

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ZINA FARBER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer:	Martha Benoff
Date:	April 22, 1985

© 2000
Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

ZINA FARBER [1-1-1]

ZF - Zina Farber¹ [interviewee]
MB - Martha Benoff [interviewer]
Date: April 22, 1985²

Tape one, side one:

MB: I'm going to introduce you on the tape, and then I just want you to feel comfortable to talk. I'll ask you some questions as I feel like you need questions, but it sounds like you...

ZF: Do you want me to introduce myself as Zina Farber or Zina [unclear]?

MB: I'll introduce you. This is Zina Farber, and it's April 22, 1985. I'm Martha Benoff, and we're at the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. What I want you to do, Zina, is share your experiences. I know that you were born in '33, so there's not a lot that you can share about those first couple of years, but as, as far back as you can remember, in Poland, as you were a very little girl, what's your recollection?

ZF: Of before the war what I remember?

MB: Of before, yeah, of before the war.

ZF: The only good memories of before the war I have of, is the warmth of the family. I come from a large family--five brothers--very warm mother. We had a hard working father who cared for the family, but the mother was the builder of the home. And the love, the love that was in the house. This is what I remember, and I think of it a lot. The warmth that I had in the family. It was enriched with love, between the parents, and my older brothers-- I had five brothers.

MB: And you were the baby.

ZF: And I was the only young girl. So it was a-- I think of it a lot now, thinking what, how I would have been growing up in a home with five older brothers and with all that love that I remember.

MB: Tell me a little bit more about your family, religious involvement, synagogue...

ZF: Well, I would say we were religious. I don't think of anybody from where I come from that was not religious. Friday night, getting all dressed up and going to *shul*, and the big meal, and always, my father bringing they called it an *eyrach* [phonetic]-- somebody like a, if somebody go, passing through the town of Bialystok, a traveler, or a salesman, I don't know what they called them. Here they call them salesmen.

MB: Bringing somebody home.

ZF: And they bring home, they call it an *eyrach* [phonetic], to have dinner, and eat with the family. Those things I remember. Saturday going to *shul*. And of course the holidays. That was something very special. Pesach, the whole house was turned upside

¹née Bass.

²Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.

down. They bought new clothes for the children. That was the only time of the year I think that I got new clothes for Pesach usually. That's what I remember mostly, warmth. And, but I was separated from my family at such a young age, and I think of that. I think of my mother a lot now. The older I get, the more I think of my mother.

MB: How old were you when you were separated from your mother?

ZF: Oh, I was very young when I was separated. My mother, I think, when she died, she was altogether I imagine maybe 37 or 38 years old. So she was a young woman.

MB: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the town that you grew up in...

ZF: The town was called...

MB: I mean, was it a large town...

ZF: Bialystok...

MB: Small town?

ZF: I, I didn't know any different. I was no place else in Bialystok...

MB: It was home.

ZF: So to me that was home. It was large, it was big, was small. I, I...

MB: How about looking at it from adult's eyes now? Is it...

ZF: Now...

MB: A large town? Small town?

ZF: Now I imagine it would be, now I think of it [chuckling] it would be like a little village.

MB: A little...

ZF: Probably like a...

MB: A little tiny...

ZF: A tiny village, I imagine now. It would be a village. But I was told that Bialystok was rebuilt. And it is a beautiful, beautiful city.

MB: Oh, is it?

ZF: It was considered a large city, in Bialyst-, in Poland, it was considered a fairly large, business-like city. Even a lot of factories, but at that time I did not...

MB: Yeah, you were, you were little. You were little.

ZF: Care or didn't know. I didn't know.

MB: When you were living in Bialystok and very little, were you aware of any, of antisemitism at that age?

ZF: Yes.

MB: Even when you were a little girl?

ZF: Oh yes, I was told, I was told as far back as I can remember if I see a Gentile walking on the pavement I had to get off the pavement and let them pass through. I could never walk with them on the same pavement, because they could beat me up or whatever.

MB: Who told you that?

ZF: My parents, I was...

MB: Your parents told you that.

ZF: Always told that, that I should never walk on the pavement. If I would see a Gentile walking on the pavement I should let them walk.

MB: Do you remember what you thought about that as a little girl? Did you...

ZF: I, I was taught like this, and this is the way I thought it's supposed to be.

MB: And that was just the way it was.

ZF: But now, all those thoughts come back and the only thing I can think about Poland is the warmth of my family. Anything else of Poland, I don't remember anything good in Poland.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: A Jew was not even a, from what I think back, was not even a second-class citizen. We were probably third-, fourth-, or fifth-class citizens.

MB: But as a little girl you just, your parents told you to do something...

ZF: And while I, that's what I was told...

MB: So you did it.

ZF: I'm supposed to do. I was not allowed, I was not supposed to walk on the same pavement, because if they beat me up, it was my fault, because I was not allowed, not supposed to walk on the pavement.

