

This is an interview with Faye Greenblatt, a holocaust survivor, now living in Columbus, Ohio. The interview took place on February 11, 1988. The interviewer is Louisa Hext.

I'd like to begin with your holocaust experience, like throughout the holocaust years. So would you like to tell me a little about the status that you were just because you were Jewish. What was it at the time? The fact that you were Jewish, what was that?

That was my only problem, because I was Jewish. I lived in a Jewish town. Everybody was Jewish there and we were prosecuted just because we were Jewish. When the Germans came in, with the help with the native Ukraines, right away stormed into our small town and took actually, like robbed us, took all our possessions. So prior to when the Germans came in we were already experiencing war, the after affects of war. Like the Russians came in, Poland was taken by the Russians, so we were hungry, we didn't have any food because the Russians took away. And then when the Germans came and the Ukraines came into our town and just like took all our other possessions that we still were able to save up or to hide from the Russians, they took. So by then right away we experienced hunger. Even though we were not outright killed and punished, literally

beaten or something like this, right away, right away we felt sub-human because we were always hungry. People just walked around thinking what am I going to eat. Luckily our family had facilities for farming behind the house, like gardening, like home gardening, but on a larger scale. So we were able to survive that way. I had two brothers, I was the oldest. My father wasn't home anymore. It was just my mother and my two brothers. So the day to day life was more or less like let's survive. What I'm going to eat. And just live through each day. And you were not worried so much, of course I was maybe a child, and I didn't understand the politics, and at that time that's all I worried about was eating.

came?

And actually when the Germans finally, it didn't take very long, when they decided they'll exterminate our town. They just like; well, we were sub-human by then already because it was just women and children; were hungry, they suffered, they didn't have any clothes. Every now and then there were victims of brutal beatings by Ukraines because maybe they would ride into young, youths who, maybe they were... The Ukraine kind of ??? They were wearing the uniforms. They became bigshots. Any hoodlum could have gotten a uniform with a rifle with one of those sticks you know, wooden sticks that they could beat people off. And

they would ride into town and any time they didn't like your looks they could right into the house and do something and rob you or beat you and run away on the horse. And so we experienced until the final time we had there the ??? *hetto* and also to mass raid killing. We were like sub-human by then. It didn't take long until the actually took some able man to the center of the city who would dig a grave. And then they gathered up all the people from town and they were going to kill them, row by row. Just prior to that, I guess the adults, I was only about 7 years old at that time, it was 1941, the adults did know something was going to happen. My mother, for instance, took me, wanted to save her children, so she was trying to put me out with a non-Jewish family that owned a big farm not too far away, she took some of her possessions that she was able to save. Like, well in Poland possessions like having a down cover, quilt with down feathers, that was also a possession. I guess it's a possession now too, but comparatively there it was worth more. And other things like this, and for them to keep me. And I could babysit, I could help in the house. And I was there for two and a half weeks.

The day of what we called ^{Porgorum} Porgorum(?) the grandmother of the baby or the mother of the couple that I was staying with, took me home. Right at the edge of town she dropped

me off on the day that they were gathering up all the Jewish people, mainly women and children, to the communal grave. Some people knew where they were going, some didn't. Because some people still were carrying possessions on their arms and on their backs. You could see them walking with sacks and carrying their stuff. Some knew where they were going. And you had no chance to run because if you ran sooner or later you died. Because when I came I could see already both sides of the road, people were laying dead, and I actually had to step over dead bodies in order to reach my house on that street. Because our town was like one long street. Ukraine soldiers and Germans were just walking behind and just like sweeping the street, just sweeping the people off the street. And they were just shooting. And if you did run away you were shot. So you just kept walking and you just obeyed orders. And you just walked and walked and then finally they said walk into these houses. And they made it into a ghetto. There were four or five houses. People were standing on top of each other. It was like just a temporary stop over it looked like. I don't know what they had in mind at that time but they just... it seemed silly because they just took us into those houses. And then all one night you stayed there and the next day they took everybody out.

During that night it seemed that my mother and the house we were in, she was familiar with it, she was familiar that people had like hiding places. In these parts of Europe everybody had like reason to hide. Like you hear a lot of the black market and doing things illegally. In order to survive there was always going to be a black market, there was always going to be something they have to hide from the government because nobody was ever free. So she knew that there was a hiding place in the floors, and just a couple of boards from the floor and under there their was a kind of storage area and my mother put my brother and me in hiding there. For three nights, we stayed there for three nights. No food or no water. Put we ?? for the people. And my mother also hid with my other brother in another place of the house. But the rest of the people were actually taken out in big trucks, big open Army trucks and they were taken to their grave. And they were shot. They were asked to undress and row by row, they marched them and as one row got undressed and they shot them, they fell into the grave, they took another row, shot them and they fell into the grave. Continuously until they finished all the people.

