I'm named Marsha -- Masha, his mother managed quite well to have six children and run the family. She owned a, well my mother used to say she owned a general store, but my cousin in Israel who was seventeen when he left Poland and really knew her, said that she basically owned a shoe store. That is, she sold other things too, but it was mostly shoes and what she would do is, she would take trips to Warsaw or Lublin and see what was in the fancy shoe stores there and then copy them and arranged to have the shoes made. She didn't make them herself. She wasn't a shoemaker but she would get them made and then sell them, both in the store and also in a kind of…She would send her children out to sell them also, when they were grown, to sell them to the peasants in the villages. That I learned from my cousin in Israel. But let me just try to say something about my father's family background in general before I talk more specifically. They were a very religious family and pictures of my father show him wearing the sort of traditional cap of the Polish Jews, you know that sort of squarish cap. I can't tell from the pictures whether he has pais or not. It's hard to tell, but maybe he did. I should say before I go on that my father died, Mendel Rozenblit, the survivor that we're talking about, died in 1961 when I was ten years old so that most of my recollections come from either things I actually remember him saying, or things that my mother told me that he had said, or things that my cousin in Israel, that is his nephew, Mordecai Rozenblit, who came to Palestine in 1938 has told me. So it's a sort of conglomerate of those things. So, in any case it was a traditional religious family in the Lublin area. His mother owned this shoe store. I don't think she was rich but she was reasonably prosperous and my father had all of these brothers and sisters. His oldest, I don't even know the age order, I think Nehama the sister, he had one sister and five brothers I believe, and the sister, Nehama, was I think the oldest and then there were other brothers. There was Simcha, there was Haim Yakov, there was Meir who was the baby, there was Yehoshua and I know how most of them died actually and I'll get back to that later when we talk about it. But Haim Yakov was a very ardent Zionist and he left Poland before the war. He went to Palestine in 1937 and then his son Mordecai joined him in 1938.

Q: Were the rest of the family involved in Zionism, do you know?

A: You know, I don't know. My cousin, Mutti, Mordecai, in Israel has many times told me that you know, he had said to me, [Marsha, at yahdat ha abba shelach lo haya Zioni] which means Marsha, your father wasn't a Zionist. But I think that's not true. I think that Mutti means by that, that my father didn't move to Palestine after the war. And Mutti is still mad at him forty years later for not having done that. I do have his Zionist membership card from after the war. But, of course, everybody was a Zionist after the war. So the question is was he an active Zionist before the war. Judging from the schools he sent his children to I don't think so. That is an active Zionist. I don't think he was active in the Zionist movement, no. But he was probably sympathetic to Zionism.

Q: I was going to ask you about the town. Have you researched or found out anything about that town, was it a shtetl or…..?

A: Well, all towns are shtetls, shtetl just means little town.

Q: What was the nature of this town?

A: It was a small town. I don't know how big it was. It certainly wasn't a large place. Lublin was in central Poland so it was central Poland. I think my image of it as a child was that it was like any small American town with white picket fences and neat little houses on neat little streets. And I was shocked in 1972 or '03, I was talking to Lucin Dovarshitsky who teaches Polish-American history at YIBO and who is a member of whatever the staff at the YIBO Institute and Lucin Dovarshitsky at the time was busy collecting lots and lots and lots of pictures for the Image Before My Eyes volume and I said my father was from Lukow and he said well I've got a picture of Lukow, come and see it. So I went upstairs to his office and I looked at this picture of Lukow and it was not my image. I mean it was a muddy little street. This was a picture taken in 1926 and it was this dreary little muddy town. So it was a tiny little nothing of a town, I think. Although my cousin Mutti in Israel who was seventeen when he left Lukow has nice memories of it so it couldn't have been that horrendous. I mean maybe this picture doesn't do it justice. He has nice memories. My father left Lukow when he married and lived near Warsaw. I'll get to that in a minute. So his adult life was not in Lukow, it was in a Warsaw suburb. The stories of his childhood that he told me when I was little were certainly not negative. If his family was prosperous, even if they weren't rich they wouldn't have suffered much.

Q: Do you know much about his education, where he went to school?

A: He went to cheder. He was born in 1907. He was born when that part of Poland was part of the Russian Empire. I know he just went to traditional cheder. He did not have a formal secular education as far as I know. I do know that he could read Polish easily and that means that he must have had some secular education. All the schooling he ever spoke of was cheder. On the other hand since he could read Polish novels he must have also gone to something else. He didn't have a gymnasium education, that I know. He didn't go to university. But he must have gone to some Polish school as well as cheder because you can't read Polish easily if you hadn't. Speaking it is one thing but knowing it is another. So I think that he and virtually all his siblings just went to cheder and maybe also some kind of Polish elementary school. There is one thing that is important and that is his younger brother, Meir, wanted very much to have a

real secular education and he did go to Polish school and gymnasium in their town, or maybe not in their town, it's hard to say since I was only ten when my father died, he may have just said gymnasium and maybe Meir went off to Lublin to go to gymnasium, I don't know. In any case my grandmother who was a religious woman, who wore a sheitel and so forth, nevertheless was willing to let her youngest son go to gymnasium. This must have been already, since Meir is younger than my father, this must have been after World War 1. It must have been in the twenties. And the town was very mad at her for doing this. So she was something of a progressive because she was, although very religious, was willing to let her son go to gymnasium, and of course going to gymnasium meant going to school on Saturday. And theoretically Jews were exempt from writing. And in fact, they were. But obviously it spoke of abandoning traditional Jewish life and entering the larger world. She was certainly willing to do this and was willing to defy the town to let this happen. I remember my father telling a story about how there was a library in town, like a secular library. Now maybe it was a Zionist library, may it was Pol…..I don't know what and a lit of the "frumies", a lot of the very religious people in town marched against it and they tried to burn it down. And my grandmother, who was herself religious and not secular, nevertheless sort of defied them and insisted that her son Meir go to gymnasium. Actually Meir had a very different experience from all the rest of them. Meir not only went to Polish gymnasium but after he graduated from gymnasium, and this must have been into the '30's at some point, he went to university to study to be a doctor. He didn't go in Poland because it was very difficult for Jews to do that in Poland. He went first in Italy and then in Paris. He was presumably deported from Paris to Auschwitz because he was dead too. So his experience was different from everybody else's. One brother went to Palestine where he died a natural death in 1943 of a heart attack. Haim Yakov is the one who went to Palestine and Meir was in France.

Q: Do you have pictures of either of them?

A: I have pictures of Meir as a baby. No, actually as an adult, too. Come to think of it, yes, there is a picture of Meir as an adult, two pictures of Meir as adults. One from Italy and one I'm not sure where from. He went to Pisa and studied medicine and then he was in Paris. I think he married in Paris but I don't think he had children. And I don't know what happened to his wife. I don't know if she was deported or not deported. My father never tried to look her up after the war. And my mother, after my father's death, was suspicious that perhaps Meir's wife wasn't Jewish and that's why my father hadn't bothered to look her up after the war because he was in Munich for two and a half years after the war, he could have. And he knew his brother was in Paris. And he found out that his brother had been deported so he could have presumably investigated his brother's wife but he didn't. That may mean that the family was angry that he had married a non-Jewish woman or something like that. Anyway Meir's experience as an educated Jew, as an educated person and the fact that Haim Yakov was a devout Zionist, I think indicates that this family, while very religious, clearly had its arms out to the modern world, either through Jewish nationalism or through secular education. And it's also true that my father, although raised as a very religious little boy, as an adult was not religious. As an adult in Poland, I don't mean in America after the war, that's something else. But as an adult in Poland was not as religious as he had been growing up. He had a kosher home, he sent his kids to Jewish schools, he was very Jewish, but that was normal in Poland. People did that. But he was not that observant a Jew as an adult in the thirties as he had been growing up although his mother remained religious. And I assume some of his siblings were and some weren't. I really don't know. That would be a nice question to ask. My cousin in Israel would know all these answers because he was seventeen when he left and he would have a better sense of who was

religious and who was not. Anyway what else can I say about just his family background. His mother had this store. I think several of his brothers were involved in running the store or in, as I said, selling to the peasants. But some of the brothers moved. He himself moved to Warsaw. I think another brother, Simcha moved to Warsaw. I'm not sure where his sister Nehama lived when she grew up. I mean they were all adults by the '30's and they were all married and had children and so forth. The only thing I could say I suppose my grandmother, Masha Markusfeld Rozenblit, I mean 'Markusfeld" is very important. She was a Markusfeld. Rozenblit was something that accrued to her but she was a Markusfeld. She must have been a very feisty lady, she sounds like it. She ran this store, she had her six kids `which she raised by herself, or at least partly. We have a picture of her. She looks like a Jewish woman from Poland but she was kind of a neat lady, I think.