MB: What else did they tell you? What else weren't you allowed to do? Do you remember?

ZF: This basically stays out in my mind.

MB: Yeah, that stuck.

ZF: That basically stays out in my mind.

MB: Okay. Tell me how you became aware of the war, the Nazis, as a little girl, again. What happened? What happened in your town?

ZF: When, when we were transferred to Pruzhany Ghetto, after a while we were transferred. And my name is Bass, is a B, so they went by an alphabetical order. My maiden name is Bass.

MB: Okay, you were transferred in...

ZF: To Pruzhany, from Bialystok Ghetto to Pruzhany Ghetto, by buses. Not buses, open-- what do you call them? Cattle...

MB: Like, like big trucks? Is that what you mean?

ZF: Yeah, open trucks, but cattle...

MB: Yeah.

ZF: What do you call them?

MB: I, I...

ZF: Open trucks? Open...

MB: Sort of like those big army trucks that are open in the back?

ZF: Right, open in the back.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: We were transferred in those trucks.

MB: How old were you about?

ZF: Oh, I don't, I-- you know, when I will think back it seems like I, I've never been really a child, I never had a childhood. I never was young. I feel younger now than I ever did. I feel younger now.

MB: That's wonderful.

ZF: I never felt young. I never did, I think back, I always had to be, think, how, for the next day, or for the next hour.

MB: You had to be strong.

ZF: I had to think for myself and do something for myself. I was told that that's the only way, you've got to make it is you have to think of yourself.

MB: Your mother told you this?

ZF: My mother told me this, and beside my mother-- my mother was taken away from me in such a odd way we were separated-- that, I had other people tell me. I had friends that were looking out in a way to tell me, to show me. And I, in Pruzhany Ghetto, where my mother was taken away, she wa-, had to go back to Bialystok back.

MB: Your mother was taken from you in the ghetto?

ZF: She was taken, she went back to Bialystok. But this is a whole story in itself.

MB: Okay, you, I wish...

ZF: You want it?

MB: Yeah, tell me that story. Tell me what happened.

ZF: It has nothing to do with my own background, but it's a story in itself, yeah, on its own. I had one brother name Wol [phonetic], and he was working with another guy, going from Bialystok Ghetto bringing in foods from the outside to the inside ghetto. And he looked Polish. And he talked a good Polish, and he was, he was sort of like what you call a sharp-looking guy. And he found another friend of his that was the same type of guys. Here I think you would describe them extremely sharp, smart. They made their own, they called them *Scheins* in German, but here it's called papers, like Aryan papers, Gentiles. And they went out, and they brought in food to the ghetto. They went out of the ghetto and for some reason whether, they recognized or they were suspicious, they caught them. After a few times. They did smuggle in food a few times, but once they caught him. And he was riding-- they had a horse and buggy-- and he was riding on the, with the horse in front. And his other friend was in the back. They switched places each time. And when they stopped him, this other guy jumped out and into the woods and he disappeared, his friend. So they wanted him to tell him where, who made that *Schein* up, and who's, what's the name of the other guy? Because he went in right into the ghetto. They figured they'll be, he'll be back in the ghetto. So my brother, his name was Wol [phonetic], said, "I don't know the other guy. There was no other guy. Maybe he was hiding, but I don't know no other guy." "Who made the *Schein* out?" And

he just did not acknowledge that there was another guy. So they put him in jail. And they put out a bond that such and such an amount of money in gold they want for him they'll let him free. That's what they wanted for him. Because he was considered brave, and it was unique. I mean, nobody did it, not, he was one of the first people that did it. They did not want to encourage anything like this. Now I think, back at the time I did not know. But now when I think back, this must have been their thinking. Or who knows what they were thinking.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: So my mother sold everything that she could get her hands on-- jewelry, silver, whatever of worth. And friends and relatives, everybody helped out. And she left Pruzhany Ghetto and went to the Bialystok Ghetto to bail him out. But that's not the way the Germans worked. You couldn't bail him out. They took the money and the jewelry and everything else.

MB: But they didn't give you...

ZF: But when my-- when they put-- I, from what I was told, that's what I was told, I wasn't there, and I don't know. But I was told from the people that heard about it that they put him on a hot stove to tell. They only wanted to know who made that *Schein*, because it was such a perfect *Schein* made, so perfect, I mean, such perfect. I don't know myself to tell you who made it, whether it was my brother or his friend. I have no idea who made it, but it was so p-, such a perfect job. And he did not tell them who made it. And they, when they put him on the hot stove, he jumped, and they shot him. So my mother went, and they didn't let her out after that.

MB: So you, did you see your mother after...

ZF: I've never seen my mother after that. But I was told that she was taken to Treblinka, and that's where she apparently died.

MB: By, by people...