She doesn't know for person informant

The reason I know about that is because there were people who escaped that because they fell in... as they did

a mass shooting naturally some bullets.... some people just fell in without being killed. And they ~~called~~^{crawled} out afterwards. And they ran into the woods. And there were ~~some survivors and they told that.~~ That's how, because I was not in the grave but I've heard in on first account from somebody that did survive and they ran away. And this is how we know. Not only that, it's because of my mother after the war... after this ghetto, they gathered all the rest of the people that survived it and we finally found our place among the other survivors still in town, she was taken to work during the day. And her work consisted of sorting all the clothing near the graves. And there were just big piles of clothing and you had to put shoes separately, dresses separately and then you separated everything. And then you looked for jewelry and you put it separately. And that was her job. They took all the survivors to do that. And the Germans took it on trucks and took it away. And you could see baby shoes. And they say that even though the grave was covered it was still moving for days because some people were still living. You could see the earth moving.

And then the rest of that was... that whole story took place within a year after the Germans came, and maybe less than a year. I mean that the ghetto didn't last very long,

from the ghetto to the killing, that didn't last very long. So after that what happened after that first grave, first killing, when we were in that ghetto, they decided everybody was really very much aware of what's going on and what's happening and that in order to survive you have to do something about it. So it was arranged that my mother and my brothers and another aunt, everybody run to the woods. Fortunately we were very close to the woods and made arrangements and we ran and it so happened that my grandfather was very good in this type of activity of the woods, knowing where to go around there and how to... you know, he was a good scout. So we actually stayed in the woods, the open woods, for ³two years. From 1941, the fall of 1941, until 44. We were away from civilization but we always stayed close to small farms. Close to familiar grounds because we needed food. Our main goal of life was at that time, from what I remember, was food. And water. And we were constantly hungry. My youngest brother was only about 5 or 6 years old. He was constantly crying. There were five children. There was me, I was 7 or 8 by *uncertainty* then. My other brother who was two years younger. And then I had a cousin who was maybe a year younger than my brother. And then another brother that was a year younger than that and another cousin. My youngest brother always

cried. He was hungry. He didn't say I'm hungry or cry to himself but he made alot of... my head, my head hurts. He doesn't want to walk. No matter what you did to him. So the rest of the adults actually were thinking about killing him and at one time I ~~say~~^{see} my uncle taking him and putting him in a well that we dug ourselves to get water, they were going to throw him in there but it wasn't big enough so they had to take him out. And they had him tied up to a tree but cut down the rope. Then they asked my mother to put him to sleep under a tree just before we were leaving. Then she heard some wagon passing by and she ran and got him cause then she got scared. Because first of all it was too close and if he would start crying then they would start looking for us, following us. So miraculously he survived. We all survived, the ones that went in the woods. We survived by... it was like a miracle because we didn't really have any food. We stole from the local farmers, even in their houses. Like where they put out for their cattle or pigs to eat, you know they have like... we knew what time they were going to put it out and as soon as they put it out before the pigs got to it we got to it.

Some of it was actual confrontation with those farmers, like coming in a begging and saying well we have the family and they knew who we were. They didn't refuse. And that

was for bread, mainly. There was one thing for some reason in Europe you couldn't live without bread. You literally had to have that. It was like if you didn't have bread for a while you really were very, very hungry. Because you couldn't live just on vegetables. Because in the summer time the vegetables you could just take them from the fields. There were many farms and we would just steal it from the farms. And orchards, we went and got food. Sometimes we were even brave and caught a cow and killed a cow and we had meat. ~~And that's how we lived.~~ And for three years. Actually we went through many sicknesses. We had no doctors. We survived. How we survived, nobody knows. I mean it was like a miracle. We actually... I remember thinking that we were the only ones, must be the only ones left in the whole world. The whole civilization. There was nobody left, no Jews left. I mean we didn't know... especially when you're that young you think your town is the whole world. You don't know there's a whole world some place else. And you come out of it and you think nobody's left. Why am I living? You know. And you question that.

I remember when the war was over the only signal that we had was we heard shooting and the planes kinda close to our area so we knew that it must be like they're moving

back. We actually could see, in the evening and at night you could even see the explosions, the fires. From the woods you could not only hear the bombs but you could almost see them so we knew it was close. And then after the war it was just like it took us three months to get out of the woods because we were scared to be seen. I'm kinda of making it short because I hope that you'll ask if there's anything in particular that you want me to elaborate on, we'll come back to it. And, I don't know, what do you want me to continue?

*V. organized
systematic
training*

O.K. You were talking about where you lived, you said you lived in the forest. How safe was that? You talked a little bit about the safety.

O.K. Safety. We were away from the eyes of the Germans and we were also afraid, of course, of forest dangers. Because the forests in Europe were all actually guarded. I don't know how much they guard the American forests, but in Europe they are very much guarded and they are overseen. And so you were always afraid to be seen by any official so you stayed away from the main roads. This was no problem, you could stay away from it, you were very careful. We never made any fires ????. You learned the tricks of the trade were not to make a fire when it was a damp day. If it was a clear day there was no smoke. We

also in the summer time we lived on the outside and just laid on the grass. But we also had bunkers. We looked like partisans lived, if you've seen the movies. We had, of course, the men, I had two uncles, my two brothers and my grandfather, we had a space or what do you call it...

