

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:01:22,980

2

00:01:22,980 --> 00:01:27,500

Today is Tuesday,
February 21st, 1995.

3

00:01:27,500 --> 00:01:29,820

I'm Judith Anne Tillman with
the Holocaust Oral History

4

00:01:29,820 --> 00:01:31,710

Project in San Francisco.

5

00:01:31,710 --> 00:01:36,330

And today, we're doing part
two of Fay Nilsson's videotape.

6

00:01:36,330 --> 00:01:38,940

We'll be discussing
some of her documents.

7

00:01:38,940 --> 00:01:40,500

And she'll be reading a poem.

8

00:01:40,500 --> 00:01:43,480

And we'll see a photograph.

9

00:01:43,480 --> 00:01:46,980

Fay, if you'll describe the
first document that we see?

10

00:01:46,980 --> 00:01:50,640

It's my father's
birth certificate.

11

00:01:50,640 --> 00:01:54,010

His name was Alfons Georg Gross.

12

00:01:54,010 --> 00:01:57,990

He was of Catholic

faith and married

13

00:01:57,990 --> 00:02:00,690
my mother, who was Jewish.

14

00:02:00,690 --> 00:02:04,200
And if it wouldn't
have been for him,

15

00:02:04,200 --> 00:02:06,980
we probably wouldn't
be alive today,

16

00:02:06,980 --> 00:02:11,640
my mother and my three
brothers and sister.

17

00:02:11,640 --> 00:02:13,260
And why is that?

18

00:02:13,260 --> 00:02:14,490
If you can just expand.

19

00:02:14,490 --> 00:02:17,940
Because during the
War in Germany,

20

00:02:17,940 --> 00:02:20,640
anybody related
to a Jewish person

21

00:02:20,640 --> 00:02:27,360
had to go to a concentration
camp and never made it back.

22

00:02:27,360 --> 00:02:34,200
But since he was German
and we took on his faith,

23

00:02:34,200 --> 00:02:40,650
we survived the
War and Holocaust.

24

00:02:40,650 --> 00:02:42,780

And he was born what year?

25

00:02:42,780 --> 00:02:50,190

He was born in 1901,

August 4th, 1901

26

00:02:50,190 --> 00:02:54,900

in Lanshut, Germany, which is
not far from Munich, Germany.

27

00:02:54,900 --> 00:02:58,310

28

00:02:58,310 --> 00:02:59,240

He met my mother.

29

00:02:59,240 --> 00:03:04,440

He was in the cavalry
when he was a young man.

30

00:03:04,440 --> 00:03:07,560

And he was stationed
in Anspach where

31

00:03:07,560 --> 00:03:10,410

my mother lived at the time.

32

00:03:10,410 --> 00:03:13,680

And that's how they met.

33

00:03:13,680 --> 00:03:18,780

He saw her riding around on
a bicycle and he said, cute.

34

00:03:18,780 --> 00:03:22,048

And he said, I want
to meet that girl.

35

00:03:22,048 --> 00:03:23,090

And that's what happened.

36

00:03:23,090 --> 00:03:30,270

37

00:03:30,270 --> 00:03:32,220

OK, Faye, if you would
describe this document.

38

00:03:32,220 --> 00:03:34,920

39

00:03:34,920 --> 00:03:38,340

This is the birth
certificate of my mother,

40

00:03:38,340 --> 00:03:47,820

who was Karole Uhlfelder,
was born on July 18, 1902.

41

00:03:47,820 --> 00:03:52,530

She was of Israeli
or Jewish faith.

42

00:03:52,530 --> 00:03:58,530

And her father's name
was Mauritz Uhlfelder,

43

00:03:58,530 --> 00:04:01,440

her mother's name
was Ida Uhlfelder,

44

00:04:01,440 --> 00:04:04,680

who later died in a
concentration camp.

45

00:04:04,680 --> 00:04:07,230

Did both of her parents die
in a concentration camp?