ZF: The last person that has seen her was on the transport to Treblinka. So that's was the last I heard of my mother.

MB: And that's what you heard. Who took care of you after that then? You had brothers?

ZF: My oldest brother was mother and father and everything to us. Yes, my oldest brother.

MB: Okay. So he cared for you and...

ZF: He cared for all of us...

MB: Your y-...

ZF: He would comb my hair and make my little braids and if there was an extra piece of bread or an extra piece of butter, he made sure I got it.

MB: So you...

ZF: He always [unclear].

MB: You lived in the ghetto with him?

ZF: We lived in Pruzhany Ghetto, with him, and another fam-, well was a few families. We didn't, they, we was a few families, but we had like our own, I want to call it quarters or bedroom and we had our own. But there was two other families.

MB: But it was the six of you? Your brothers and, or the five of you? It was your brothers?

ZF: My, it was, I only had at that time already four brothers left.

MB: You had four brothers, and you.

ZF: And myself.

MB: And, in a space how large?

ZF: Oh small.

MB: Small.

ZF: Small. I don't know how we managed, but we managed somehow.

MB: How did you manage?

ZF: I don't know. I, I, I don't know.

MB: You were a little girl, and you were, you were...

ZF: I just don't know.

MB: Cared for.

ZF: I know a lot of men always came to see my brothers, a lot of men, coming, talking, and...

MB: What are your memories of the ghetto? What do you remember?

ZF: Of the ghetto? Hoping for a better tomorrow. But the better tomorrow never came. Seems like the ghetto, after I experienced what has happened, afterwards the ghetto was like a dream come true.

MB: Did you hear information? Did you hear anything coming from the outside world about what was going on out there?

ZF: In the ghetto?

MB: Yeah.

ZF: I didn't.

MB: You didn't hear anything.

ZF: No.

MB: You think that's because...

ZF: Well, I...

MB: You were so little, or...

ZF: I don't know.

MB: Hard to know.

ZF: I, I don't know. I mean, I was just concerned maybe tomorrow will get a little bit better. Maybe tomorrow my mother will come.

MB: At that point, did you have any idea what happened to your mother?

ZF: No, no.

MB: You knew that, you knew that...

ZF: We did not.
MB: She hadn't come back, but nobody knew where.
ZF: No, we didn't. We thought the Germans wouldn't let her out. In Bialystok maybe there was no transportation, maybe there was no way of how to come. We did not know. There was no way you could, was no, no communication of any kind.
MB: And you were hoping.
ZF: I always...
MB: You hoped that...
ZF: I always hoped.
MB: How about your father?
ZF: My father? That's a different story all together. Again, because my father was, when the Russians occupied our city in 1941, for a short time, he had a little business, and in Russia was considered-- they called it in Russian bourgeois. That's like here, the definition of a rich guy, you were in the business. You were your own, you had your own business. But, we barely made a living. But they considered you have someone working for you, you had a business.
MB: So he was a small, a small business man.
ZF: A small business, yeah.
MB: Yeah.
ZF: And they sent him away to Siberia, without no trial, without nothing. Just, all the reason is because he had a business. They-- you were a capitalist.
MB: Yeah, oh, okay. Oh, okay.
ZF: You were a capitalist.
MB: No questions asked.
ZF: A capitalist. No questions.
MB: They just shipped him away.
ZF: They just shipped him away. And maybe that was the best thing, because he survived.
MB: He did?
ZF: In Russia. He survived in Russia-- hard labor-- but he survived. He survived in Russia.
MB: And when was the next, did you see your father again?
ZF: I never saw him again.
MB: No.
ZF: After that. Was all...
MB: How did you know that he survived?
ZF: Oh, I, my father just died recently.
MB: So you have seen him, or...
ZF: Oh yeah, oh yeah, I saw him every year. My father lived in Chicago.
MB: Oh.

ZF: I saw him every year.
MB: Okay. So you were reunited obviously...
ZF: ...I was reunited after the war...
MB: ...at a point.
ZF: With my father, yes.
MB: But as a child you didn't know him? And, what did you, did, what did you assume?
ZF: Well, you see, you know, the idea of child, it seems like the word "child"...
MB: I know, you...
ZF: When was I a child?
MB: We're talking, we're talking, I, when you, when you were...
ZF: I tell it to my children [laughs].
MB: A number of years, I realize you didn't have a childhood. You're right...
ZF: I never had a childhood.
MB: I don't think they've...
ZF: I never was a teenager.
MB: Made...
ZF: Because when I came here as a teenager, I felt grown up. I felt like a woman. Well, I had nothing in common with the teenage boys that wanted to take me out, to go out with me. I felt like a mother!
MB: Yeah, I'm sure.
ZF: Oh yeah. I had nothing what to talk to them.
MB: Yeah, it's a culture, culture gaps.
ZF: Now I have more in common with the teenagers than I ever did!
MB: [laughs] Yeah, you're sort of flip-flopping the times, huh. Tell me what happened after, after the ghetto. You were taken to the camps. Tell me...
ZF: In Pruzhany...
MB: What happened.
ZF: They called it, the action, right? One of those days they, we all had to come out in the streets. Everybody had to come out in the streets. And, and we were loaded into, again, cattle, open cattle trucks. And they pushed us in there and took us to trains. And, well, this was the beginning of the end for most of us.
MB: What did you think? Did you know?
ZF: They told us that they're placing us in a, to, for a better life, for, things that will be better for us. This is no place for us. Well, it sure wasn't. It was, we were closed in. We didn't have no way of communicating with anybody. And, I really thought maybe this is so. But my oldest brother didn't. He seemed to sense something, because he wanted to disappear. At first we were thinking of going into the woods with a bunch of friends. Fortunately for him-- all of them died in the woods-- but he, he, I don't