* they dug bunkers that were almost like real bunkers. They dug the earth out and shaped it and then covered it with twigs and then put leaves on it and twigs and then had like earth steps going down and then maybe even molded into one area for cooking inside so it was like an inside stove, and had a chimney going out so the smoke stayed out. And we lived in a bunker like that. So we lived under ground and even sometimes, even in the summer time many times when we found a place that was good for us because it could be not too far away from getting food, we made it really big and elaborate so we could stay for a long time, maybe live there in the winter time. So it was a big area that we dug and made ourselves comfortable underneath and it was protected from the rain. Of course it wasn't protected from the cold weather but we always had a fire going inside, whether it was for cooking or not. And then, being under ground it's warmer too. And sometimes we were buried in snow. We couldn't go out because if we would go out ^{vivid} when there was snow on the ground you would make tracks. *

So you only moved you learned (this is what I call the tricks of the trade), only move when fresh snow is falling, then you can move out, because it will cover your tracks. Or else you're stuck. And in this part of the world it snows pretty often and once the snow falls in November it stays there until about April. It never melts. So, but being in the woods you didn't get that much snow because you were protected by the trees.

So as I told you before the food we got by stealing and begging and taking and all that. And the shelter you know what we did. We helped ourselves, we dug water wells, we kept digging until water came. And of course there was always some ^{insects} ??? that would... frogs, mice, and everything. We used to take some of their eggs and filter it so we could cook let's say. If we did cook soup or potatoes or something we would use it that way. I don't know if we drank the water. At first we had to fish out all the other animals from it.

As far as safety, we were actually afraid of wild animals because wild animals lived around the area. (PHONE RINGS) O.K. Like I said the things that we were afraid of was actually animals. And one time I remember, it was really a funny situation, when my uncle was coming down to the bunker and we were afraid of wolves and we knew that in

*interface
but well
on track*

order to scare away a wolf you have to show them fire, for instance, if you hold a piece of fire they run away. And that's how we would combat it, you know, the natural... nature's... you know the fear of all the natural environment there. The natural environment was very scary too. Snakes and all kinds of crawly animals. But wolves and bears were roaming those woods too. So, we knew how to protect ourselves and we knew kind of when to use that. As far as every time we heard some movement or military movement through the air. And of course one time we were attacked. We just... they were throwing grenades... in that area there must have been also partisans, Russian partisans. So actually we were attacked probably because of them and our bunker was not too far from them, so we heard the shooting and we ran away. There was shooting after that. And somehow all of us survived and it was a miracle again. And we started a different bunker in a different part of the woods and from that time on we were really careful not to group together with other people in bunkers, you know, too close together. And there were a lot of people who were hiding out in the woods like that.

O.K. So you've told me a little about the fact that there was little predictability. You didn't know what was going to happen to you day to day.

No.

It was always change. Was difficult to be positive then?

Positive?

Feeling happy... you know, trying to live a normal life, as possible?

O.K. Every now and then I do remember thinking about it. I was the oldest of the children. And we looked around at each other. I remember looking at it and saying why are we here? Why did we stay alive? Look at all the righteous people. Look at all the sages of our town. All them, all of them are gone. Why are we surviving? There must be some... God must be punishing us. I mean, what are we doing? Look, we're sitting there hungry. My mother was peeling potatoes. We would grab the peeling from the potatoes and roast that to eat because we were starving and the children were fighting whose getting the next ^{peel} meat. What is the meaning of all that? What are we doing? How long are we going to stay? There's no other people left in the world. And that, you know, from a child's point of view if the people from your town are not there then there's nobody left. So why are we living? So you get a negative feeling like what is it for? Why are you doing all that for? Is it worth it all? It's hard to be

Looking back at
the interview, I
could have
probably said
more

positive at that time. Seeing somebody die just from lice. You were always cold and you were always hungry. You were never comfortable. You didn't have any shoes to walk on and your feet were hurting. And you scared of the snakes. So you couldn't have a positive feeling about life.

I'm interested to know how you helped each other. I mean you talked about the kind of things that you needed day to day. Were there specific things that helped you live? Anything that you can think of.

The main thing that helped us live was food. O.K. So the adults would go into the farm people and they would go steal food. And then they rationed it out. My mother would just give us a slice of bread each. And then know that this is how far... that's how long this food has to last. And it was very strictly rationed. How we helped each other. I mean everybody had to live for the other person and we had to... it was like a team. Because if you would just like fight between yourselves or be selfish you couldn't do it or nobody would have survived. You had to pull together. For instance, when it was cold you cuddled up real close to keep each other warm because otherwise somebody else would freeze. And you would not want to take advantage, like taking the rations away from somebody else. I mean like my little brother, who had a habit of hiding

it. He'd get his portion and hold on to it and eat it longer. You felt so bad for him you wanted him to eat now too, so I remember giving him a little piece... now eat this, eat this half of mine now and keep yours for later. You had to do that. *Took control a lot*

F. needed little direction

So who were you closest to during this time? Was there anyone in particular?

My brothers and mother and my grandfather. I also had two cousins and an aunt which were still close.

What was special about those kind of relationships? You talk alot about your mother.

