Interview with LENCI FARKAS (Part II)
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Interviewer:
Transcriber: Roland M. Dragon, CSR

Q. LENCI, I STARTED ASKING YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TIME AT AUSCHWITZ.

A. Yes.

Q. AND WHAT I WANTED TO ASK WAS: WAS THERE ANY RETRIBUTION AMONG THE WOMEN FOR OTHER INMATES WHO PERHAPS STOLE FOOD FROM SOMEBODY OR DID OTHER THINGS THAT WERE CONSIDERED CRIMES AGAINST THEIR PEERS?

A. You are talking about if a German --

Q. NO. I AM TALKING ABOUT --

A. Or talking about against each other?

Q. YES.

A. Well, there were many people that did things to each other, sure. If they could get hold of your bread they would, and what would you do? Maybe you started a little fight, but there was no use to fight over it. But, yes, people did. If they saw you put away a slice of bread for tomorrow, they -- sure, if they could, they took the bread. Many things were going on.

Q. THERE WAS NO KIND OF DEFINITE PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE KIND OF PEOPLE?

A. No. Oh, no. If you would go and report -- You would be reporting to where? It wouldn't do any good.

Q. NO HARM IN IT, ANYWAY?

A. No. No harm and no good. I mean, they were hungry

just like you were. So the best thing, actually, was to finish what you had. You always took a chance if you put it away it might not be there the next day. Besides, where would you put it? Under your pillow? Under your head? Let's say under your head. There was no place to put it.

Q. NOW, I HAVE TO ASK YOU ABOUT WHETHER WHEN YOU GOT THERE YOU WERE -- YOU REALIZED YOUR STATUS. I MEAN, PEOPLE LIKE YOU KNEW, YOUR FAMILY. DID YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION NOT TO THINK ABOUT THINGS OR DID YOU WAIVER?

A. It's interesting how you don't accept it. You know it is but you don't really believe it. Naturally, many times talking about it between -- you didn't really mourn. We never really mourned. We knew they are gone and somehow you accepted it. When we were liberated we still hoped maybe -- we had dreams. I mean, we all had dreams. My father was home and I am not there to be with him, or things like that. I don't know, I really can't explain it. I can't explain how one knew it and one didn't accept it. And one accepted it. I mean, it's interesting that when I came back, back home to our village once after -- before I got married, and all that, after the liberation, and I walked in the house and the house was dirty and the floor -- we had hardwood floor, which not too many people had, and my mother used to keep it so beautiful, and I walked in and that floor looked like a pigsty.

I started crying, I was bawling, and somebody said, "Why are you crying to terribly?" I said, "I can't explain it, but just to see what it looks like. How would she feel, if my mother would see this?" That's what got to me. I can't explain why

that is. Those are the things that shows you material things really don't matter. Somehow, that's what I was thinking, "Poor mother, what would she think if she would see this floor."

So, anyway, that's what happened. That's how we lived and we hoped, and --

Q. IT HELPED YOU TO SURVIVE?

A. It helped us to survive, I suppose. And afterwards, I guess you accepted it because everybody else was in the same situation. We started saying, "Well, okay, I have this sister or I have that one," or this and that, and -- more so, some people came back all by themselves.

Q. DO YOU EVER REMEMBER ANY INCIDENTS WHEN YOU WOULD HAVE A LIGHT MOMENT FOR AMUSEMENT OR FUN?

A. Well, we would talk about cooking, who can cook better, which was torture, because we were so very hungry. And we would make up songs and sing. I mean, you have to keep yourself going, because doing nothing is the most terrible thing, just doing nothing and not knowing what the next minute-- These were young women there, and we had to entertain ourselves some way.

Q. TO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE SONGS?

A. Pardon me?

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE SONGS?

A. Well, we liked to sing that, "Everything Will Go By--" (Singing). I don't have a voice, but anyway, these were the songs that we sang, in Hungarian and German, and back and

forth. Yes, it's amazing how human nature is.

Q. I THINK YOU ALREADY SAID YOU REALLY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY HAD NO WORK FOR YOU?

A. Yes. They kept us in Auschwitz until October. And, really, there was no work for us except, like I said, I was lucky enough to get into that place where they were sorting the quilts. But that was temporary, it wasn't a steady job, because we were in Auschwitz in the , they called it, and one day, it was during the summer, they came to select, and they were selecting, they said, the pretty girls with nice hands, nice face, "We are selecting them for work."