remember that, but he says that I cried, and I said, "Don't leave us here." I don't remember saying that. But he said I did.

MB: But, but he was saying that that was one of the reasons that he didn't go?

ZF: He said, don't, he said that I started to cry. That's what he told me. After, now, many years later, and he said he couldn't leave me. He couldn't leave me. I says, "How can you leave us? We are all alone here. Nobody, no father, no mother. How can you leave us like this?"

MB: So you saved him.

ZF: So he went with us. None of his friends from there that went into that woods in that particular area, nobody survived.

MB: No, no one came out.

ZF: Not even one person. So he went with us, and fortunately for me and for him. He survived, but my oldest brother, I was one of the very few fortunate people that I happened to have lived to see two older brothers survive, and a father who survived in Russia.

MB: Yeah. Did your brothers go to Auschwitz with you?

ZF: Yes.

MB: You all went.

ZF: They, they, well, we were separated right away.

MB: Yeah, right.

ZF: Once we arrived in Auschwitz, one thing that stands out in my mind that I, I am luckier than luck, if you want to call, that was meant for some reason for me to survive. I was put with all the young and the old, on the truck already to this, now I know it was to the gas chamber. But apparently, what they needed is a even number to go in into the camp. And they counted, and they probably needed...

MB: Into the chambers you mean?

ZF: Yeah, no, no, an even number to go into the camp, to the labor camp, to...

MB: Oh, okay.

ZF: Auschwitz. Because Mengele was directing. I didn't know at the time that it was Mengele either. Left, right, right, left. And he pushed me past to the, where the truck, on top, with the children and the older people to go to the gas chamber. I didn't know then either that it was the gas chamber. But, I was there, and fortunately for me, it was very cold, and I was wearing-- my mother had a fur coat, and in Europe they wore the fur inside, not outside. It was the cloth outside, but the fur inside, and a big collar, with lapels hanging down so. And, maybe this saved me, because it made me look maybe a little bit older. It was warm, I hold it around me. And he, one of the SS guards grabbed that lapel from me and he dragged me down, and one more. One more woman dragged down. They probably need an even number.

MB: You mean...

ZF: To make it a, this is how I got into, into the labor camp. When we got in

ZINA FARBER [1-1-10]

into the camp and they took us to stamp the numbers and then to take our showers, they shaved us everywhere. There were not, nothing to shave except my hair.

MB: Yeah, you were still a little girl.

ZF: Everyb-, everybody looked at me, and they said, "How did you get in?" They said, "You don't even have mosquito bites!"

MB: [laughs]

ZF: That's what I remember one woman saying to me. "Little girl, little child, you don't even, how did you get in? You have no mosq-, you don't even have mosquito bites!" But I got in there. I did. I was there. So, and we were shaved, tattooed. They gave us clothes.

MB: And even when they saw you, they didn't, they didn't question...

ZF: Nobody looked at me there...

MB: Once, at that point, you were there.

ZF: They, every, once at that point it was handled by, everything was handled by survivors in a way. People that were there put to work--German people that were in concentration camps. A lot of Germans that were in concentration camp for some reason-- politically or for some other reasons-- they were in, they were like leaders over us. But they were in camp.

MB: So were they, were they loyal to you, or would they...

ZF: Not really. They would hit us too. Some of them would hit us, punch us, or push us.

MB: But they wouldn't turn you in, you know, they wouldn't...

ZF: For what they're...

MB: They wouldn't say, "This is a little girl," or...

ZF: No, they had no reason to. They had no, they had no voicing to it. I mean it was not their job to turn anybody in.

MB: Okay.

ZF: I mean, they could, but...

MB: There wouldn't be any point.

ZF: They had not point.

MB: No point.

ZF: They-- it was like a factory working so fast. Everything was going so systematic that it's unbelievable. It's unbelievable how everything was clicking to...

MB: Like a well-oiled machine.