Well, she was taking care of us and she was actually... because she had three children and she was the woman in the group. She was with two brothers and her father and there was a cousin... they were all men. Here she was a woman with three children and they could... because the three children, especially my youngest brother was so young, she was always kind of accused of holding them back. Because of her and because of her children they wouldn't survive it. Because they make too much noise. And look at him, he's so much trouble. Here twenty people will die because of this one kid. So you had to be strong to withstand that. Those accusations and trying to... sometimes you felt, they're right. It's like the same thing you know

like people you see in the movies... there's a boat and there's ten people and only eight can go on. Who stays behind. You have to make a choice. And that was that kind of a case and it was difficult. We all had to... we were all worried about my brother because he was a trouble maker because he was young. It was not his fault. And then it was a miracle that he survived.

Did anyone depend on you to do anything?

Well I was the oldest, yes. And so because I was the oldest I always had to be stronger or smarter or... you know, I could go without because the younger ones need it. And I did. I watched out for my little brother. Probably he depended on me more than anyone else. Actually after the war I was like the mother of them. My other brother, because we were separated from my mother after the war. Traveled... we were going to go to Israel and I was, of course, older and I always had... I was not that much older but I always undertook the responsibility more. More seriously.

So, did you depend on anyone? Like your little brother was dependent on you, did you depend on anyone yourself?

Probably not that much because I wasn't... I was always like very independent.

Can you remember any particular incidence where...

*Ambivalent
on occasion*

actually, how did you help yourself then if you had to be dependent? I mean what did you do to help yourself?

You mean during the woods? (Yes) I probably, for instance, de-loused myself. I would take off my clothes and... this was a big thing, big activity. It's not funny, it was very sad at that time. Probably my younger brother go out and help the men sometimes build the caves or the bunkers, so he was a help to them. But I didn't need anybody to watch me. I took my time walking and whenever we had to walk fast I made sure I walked like how was expected. Nobody had to carry me. Because I figured the younger brothers, they need to be carried. Or maybe I carried my younger brothers sometimes. Or lead them. And also my cousins. So I was like a little mother to them. I really didn't... I was the oldest of the whole group, of all the children, so I never had a chance somebody to help me. I helped myself.

Can you remember any particular instances that, during the time of trouble, for example, ? or lack of motivation, where you did pull together as a group. Or on an individual level, sort of the survival, how instinctive was

Well, I'll tell you, I remember an instance... I think that would be a good example. I don't know exactly what

Confusing qu?

*I remember
answering for this
a video - I'd seen
wanted to know it?
about the incident of
saying how our life
at it*

*Question
too broad*

you're after. At one time... like I told you when we were attacked a lot of bunkers were close together at that time, we were really not aware that that many people were around in that area of the woods. But when it did happen everybody was really worried. I mean everybody got scared out their wits. At that time I was like an invalid. I had one foot was burned. I had a real big blister. And for maybe days I didn't put my weight on the foot. That's when I was babied really, that was a time when I was sick. When we heard the shooting I was the first one out, on my own, and everybody thought for sure Faye was left. Nobody stopped to think where she is. Everybody ran to save themselves. And I did run by myself. I didn't stop to look for anybody. And that after I got out and ran far enough I sat down behind a tree and saw all the rest of them coming, my uncle, this [uncle] that [uncle]. They couldn't believe I was there. Who brought you? Who carried you? They couldn't believe it. That was like an instinct of fear that makes you motivate, you get strength and somehow. I don't know how I got there. So that's one particular time I can remember. And when we pulled together mainly to survive, it's like how we went to get the food and we divided equally according to how many people in that family and that was like living together. And also my mother did

Talks about working as a team until face w/ crisis - went to Faye herself first - contradictory

probably
sex roles traditional
↓ concept even
perpetrated in
extreme
conditions.

the cooking and maybe the washing. Whatever womanly things needed to be done. She did perform those things. And I always helped.

Did you ever join with other people? Were you always on your own as a family?

As a family we did not... at one time we tried... this area that was before that attacked, we were in the same area as other people. But it was a very short time.

Was there a reason for that? Being separate from them?

It was not safe. We found that it wasn't safe to be too many people at one place because you ran a chance of being seen more, being heard more, being out of control of things.

Were you ever separated from each other? Your family or the family group you were with?

Not during the war. After the war we were separated.

I had here did you ever take any risks in order to escape death? Can you think... would you define your example you gave before as a risk. Or can you think of any other risks that you or the group took in order to escape?

Well, to escape death that one time when we first ran away from the ghetto into the woods. We were seen by somebody. Like we walked in the woods and then we had to go through a clearing to cross the other side. In that

clearing, we thought it was clear, nobody would see us and then a Ukraine did see us and he started chasing us and we ran and we ran for our life. That was two brothers and myself and my mother. And, of course, the guy did catch my mother and he really beat her up. Like they had to... the person who was our contact that knew where my grandfather was already in the woods carried her in the woods because that's how badly she was beat up by him. So I would think that was a real time when were really running for life. And also when I first came from that Polish family and the bullets were shooting on both sides of my head. Like it felt like if you turn your head one way the bullet would have caught you. It's like a miracle it didn't. So you could see it flying through you.

Did your style of living ever change over the time, or was it pretty static?