Q: Do you know when she was born?

A: No, but she was in her sixties when she was killed. So that would make her born in the 1880's. Right and if my father was born in 1907 that's about right. So she would have been born in the 1880's or 1870's, probably in the 1870's if he was born in 1907 and he was not her first child, he was her third or fourth child. And I think my father's father, Avraham Rozenblit, he was probably in his forties when he died, in around 1919 say so that means he was born also in the 1870's. My father, by the way, even though he did not have formal higher education or even secondary education, knew a lot of languages like many Jews of that part of the world. Yiddish was of course his native language like it was for virtually all the Jews of Poland except a small group of hyper-assimilated Jews. But he was fluent in Polish and that was common for his generation, that is people who came of age in the twenties and thirties knew increasingly also, unless they were just Hasidim, increasingly really knew Polish. And certainly my cousin Mutti, the one who moved to Palestine in 1937, '38, Mutti went to Polish public school in the thirties and has very fond memories of his teachers in the Polish elementary school in Lukow, that they were not anti-Semitic. I don't know if he's telling the whole truth when he says that, it may be nostalgia. I mean he has unkind words about Poles in general but his teachers were very loving and very nice and he has very fond memories of going to elementary school in Polish although how deep his Polish language knowledge is, is hard to say, because at this point in the 1990's after living in Israel for fifty odd years he really can speak only Hebrew and Yiddish and English which he learned in the British army during World War II but his Polish, I think, is so rusty that he didn't use it. But anyway my father knew Yiddish of course which was his mother tongue, Polish which he spoke totally fluently. He knew Hebrew. Now that's unusual. That would indicate also a Zionist whatever. I don't know. My mother says he knew Hebrew. Now what does that mean. She says, she insisted that he spoke modern Israeli Hebrew, that he could easily speak Hebrew to an Israeli. I don't remember that although we did have an Israeli neighbor in the fifties and my mother says he spoke to her in Hebrew. Now maybe he said three words and my mother thought that meant he…… Certainly he had a traditional cheder education and he was well versed. He wasn't a Talmudist but he knew Hebrew in the way a traditionally educated Jew knew Hebrew. It wasn't rote. He could look at the prayer book or at a bible and understand what it said. He knew Russian. I don't know if he could read or write Russian but he certainly could speak Russian and he knew German. So he knew his languages. Okay what else can I say about just childhood. My father was clearly a very mischievous little boy because there are several stories that I remember of him directly telling me for example about how they tormented the Malamed at cheder, how they tormented the teacher at the traditional Jewish school in the cheder. In fact I remember when I was in Hebrew school as a child he would say to me, Marsha you must never do the things to your teacher that we did, that

I did to our teachers. And he did all the things you read about in all the Haskala, I mean putting tacks on the chair and putting honey on the chair and they just bedeviled the life of the poor teacher, which was standard, standard childhood high-jinx. And the other thing is that his sister Nehama who was older than he, probably three or four years older even though she was three children older, his sister Nehama wanted a date. World War I was a kind of liberating experience, not the war itself, that was just a horrible experience. In the aftermath of the war things really opened up and social life really changed. And she wanted to go out on dates but her mother didn't want her to because her mother was still very traditional. And so my father and another one of his brothers would conspire with her to sneak her out of the house. And they did this through some kind of closet, some armoire, in Europe they have these closets and apparently they would move it against the window and open the window and open the back of the closet. I don't remember the exact details but I have vivid memories of riding in our family car in the 1950's with my father telling me stories about how they would trick his mother so that Nehama could go out on a date with probably the man she ended up marrying. But, you know, nothing serious. She didn't cover her hair, actually. Pictures we have of her or that I've seen of her as an adult, she didn't cover her hair. So clearly this was a very mischievous child. He always had a twinkle in his eyes as an adult, too, so he clearly was the kind…..and survivors, of course, were often the kind of people who were mischievous sorts. Okay, I think I don't know very much more about my father's real childhood, that is when he was a baby. If I think of anything I'll come back to it. My father got married pretty young. He got married when he was about twenty or twenty-one to a cousin of his whom he loved very deeply. So this was also non-traditional in a way, that is it was a love marriage, not an arranged one.

Q: Was it a first cousin?

A: You know I think it was a first cousin. I think it was his first cousin. I'm not a hundred per cent positive that she was his first cousin but she was definitely his cousin. Her father owned a lumber yard in the Warsaw area in a town called Wolomin, which I think is spelled W_O_L_O_M_I_N, I'm not a hundred per cent sure but I think so. It's in the Warsaw area. So he moved to Warsaw, or to Wolomin, and he ran his father-in-law's business or worked with his father-in-law in running the business. His wife though, whose name was either Mira or Perella I don't remember which, his wife though died about a week after their first child was born because she had a rheumatic heart and she was warned by doctors not to have any children and she then didn't listen. She wanted a child, it wasn't accidental. They weren't that religious and she died very shortly after he was born.

Q: So you think she was probably about twenty years old?

A: She was probably twenty, twenty-one. I think my father was twenty-one and she was probably the same age or a year younger. She was very young. Their son's name was Avraham. He was named after my father's father. Avraham was born therefore, let's see in 1943 when he was killed, he was twelve. So he was born in 1931. So my father wasn't twenty-one, he was twenty-four. Well, whatever. These stories have gotten passed from my mother who was not especially good at dates but I think Avraham was born either in 1930 or 1931. And his wife died and he was very, very miserable, naturally. And the family talked him into marrying her sister whose name was either Mira or Perella. In other words, Mira and Perella were his wives. I just don't remember which was the first and which was the second. I think Perella was the second. I think Mira was the first. Again I'm really not a hundred percent sure. Again my cousin in Israel would know the answer. And they had another child.

Q: The family talked him into it. Was this under duress then that he did this?

A: No, I think they talked him into it in the sense that this is the smartest and best thing to do. The child needs a mother, what better mother than her sister. She needs a husband, she's a nice lady, why don't you just marry her. You know I think it was that kind of thing. And he was very depressed and he needed a mother for his child and maybe she was already taking care of the kid. I don't know exactly but he definitely married her. And it was all right. Obviously it was sad. I didn't know this when I was a child. When I was a child my father was very open and talked a huge amount about his Holocaust experience and about his life before the war. But for whatever reason, maybe because it was ordinary tragedy rather than the special Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust, he didn't tell me about the fact that his first wife had died. He thought that would be too sad for me. Here he was telling me about his son and daughter who had been slaughtered by the Nazis. And that he could tell me about. But the specific tragedy of his own personal life with his wife's death he didn't tell me. I found out when I was twenty or something. A cousin of his in America was visiting us and she just mentioned it casually. I said, what are you talking about? And she told me the whole story and I just bawled. It was very sad that this love of his life died in childbirth. But anyway he did have a daughter with the second wife. Her name was Toby. That's what my mother called her. It's probably Tova, which again sounds both modern and Hebraic, Gittel is the Yiddish. Tova is already a sign of modernity in its modern Jewish form. She was four years younger than Avraham. So she would have been born in 1934 or '35, something like that, or '33 depending on exactly when Avraham was born. And my father continued to live in Wolomin with his wife and running this lumberyard. He sent his kids to -- there were several Jewish school systems in Poland as you know. There was the Zionist school system and the Bundist school system and the "frumie", the religious school system and so forth. He sent his children to a school system that was very like American Jewish Day schools, that is Jewish subjects which were taught in Hebrew and secular subjects were taught in Polish which was not the case in the Zionist or Bundist schools where everything was taught either in Hebrew or Yiddish with only a minimal amount of Polish. So his children went to this kind of modern Jewish school which means, of course, that it was a little bit more religious than both the Zionist or the Bundist schools which would indicate a kind of moderate religious position. So that's the kind of school he sent his kids to. As I said he kept a kosher home. I don't think he was Sabbath observing. So he was kind of a little traditional, but not….