46

00:04:07,230 --> 00:04:13,890

No, just-- Mauritz died
of wounds from the War,

47

00:04:13,890 --> 00:04:17,399
of the First World War in 1936.

48
00:04:17,399 --> 00:04:23,760
But my grandmother Ida died
in a concentration camp.

49
00:04:23,760 --> 00:04:25,860
Where was your mother born?

50
00:04:25,860 --> 00:04:30,480
My mother was born in Nurnberg,
which is north of Regensburg.

51
00:04:30,480 --> 00:04:34,840
It's about 200 kilometers
north of Munich.

52
00:04:34,840 --> 00:04:35,340
OK.

53
00:04:35,340 --> 00:04:43,820

54
00:04:43,820 --> 00:04:46,890
And if you would
describe this document

55
00:04:46,890 --> 00:04:51,390
and tell us what it
says, and the date,

56
00:04:51,390 --> 00:04:54,420
and the circumstance
that it surrounded.

57
00:04:54,420 --> 00:04:58,170
This says in other
words, it was done

58
00:04:58,170 --> 00:05:04,170
by the government of
Regensburg that they

59

00:05:04,170 --> 00:05:10,260
were saying that my
grandmother, Mrs. Ida Uhlfelder,

60

00:05:10,260 --> 00:05:16,560
was taken with 105
other Jewish people

61

00:05:16,560 --> 00:05:28,210
to Piaski bei Lublin,
which is in Poland.

62

00:05:28,210 --> 00:05:32,080
And we found out later that
she actually died in Majdanek.

63

00:05:32,080 --> 00:05:34,720
But since we never saw
her body or anything,

64

00:05:34,720 --> 00:05:37,510
we really are not 100% sure.

65

00:05:37,510 --> 00:05:42,220
But this is a
verification that she

66

00:05:42,220 --> 00:05:53,060
left on the 2nd of April,
1942 to never return to us.

67

00:05:53,060 --> 00:05:57,080
And when did you receive this
certificate of verification?

68

00:05:57,080 --> 00:05:59,420
That was in October of 1949.

69

00:05:59,420 --> 00:06:06,440
I'm sure my mother had that
made out by the government

70

00:06:06,440 --> 00:06:07,400
to perhaps later.

71

00:06:07,400 --> 00:06:09,058
Because I think we needed it--

72

00:06:09,058 --> 00:06:10,850
first of all, to come
to the United States.

73

00:06:10,850 --> 00:06:16,045
They helped us to do
that, get special rations.

74

00:06:16,045 --> 00:06:17,420
After the War,
there was no food.

75

00:06:17,420 --> 00:06:21,170

76

00:06:21,170 --> 00:06:25,160
So it's assumed then that
she was killed in Majdanek.

77

00:06:25,160 --> 00:06:27,020
That's what we heard.

78

00:06:27,020 --> 00:06:28,520
That was the latest
that we heard

79

00:06:28,520 --> 00:06:30,670
that she died in Majdanek.

80

00:06:30,670 --> 00:06:31,170
All right.

81

00:06:31,170 --> 00:06:34,340
And that is your maternal
grandmother who was Jewish?

82

00:06:34,340 --> 00:06:35,570

Yes.

83

00:06:35,570 --> 00:06:37,100

And her full name again is?

84

00:06:37,100 --> 00:06:39,200

Is Ida Uhlfelder.

85

00:06:39,200 --> 00:06:40,400

Maiden name was Goodman.

86

00:06:40,400 --> 00:06:43,310

87

00:06:43,310 --> 00:06:46,370

Isn't she beautiful?

88

00:06:46,370 --> 00:06:49,280

And Faye, if you would tell
us about this photograph, when

89

00:06:49,280 --> 00:06:52,190

it was taken, where, how
old she was if you know.

90

00:06:52,190 --> 00:06:58,370

It was taken, I believe, either
1941 or 1942 as a passport

91

00:06:58,370 --> 00:07:00,110

picture to come to
the United States,

92

00:07:00,110 --> 00:07:02,980

which she could never use.