During the woods? (Yeah, or compared the ghetto to the woods, but essentially during the holocaust years?) The living style. Sometimes there were better times. You know, sometimes they were better in the summer time. It was much nicer. Especially for the children, because you could be outside and you could pick berries, for instance, and it was fun. It was something to do besides eating. And food was more plentiful, because you could pick berries

and greenery. Like some edible grasses. I don't know... there's a few things that I didn't eat since the woods. So the summer time was much, much nicer to live in the woods. It was pretty and there was all kinds of berries and we just ate and ate all day.

Did you understand what had happened to you and your family?

At that time? (Yes) No, it was never understood really. I remember questioning it. Why? What did we do? What for? The answer was of course by the elders and saying that's the life of a Jew has always been. Because life for a Jew in Poland was always kind of persecuted and we lived under persecution. And that was the answer at that time. Of course, now I feel like, why did we let it happen. Why didn't somebody just run and protest or... but I can just make excuses at that time. By the time they came to our town you were actually sub-human already. Your morale was... because you were hungry, you didn't have any food, you didn't have any people, you were already oppressed. You didn't have any leadership. Maybe that's what it was. You didn't have one person stand up and say what are you doing to us? Protesting. What do you mean you are going to kill me? You want to kill me, I'll kill you too. Well, nobody did that. I mean it couldn't happen

*there
passionately
talking
about food*

to me now I don't think.

Did anyone take time to explain to you what was happening? Any of your family? Did they know?

I don't think they knew either. Mainly they said it's because we were Jewish and that's the way... this is our destiny because the people never like us. We should have gone to Israel years ago. They were Zionists. My family were Zionists. Because you had to be Zionist in Poland. They... there was a lot of anti-semitism there.

So how did you feel about the Nazis? How much do you know just from what your situation was?

See, I was so young at that time I didn't know what means Nazis, I mean I can just think of thinking back... it's like unbelievable what they did and why did they do it? I mean what did we do to them? Why... they are intelligent people, they were the most civilized people, they were more educated and more civilized than the Ukraine or the Bors. Why did they come into Poland to do that to us? I don't know. It's like a mania, I think it's the work of sick people. It was a sickness with them. I don't think... it's different when you kill someone in military or an enemy but innocent children, why?

So now I'd like you to step back from your general holocaust experience and tell me a little bit about the assessment of the situation. So do you consider yourself a holocaust survivor?

Yes, definitely. What does that mean to you? O.K. It means I'm living here and interacting with other people that didn't go through that. I can see myself being different in a way because I have that background. In a way it made me probably stronger or maybe more tolerant of things. And made me more... you know, what things are important and what things are not. And some things are not that important. Where I see some people who have not gone through all that make such a big te-do about things, I really feel it isn't because I lived through that and I saw what real suffering could be. What it means to have food and not to have food. And what it means to enjoy things and not to enjoy things. So I think I have a fuller range of enjoying and not enjoying. It a bigger ?? *far* .

Do you have any thoughts or feelings when you identify yourself in this way? I mean, when someone says holocaust what does that mean to you? The word?

Holocaust, to me actually means the loss of all those people. I don't automatically think of what I went through. When you talk about the holocaust, I think... when you say the holocaust, I don't really think about myself. I think about what we lost, and all the people

Holocaust - word-universal phenomenon
- not so personal → her

pg 1.?

2

that are gone, and this is why I'm here and not there. If not for the holocaust I'd probably still be in Poland. I feel like my whole life would have been... I would be a completely different person than I am now.

What does the word survival mean to you?

The word survival means to me if there's a will there's a way. And somehow miracles have to work with you. Somehow you have to manage with what you have and survive with what you have. And you have to be a good manager in it. To survive, if you were strong enough to survive that I always say that if I could survive that I could survive anything. That's my attitude.

So do you have... how did you identify yourself then?

If I talk about myself? As a kid? Yeah, when you were there. Well I don't think I really dwelled on it. I'm not that kind of a... I kind of like... right away... I don't think children really do that. I don't think children... I see what you're talking about. Maybe if an older type of a person were... they live it over and over again. I really don't think I had that, maybe because I was too young when it happened. And I don't see myself a survivor. I know I went through it and if I think about it, if I have to survive a difficult situation, I say well I could survive that I'll survive this too. But I never really identified myself as a... I was still young enough to go to school, and develop ideological thinking and I did at one time

Informant

become a real strong Zionist and then I wanted to go to Israel and that didn't work and then I came here. I'm a real good American. I really don't label myself as that.

Did the experience have meaning for you though?

Probably it must have guided my life somehow because... ~~meaning... let's say that when I was raising my children~~ the fear, that paranoid feeling was there. For instance when I worked, I worked in a business office, if a package came and it didn't have a name or return address on it... it was a community... I worked at a Jewish Center. Before it was popular that Jewish Centers later looked into unlabeled packages because there were some bombs sent there. But even before that we were in the old building yet, a package came that wasn't labeled because some company wanted to send us some stuff and then bill us for it and I wouldn't open it and I would set it outside and said if there's label, no return address, I'm afraid it could be a bomb. And I think that kind of mentality only can come from a survivor. Right? O.K. So you get paranoid. For instance, my son went to Columbia University and he had to go on the subway and ~~we~~ were Orthodox Jews and he wears a skull cap and I made sure, telephone call after telephone call, you make sure when you go on the subway, please put on a hat, don't wear your skull cap, I don't want anybody to think that you're Jewish. You get paranoid. If you're a survivor, no matter how young, no ~~meaning... let's say that when I was raising my children~~