Q: And they spoke Yiddish at home, I assume.

A: You know I don't know what language. Certainly growing up he spoke Yiddish at home, that goes without saying. What language did he speak as an adult in his family in Wolomin? I don't know. I really don't know if he spoke Yiddish or Polish or both. You know if you're utterly fluent it probably depends on your mood. Yiddish was definitely his mother tongue, what he dreamed in, what he counted in was definitely Yiddish, but I don't know. I bet they spoke Yiddish. I think most Jews spoke Yiddish.

Q: That would be my guess.

Q: My guess would be Yiddish although maybe sometimes Polish depending if the kids came back from school and spoke Polish, then you answered them in Polish and then all of a sudden for an

hour you were talking Polish. But then if you stopped talking for a minute and then started talking again you probably would speak Yiddish because Yiddish was the natural thing to speak. After the war in America my father was utterly fluent in English. He learned English very quickly and spoke English with my mother who was American born. But with his friends from Lukow who had survived the war, and some of them had as partisans and so on, these friends who were in America, their natural language that they spoke was Yiddish although all of them were modern. None of them were orthodox and so forth. The natural language they would speak was Yiddish. But sometimes they would just speak Polish and it would drive my mother crazy because as an American Jew she did know Yiddish but she didn't know Polish. And she would get very angry with them when they spoke Polish and the angrier she got the more they would speak Polish to make her angrier because they were very jealous of her because she had parents because she was American and they didn't. The thing they had on her was that they could speak more languages and so they would speak Polish. But my guess is that Yiddish would be the language of his home. I don't know what kind of home he lived in. He was certainly reasonably prosperous, certainly middle class and definitely in contact with his family in Lukow. He still had brothers and I think his sister was there. His mother certainly was there. Of course he had aunts and uncles and cousins and nieces and nephews. All of his brothers and sisters had married. They all had children. He was the closest with his sister. The sibling he talked the very most about was his sister. They were named for the same person. Mendel is a Yiddish nickname for Menachem and so technically his name was Menachem Mendel Tzidik. I should tell you my father's formal name was Menachem Mendel Tzidik Rosenblit which would translate -- Tzidik is Tzadok. Just a Jewish way of saying Tzadok and Nehama, his sister, who was called Nechuma, ?? raised eyes that she was called Nechuma. Nechuma was obviously named for the same person. She was born first and they named her Nehama to be after whatever relative, Menachem. So when my father was born they named him after the same relative. So he was very close with his sister and he talked about Meir because Meir was unusual because he was the one who had the secular education and had gone off to study medicine. That was all he talked about with any specificity except in terms of how each of them died in the Holocaust and I can tell you about that when we talk about the war years. I don't know what his wife did. I don't know if his wife worked or not. Probably not given the 1930's in Poland and middle class family. I doubt that she worked. They were definitely middle class. This is not somebody making -- with nostalgia, hindsight, looking back because well maybe this isn't a good historical -- forget this. I was going to say I've seen the list of property that he presented to the United Restitution Organization as part of his reparation claim. It's the kind of things middle class people have, you know silver and whatever, fur coats and so forth. But you know people could lie on those so that's not necessary a good source. I think that despite the very terrible situation for Jews in Poland in the 1930's, you know very high anti-Semitism and very terrible economy and so forth. That my father did reasonably well. He certainly didn't give any thought as far as I know to migrating, although, there was no place to migrate to except for Palestine. And he wasn't enough of a Zionist to want to go to Palestine although his brother Haim Yakov did. They had relatives in America like probably every Jew in Poland but America was out of the question by the twenties so I think he was perfectly content to be in Poland. In terms of his attitude to Poland as a country, actually when he was born, he was born in Russia, and of course the Polish Jews hated Russia because they were discriminated against so severely, I think he thought of himself as a Polish national. I think he was a typical Jew in Poland in the sense that his primary identity was as a Jew. If you asked him, who are you, what are you, he would say I am a Jew. But he was Polish, he spoke Polish, he identified with the Polish state. He thought of himself as a Polish subject. He used that word actually. He called himself a Polish subject which is a funny archaic word which is usually used for

kingdoms. But that's how Jews were in Poland. They were members of the Polish state but they weren't Poles so he would never have said that he was a Pole because he wasn't a Pole, he was a Jew. I suppose he was hoping that the Polish Republic would get to be a nicer place than it was. As I said I was ten when he died and at ten I didn't ask him such nice interesting political questions as what you thought about Poland and how you related to Poland and so on. What else could I tell you about right before the war?

Q: This is good. This is all good and it's what we need.

A: That's what you need. So basically before the war, on the eve of the war, in 1939, on September 1, 1939, my father had a business that was reasonably prosperous. He lived in a town near Warsaw called Wolomin. He had a wife; he had two children, a boy and a girl. He had a huge extended family. He had a very large family, he had a mother and sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, cousins. He had a large and intact and functioning family. And then the war started.

Q: So what happened?

A: What happened, okay. You know I'm used to telling the story to my six -year old son and of course to my six- year old son I have to include what happened during the war. I have to sketch out the war and what the Nazis did to the Jews and I don't have to do that here. In the first months of the war there was just chaos and all kinds of restrictions against the Jews. I assume that his business was Aryanized because that's what the Germans did as soon as they came in. They Aryanized businesses giving them to ethnic Germans. I assume my father was not compensated for it. He was a clever man. He probably managed to get stuff out of it before it was technically Aryanized. In all the stories he talked about the years before he was deported to Auschwitz he never mentioned that he was starving to death and he was living on the street or anything like that. Of course he was starving but he wasn't……He must have managed to get something out of his business even though he wasn't compensated for it. You read about this in the memoirs people who with Polish friends manage to make arrangements and deals and so forth. But anyway his business was confiscated, his bank accounts frozen, all of those things taken from him. But then, of course, he was in the ghetto. Now when my father was alive and he talked about his experiences in the war he always simply said the ghetto. He didn't specify which one. When my mother, who is not a historian and who is not at all good with details and in fact was terrible with details, when my mother talked about it for him, after he died, or when I would ask her as I got a little older, well which ghetto, she said the Warsaw ghetto, that he was in the Warsaw ghetto. Some of the details of his story very much match the Warsaw ghetto in terms of…..well the fact is he escaped from the ghetto when it was burning in April 1943. That's the Warsaw ghetto. What other ghetto was burning in April '43 that you could escape from in some way. But on the other hand, he didn't live in Warsaw. He lived in Wolomin which was close to Warsaw. There could have been a ghetto in Wolomin. On the other hand it was so close to Warsaw that all the people may have been moved to Warsaw. But usually people who had to move into a place did very, very badly. And my father obviously didn't fare badly. I think that he probably was in the Warsaw ghetto. He probably did just simply get moved from Wolomin into Warsaw. Let's say for the purposes of this record that he was in the Warsaw ghetto.

Q: Have you looked up any of the records about Wolomin if they did transfer them at some point?