93

00:07:02,980 --> 00:07:05,105

And this, again, this is
your maternal grandmother?

94

00:07:05,105 --> 00:07:07,790
That's my maternal
grandmother, Ida Uhlfelder,

95
00:07:07,790 --> 00:07:12,260
who died in Majdanek, Poland.

96
00:07:12,260 --> 00:07:14,780
So this was taken
about '41, you think?

97
00:07:14,780 --> 00:07:18,980
I believe, because it could
have been either the end of 1941

98
00:07:18,980 --> 00:07:25,730
or the beginning of 1942 when
she was she was 65 years old,

99
00:07:25,730 --> 00:07:26,830
I believe.

100
00:07:26,830 --> 00:07:32,910
Because she was born
on February 26th, 1877.

101
00:07:32,910 --> 00:07:35,340
Birthday is approaching.

102
00:07:35,340 --> 00:07:37,440
And do you know when
she was planning

103
00:07:37,440 --> 00:07:40,440
to come to the United States?

104
00:07:40,440 --> 00:07:43,620
She had two tickets
when she left.

105
00:07:43,620 --> 00:07:44,625
When she was taken away?

106

00:07:44,625 --> 00:07:46,500

When she was taken away,
she had the tickets.

107

00:07:46,500 --> 00:07:49,260

But they could no
longer honor them.

108

00:07:49,260 --> 00:07:51,930

No one left anymore.

109

00:07:51,930 --> 00:07:56,400

I think in '41, she could
have manage to leave, but not

110

00:07:56,400 --> 00:07:58,770

in '42.

111

00:07:58,770 --> 00:08:00,080

The War was too far gone.

112

00:08:00,080 --> 00:08:03,730

113

00:08:03,730 --> 00:08:06,910

She was a beautiful woman.

114

00:08:06,910 --> 00:08:09,010

What's one of your
greatest memories

115

00:08:09,010 --> 00:08:12,040

about your grandmother,
the strongest?

116

00:08:12,040 --> 00:08:15,040

117

00:08:15,040 --> 00:08:17,650

The memory before she
left and my mother

118

00:08:17,650 --> 00:08:20,140
washed her hair, her white hair.

119

00:08:20,140 --> 00:08:23,560
And I think I mentioned
that in the other thing.

120

00:08:23,560 --> 00:08:24,550
And said goodbye.

121

00:08:24,550 --> 00:08:32,580
And she said, they already
killed them in the wagons,

122

00:08:32,580 --> 00:08:34,034
in the trains.

123

00:08:34,034 --> 00:08:35,409
They already gassed
some of them.

124

00:08:35,409 --> 00:08:37,409
She said, I don't even
know how far I might get.

125

00:08:37,409 --> 00:08:38,620
I will make it.

126

00:08:38,620 --> 00:08:40,090
So she knew.

127

00:08:40,090 --> 00:08:42,049
She knew.

128

00:08:42,049 --> 00:08:43,210
She took things along.

129

00:08:43,210 --> 00:08:45,880
She dressed like
this when she left.

130

00:08:45,880 --> 00:08:53,380

She always was
beautifully dressed

131

00:08:53,380 --> 00:08:56,300

and took along beautiful
clothes, a big trunk,

132

00:08:56,300 --> 00:09:02,200

which she never received,
and jewelry, and whatever.

133

00:09:02,200 --> 00:09:04,000

But she never
received any of it.

134

00:09:04,000 --> 00:09:06,830

135

00:09:06,830 --> 00:09:10,460

And I believe I mentioned
when we were talking about her

136

00:09:10,460 --> 00:09:12,800

that she sent a card from--

137

00:09:12,800 --> 00:09:15,860

how we know it's Majdanek,
because the card,

138

00:09:15,860 --> 00:09:19,160

I believe, states that.