matter how unattached to the label survivor I am, it's still with me. The paranoid is there. For instance, when we built this house we had a, out of plant, a climbing bush like, and we ^{framed} it on a metal frame to go on to the shape of a manoa(?) ^{menorah}. I don't know if you know what a manoa is, a six branched symbol. Some children, some hoodlums, they were throwing eggs at ^{it} ~~us~~; broke our window sometimes. So you have to be paranoid. You know this is why they're doing it. And especially if you're a survivor, you're a little bit more paranoid. And we didn't rest... when my husband got sick and he was in the hospital the first thing he wanted to do, when the house was alone, was to get somebody to cut off the manoa. And we did because that was always like... we were scared to have it on afterwards. And you see people putting Christmas trees around their house but you can't put a manoa right here. And I did not... and like I said my children were Orthodox observant children and when they walked from a bus to here I made them take off their skull caps. So that definitely has an effect on your life.

Would you say you survived because of luck, circumstance and coincidence, or was there more to it than that?

Luck and... Why did you survive? I think there was a strong will to live and alot of it was coincidence and luck because it... just like somebody was guiding us. It seems

*Didn't think
I was Jewish
and this
effect had
all this?*

like so unreal now when I look back at it.

How important was it for you to survive?

At that time? Yes. I don't know if it was like an important... it was more like instinct to want to live. It was more like of like, from what I remember, it was more like an instinct.

Did you think of yourself alot or of others? We actually thought of others, where are they. And probably not so much of yourself, we were living like for somebody else, for the rest of the family. You were thinking of your mother, your grandfather, your cousins, and that's what kept us, because of the togetherness. Each supporting the other.

*sometimes
statements
seem
contradictory
as a result*

Were there any other options for you to escape persecution other than what you did?

No, there was no other option. *Were decisions made for you?* I didn't make that decision. My grandfather made it. But I know from looking back at that time, there may have been an option earlier to go to Russia. That would have been before the Germans came in. And people from our town had a very good chance to go and we just didn't think that... That area of Poland, they didn't like the Russians. Especially Jewish people didn't like to go to the Russians because they were not free to practice their religion. And also the communist type of living, you know, they took everything off of you and to us Russia means going to some

kind of labor camp at that time, so stories like that. If you were not a communist you were sent away. So it was like a bad place to go, is to go to Russia. But we could have. And people from other areas went to Russia and they got saved. Maybe from bigger cities there would have been a chance to escape like to China or to Europe. A lot of people went to South America, Brazil and stuff like that. Africa. But much earlier, much earlier. Would have to be like... not at the time when we were caught.

And did you think that you would survive?

unpredictability

Actually I don't think any of us would have undertaken to go in the woods if we would know it takes three years.

At the start. I don't think, when it took so long. Three years in the woods seemed a long time. And I think when they first ran away, the family first ran to the woods, they didn't think it was going to be that long of a time.

But while you were there, were there times when you thought this is it?

That sooner or later we're not going to survive, right. ~~Do you think that you survived better than others?~~ What do you mean than others? Those who were with you and other people in your situation, trying to survive. Better than others? I think I had it pretty good, yes. I mean, I survived pretty good, I think I don't understand the question. I'm looking, just thinking, how you survived you might have been better off than other people. You may have

Totally leading to informant I didn't realize that I'd done this until reading the transcript

felt, maybe because you were young it's difficult for you to think back and say yes I survived better. Or compared to different other Jews that had to escape, that were in different situations. Well I think that we probably had... we had a difficult life. It was being... alot of people say well at least you were free. You were not persecuted, you were not beaten, you were not watched all the time, under somebody going in back of you with a rifle and if you made the wrong move. And that's what happened in the concentration camp. But this was like self-imposed prison like. You were not free. You were always hiding. Sometimes for days you heard alot of activity in the woods, you were hidden in the bunker. And in the winter time you didn't go out. So you didn't see people. You didn't mix with other people. And not seeing other people I think is the greatest depreviation, especially for a young person like me. I can remember like looking the first time to another... after not seeing other people for three years I was afraid to look at them. It was a real strange feeling, like who are they? Where are they from? I was afraid to talk to them. I was very shy. I couldn't talk. So you get all kinds of phobias and fears from it. Because you were like in isolation. So that's kind of a bad feeling. To be isolated. And you feel that isolation and you feel like different when you come out of it. I remember that feeling very well right after the war, after we got out. And by

then I was like 10 years old or so and it's like you really get ideas. A thinking person and you think all those fears and phobias come out at that time. But as far as surviving better than others probably I had it better because I didn't have to go and worry about what I'm going to eat because I had the elders worried for me and they handed me everything. So in that respect I was better off. I wasn't left to my own resources.

How do you perceive your life during the holocaust if you look back at it now? Do you think you lost part of your childhood?

How leading are the questions themselves?