A: No, I have never done that. It's funny, I'm a historian and not a genealogist and so I'm interested in what happened to the Jews and I've never bothered to look up the specifics of my father's experience in any systematic way. A lot of his experiences that he described are very, very similar to what you read in the memoirs. So it fits in very well. But I never tried to…..when I was reading Itzhak Arrad's book about ???? Treblinka which is about the operation ??? death camps which basically gassed all the Jews of Poland and certainly the region he was living in because the section of Poland that both he and his family was in was the general government. The Germans came in and annexed the Bartoland and created the general government and the Soviets took the eastern part of Poland. So my father was in the general government. Anyway when I read that I did pay attention to see if there was any word about Wolomin. There was description of deportations from Wolomin but I don't know. There probably are no records of the Wolomin ghetto. In any case, for the sake of argument I say that my father was in the Warsaw ghetto. I think he may have worked for the Jewish Council. He never said that. This is not a memory I have from him or from my mother or from my cousin Mutti who wouldn't have known because my cousin Mutti could only give me information about the pre-war period because he left in 1938. I have a memory from when I was a child of a friend of my father's from Wolomin, a man who had been a worker of his in his lumberyard who he was in Auschwitz with and who had also survived and who remained a friend after the war. He's still alive, a man named Shaya May. I think he's still alive. He was alive five years ago when my mother died because I called him but I assume he's still alive. Shaya once I remember when I was a child, it was right after my father died, too, actually he was talking to my mother about my father during the war. He mentioned something about my father working for that traitorous Council or something like that. A lot of Jews hated the Council. He was certainly not a member of the Council, of the 24 hot shots on the Council because I certainly would have come across his name if he were. The Warsaw ghetto Judenhad had several hundred employees so he may have known someone who knew somebody who got him a job on the Council. So he may have worked on the Council. From my memories of all the stories of the ghetto years I don't have any sense that he was in terrible shape. Obviously all the Jews had very little food and fuel and so forth. Things were very difficult in the ghettoes. But his family was intact. He had a son and his daughter. His son and daughter attended school. I think his wife taught school in the ghetto. My mother said that. Either she taught school or she taught piano. I think both stories, I remember. So she was involved in this kind of moral resistance that took place, the organization of clandestine schools, and sort of doing moral and cultural and so forth things. I don't think I know very much more about the specific ghetto experience.

Q: So you don't know if they lived with other families or….?

A: That I just don't know. The only person who might know is Shaya May but Shaya never wanted to talk about his experiences very much whereas my father talked about it all the time. I should add I have another source about my father's experiences and that is that when he went to school in America, when he came to America, the equivalent of "What I did on my summer vacation," he had to write an essay about his experiences. He had to write an essay that described his experiences during the war, I guess, so he wrote, I have part of that essay, part of it is missing. But he just says I suffered terribly and goes on. He doesn't provide specific details about what it was like in the ghetto or in the camps. There was also, of course, the testimony that he provided to B. Goodmachen for the reparation claim which my mother typed and of which there is no copy although she swears she made one. She doesn't know what happened to it and she suspects that my father actually destroyed the copy. I don't know why. But the copy just doesn't exist. Most of her memories I suppose come from that formal

document that she typed for him. So I don't know if he lived with others or what the situation was. Probably he did, most Jews did, it was a very crowded situation. Most of his family, of course, was in Lukow, in the Lukow ghetto although he had a brother in Warsaw. Simcha was in Warsaw and Simcha was shot for playing cards after curfew. He was shot during the time of the ghetto. I mean for not playing cards but after playing cards going out in the street. So Simcha died before the deportations. And he had been in Warsaw because he had moved to Warsaw already in the thirties or twenties or something and I don't know why he had moved or what he did at all. Again my cousin Mutti would probably know although he may not because since he was in Lukow he didn't really know the war…..he actually knew my father the least well because my father was already in Warsaw. He remembers my father coming home to visit twice or three times and giving him a ball or something like that. His stories are really best. From my cousin Mutti in Israel I mostly learned about my grandmother, about Masha Rozenblit, because that was his grandmother, too. Anyway so I really don't know much about the ghetto years except that things were okay. His brother was shot but things were reasonably okay. Of course then came the deportations. During the deportations from the Lukow ghetto, his mother was shot. She was in her sixties and rather than take her to Treblinka or Sobibor or wherever they were taking the Jews from Lukow, they shot her. Somebody must have witnessed that because how else would he have known, he wasn't in Lukow. She was shot. I assume the rest of his relatives in Lukow, aunts, uncles, cousins, Shia and his family were probably just deported to wherever Jews from Lukow were deported to and gassed.

Q: Do you know what year this was, was it '43?

A: No, well of all Polish Jewry, it's '42. The operation Rhinehart which just simply went methodically and liquidated all the ghettoes began something like March of '42 and was over by October '42 with some pockets left. That is there were Jews left in the Warsaw ghetto and in the….was it the Lublin? Yeah the Lublin ghetto was made into a labor camp and a couple of other places. There were pockets where they allowed Jews to still continue. Those were destroyed in '43. I assume that probably all of those relatives were killed in '42 unless by some chance Shia or another one of his brothers was in the labor camp, in the Jeneska Road labor camp or Poniyet Tovah, I forgot there were a whole bunch of labor camps in the Lublin area which maybe his brother or one of his nephews because if my father's son was already twelve by that time then his older brother's kids could have been teenagers. So maybe they were in…..But I just don't know. I assume that everybody was just killed in '42. His sister Nehama, though, who lived in Lukow with her family, you know I wrote down that her name was Pearlman but maybe her name was Bernstein. Yes, her name was Bernstein. Pearlman was my father's wife's maiden name. She and her husband who was much shorter than her, that was the joke of the family, that Nehama who was very tall, I presumably look like Nehama, -- that when I was a kid we would go to the Lukow Young Men's Benevolent Association and all the people who had come from my father's town -- and people would go Nehama, Nehama. They looked at me. I don't look like her in the pictures but they thought I looked like her. But anyway she and her family, her husband and her children (she probably had teen-age children) hid in the woods. They somehow escaped the ghetto. I don't know if they escaped in '42 or if they escaped earlier but they were hiding in the woods near there in the Lublin region. And they were only killed in '44, about three months before the end of the war in that part of Poland. They were handed over by some Poles to the Nazis at that point. So I don't know what happened to them if they were then sent to Auschwitz or if they were shot right away or whatever. But they did succeed in hiding. Nechuma, I should be fair, her name was not Nehama, her name was Nechuma. Actually she used a Polish name too, Helenie, she used the

name Helenie. There are pictures on the back that say Helenie. I think she was the only one that used a Polish name. My father didn't. He used Mendel, his Yiddish name and all the others, Shia, Meir, they all used their Hebrew names. But she used both Nechuma and Helenie. But anyway, Nechuma and her family, that had been hiding for years, at least for two, maybe even more than two, were handed over to the Nazis by some Poles for (as my mother used to say, for a bottle of vodka). The Poles were given booty for handing over Jews. Now I don't know if these people had just happened upon them and turned them over or if these were people who had been helping them all along and then turned them over, because often people were hiding with the assistance of Poles. Maybe it was neighbors, good Poles who were helping them who turned them over, who knows. I think that most of his family, the Lukow branch of the family, his mothers and brothers and sisters, well whatever, there's not that many brothers by that time because Simcha and his family were in Warsaw and presumably they were deported in 1942. Simcha had been shot earlier for curfew violations but presumably his family was deported in '42 when most of the Jews in Warsaw were deported. In Lukow Haim, his brother Haim Yakov had already gone to Palestine although his family hadn't. My father's brother Haim Yakov had gone to Palestine in 1937 alone. His son Mutti, followed him in 1938 leaving the wife and the other children. So they were all presumably killed also in '42. Shia was there and his family presumably were all killed and Nehama was there but she was in hiding until '44 when she was handed over to the Nazis, she and her family were handed over to the Nazis and killed and of course Meir was in Paris and he was deported, I assume, again I don't know this, but I assume he was deported in July of 1942 when the big raid in Paris took place, July 16 I believe, 1942, when most Polish Jews in Paris were deported. Now this is not necessarily true. He could have escaped to the south and have been picked up at some other time. He definitely was deported to Auschwitz because after the war my cousin Mutti in Israel, he was too upset to deal with the issue but his wife Zeporah, spent months dealing with the Red Cross and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency to track down all the Rozenblit relatives, also her own relatives from her own family. But her family was mostly in Palestine because they were all Zionist who'd come mostly in the 20's. So she tracked them down and she found my father and she found nobody else. So in fact the first time I saw those letters I wanted to cry because the first letter had to be in English, the Red Cross would only deal in English. So the first letter to my father that my cousin Mutti wrote to his uncle was in English so I could read it easily and my father didn't know English yet but Mutti knew English and then of course all subsequent correspondence was just real letters because my father had a real address and that was all in Yiddish which I could read too but with much more difficulty so I didn't read it quite as easily. But she found nobody else. So I assume obviously she would have found -- there were all these organizations after the war, all these Jewish and non-Jewish organizations tracking down people. So he was presumably killed either in '42 or '43 or '44, everybody else. And Nehama definitely in '44. Simcha at some point before '42, everybody else in '42 except for my father and his family. In any case assuming that my father was in the Warsaw ghetto, his family was able to stay there after that initial depletion of the Warsaw ghetto in August/September of 1942. That confirms that he worked for the Jewish Council actually because the people who stayed in Warsaw, the 70,000 or so that remained after the major liquidation either worked for the Jewish Council or were involved in SS industry, or whatever industry that was working for the German economy.