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Well, we thought, okay, we are going to try for it and see what happens. And they did select some of my friends, yes, and by the time they came to us they cut off the line, they said, "We have enough, we don't need any more."

And then they took the rest of us, and they took us over to another lager that was across from the C lager, and it was an unfinished one. And it seems to me it was, you know, muddy, there were no walkways. And the cell where we were in they didn't have bunks and we slept on the floor, and they said they were waiting, they were going to take us somewhere from this place and this was where we were waiting for it.

Well, it didn't happen. It went on for weeks and weeks and we were still just being in that unfinished part of the lager. And there, there was really nothing to do. I mean, you could go off your mind. But, like I said, we were among each other

and we invented all kinds of games, or whatever you would call it, you know, to entertain ourselves.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE GAMES?

A. Well, like I said, it was always about eating and cooking, mostly.

And then I became ill, I had scarlet fever in that lager, and I was -- if my sister had not been there, my oldest sister, I don't think I would have survived because we had to stand in line, no apparel, and it was raining, it was already the end of the summer, and sometimes I couldn't stand and I would collapse and they would make me stand up. I know I was delirious, I had terrible earache, and, of course, you didn't want to -- even if it was a green doctor you wouldn't tell because who wanted to have scarlet fever, it's a contagious sickness, everybody was afraid to get it, so we kept it among us, of course. And very fortunately I survived and none of them got it. So that was a very fortunate thing.

But at the same time there was an incident when we were in this lager and I was -- already my body was kind of peeling. After scarlet fever your body peels. And Mengele himself came to the lager and he was selecting because there would be -- apparently there were too many for him who were in bad shape and he was picking them out. And we had to undress, completely naked, and we had to walk in front of him.

Well, I definitely thought that he was going to see my body peeling then I'm just -- that's it, that's the end of me.

So I folded raggedy clothes, whatever I had, and I had it in my hand and I held it in front of me and I walked in front of Mengele and he looked at me and didn't say anything, and all of a sudden he said, "Come back." So I returned and he said, "Take your clothes away from your stomach and just walk in front of me and don't cover yourself."

And I didn't know what to say. I tell you, my heart was in my stomach, and what not, and I walked -- and he being a doctor, he didn't see it. He let me pass. As we say it, I was meant to live. If you have years, no matter what happens you're here. That's why I always had such hope, such optimism, because I figured, "Well, it's meant for me to live."

Q. DID YOU EVER GET ANY MEDICAL TREATMENT AT ALL FOR THIS?

A. No, absolutely nothing. To tell you the truth, in one of my ears I don't hear one hundred percent, but the other one is okay.

Q. DO YOU KNOW OF ANY INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE?

A. No. Not where we were. Not in Auschwitz itself. I didn't experience any. Like I mentioned to you, it was the Russians rather than the Germans. No, not in our group. But we heard all kinds of stories that goes on, and went on. But I guess we were just the masses and they didn't pay much attention to us, I guess.

Q. WAS THERE EVER ANY INCIDENTS OF BABIES BEING BORN IN YOUR GROUP?

A. Well, there was a baby being born, but I don't know much about it. It so happened she was my stepmother's sister-in-law that had the baby. They say that they took her -- when

it was due they took her away and she never came back, so I'm sure both of them were killed, either before or after the birth, I don't know. I didn't have any incidents of seeing a baby being born, no.

Q. SO, HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE FACT THAT YOU WERE SELECTED TO BE WANTING -- TO BE WORKING?

A. Well, in October I guess they were wanting to -- liquidating the camp, the Russians were quite close, and I guess there was something left in us, we could work, and they took us, like I said, in one evening and we traveled day and night, and -- when we started out on the train we went into a closed train, it was closed, but then we were transferred to these open wagons, completely open, and this was already -- it was quite cold, it was the end of October, and we came to this working camp which 34 Birnbaumel was called , a very small little place. It was not far from Breslau. All these small camps were around Breslau. And there they took us into a camp -- it was not -- it didn't have any ovens. And it had these cells, they were rounded cells, like -- what do you call it -- campers, like campers.