139

00:09:19,160 --> 00:09:22,400

And she said, take the
children to the sun.

140

00:09:22,400 --> 00:09:26,915

And also said, I have
the key to my trunk--

141

00:09:26,915 --> 00:09:29,840

142
00:09:29,840 --> 00:09:31,970
So you have the key,
never got the trunk.

143
00:09:31,970 --> 00:09:36,110
In fact, my brother was
telling me he never--

144
00:09:36,110 --> 00:09:39,080
the stuff was left right
there in the railroad station.

145
00:09:39,080 --> 00:09:43,316
Never even was put on the train.

146
00:09:43,316 --> 00:09:45,220
That's what they did.

147
00:09:45,220 --> 00:09:47,360
Yeah, I wonder who
has that stuff.

148
00:09:47,360 --> 00:09:53,780

149
00:09:53,780 --> 00:09:57,030
OK, and if you can describe
this document, please.

150
00:09:57,030 --> 00:10:02,810
This was an ID card that
all Germans had to have.

151
00:10:02,810 --> 00:10:07,640
And for Jewish people,
they had a big J,

152
00:10:07,640 --> 00:10:12,890
as you can see on the left
side of the picture right here.

153

00:10:12,890 --> 00:10:16,550
And my mother had to sign it.

154
00:10:16,550 --> 00:10:19,190
Her name was Karole Gross.

155
00:10:19,190 --> 00:10:24,170
And they made her sign
Sarah in front of it because

156
00:10:24,170 --> 00:10:26,930
of her Jewish background.

157
00:10:26,930 --> 00:10:31,100
And as far as I know, she
never wanted to show it.

158
00:10:31,100 --> 00:10:34,730
If she had to go somewhere
where she had to show an ID,

159
00:10:34,730 --> 00:10:37,970
she just acted like she
didn't have it along.

160
00:10:37,970 --> 00:10:41,930
Because she was too afraid
that if she showed it,

161
00:10:41,930 --> 00:10:46,670
they would either throw out of
the train, or out of stores,

162
00:10:46,670 --> 00:10:50,660
or whatever where you
have to show your ID.

163
00:10:50,660 --> 00:10:52,920
And you see the Nazis--

164
00:10:52,920 --> 00:10:55,340
see this?

165

00:10:55,340 --> 00:10:58,130

You see [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]?

166

00:10:58,130 --> 00:10:59,120

See the swastika there?

167

00:10:59,120 --> 00:11:00,495

Part of the
swastika, you see it.

168

00:11:00,495 --> 00:11:01,610

Yes.

169

00:11:01,610 --> 00:11:03,980

So now was she
ever in a situation

170

00:11:03,980 --> 00:11:09,410

where she was walking without
it and Nazi or SS stopped her?

171

00:11:09,410 --> 00:11:10,820

It happened a few times.

172

00:11:10,820 --> 00:11:17,690

And as far as I know, they
said, well, you better carry it.

173

00:11:17,690 --> 00:11:20,250

They just told her, you
better have to carry it.

174

00:11:20,250 --> 00:11:26,180

So in the future then, she
stayed at home more and more.

175

00:11:26,180 --> 00:11:28,190

Didn't go very many places.

176

00:11:28,190 --> 00:11:35,210

Because she just was afraid
that if she had to show ID,

177

00:11:35,210 --> 00:11:38,180
she couldn't produce it and
didn't want to produce it.

178

00:11:38,180 --> 00:11:40,760
But she didn't want to put
us in jeopardy, you see.

179

00:11:40,760 --> 00:11:42,740
What about you
and your siblings?

180

00:11:42,740 --> 00:11:44,310
What did your IDs say?

181

00:11:44,310 --> 00:11:46,400
Did it say half Jewish,
half [INAUDIBLE]??

182

00:11:46,400 --> 00:11:51,200
We didn't have--
children didn't have IDs.

183

00:11:51,200 --> 00:11:53,360
My brother, my oldest
brother might have.