Q: Maybe that lent itself also to them having slightly better food conditions or something like that.

A: That's right. Also I think the Wolomin ghetto was simply, I read that in Orad the Wolomin was totally destroyed in 1942. So my father I know was in the ghetto until April of 1943. That's

Warsaw, that April ’43 date is so fundamentally Warsaw that he had to have been in the Warsaw ghetto. In fact he always lit a yahrtzeit candle for his children at Pesach because that’s around, I mean the Warsaw ghetto was finally liquidated on the second night of Pesach. And they didn’t die that night. I’ll tell that story in a minute but it was just a few weeks later. So Pesach of 1943, so Pesach is when he lit a yahrtzeit candle for everybody then. I don’t know, maybe because he was in Warsaw and that had such an impact on his conscience. His mother was probably shot at some point in 1942 not necessarily at Pesach. My father, therefore, and his wife and his children and his wife’s sister who was crippled, not totally crippled but she schlepped a leg for whatever reason, they were together in the ghetto. So he was in the ghetto after that liquidation in August/September 1942 when most of the people in the ghetto were liquidated. So he was one of the 70,000 that stayed in the ghetto until April of ’43 when the Nazis decided on the final liquidation of the ghetto. Now my father in 1943, he was born in 1907, so in 1943 he was 36. Well he wasn’t yet because his birthday is November, so he was 35 years old. And he had a twelve-year old son and an eight-year old daughter and a wife and a sister-in-law. And they decided to escape from the burning ghetto. Because of the uprising the Nazis sort of bombed the ghetto and sent in firebombs and so forth and basically burned the ghetto down. And my father and his family decided to escape from the ghetto. I don’t know if that means they went through the sewers or not. In Warsaw that’s how people escaped from the ghetto. This is where he really told. My father told the stories from the escape from the Warsaw ghetto until liberation. That’s what he told. The ghetto experience didn’t interest him. That must mean that it was not too terrible. My image of hearing the story as a child was that they escaped into the woods. But there are no woods around the Warsaw ghetto or around Warsaw even for that matter. So I don’t know how they escaped, presumably they did it through the sewers. But in any case they escaped. Oh, I do know, my mother I think told me this that he did make attempts through Polish, non-Jewish friends to get his children to be taken by non-Jews. And nobody would do it. He was unable to get anybody to agree to do that. So anyway there he was with his twelve year old, his eight year old, his wife and his sister-in-law and they escaped and somehow they made it to some woods, or maybe not to some woods, they were just out. They had a kind of pact that if one of them should get lost, they would not look for that person because that could be problematic and instead if one of them should get lost, they should go to a farm house that they knew which was some distance away, my memory is 90 kilometers but I was a little kid when I heard this so I don’t know where it was. Somehow Avraham, my father’s son, who by the way was not called Avraham, that’s my way of Hebraisizing it again, it’s Avremy, the Yiddish nickname for Abraham. Avremy who was twelve somehow got lost, he wasn’t there. My father’s wife said that she had to go look for Avremy and my father said no. We’ll lose you if you do that. We have to stick together and go to the farmhouse. We’ll find Avremy at the farmhouse. And she just was mad with concern for her son who’s not technically her son but she had raised him his whole life so he was her son. And she went to look for him and they never saw her again. I assume that means she was picked up by SS soldiers and by the SS and taken directly to Auschwitz which at that point was the only, by 1943 -- oh maybe not Auschwitz, maybe she was taken to Treblinka, I don’t know where she was taken to but she was presumably killed. But my father and his daughter and his sister-in-law did go to this farm house and they found Avremy there without his shoes, a Polish farmer had taken them, probably he needed them, probably he thought that Avremy would be killed soon anyway, what did he need shoes for. Who knows why he took them, but he took them. This is April of ’43, my father, Avremy, Toby and Tova whatever, and his sister-in-law whose name I don’t know and then they were arrested, they were found. I mean it was very hard to really escape especially since the Poles were so hostile and the Nazis were so eager to find them. And he was taken to Auschwitz. They were taken to Auschwitz. Of course my father was 35, and the rest of them

were not 35, they were twelve, eight, and I don't know how old his sister-in-law was, presumably in her thirties too but she was crippled. And she was as if the mother of these children. She was an adult female with two children. And so when they got to Auschwitz, he was sent to the left or the right, whichever way. He was sent to do slave labor and they were sent the other way which means that they were gassed. So in April of 1943 his son and his daughter and sister-in-law were killed by the Nazis. But he was in Auschwitz and he was a slave laborer in Auschwitz for a long time. He worked in Auschwitz and he would talk about his experiences quite a lot. He talked about how awful it was although I must say that he did not dwell on how awful it was. My father talked about his experience in the camps a lot. Saturday nights when we would have company, in the 1950's if you were a Jewish family in Brooklyn you would have bagels and lox for dinner, and we would have bagels and lox and herring and so on and company and he would talk . People would say Mark what was it like. And he would talk. And I just remember Saturday nights in my childhood hearing my father talk about this. And when he talked about it he did not talk about the horrors so much. He certainly made it very clear that it was so horrific that you could not even imagine it. And in fact when people would be nasty, nasty is the wrong word, but you know how Americans could be presumptuous and they would say, how could you have done such a thing? Like my father would say we found a rat and we ate it or something. And they'd say, ooh how could you eat a rat? It's not really nasty. And he would say, you shouldn't talk, you don't know what it's like to be in a fire. I remember the expression, you don't know what it's like to be in a fire. But he wouldn't dwell on how awful it was except to indicate that it was unbearably awful and constant beatings and starvation and filth and dirt and crowded and disgusting. He indicated that but that's not what he dwelled on. What he dwelled on instead in his talking about it was the things that people did to survive and the things that people did to help each other survive. The image that I had as a child of what it was like in the camps was unbearable sadism and cruelty on the part of the Nazis but the inmates being human, working to do things that would make themselves survive and things that human beings do. I don't mean that human beings are pigs and do horrible things, but in the good sense of being human, that is if helping each other and working together to try to survive, and so forth. For example he always spoke about what the memoirs all talked about, that is the whole business of organization, the whole network through which people bargained and traded and bartered and traded their bread for other things. He talked all the time of it how it was crucial to trade your bread for soap, or to trade your bread for an onion or for garlic or something and soap so you could clean yourself. Onions or garlic so you could get vitamins. All of that which I've read in umpteen memoirs but he talked about that all the time, about the need to trade. Of course the whole network depended on pilfering from Nazi stewards and from the suitcases of people who came in to be gassed. So he talked about that a lot. He didn't use the word organization as far as I can remember but maybe he did and I just don't remember. But he talked about that you really needed to do that. He also talked, in fact more importantly than this whole organization business, he talked about holding on to the will to live. My most vivid memory I have from childhood, the most single vivid memory of my own childhood is my father talking about holding on to the will to live. And that the only way you could survive such a horrible place was to hold on to the will to live and that's how you did it, you just held on to the will to live. Like literally held on to it. And every second said, I'm going to live, I'm going to live, I'm going to live. I just remember that vividly. I don't remember what he said how you did it, how you held on to the will to live or what strategies he used to hold on to the will to live, which I read about in memoirs, thinking about the past, thinking about the future, thinking about this, whatever. There are different strategies that people used. That I don't remember, his own personal strategies. But I do remember him talking about that -- holding on to the will to live. I also remember that of course it made him