ZF: When you think back how it was working, how much energy, my God, if all that energy would go into healing people...

MB: Yeah.

ZF: How much energy and money and...

MB: Did you ever think that then? Is this, is, all sort of reconstructed as you thought about...

ZF: At that time I don't know what I...

MB: Think, what do you remember?

ZF: I can't even think...

MB: Don't know what you thought.

ZF: All I was thinking then is, I just wanted to believe that maybe somebody will survive and not, why not me.

MB: At that point...

ZF: A lot of times I wanted, I would think I wanted to survive. Sometimes I would just want to give up.

MB: Uh huh...

ZF: And...

MB: How did you do it? What...

ZF: I think basically it's because we, we, whoever hooked up with other friends, one helping the other, I had one particular girl that I was friends with these, her sister. And she, her sister just laid down one morning, and she gave up. She didn't want to get up. She just refused to get up. After this-- her name is Layka, Lisa now-- she helped me a lot. When they would go and when Mengele would come and count-- I didn't know at the time it was Mengele-- count, and you know, pull out whoever didn't look right, she would take like bricks and rub my cheeks, would look red, healthy.

MB: Healthy.

ZF: Or I would stay like this. She would give me a punch I should stay straight and look taller.

MB: So she, she took care of you a little.

ZF: So we all helped, like we tried to help one another. So she needed me, too. She made me run, when they would give us a portion of bread, she would make me eat it up immediately, not to take it back believing that I had a piece for tomorrow. Maybe someone would steal it. They always, they always would steal, no matter where you keep it, you could keep it with you between your legs. You'd get up in the morning you'd never have your piece of bread.

MB: The people would just steal from each other, yeah.

ZF: People were so hungry, were so starved.

MB: Do you remember that? Do you remember feeling hungry?

ZF: Being hung-, always hungry. I was always hungry.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: I could eat almost anything.

MB: Did you ever steal?

ZF: No, I, we didn't have, maybe if I would have from where or from whom, I would. There was no opportunity...

MB: No, it wasn't there.

ZF: From where would you gonna steal? I didn't know from where. Where?

There was no place for me to steal. I probably would have if I would...

MB: [unclear].

ZF: If there would be food someplace to steal, I'd risk. I'd steal. But there was no place to steal from.

MB: How else did you get through? Friends who supported you, did you...

ZF: Sort, you know, I truly believe it's sheer luck. I, I, there's no magic. If some one says, "Oh, it was meant for me to survive." I don't know. I believe that it was just a little bit of luck, and maybe your health. I was young. Your health held out good. Because you look around, even now, you figure out. No one survived in their thirties. The most of them survived was teens or in their early twenties. So it means you were still extremely healthy...

MB: Yeah.

ZF: In your youth.

MB: What were the conditions like? Sleeping-- what did you do during the day?

ZF: Sleeping, we were sleeping-- work, slavery work, labor, hard labor work.

MB: Hard, heavy.

ZF: Hard work, chopping, cutting, bricks, being dehumanized. It's undescrivable.

MB: Yeah, I believe you.

ZF: You cannot even describe this situation where we were.

MB: Do you see it in your head as you talk?

ZF: Yes, oh, I see it now. The, the, they called it the *koya*. That's a bed. We were sometimes 12, sometimes 6, and sometimes 20, even more people, like on top of one another. There are so many little stories, little incidents that I think of it I could talk about, but I just don't want to get into it.

MB: You can...

ZF: It is painful...

MB: Okay.

ZF: And it is, it's so sad.

MB: Whatever you can tell, I don't...

ZF: I do push it away, and I would love people to know about it, but I wish it would, could just come out without me...

MB: Without the pain.

ZF: Because I feel pain even while I'm talking.

MB: I know you do.

ZF: And I feel like crying but I don't want to cry.

MB: It's okay.

ZF: I don't want to! My mascara's gonna run!

MB: We'll get tissues. You have makeup in your bag.

ZF: Oh, I, it is...

MB: Is there, is there a story you can tell, that you can share?

ZF: It was scary where you were in bed there-- at the *koya*, we called it the *koya*-- and you had to go to the bathroom. There was no bathrooms. There was on the middle of the, that barrack where we were in, they kept like open barrels, and that's where you went to make. And if you went there, and if it was full and they caught you who watched that evening, and they caught you, it's full already, you were the one that had to take that to the, a special place where they emptied it out. And he was an SS guy or guard that didn't like you or they didn't do it right, or you didn't push it right, they could just push you in there. And this is what I always was afraid to go, if I have to go in middle of the night, I could try that I will pass. I could do anything and not go.

MB: Rather than do that.

ZF: Oh, God help me, if I had to go I would, anything possible. I was afraid of being pushed into that barrel.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: That's what, because we knew of a lot of people being pushed in, or some times felling in by themselves.

MB: Just by accident.