Q. DO YOU MEAN LIKE SUMMER CAMPS?

A. Summer camps. But they were a little bit more sturdier than that. It was kind of round and it had this top, but it was open around on the top, and a little stove in the middle, which couldn't give you enough heat because in the morning when you woke up icecycles were hanging around on the roof. And we were like four of us in one bed, and they gave each of us a blanket and we divided it two on the bottom and two on the top -- with one on the bottom and three on the top so we could all cover ourselves.

It was very cold, it was miserably cold. And the food was just like in Auschwitz -- not very much. Very -- coffee was the brown water and the soup was just here and there, floating something inside.

We worked outside, outdoors, digging tank traps, I would call it, to -- putting things in to fall in if they come across. And when it was ready we had to cover it with branches. And it was a terrible winter and we had no clothes, I mean hardly any clothes. We used to take out this straw that we had in the cells under our bed and stick it inside our coat, inside our clothes, so it keeps us warm. Shall I tell you that we even laughed at each other, how we looked? Yes, we did. And we looked at each other and said, "Oh, my God, look at you, you have a hump here and a hump there," And you look this and you look that. And, you know, you have to make life bearable in some way.

Q. WHY DIDN'T THE STRAW FALL OUT WHEN YOU WOULD BEND?

A. Well, we had a string or something that we kind of tied it, you see, so it was right along here (indicating). You couldn't put it here (indicating) because then you don't have it too tight, around the upper body. And then at night you would just come back and put it back in the bed and sleep on it.

It was the same thing. In the morning they counted us when we went to work, and then we came back and they counted us. This was from October 'til January.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY CLEANING FACILITIES, WASHING FACILITIES?

A. As I remember, we had even less than at Auschwitz.

It was so cold we didn't even feel like we wanted to wash ourselves. We were already -- we had lice. By that time we already had lice. Sometime when the sun would shine and one of us would take the clothes off and start hunting for lice, but it didn't help because there were so many eggs laid that it came out again. So, yes, we were all full of lice by then.

Q. HOW DID THE GERMAN GESTAPO TREAT YOU WHEN YOU GOT THERE?

A. Well, if you went to work you went to work. I can't say that we had any beatings there. Like I said, we were out from morning until evening or late afternoon in the fields and there was no protection from the rain or from the snow or from the wind and you were there all day. And they brought us out the food, the lunch, whatever they gave us, and we -- for a few minutes they let us finish our food and went back to work.

We had the Wehrmacht, it wasn't the SS's that was overlooking us. Then there were some Ukranian workers that would overlook how we worked, but they were prisoners themselves, except they were Germans. And the Germans would be the ones that came back from the Russian front already, that they couldn't serve any more.

And some of them would walk by and they kind of wouldn't look, you know, sometimes. It just was already so late in the time that they worked -- maybe they thought themselves, "What's the use, what's the use." But they still stood over us. And this was still about January, the beginning of January.

The bombing was going on, you could hear Breslau-- you could almost see burning, it was that close.

And then one day after Christmas, after New Years, they said we have to march because the Russians are coming, or whatever -- or we have to go to work somewhere else. That was the story, not that the Russians are coming -- except we knew the Russians are coming, and some of these Ukranian couples would say the Russians are close, you know. By that time they felt that maybe they are also prisoners and they should be a little more human. They would say the Russians are coming, they are very close.

So that's when our death march started, and they wanted to take us back somewhere into Germany. Silezia, actually. This was Poland, Silezia, that part of that country. So then we started our death march.

Q. WHAT DID YOU HAVE FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING WHEN YOU STARTED?

A. For the death march? Sometime we would have food and for days we wouldn't have food. We would come in the village -- where they got the food, I don't know, but they would serve about the same kind of food as they served all over -- in Auschwitz. And coffee, as such, we used to call it -- we would arrive into a village and they decided, okay, we stay here. So they would put us up in a barn and they locked the barn, naturally, so we would have straw and we would be a little bit warmer. And I don't know -- a thousand of us or how many of us would stay in one like that. And sometime for days we didn't get anything to eat.

We walked by fields where they would have sugar beets left, some sugar beets, and we were like wild animals, we would run out of the line and try to pick some of that sugar beets, if you could get ahold of it. And if we did then the others would run against you and steal it from you. Like I had three or four of them and I was running to give it to my sisters, and then here comes another one and grabs me and takes it away from me. What do you do; what do you do?

In the meantime, the Germans are shooting in the air -- "Back in line," and they start screaming, you know, and hitting. And that's when they hit my sister very badly, and she still suffers from it today.