184

00:11:53,360 --> 00:11:56,930
But I don't know
what it said on his.

185

00:11:56,930 --> 00:11:59,200
I have to ask him.

186

00:11:59,200 --> 00:12:06,370
And when we went anywhere,
we just didn't say anything.

187

00:12:06,370 --> 00:12:09,390
In fact, if they asked what
my mother's maiden name was,

188

00:12:09,390 --> 00:12:12,720

I used to say, Uhl,

U-H-L. Because I

189

00:12:12,720 --> 00:12:14,730

was afraid to say

Uhlfelder, because that's

190

00:12:14,730 --> 00:12:17,460

a very Jewish name.

191

00:12:17,460 --> 00:12:20,970

And because of your

father's kindness,

192

00:12:20,970 --> 00:12:23,400

she survived and all

of you, all the kids.

193

00:12:23,400 --> 00:12:24,510

He took good care of us.

194

00:12:24,510 --> 00:12:27,030

My father took good care of us.

195

00:12:27,030 --> 00:12:31,770

He had many times,

opportunities where

196

00:12:31,770 --> 00:12:35,190

they encouraged him to divorce

my mother or leave her.

197

00:12:35,190 --> 00:12:39,490

And it would have meant the

death penalty for all of us.

198

00:12:39,490 --> 00:12:43,710

And he knew-- he didn't

know it as a fact,

199

00:12:43,710 --> 00:12:47,820

but he had an idea that we
couldn't survive this War.

200
00:12:47,820 --> 00:12:50,940

201
00:12:50,940 --> 00:12:52,430
Let's keep this picture.

202
00:12:52,430 --> 00:12:55,680

203
00:12:55,680 --> 00:12:59,790
And if you'll tell us
about this last document

204
00:12:59,790 --> 00:13:03,030
that you're going to read while
we still look at your mother.

205
00:13:03,030 --> 00:13:04,440
OK.

206
00:13:04,440 --> 00:13:09,930
My mother died on
January 8th, 1979.

207
00:13:09,930 --> 00:13:17,280
And my youngest brother Frantz
wrote a poem to our mother.

208
00:13:17,280 --> 00:13:19,270
Where did she die?

209
00:13:19,270 --> 00:13:21,600
She died in Vacaville.

210
00:13:21,600 --> 00:13:22,180
California?

211
00:13:22,180 --> 00:13:22,920
California.

212
00:13:22,920 --> 00:13:24,890
Yes, in California.

213
00:13:24,890 --> 00:13:27,450
My mother died before my father.

214
00:13:27,450 --> 00:13:32,200
So he wrote this poem.

215
00:13:32,200 --> 00:13:35,841

216
00:13:35,841 --> 00:13:38,820
"Our mother who was born
under the Star of David,

217
00:13:38,820 --> 00:13:41,100
but saw her future and
believe in Jesus Christ

218
00:13:41,100 --> 00:13:43,140
for the great love
of our Father,

219
00:13:43,140 --> 00:13:46,560
she was an intelligent, proud
lady with great strength.

220
00:13:46,560 --> 00:13:48,480
She changed her
religion by conviction

221
00:13:48,480 --> 00:13:51,450
and Jesus asked her to
stand up and be counted.

222
00:13:51,450 --> 00:13:53,350
God gave her tests.

223
00:13:53,350 --> 00:13:55,320
She nursed all five

of her children

224

00:13:55,320 --> 00:13:59,190

back to health when four of
us were down with listeria

225

00:13:59,190 --> 00:14:02,400

and her youngest girl near
death with a heavy pleurisy

226

00:14:02,400 --> 00:14:04,020

all at the same time.

227

00:14:04,020 --> 00:14:06,780

She was the lady that
had to stand by and watch

228

00:14:06,780 --> 00:14:10,800

her mother being dragged off
to a Nazi concentration camp,

229

00:14:10,800 --> 00:14:12,450

never to return.