I lost all of it because I don't think I ever acted like a child. I didn't have any childhood so to say. I didn't have the games, the toys, the luxury of just being a child and laughing. By the time the war was over I went right into another kind of difficult... kind of traveling and going to Israel and became an adult right away. Getting idealistic and working for the cause and stuff like that.

So you matured quickly because of experiences. Right, and took responsibilities. For instance, like I'm talking about when I was 12 years old I joined, it was in a children's home where it was organized like an idealistic... how you'd go to Israel. We lived like in a commune and everybody had their own responsibilities. At 13 I was in charge of like 620 children doing laundry. I

was in charge of laundry day. You had elections and everybody was chosen. You had a president, you committees, each one, and then you had chairmen. I mean I was in charge and I had to get the girls to help me do the laundry. And I mean the laundry by hand, that you did in big kettles and you boiled it and then you scrubbed it and dry it and they fold it and deliver to each child. So the responsibilities, to look back now, it's like amazing. I had to do it when I was 13 years old.

Were you spiritual or religious? What was your background as far as... Religious. Orthodox. Did that have anything to do with... We questioned it. We said where is God now. Why is he doing that. That's what I referred to before... why are we surviving. Maybe he's punishing us. What did I do that he's punishin us.

It's interesting that you would call that punishment when you still had life. Yeah, but we were suffering with the life. O.K. So, you said why am I living. I mean this could not be a reward. It had to be a punishment. This kind of life had to be a punishment. So did that make you multiple qu. question it, did that make you less religious, or less Orthodox. Did you observe anything throughout the time you were in hiding? Yeah. We observed most of it. As much as we could. We sometimes lost count of important holidays and stuff. You must have lost count of days. No, we somehow counted off. What did you do? I don't remember Truthful

myself knowing what day it was. But I think my grandfather and adults kept something like marking off the days, just *informant* like you see in the movies, like a prisoner.

Things I wouldn't have thought of

What did you do during the days and nights? We invented all kinds of games. And of course you had to talk very quietly. Very softly. And we did. Like in the summer time we kept picking berries and then we had word games and we had little string games. We didn't... most of the time we just sat and stared... blank space. Because we were hungry, day and night. All the time? Yes. Did that frustrate you. Did you behave differently because of that? Yeah, you were weak to move around. Were you angry, frustrated? We were sad. I don't think you got angry for that, no. It's like you were helpless. More of helpless and sad than angry. You got to a state of mind that you didn't believe... when you're angry... let's say you're hungry and don't get food now, you're probably angry because it's somebody's fault. I don't remember where we thought it was somebody's fault that I was hungry. It's probably that you accepted that as your fate, that as your destiny to be hungry. And you are sad that that's I'm supposed to be.

What do you mean by the statement destiny? That you're supposed to be hungry. This is... I'm hungry and it's nobody's fault that I'm hungry. I had no choice. And nobody can help me. There's nobody that I could well I'm

hungry, give me food. Or why don't you have dinner ready. So you were accepting of the situation. You accepted the situation and just felt sad about it. Did your perceptions of your situation ever change over time? Because you were... three years is a long time. You were 8 when you went into the forest and then, between 8 and 11, that's a lot of growing. Can you think back and remember any way that you may have changed as it became a way of life or because you just got older, because you had to mature.

What I remember mainly is questioning that, why? I remember when I was getting older, why? Why all of a sudden do I have to live and nobody else has to live? Because everybody else is not living. Why me? What am I so great about? This is what I questioned. And this is something I'll always remember. And I questioned my mother even, I bothered her. And they thought I was going out of my mind. It's the will of God, I kept saying. I was very religious. It's will of God. And for some reason he wants us to live. But what for? Let him give us a signal. I remember saying that. Because we were sick and nobody really died from the sickness. We had typhoid (?) fever, we had all kinds of fevers. I remember my uncle was like delirious, my mother delirious, everybody went through it. Snapped right out of it without medicine. So I questioned why. That's the only think that I remember. And also feeling isolated. The feeling of being isolated from the

Leaving?

rest of the world. Is there anybody... what if we survive, what are we going to do, where are we going to live. I mean, are we going to go back home. We can't live forever in the woods. Where are we going to go. Thinking of what our future will be. And I couldn't imagine it. Kept thinking, what will it be like. And if we're going to meet people, what are they going to say about us. They'll put us in a cage and show us in zoos. Saying these people survived in the woods. As if nobody else survived. *Is that really what you thought?* Yes, that people will look at us, that we're strange. *Asked herself many questions*

Do you remember a lot about how your mother was during the time that you were in hiding? Can you tell me a little bit about it? How my mother was... Or about your mother. O.K. She assumed she had to pull her part in helping us survive by providing food. So if my grandfather went into begging food, my two uncles, and she had to. So naturally they expected her to bring more because she had to bring for more people, so she always wanted to do her part. And she always did. She always was very sharing and she made sure that not only did she bring enough for us but also worried for her brothers and father. My grandfather was a very strong person. He's the one that actually led us all through it. He actually knew the places, where to go and how to go, who will be good to them and who won't. So he was like, whatever he said was law. And she took good care