lose all faith in God. Actually I don't remember that, I take that back. He did lose all faith in God. But that he didn't tell me about. My mother told me about that when I was older. He didn't want me to know that because he didn't think that was fair to me. He thought that I was a child and not know that he didn't believe in God as a result of Auschwitz. And he didn't believe in God because his children had been killed and everybody's children had been killed not just his. That didn't stop him from wanting to have a kosher home or from going to shul all the time. He didn't stop being a Jew, you know what I mean? Well, actually he did stop going to shul until I was born. From the time the war ended until I was born he would not go into a shul, he would not do anything religious. He would not go into a Passover seder, he would not do anything religious. No, that's not true. He would go to a Passover seder. I think that was the only religious thing he would do but he would not go to shul. When I was born he didn't even think about it. He went to shul to name me. He was a Jew. That's what eastern Jewry was like. You were a Jew. You did things because you were a Jew. Jews named their daughters in shul. The angel of death might kill your daughter if you didn't do that. You know you had to. Just because you didn't believe in God didn't mean that you didn't name your daughter in shul. And that broke the ice and he went to shul all the time. He loved to go to shul. He absolutely loved to go to shul. He didn't go every week, he wasn't religious. But he went at least once a month. He really loved to go to shul. In fact he even wanted me to go to a Jewish day school but my mother didn't want me to go because we weren't that religious and in those days it was just orthodox schools. Getting back to his experiences I don't remember that he talked about how he lost his faith in God but that was a central experience that he had in the camps, the loss of faith.

Q: Do you remember any discussion of any specific episodes or incidents that he might have told you or other people?

A: No, I don't remember anything specific from the camps except the business of trading bread for soap which is not a specific incident; I'm sure he did it more than once and the business of holding on to the will to live and the sense of how unbearable it was. I think in his testimony for reparations he did provide some specific instances. But my mother, who unfortunately was terrible at details didn't remember them and had lost the carbon copy. I'm sure he was beaten mercilessly many times as was everybody, I mean he wasn't singled out. I'm sure there were but I really don't unfortunately know any very specific thing. In terms of what he actually did in the camp, I assume he did a variety of labor things. He could be a carpenter so presumably when they asked him what do you do, he said I'm a carpenter and they did have him building. My mother used to say that he built crematoria. But they were already built by the time he got there so I don't -- see my mother was really bad at detail. It was a shame. I'm a historian concerned with detail and she wasn't. And my father died when I was young. So I'm bringing all these memories of sitting around our table listening so I can think of something very specific.

Q: If you don't have it that's okay too.

A: I remember that he would be annoyed with people who presumed -- like if he would discuss -- in the Warsaw ghetto for example he would say how it was wonderful when a horse would die and they would just eat the horse meat and people would say, horse, how could you eat horse, and he would say, lady, you haven't been through a fire, you don't know. People were in awe of my father. He was a very intelligent man and they would sit there sort of enthralled with his stories. I don't remember a specific incident unless I keep on talking I'll come to something. I

don't remember anything specific. I do know that he was in Auschwitz from April of '43 until January of '45 when the Russians -- so in terms of your dates through 1944 he was in Auschwitz. In January of 1945 as you know the Russians came very close to Auschwitz. Knowing that the Russians were going to be there any minute the Nazis evacuated the camp and in the famous death march that Elie Wiesel and millions of other -- Isabella Leitner -- millions of other people described -- marched off people to Germany. And my father was part of that death march. I remember him describing that a little bit in more detail than the camps. I remember him saying that it was very cold. It was January, it was winter, and they didn't have boots and they didn't have coats. Two thirds of the people died. And I remember him saying that you couldn't fall asleep because if you let yourself fall asleep you would die. The snow was deceptive. You think that it's warm when you're in it and so you could fall asleep. And then of course you freeze to death because in fact it's not warm it's cold. So you should never go to sleep in the snow. And I remember him saying that they would force each other to stay awake. In some of the memoirs I've read about how they were put in barns, my father never talked about that. He just talked about the snow and how people straggled, they would be shot of course and the Nazis would beat people up. The Nazis were very nervous of course at this point. He was taken to Dachau. Other people went to other places. They were in Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald. They were all taken to concentration camps in Germany. He personally was taken to Dachau where he spent the next few months. I don't know how long it actually took him to get from Auschwitz to Dachau. In some of the memoirs you read how that part of the way they were on trains and trucks and so forth. My father never said that. He just said the death march. He called it the death march and he said they took us to Dachau. So he was in Dachau for a few months and he was liberated by the Americans in April of 1945. And I have a couple of little stories that I remember of the actual liberation. Not of the moment of liberation. Not of the moment of liberation although I have a wonderful story of somebody else of the actual moment but I won't put this in my father's record. It's one of those classic stories, the other story of how this other person got out of Dachau. The Nazis left the camp before the Americans got there and he was wandering around the streets and was almost shot by some American soldiers but he spoke Yiddish to them and one of them happened to be Jewish and so forth. That's not my father's story. Right after liberation he and Shia, this person who had been his employee in Wolomin before the war and had been in Auschwitz with him and had been in the orchestra in Auschwitz actually, my father was just a laborer in Auschwitz but Shia was in the orchestra and they were in the death march together and so forth. And after the war they were walking around and Shia picked up a rotten potato from the street that he saw and my father said what are you doing that for because now we have food. And Shia was still too scared that there would be no food. But that again is not my father's story because that's not what he did. He of course was nothing at the end of the war. He was utterly emaciated and utterly depleted. My mother used to say he weighed fifty pounds at the end of the war. I can't believe that. But he must have weighed seventy or eighty. My mother was also an exaggerator a little bit. But I bet he weighed seventy pounds at the end of the war. He was not a huge man anyway, he was probably about five nine. He was broad but thin.

Q: He must have been strong to have survived all the labor and all.

A: Yeah. He was actually old to survive. Most of the survivors were teenagers, which is why they're still alive. My father if he were alive today would be in his eighties. I mean he happened to die when he was young. He happened to die when he was fifty-three but even if he hadn't died and if he were still alive the man would be eighty-four years old. No, that's not right. Yes, he would be eighty-five on his next birthday. Whereas most of the survivors that

you talk to I'm sure are in their seventies because they were teenagers or in their early twenties during the war. My father was a very old survivor, very unusual, he must have been extraordinarily strong. It's funny to say that somebody in their mid-thirties would already be no longer at the height of their physical strength but it's true. So it's just amazing that he lived. But anyway he was liberated by the Americans. He did not go to a DP camp which was the standard experience but rather he went to work for the United Nations Relief and Restitution Agency and his job for them was to help people find housing. He must have learned English working for them or before but he lived in an apartment in Munich. He had a real apartment and had a real job and sort of went about his business. I assume for a few months, I mean I assume that immediately after the war he was, it took months to recuperate. In fact he said that it was months before he felt like a human being again. I do know that most of his teeth had rotted during the war and that one of the first things he did when he had some modicum of strength was he just walked around the streets of Munich and looked for a dentist. He found a dentist, walked in, asked the dentist to pull whatever was left and to give him false teeth. The dentist wanted to give him anesthesia for the pulling and he said, no need. He was so into pain that it didn't matter. And the German dentist didn't charge him because my father had a number, he had been in Auschwitz. He just showed his number. In fact in those days you just showed your number and you got anything. He didn't pay for too much after the war. The apartment I think was also free.