Q. WAS SHE KNOCKED DOWN?

A. Yes, she was. She could hardly get up.

Q. HOW DID SHE GET UP?

A. Well, we helped her to get up and she continued to march. So we decided we were going to run away.

Q. WERE PEOPLE BEING SHOT WHEN YOU WENT AFTER THE FOOD?

A. They were shooting. Now, if anybody was shot to death I don't know. But if you sat down and said you can't walk any more they would shoot you. Yes, they would. We seen bodies in the ditches on the side where we were walking, because there were other marchers before us, we weren't the only ones. Yes, we did see the bodies. We saw a lot of men.

Q. WERE YOU GETTING ANY WATER ALONG THE WAY?

A. No. We would eat the snow. No, I mean that march was really a death march. Like one day there was a horse and a

small buggy and a man sitting on it, and he had boiled potatoes which were still steaming, he was taking them for the pigs, because it was dirty, it was full of mud and all that, and he was driving by and all of a sudden we all ran and as he was riding the horse -- we ran as fast -- I think he slowed down a little, I have the feeling -- and we grabbed some of the hot potatoes, dirty as it was, and we ate it. I still feel the sand and the dirt in my teeth, I was crunched. But my God, you ate it. These were the experiences on the death march. Their aim was that we really should not get back anywhere. The people that made it and came back to other camps, sometimes they would survive and some of them didn't. Even after the death march.

But like I said, we were very fortunate the way we made the right decision and we ran away and we stayed in that village until the Russians came.

Q. HOW DID YOUR SISTER DO WITH THE WOUNDS THAT SHE HAD?

A. Well, she had pain, she has pain all the time. And, you know, you thought it was going to go away; after all, it was just a hit, and this and that, but it got ulcerated and we were already in Prague and we were liberated, and she went to the doctor and they even told her that it's like tuberculosis of the bone, or something like that. But luckily it wasn't because she's still here. But yes, she has backaches all the time.

Q. WHERE IS IT IN THE BACK?

A. It's somehow right here like, you know (indicating). He did it with this stick that he had in his hand. But I fortunately did not experience any of that.

Q. YOU TALKED ABOUT BEING LIBERATED BY THE RUSSIANS?

A. Yes. We were liberated early, which was February 8. I say early because after that people still had terrible, terrible life, and I know that some of my family died afterwards. Yes, we were liberated by the Russians and they were very distrustful of us, they didn't quite believe us, who we were. I guess they didn't want to believe us or they really didn't believe it, but, you know, we said we were in concentration camps, and this and that, and it didn't impress them at all because they said that what they went through in Leningrad -- you know, nobody can compare their trouble with our trouble, or our trouble with theirs. But they asked us if we wanted to work for them, then they will give us food, which was most important to us. Of course, we agreed, we're going to work for them washing clothes by hand at their hospital, for the hospital, we were washing clothes, sheets and bandages, and what not. And that wasn't a place to be for young girls because the soldiers naturally wanted to have -- to sleep with us, which we didn't want.

And then the head of the division there, or whatever, they suggested that they take us to where the civilians are so we can be among civilians so we wouldn't be so much with soldiers. After all, the soldiers had their glass of vodka -- what did they care. You know, they knew it's war.

So then we were taken by the Russians -- yes, we were taken to a civilian village where there were a lot of Germans and we met other civilians like we were -- I mean, others like we were who were also liberated. And there we worked on the farm.

Q. WHAT ABOUT -- WERE YOU OFERRED ANY MEDICAL CARE OR ANYTHING?

A. Never, never. The interesting thing that -- I had infected gums -- which I still have bad gums since then -- and I thought I am going to lose all my teeth. But no, the Russians didn't bother with us. You were sick, so you were sick, they kept away from us, they didn't -- in a way, we said it's a blessing because they at least don't come to our room, they don't come and knock on the door.

And then -- I had that, and my sister started having these terrible infectuous -- how would you say it in English, you know, like these big, big pimples.

Q. AN ABCESS?

A. Yes, an abcess. Which finally one of the Russian doctors opened it for her because it was terribly painful. And she still has a very big scar because they didn't care how they do it. And my sister who was hit, she developed typhoid, and so the Russians kept out, they didn't come to visit or make friends with us or anything. And that time we didn't go out to work even too much because they didn't want too much association with us.