*Asked her →
became inform*

of her father. I don't know what specifics you would want, but... *I'm just interested only because she was older, in that situation. And I'm interested in women's experiences and the types of things that they did because I see distinctions between how men and women survived. Not distinctions that men survived better than women or women survived better than men, but that there were different things that they valued or different things that they felt that they had to be.* I think my mother actually lived for the children. And also I think she had the responsibility even though the men were bringing in all the... she was actually being picked on because she had three children. My uncle had one, the other uncle didn't have any children. She was like the outcast from the group and she always had to prove herself to her brothers that she can do as much as they can. And she did. She went... whenever she left us... and that's where I came being the oldest. That I could take of the little ones while she was gone and everything was O.K. She didn't have to worry about me because I could take of my two brothers. So that I was really not that much of a burden to them. And always having to prove... my mother had to prove not being a burden but a help. And she did. She, even after the war, she took care of my grandfather, we lived together. She did baking and we sold it to make a little money. She cooked and she baked. Stuff... sweet rolls. We took it to the train station and

*role of a
most tract.*

and sold it. And as soon as you sold it she had some more. And we, as children, we sold it like a nickle a piece or something. And we had money like this. She did the laundry, she did the cooking for everybody until my uncle got married. She was like the mother of all of them.

Did you ^{fulfill that little} ??? mother role. Because you talked about how you were the mother really. A little mother of the little kids. Yeah, I did. I was expected to do that because I was older and I think I lived up to it. And everybody expected me to do that. As a matter of fact my cousins still look at me that way. Is there anything you want to add about the aspect of looking back at your experience? Anything in particular that you can think of. O.K.

We're now moving on to this last section where you could tell me a little bit about your background prior to the whole experience. Your family background, for example. Where you were born. O.K. I was born in a small town in Poland and it was called Safaufka (?). And it's a, maybe what you could call is a townlette. The main industry there was actually leather making. And everybody had a little farm and they had their own livestock, like their own cow, their own milk, their own eggs, their own everything. Most of the people. Of course there were some that didn't have that and they were less fortunate and the rest of the people supported them. My grandfather in that small town actually was one of the better off people. He

had a lot of land, he had livestock, he went to business in and out of town. And this is how, because of him, we ~~survived because he knew the surrounding little villages~~ because he did business with them. And livestock he traded and bought and sold, wheat and beans and all that. So we were pretty well off, my grandfather was. And then my father and mother also had a little store. There was dry goods. Right in front of the house. In back of the store we lived. It seemed... and my mother also worked with her father in the fields sometimes, because he had many fields. So we were very well to do family, I wouldn't say rich family, but we were well to do. It was a large family. My father had five sisters, who all perished. One of his sisters had a leather factory, one of the bigger factories, in our town. And actually they lived the longest, and then they were killed off. I went to school. I had just started school. I don't remember that much before the war. But I do remember the house and the streets and the family and going to school. And I was a good student. My mother was proud of me and all that, and my father.

Were you close to your family? Real close, yes. What ~~happened to your father?~~ My father actually was drafted by the Russians just before they pulled out. Just before the Germans came. What did that mean once... O.K. The Russians... uh-huh, you've never lived through a war. Actually our small town was like... must have been a

highway for military troupe movements. Because it was like one long street and that street they used. We could tell whether they were pulling back or they were going forward. When the Russians, in the spring of 1941, where they knocked one time, in the middle of the night they knocked on the door and they asked for my father. And he had to present himself and they inducted all the able men. He was like in the early 30's at that time. And they inducted all those men into the Russian army. And a couple of hours later somebody came with a message that if we want to see my father, go down near the post office and that's where they all are. And I remember going to say goodbye to him. So that means like two weeks or so before the Germans came. They inducted all those men. Like a week later we could see all the Russian artillery and the ones that ride on the horses, the ones that walk, and the tanks going on our street the other way. Meaning they were going towards Russia. At that time we had a chance to go with them. That's the time we could have run with them, with the Russians. And we didn't. We were happy that the Russians were leaving because we didn't like them. And as soon as they left the Germans came in. There was like two weeks before the Germans came, or maybe a little longer, I can't be too sure about time.

Do you want to add anything more about your background other than what I asked you? So moving on to look at your

life following the liberation, what were your immediate experiences following your liberation when you managed after your three years to move into the real world. What were those immediate experiences and feelings? I can't really describe feelings now, you know, it's been so long. The immediate thing was just being with other people. And whether you should be scared of them or not. You had built up a mistrust for non-Jewish people. And you were like afraid to really go to sleep. We lived in... went into a home that was shared with a non-Jewish family. And was like bunk beds that they put in. And I stayed on the top bunk and I felt like I was afraid to fall asleep. We didn't stay very long there. Then we moved into another... to a big city, because we were safer there. And meeting a lot of people and it was like... it was exciting for me. Because my mother went and got dresses for me and my cousins and she made dresses, you know to a dress maker. And it was like normal life. And we went to school, to regular school. And it was like a dream.

Corrects my question

Did any of your close family perish? Did any what?
 Most of your close family perished in the holocaust? Yes.
 Did that have an effect on you, as in asking yourself...
 Well sure, for many years I kept thinking about my father. Always missing him and dreaming about him. I also thought about my friends. That's when you really thought about... you know, the girl across the street or this that girl that

?

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