Q: I was wondering about that because I talked to a number of people and they said well we just lived there. And I said how did you get food. Well, we got food.

A: Well, if they were in a DP camp they got food from the UN.

Q: No, I mean in cities.

A: But if they lived in cities -- well my father worked, I mean my father had a real job, but before that he didn't have the job from the first minute, I think it was not a problem.

Q: There was guilt.

A: Yeah, although the Germans didn't have any food. They must have been given food by the American army of occupation. He must have just been given it. I don't know that. I know somebody who studies the DP camps, she might know. Anyway, so he wasn't in a DP camp. I assume he stayed in Dachau because that's what they did. They set up barracks and gave people food and medicine and let them come to themselves. We have pictures of my father right after the war, not right, right after the war but in '46 where he looks fine. He had obviously regained his strength and so forth. But so he lived and worked for UNRRA and he did have housing and he had a German, non-Jewish girlfriend who he lived with which is very weird. And she knew Yiddish which is very weird.

Q: I heard of some southern Germans who know Yiddish actually.

A: Well, yeah, she was a Bavarian. She was a beautiful woman. Her name was Lisa, well probably Elizabeth, but Lisa was her nickname. Just a beautiful woman. Her husband had been a soldier probably and he probably had been killed and she was probably lonely and my father had access to food and people were starving. She wanted to marry him actually and he couldn't do that. To live with her is one thing, to sleep with a shiksa is one thing; to marry a shiksa after you just

….. I remember him saying he used to have dreams. His mother would come and beat him up in his dreams. The very idea that he would even think of marrying a shiksa was -- a German shiksa no else. Well, I mean from my grandmother's point of view a shiksa is a shiksa, it doesn't matter what kind. But the fact that she was also a German shiksa didn't really help. I'll show you her picture. She was gorgeous, just beautiful. I have this huge urge to look her up although she's probably eighty-five years old, too. I mean at the end of the war how old was my father? In 1947 he was forty right. And she may have been ten years younger so she would only be in her mid-seventies at this time. I don't know her name.

Q: I think it would be interesting to learn something about her.

A: I don't know her name. Her name is Lisa. I don't know her last name. Although actually some of my father's Lukower friends, that is the friends from the town that he met again in America, they might know her name because she lived with him. All these pictures of my father and his other survivor friends in Germany after the war. There she is, she's with them. My father did know German though, he probably did speak to her in German. Anyway, so he lived in Germany and had this job, joined the Zionist organization and stuff and then in December of 1947 he came to the United States. That was right after Congress passed that emergency legislation allowing in 100,000 victims of Nazi persecution. I guess because he worked for UNRRA he was able more easily than others to get an early seat in that. And he came to the United States in December of 1947 leaving Lisa behind in Munich. I don't think he ever had any contact with her again. Maybe initially he did but not for very long. He got himself a job very quickly. It was the only job he ever had in America. He actually lived with a Lukower. He lived with Mrs. Feldman who had moved to America God knows when. But her son, Muttel, who was my father's friend in Europe and had survived the war also, and was my father's friend in Germany, he lived with his mother, Mrs. Feldman. Muttel came later to America, too. But he lived with Mrs. Feldman. He wandered around lower Manhattan looking for a job, he got a job right away for a company called Civikoppen Minor which did store fixtures, you know furniture that's inside stores. And he worked both as a carpenter -- he knew how to work with wood, he owned a lumberyard, and he was also very handy, actually more than handy. He was talented with his hands. He could build beautiful things and so on. So he got a job there, initially I guess just as a carpenter since he didn't -- I don't know, whatever -- but he also worked for them supervising job installations. When they did Bambergers in New Jersey, he went out to Bambergers and made sure the job was done right. And what he wanted more than anything was to save up enough money to open some kind of business. He was an entrepreneur by nature and that's what he wanted to do. He died before he could do that. But that's what he wanted to do. So he got a job right away, I mean he probably got a job three days -- oh actually I have a funny story to tell. I know you're mostly interested in the Holocaust but I love this story. When he came to America he was met at the boat by his aunt, Judith Marcus, Marcusfeld shortened to Marcus. Actually she was an aunt-in-law. She was his mother's brother's wife. His mother's brother had died. They had come to America probably before World War I and had shortened the name to Marcus to make it more American. Anyway his uncle was dead but Judith Marcus met him at the boat and she said to him, today I'll speak to you in Yiddish, tomorrow only English. You're now in America, you have to speak English. Presumably he knew some English because he worked for UNRRA. Today I will call you Mendel, but from now on you have to have an American name and your name is Mark. She gave him a name that was common in America. In 1947 Mark was a common name. So in fact, when he became a citizen in 1951 he changed his name to Mark. So in America he was Mark Rozenblit, although my mother called him alternate…..she called him Mark most of the time,

but she called him Mendel when she was being affectionate because that was his name. Mendel was his name. He was forty-four years old when he changed his name to Mark. Although he used it, it was his American name. My cousins called him uncle Mark and my uncle called him -- I mean everybody called him Mark. Anyway he came to America, was met by his aunt, he got a job, and he met my mother a year and a half later in June of 1949 and they got married in November of 1949 and they had me in October of 1950. The rest is history. He adjusted extremely well to America. He loved America. He felt utterly happy to be American. He had an American wife which is unusual for survivors. He didn't feel the need to be -----of course he was friends with all the people who survived from his town. My mother hated them. They were a bunch of people who survived from this town. Actually a very large number considering how tiny the town was. Virtually all of them had been in the Partisans, except for Muttel. I think Muttel had been in the camps. Everybody else, I forget all their names now, Frimmet. God, Frimmet, Frimmet and Dave Rosen. They're so unlikely to have been in the Partisans, it's amazing. And Chayetta whose son looked like somebody else, not her husband. There's this sort of crew of people that I grew up with. Those people, I haven't seen them in a hundred years.

Q: But they all ended up in New York?

A: They all ended up in New York, all the survivors. There were probably eight of them; it's not like there were hundreds of them. But there were some of them. Some of them actually subsequently moved to Israel. In the 50's and 60's they lived in America and 70's and some of them retired to Israel. Well Frimmet and her husband and the Feldmans, Muttel and Fanny moved to Israel. But I think Lola and her husband, I forget his name, they still live in America, in New York. I mean, unless they're dead, I haven't spoken to these people in a hundred years, a hundred years, but a long time. So my father adjusted very, very well to life in America. He really did. He didn't want to have children because he lost two. He had one because he thought it wasn't fair to my mother to impose that on her but he wouldn't have any others because it was too much of a risk that you could lose your children. In a way I replaced his daughter; his son he mourned for continuously. He had nightmares all the time, all the time my mother said. I don't remember that. That was from my mother. He was in his daily life in America, fine. He joked and laughed and was successful. I mean not successful in the huge sense but he had a job and worked and made a living and he was saving money for a business and he had an American family. I remember my father being loving and warm and it was fine in his waking consciousness but of course he was racked by nightmares. He missed his son profoundly. He was in excruciating pain at a barmitzvah. He had a very hard time at barmitzvahs because his son died just before his own. The loss of his children was really unbearable to him. The loss of everyone else he could handle but the loss of his children was unbearable to him.

Q: That must have been a big responsibility for you really to have that position.