Q. WAS IT LIKE A QUARANTINE, PERHAPS?

A. Well, they didn't quarantine, we did ourselves. And then one of their doctors said she should take this and that kind of medicine and we said well, where can we get that kind of medicine, and he said, well, in the next village there is a hospital and they have that medicine and I'll write for you the prescription.

Don't forget, we spoke the language, Czech and Russian, and in the meantime we picked up very well the Russian so we could communicate.

And it almost sounds unbelievable we decided, with my niece, the two of us are going to go and pick the medicine up. I don't know if it was my niece or youngest sister, but one of them, we are going to go in that other village and pick the medicine up for my sister. After all, we don't want to lose her now.

And it was winter and it was snow because this was still March or February, something like that, and it was very dangerous. You know, only young people have this -- I don't know, this guts. When I think about it today, two girls going through fields -- you walked, there is no bus, there is no cart, there is nothing, you walked, you walked. This is in Germany, how the hell do I know Germany? I don't know anything, but he told me you go straight there and you are going to get to the village.

Well, we made it to the village, found the village, and lucky that they gave -- we were smart enough to say okay, if somebody stops us on the way, some Russians, we don't have any papers, they will say you are spies. After all, the war was still on. This is early -- like I say, end of February or early March.

And, I don't know, somehow sometimes you have these lucky thoughts, and they said okay. So he made out the paper, the doctor, "She's so and so and she's going for medicine," in Russian, of course, and sure enough we encountered a Russian on a bicycle, and right away "Stop," you know. "What do you want?" "Speak

Russian? Dumyski, Dumyski," he says, which means "paper, paper." "Oh, sure. Here, papers." He looked at the paper and he accepted it. I mean, there was no photograph, no picture on it, no nothing on it, you know, not really. If he wanted to start something or say okay, you're a spy, or whatever, he could have done it.

So he let us go, and so we came to this village and we came to this pharmacy there -- the hospital and the pharmacy -- and he gave us the medicine. He was nice, because it was written by this doctor, and apparently he must have known him, and he gave us the medicine.

I can tell you all kinds of stories and you won't believe it, but this is true. Then he said to me, "Oh, you are dubriski." "Dubriski" is girls, you know, in Russian. "Why don't you stay here, we'll have a party tonight. I have here other officers and we can have a party." And I said, "No, no way do we want a party, we have to get back, it's pretty soon dark and we have to get back with the medicine."

So these kinds of proposals we had, you know, all the time. So actually they were gentlemen and they let us go and didn't say no, you're not going to go, we are going to have the party.

So we came back and my sister took the medicine -- whether it helped or not -- but anyway, she survived and none of us got the typhoid. Do you know what it is to be in a room with a sick person like that?

Q. WHAT WAS THE TYPHOID LIKE?

A. Well, you have a terribly high termperature so that you don't even know what you are doing or what's going on. And then you have diarrhea too. So we had to take her pot, take it out and what not. And I understand that it's very contagious, actually, the diarrhea itself, you know. I still say, we were meant to live.

Q. YOU MUST HAVE BEEN TERRIBLY THIN YOURSELF, THOUGH.

A. Oh, yes, we were skin and bones. I mean, there was no question about that. But we had already a lot to eat with the Russians. Yes, they gave us food. They had a kitchen set up and they had food, and we didn't care what it is as long as it's food.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT?

A. Oh, yes. At that point, yes, we had enough.

Q. YOU DIDN'T EAT SO MUCH THAT YOU GOT SICK?

A. We got sick only when we ran away and the first night when we broke into a house and whatever we found in the house, left-over food, because the people were -- left, the German people left and left the house. And we found some food, even some boiled potatoes that were still warm so they must have left not very long before. We ate everything we could find, I don't know what we ate, but I know we were very, very sick. We just ran and ran, cramps and what not. And we survived that too, none of us really died over it. We survived that too.

Q, YOU WERE STILL ALL TOGETHER, YOU AND YOUR SISTERS?

A. Yes. There was 3 sisters and a sister's daughter. The four of us. We were always together. We're all still alive, the four of us, we are all of us still alive. But I am the only

one that has children and grand-children, and my niece. The others don't.