230

00:14:12,450 --> 00:14:15,180

She was the lady that had
to handle the shouting

231

00:14:15,180 --> 00:14:17,580

abuses from Nazi
neighbors because she

232

00:14:17,580 --> 00:14:19,650

came from a Jewish family.

233

00:14:19,650 --> 00:14:21,720

She was the lady
that held our hands

234

00:14:21,720 --> 00:14:24,090

and found shelter
after the bombing raid

235

00:14:24,090 --> 00:14:26,340

when no one wanted
us because she was

236

00:14:26,340 --> 00:14:28,980

born under the Star of David.

237

00:14:28,980 --> 00:14:31,140

She was the lady that
gave her last bread

238

00:14:31,140 --> 00:14:33,720

rations to a young
Russian prisoner of war

239

00:14:33,720 --> 00:14:36,750

to keep him from starving.

240

00:14:36,750 --> 00:14:39,090

She was the lady that
convinced the village leaders

241

00:14:39,090 --> 00:14:42,990

to remove a road
blockade to save

242

00:14:42,990 --> 00:14:48,030

the small town from annihilation
by American gun power.

243

00:14:48,030 --> 00:14:51,480

She was the lady that put
food and bread on the table

244

00:14:51,480 --> 00:14:53,970

when things were very tough.

245

00:14:53,970 --> 00:14:56,580

She was the lady that stood
in 18 hour bread lines

246

00:14:56,580 --> 00:14:59,440

in order to feed us.

247

00:14:59,440 --> 00:15:01,890

She was the lady that
walked for miles and miles

248

00:15:01,890 --> 00:15:04,140

and crossed rivers when
there were no bridges

249

00:15:04,140 --> 00:15:07,140

to look for her oldest son to
come home from the forced labor

250

00:15:07,140 --> 00:15:08,370

camp.

251

00:15:08,370 --> 00:15:11,160

She was the lady who
always mended our clothing

252

00:15:11,160 --> 00:15:12,480

when there was no thread.

253

00:15:12,480 --> 00:15:14,620

She found a way.

254

00:15:14,620 --> 00:15:16,710

She was the lady that
taught us right from wrong

255

00:15:16,710 --> 00:15:19,590

and gave us strength.

256

00:15:19,590 --> 00:15:24,090

She was the lady
that gave us pride.

257

00:15:24,090 --> 00:15:27,990

God gave her the tests
and she responded.

258

00:15:27,990 --> 00:15:33,270

God also rewarded her by
giving her five children who

259

00:15:33,270 --> 00:15:34,440

loved her sincerely.

260

00:15:34,440 --> 00:15:40,710

261

00:15:40,710 --> 00:15:42,720

God rewarded her by
keeping all of us

262

00:15:42,720 --> 00:15:46,350

alive during the bombing raids,
the Russian front, the forced

263

00:15:46,350 --> 00:15:50,880

labor camp, and bringing us
all back together in one piece

264

00:15:50,880 --> 00:15:53,700

as a family after World War II.

265

00:15:53,700 --> 00:15:56,100

God gave her the foresight
to leave the city

266

00:15:56,100 --> 00:15:58,620

and go into hiding during
the last year Of the war

267

00:15:58,620 --> 00:16:02,310

to save us from
annihilation by the Nazis.

268

00:16:02,310 --> 00:16:05,040

God gave her the foresight
to encourage her two oldest

269

00:16:05,040 --> 00:16:08,970

sons to emigrate to America

and spearhead our whole family.

270

00:16:08,970 --> 00:16:12,120

God rewarded her by giving her
good health all of her life.

271

00:16:12,120 --> 00:16:16,530

And God helped her by making
her passing as easy as he could.

272

00:16:16,530 --> 00:16:21,390

This, in a brief synopsis, is
our mother, wife, grandmother,

273

00:16:21,390 --> 00:16:26,795

and great grandmother,
Karole N. Gross."

274

00:16:26,795 --> 00:18:33,000