ZF: You know, because you had no strength, and it was not, it was dark, and it was not...

MB: Not steady in the ground.

ZF: You didn't have regular shoes...

MB: Yeah.

ZF: It was wooden shoes, those, like two of my feet could fit in into one.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: And you were afraid.

MB: You could.

ZF: I was always afraid that something, even if no one will push me in, maybe I myself will fall.

MB: You could fall.

ZF: And I was afraid of something like that. That scared me to no end. That scared me very much.

MB: Did it ever happen?

ZF: Not to me.

MB: No.

ZF: Because I, not to me, it didn't happen to me, no. But I think I did have to go around a couple of times when you were sick and you had to go there.

MB: And you were...

ZF: But it did not happen...

MB: It didn't happen.

ZF: I was fortunate that it did not happen, no. It didn't happen.

MB: What else? What other little stories are there?

ZF: What other little stories is that we all had a-- I'm looking for that English word. We had a bowl, a red bowl, and that was our bowl that we ate and we prepared for the food that was our bowl, and we carried it on our neck-- to work, or wherever we went.

MB: On a, like a rope?

ZF: Always a rope on our neck. If that was stolen, or if you lost it, you never got a plate of soup. Because if you didn't have your bowl, you couldn't get a soup. We didn't get soup very often, because if they would give out, a handful of people could get the soup and I was, very seldom was I lucky enough to get a plate of soup. But if you didn't have the bowl, there was no chance. You couldn't get it in your hands. So, that, I guarded with my life, that bowl. Never to lose that bowl. That I remember. That bowl stands out in my mind.

MB: And it was the same one that you had for that whole...

ZF: Oh, all the time.

MB: For the year, yeah.

ZF: I kept for everything.

MB: You slept with it?

ZF: Slept with it...

MB: Went to the bathroom with it, everything. Shower.

ZF: But there was no showers. The showers, it's amazing how we survived.

MB: How did you clean yourself?

ZF: Oh...

MB: What did you do?

ZF: Nothing.

MB: What could you do?

ZF: Nothing. We didn't clean ourselves. I had the same outfit all the time. We didn't clean ourselves. That was it. I don't know how.

MB: [unclear].

ZF: We did it, we survived. I don't know how, but we did. Some of us, not all of our, all our friends did not survive.

MB: Did you see your brothers at all while you were in the camp?

ZF: No.

MB: Did you, did you assume anything about them?

ZF: I was hoping, I was hoping. When I heard rumors, I heard regards that one of my brothers, that the older, they saw my older brother.

MB: Somebody had seen him?

ZF: Yes. But a terrible things was happened to my older brother too, and...

Tape one, side two:

MB: Okay.

ZF: At one time he didn't do what he was supposed to do, or he, they didn't like what he did. He was screaming something out. So one of the SS just hit him with a big stick, and he knocked an eye out of him.

MB: Oh my.

ZF: And he saw right in front of him one eye running out right in front of him, and his eye was running out. And he has one eye now.

MB: But he lived.

ZF: He lived. Oh, he's here. He's here. He's very active.

MB: He's here with you?

ZF: He's very active in the Holocaust Survivors.

MB: You were in the camp for a year-and-a-half?

ZF: About.

MB: About. How did you, how did you hear about, did you hear about what was happening on the outside? Did you have any sense that...

ZF: Never, never...

MB: Liberation was coming?

ZF: Heard, no. When they took us, they call this now, we called it a dea-, afterwards we, they named it a death march. They took us in a, they-- at the end of April, about this time of the year, middle of April, this time of the year-- from Auschwitz, to march. Because they, the, they, the American army were ap-, the Americans, the Russians were getting closer to, I want to call it liberate, but they didn't come especially probably to liberate the Auschwitz. But the war was ending. So, whoever could walk, they just made us walk. We marched for 14 days. They called it a death march.

MB: Fourteen days?

ZF: Fourteen days, 14 nights. People were dying on the street. Dogs were walking over them. It was an unbelievable sight. And we got to Ravensbrück. We stayed there a couple of days, then we marched again to Neustadt Gleiwitz³. And there we stayed till the liberation. Then we...

MB: No food? No water?

ZF: No food, no water. I don't know how we really survived. I don't know what we survived on. We survived in, we were liberated in Neustadt Gleiwitz by the Americans, Russians, and the British and the-- what was the other, the French? The French army was with the, was the li-, one of the liberators?

MB: [unclear].

ZF: And a lot of us died after the liberation, because unfortunately-- the

³Ms. Farber could mean Neustadt-Glewe which was a subcamp of Ravensbrück.

American soldiers meant well-- they gave us chocolates and preserves and all the goodies -- and our stomachs were not adjusted...

MB: You just couldn't eat that.

ZF: To such good food. A lot of us died.

MB: Did you eat all of that?