A: I felt it an honor. I felt very privileged. I felt very special as a child. I felt that I was privy, very close to tis horrible thing that had happened to the Jewish people and therefore that I understood it better than others. I felt honored. I felt terrible for my father and the family and so forth. But I felt very special. I felt responsible, yes, but not in the negative sense of wishing that I didn't have a burden but in the positive sense of feeling that I had a special responsibility to bear the information and the pain of it. I knew lots of other people in the same situation though because although my mother was American and therefore all the family that I had was American, that is her family, we knew a lot of survivors. Both because of the Lukower, all of

these people who had survived, but also because in Brooklyn in the fifties when I was growing up there were survivors. There were lots of survivors. I had friends whose parents were survivors. Not all my friends, certainly. In fact probably most of my friends didn't have survivor parents but Elaine and Esther Rosenberg's parents were survivors and whatever, I don't have to name all the names. But there were plenty of other survivors around so it was not an unusual or weird thing at all. But yes I did feel a responsibility, a very great responsibility, probably magnified by the fact that he died when I was ten years old. I remember, my father always talked about it, I do not remember a time in my life when I did not know about the Holocaust. We didn't call it the Holocaust, of course, we called it the war, or the camps, or the Nazis, whatever. So I don't remember not knowing about it. I always knew about it. But I do remember the first time I saw pictures. There was a series of pictures prepared by the American army for Germans so they would know how horrible the camps were. And my father had a set. In the back it said "Zo vais in Dachau" So it was in Dachau. It was horrific pictures. You know those really gross concentration camp pictures from the end of the war when things were even worse, because there were bodies lying all over the place and so forth. And I remember I was eleven years old when I came across those pictures and I vomited. I remember that very vividly. I mean this wasn't a picture of my father, of course, my father was alive. Not then, he was already dead. Yeah, I felt this great responsibility because of it, absolutely. Anyway what else would you like to know about the whole thing.

Q: I think that should probably cover it.

A: As much as you guys need, right.

Q: Yeah. If there's anything else that you feel you want to include for the sake of this interview and have it in the museum we can turn off the tape and if you think about it, you can tell me.

A: Yeah, I'm just trying to think. You know of course I'm not the survivor so I can't give you the details that your survivors are giving you. My father also did die when I was ten which means that I didn't get a chance to question him and whatever. My cousin in Israel could only provide information about Poland before the war. My mother was bad at detail. So it's a hard thing. Let me just think of a few other things randomly. My father taught me not to hate all Germans because of the Nazis. He thought the Nazis were evil but he didn't hate all Germans. I mean I think the fact that he had a non-Jewish girlfriend is a sign of that. He taught me that. He taught me that I had to distinguish between people. Nazis were evil but not all Germans were evil. I probably did get the sense that all Poles were anti-Semitic in my childhood. That is, I think Polish Jewry in general thought that although no, no although. That was the sense I probably got. I got the sense that obviously most people were killed but that those who survived did so not because they were awful people. I mean there was this notion in certain circles especially in the fifties that the people who survived had been vicious and horrible and mean and had killed each other and been dog eat dog. From my father I learned that you survived because you were clever. You held on to the will to live so you were strong psychologically. You were clever. You figured things out. You were lucky, gutsy. That's what made you live, not being underhanded and mean but being tough and strong. In fact I had a wonderful experience. I went to the first international gathering of Holocaust survivors in Israel in 1981 and I in fact gave a paper on it. I gave a paper on teaching the Holocaust at the university level. But I went to not all the sessions but many of the sessions. I went to the final session which was held at the kotel, at the wall, when there were speeches. Menachem Begin spoke and Teddy Kollack spoke, everybody spoke, millions of speakers, all in English, really weird. But anyway English

was the common language because there were French survivors and whatever. Anyway so I went to it and it got real cold. It was at night in Jerusalem in the summer and I was wearing a jacket and I was feeling very cold. Begin, maybe he wasn't the last speaker, but he was one of the last speakers and he was going on and on endlessly. Everybody else had spoken for two minutes because thee were hundreds of speakers. He was going on. He was already prime minister. He was going on and on and he was really being nasty. He was exhorting the crowd that if they didn't live in Israel they were traitors to the Jewish people. It was a really not nice, disgusting speech. Half the crowd started to leave. They just started to leave. They picked themselves up and they walked. My American side, that is my Protestant side, I mean I'm not a Protestant but you know what I mean, the American side that you just stand on line whatever, was appalled that they would do that. Because, after all, even if you hate him, even if you think he's saying awful things, and I certainly don't agree with Menachem Begin politically and I though what he was saying was awful. But still he's the prime minister of a country. You don't get up and leave in the middle of his speech. It's just not nice even if you're cold and even if you're unhappy you don't do it. And so I was really annoyed. My sort of American side that hates when people cheat on line was getting very angry. And then all of a sudden like I had this revelation, wait a second, that's why they survived. They just do what seems to them the right thing to do. And then I loved them because I remembered all these survivors from my childhood. My father's dead for a long time and I've moved away from that world and I just loved them and I wanted to kiss all of them. I didn't leave because I'm not them. But they left because that's why they not only survived but they also succeeded after the war in returning to normal life. The vast majority of the survivors are normal, functioning human beings. Even if they're a bit neurotic, even if they scream a little too much, even if they have more fears than your average person, even if they are way more over-protective of their children, than your average person, even all of those things and even if their children say oh my parents were such crazy people, they are functioning human beings, they are not lunatics. And the ones who are were lunatics anyway. The ones who are were lunatics before the war. This had a searing and traumatic and devastating effect on them but they function as human beings, successful ones for the most part. There are lots of successful business people, successful professionals. All the survivors I know as children all of them made it. Even if they were just laborers, they still went to work in the morning and they still provided for their families. They were fine, they were really fine; crazy but crazy in a way that's understandable. But anyway so I love them all because they are what they are. They survived because they have the courage to do what feels right at the moment instinctively. I don't know if there's anything else I can say at all. This is not about my father's American experience and that's of course what I'm most familiar with. He had a good one. He spoke English all the time to my mother. They spoke Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand which was enough so that I did understand Yiddish. He was fiercely proud of being Jewish even if he wouldn't fast on Yom Kippur because he didn't believe in God anymore and he'd gone hungry long enough. But I didn't know he didn't fast on Yom Kippur. He didn't want me to know that because ……I mean I'm sure he would have told me if I was older, but I was little. I think that's all I have to say, at least now. If I think of something in the next ten minutes we can always add it.

Q: Okay. I want to thank you very much for your time and for this interesting story.

A: You're welcome, you're welcome. Let me add just one last thing. I know this is not going to go into the cards that you're doing but somehow the transcripts of these will be saved.

Q: Yes they will.

A: So I'll just say it. My son is named for my father. I'm named for my father's mother and he's named for my father. And so therefore we have Masha and a Mark and a Marsha and a Mark and it's very nice. And he really feels connected to my father and to the Holocaust. He has always known about it and you asked me if I feel a sense of responsibility and I do. I feel it both in my professional life and in my personal life. And I'm very pleased that I was able to tell my son about the Holocaust in a way like I learned about it, in a very personal way, in a way that emphasizes the goodness in all human beings but it also emphasizes that we should be careful about the evil that human beings are capable of and I feel that as a child of a Holocaust survivor that I have a moral obligation to purvey the meaning of the Holocaust to the next generation and I'm glad I was able to do it with my own son. A lot of children of Holocaust survivors are worried how they will do it and I think it can be done easily, so thank you for interviewing me.

Q: Thank you.

A: I have one more thing to add, I just remembered. When the Nazis occupied Poland in 1939, my father's wife said to him, escape to the Russian zone, you can do that for a couple of months in September, October, November of 1939; you go escape. After all the Germans won't hurt women and children but they might hurt men. And my father said well it's true the Germans certainly won't hurt women and children because after all his memories, like most Polish Jews. His memories of World War I were that the Russians were the horrible creeps but when the German army came and occupied Poland the situation of the Jews improved. The Germans were civilized and nice and so forth. So he had a sense that the Germans wouldn't be so bad but he didn't want to go to the east because he thought that the Russians would be very barbaric and he didn't want to go to the east. He said the Germans are more civilized than the Russians. I will take my chances with the Germans and I don't want to leave my family alone and so forth. So the image of the German was this positive one which of course worked to the detriment of lots of Polish Jews. That's all I wanted to add…

Q: Thanks.

A: You're welcome. My father understood that Hitler was a maniac and that the Nazis were evil and that they were doing terrible things to the Jews. He understood that. He just thought that ultimately German decency would prevail whereas the Russians were utterly repulsive and that it was at best to stay at home with family and take one's chances with these Germans than go off to Russia.

Q: Okay.