ZF: No, no, I, I didn't get it. So, I...

MB: Luck again.

ZF: [unclear], yeah, lucky, lucky. I guess. It was, I said, whoever survived, my belief is, is 99% luck.

MB: Maybe, I guess...

ZF: One percent health.

MB: We don't know.

ZF: Because we really don't know, no.

MB: Tell me about your liberation. What do you remember of the soldiers and the experience at the moment?

ZF: I couldn't believe it. I mean, we were actually free. We could walk and go wherever we wanted.

MB: What did you do?

ZF: We got together, we were 14 girls. And again, this smart girl was with us, this friend that...

MB: You were what, maybe...

ZF: Was...

MB: Fifteen at that point? Something like that?

ZF: Younger.

MB: Thirteen.

ZF: I was younger.

MB: Yeah, 13.

ZF: And we started to march, to go. We didn't know where to go, what to do. But I had a premonition to go to the city where I was born, in Bialystok. If anybody would survive, maybe they would come to that city. So, we did get to Bialystok. By all means, with wagons, even with the, in a tank. We had a, we were riding in a tank part of the road.

MB: The soldiers drove, took you there?

ZF: Yeah, so we got to Bialystok. It was not the same city what I remembered. It was no, no family.

MB: What did it look like?

ZF: It looked lonely, bare and lonely.

MB: Did you go back to your house, or try to find your house?

ZF: I tried to find my house, but there was nothing to go back to.

MB: It wasn't there?

ZF: No. And, it, they set up a Jewish committee. And we, a bunch of all us girls got together and we stayed in a, in an abandoned house. And I, at that time we could cablegram to almost any place in the world that we are alive or we're looking for somebody. And I cabled my name, you know, and they heard me. And it was cabled in Russia, too, and in the United States-- everywhere I put my name. And it was cabled everywhere. So I had a cable back from my father that he is alive, and he's coming, gonna come. But at that time they didn't let him out from Russia either. It was not so easy. And my uncle heard about me, who lived in Philadelphia. And I got in touch with my uncle. And he started to make out papers for me. And by the time my father did come to Poland we had to smuggle ourselves back to Germany, because that's the only place you could emigrate, is, was from Germany, not from Poland. And I came back to Landsberg. And I registered to come to the United States. I registered to go to Israel. Whoever gets us first, that's where we go. But in Israel was almost impossible to go at that time, because it was with that *Exodus* incident. Very few people could get through. It was very scary to go to Israel. They didn't let the people in.

MB: Now were you back with your father at this point?

ZF: Yes.

MB: You were reunited with your father.

ZF: I was reunited with your [she means my] father.

MB: And how about your brothers?

ZF: My brothers did not come. They did not feel that way. They stayed in Germany and they registered to go to the United States after they found out about family looking for us. And my older brother I met in Germany, when we came back to Germany. My other brother I met in the United States already. He came to the United States a little earlier, earlier than any one of us.

MB: And then you came...

ZF: I came...

MB: To the United States.

ZF: I came to the United States because my uncle brought me over to Philadelphia. And my father had family in Chicago, so he went to Chicago. And my uncle, he's a wonderful person and he said, "You are a young girl. You come stay with me. I'll send you to school. And you have a home in my house." And I went to Chicago and I saw the family there, it's a nice family, but my uncle offered me that it's something of what I wanted. And I thank God for that day, for my decision to stay in Philadelphia, because the most wonderful thing has happened to me, my meeting a man that I married, and been married to him for 30 years. And I had 30 wonderful, wonderful years being married to the best man I could ever wish for.

MB: That sounds wonderful. That was the happy part of your life.

ZF: Well that was the happy part, and in between as I said and the, my husband died four years ago exactly now. And it's been a very sad experience for me.

But...

MB: You have children?

ZF: Thinking back, thinking back is that I had a wonderful life. And we have two wonderful boys. And God's been extremely good to me that I gained a little daughter-in-law that if I would wish for a daughter, I couldn't get a better one, or a nicer one, or a prettier one. She is my best little friend.

MB: That's wonderful.

ZF: I love her, and I know she loves me. And it's the little girl that I always wanted.

MB: So you have family.

ZF: So I have a wonderful, devoted and good family. So that's the good part. So, the sad ending is that my husband was lucky enough to meet his future daughter-in-law, but she wa-, they were only married two years ago. And he loved her, too.

MB: And he died before your son married?

ZF: He died four years ago. My son is married two years. My son is a doctor. He is in Jefferson. She is a PhD. And what can I tell you? It's been a, basically I had a nice life. Basically I would say...

MB: In Philadelphia.

ZF: In Philadelphia. Philadelphia's been good to me. I had a good life, wonderful family life, a wonderful husband. I can only think back that all the bad things that has happened to me, that, what a good thing did come out, that, I probably would have never met a man like that.

MB: Was he also through the camps, or no?

ZF: He was not.

MB: He was not.

ZF: No, he was not through the camps. But he felt for me. He would protect me and I felt it.

MB: Were you able to share with him what you went through?

ZF: Yes, yes. A lot of..

MB: And he understood.

ZF: Oh yes.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: He understood very much, yes. He was a good man, a good family.

MB: He sounds like a good man.

ZF: A good man, good-looking, kind.

MB: Good father.

ZF: Wonderful father. The be-, the best of everything.

MB: The best.

ZF: Just was the best of everything.

MB: You're fortunate. That's not luck.

ZF: So...

MB: That's not luck.

ZF: That's luck too. I just happened to have been at the right time at the right place.

MB: And you worked at it.

ZF: It may have...

MB: You made it happen.

ZF: To make a happy marriage...

MB: You made it happen.

ZF: You have to work at it.

MB: Yeah.

ZF: You just, it just doesn't happen.

MB: No it doesn't.

ZF: The ingredients were there, but you have to work at it.

MB: Sounds like you did.

ZF: My man was the universe of my life. He wa-, I loved my children and I always will love them with all my heart, but my man was my universe. He was the number one. He was the most important thing in my life.

MB: And you to him.

ZF: Yes. So we worked at it. I, I would say we, we thought of each other first.

MB: First.

ZF: In fact my children always were joking. They said, "I know who is number one." That's was their favorite...

MB: And that's, and they were right.

ZF: But I'm very fortunate with my children too. You also have to be lucky too. I have absolutely wonderful children. My oldest son right now is visiting Israel. He's coming back next Sunday. And my boys are very close, and very devoted to one another.

MB: They're attentive to you.

ZF: They are wonderful...

MB: Good sons to their mother.

ZF: They're wonderful, very caring, very devoted, and...

MB: You know what? That's not just luck.

ZF: They...

MB: You, you...

ZF: It's, you have to be lucky.

MB: Yeah, but you...

ZF: You have to be lucky.

MB: You helped make that happen.

ZF: I couldn't get all that credit, because you have to be lucky, too. It's just, altogether maybe I had a little something...

ZINA FARBER [1-2-20]

MB: A little!

ZF: To do with it. But, and their father was a most unusual man-- good.

MB: Seems like a good family.

ZF: Good background, good...

MB: Like the warmth of your family.

ZF: Good man.

MB: As you recall...

ZF: A good, a good...

MB: From being a little girl.

ZF: Yeah, a good background. And we, so with, with my family I have been very, very fortunate. And with my children and my other son Jeff, if he brings me another daughter-in-law anything like it, then...

MB: You'll be very happy.

ZF: I, I have my wish fulfilled.

MB: It's a nice...

ZF: So, that's it, was...

MB: Anything else that as you think about telling the stories? Anything else that...

ZF: From the past?

MB: From the past, from the present.

ZF: There's so, there are so many. There are so many to tell.

MB: Have you, have you told your stories over the years to other people? You said you, you mentioned that you'd done some speaking at Gratz?

ZF: I did, yes, some. I am basically good at questions and answers, specific questions of what you are interested in. And if I know, I can tell you. So this is what I've been basically good at.

MB: You, you've done fine. What we really wanted was for you to talk about your memories and about your general experiences. I'm sure that you have stories that go up and down the length of my arm.

ZF: There are so many little incidents, little things. My, it's big, but I think of them now as little. Because I really dwell more on what's, what's now. I've had a beautiful life. I...

MB: How about your religion now? I mean, are you...

ZF: I wouldn't know how to characterize myself. To say that I am not religious would not be so. To say that I am religious would also not be a good description. I believe in God. I am very Jewish-oriented. I love the Jewish tradition. My father is very, was very observant, and I respected him for it. And I did everything possible when he would come to my house. But I myself just love the Jewish tradition. But I, I don't know how to, to phrase it. To say I'm religious...

MB: I think you phrased it well.

ZF: I don't know.

MB: It's cultural, it's ethnic.

ZF: Cultural, ethnic, and...

MB: Not necessarily going to synagogue every week, or every six months either. People do it differently. Anything else you want to say?

ZF: What would you like to know? What's happening now? What would you like to know for instance, tell me.

MB: No, not necessarily what's happening now. I guess any other, any other memories, anything else that you think, that you haven't told anybody, that you'd like to share a story, something else that has been inside and you said you'd, you'd love for it to be out except, except it's painful to get it out. Any of those stories.

ZF: There are a lot of little of those stories, an awful lot.

MB: One?

ZF: And, you just, sometimes I feel that it's better that I just keep it.

MB: Okay.

ZF: Let it stay there and rest.

MB: All right. I'm not, I'm not gonna rattle it. Okay.

ZF: All right?

MB: Thank you very much.

ZF: You're welcome.

MB: I'm gonna click my machine off.