Q. THE OTHER SISTERS DON'T?

A. No.

Q. SO YOU WORKED FOR THE RUSSIANS?

A. Well, we worked for the Russians until May 8th and then the war was over, they came to tell us -- you know, we worked with the cows, we milked the cows and took them to the pasture and cleaned after them, and what not. And then May 8th, I remember right now -- things I don't remember, but this I remember -- they came with the truck and said, "Oh, the war is over," and we said "What?" and he said, "The war is over." "Oh? Really? True?" Of course, we were all happy and what not.

So what's next? So we went to talk to whoever was in charge there -- "What's next?" And by that time I suppose they liked us and trusted us, and what not, they saw that we are decent human beings. And then they said that a convoy is going to Prague in a day or two and that they would take us to Prague. And of course we wanted to go to Prague, so that's how we came to Prague, they brought us to Prague. And then, of course, right there we were already committed, organized. And even the joint was already there. So, you know, you came in and "Where do you go, where do you go?" I didn't even know how they know where to go -- you know, if you think about it.

Q. DID THE JOINT HAVE SOME APARTMENTS OR --

A. We got our apartment -- of all the things, we went up to the Communist Party, we figured now it's Communism, the Russians are here, this is what it is. We went up to their headquarters

and --"Oh, yes, they have places, you can go and live in German houses," you know. The Germans left and we are from here, we are Czechs, now we started speaking Czech instead of Russian, you know.

And we were not the only ones coming, you know, there were lots of them coming back. And they gave us a wonderful apartment, a beautiful apartment. We moved in there but we couldn't stay there very long, we had to move out. But for a few weeks we were there.

Q. AND WHERE DID YOU MOVE TO AFTER?

A. And afterwards, this sister of mine, the older one, a boyfriend from back home who went to Palastine in 1938, I think, he found her in Prague -- he was in Prague, he was a liberator, he was in the Czech army in the Palastine division -- English division of Czech, or whatever. But he was -- he had a Czech outfit, he was in a Czech uniform, and, of course, in the joint he inquired who came back and he heard that Bessie came back and he right away found her, and through him we got another apartment, and he came and he brought us food and clothes and chocolates and, boy, wonderful things.

Q. HOW WERE YOUR SPIRITS AT THAT POINT?

A. Well, we were very happy to be alive, very happy to be alive. But by then we knew that we don't have any parents, by then we knew. And we don't have any other among us.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

A. Well, by then, yes, we all knew that they were burned. We were told the first day by the people who had already been there.

We didn't believe it but then we knew, by that time we accepted it, that's what happened. I mean, "Accepted it" -- if you ever accept it. But that's what we knew had happened. But we still were hoping that maybe this one comes back or the other one comes back. But I can't say that too many of us that I -- we weren't together in the long run, or met in the long run, there were no extras that came home. Just the ones that we were in touch somehow, somewhere, sometime.

Q. THEY POSTED A LIST AFTER THE WAR?

A. Yes, they posted a list and people were talking, people were saying, "I was there and there and know that this and this died." And like my sister wasn't sure if her husband was alive because he was married before this husband of hers -- her husband then used to be her boyfriend, she didn't marry him, you see, it so happened. She didn't know if her husband was alive or not, and then slowly people came and said yes, I was there and no, he died. You know, there were witnesses to it -- and he never showed up.

Q. DID YOU GET ASSIGNED TO ANY WORK WHEN YOU GOT BACK TO PRAGUE?

A. No, we weren't assigned to any work. We all wanted to go home or somewhere, we did not plan to stay really there. I actually wanted to go back to school and finish my schooling. And in the meantime I even went up and applied -- in the meantime, I got a telegram that one of my older sister's, whom I wasn't with, her husband survived, which is unusual. Not that she was old, she wasn't forty yet, mind you, but different ages survived so much. And her husband was older. I couldn't believe it. And they were in Bratislava, which is another big city in

Czechoslovakia, Slovenska.

And so my niece and my younger sister and I -- my older sister, she was really bad, sick, she was really sick with her back -- and she stayed in Prague with her boyfriend and we went on to Bratislava to see my sister. Well, how we traveled I don't have to tell you because there were some trains going but the trains were so full and people were stealing from each other -- I mean, if you had a little relish, a little bag of something, sure they would steal it from you. And sure enough we got to Bratislava empty-handed. The few rags we had before, we didn't even have that. But somehow it didn't phase us, you know. We didn't have it before so we don't have it now.

So I had an address where she was -- well, we traveled free, you know, we didn't pay or anything. Things were going and they were taking these people all the time where they wanted to go.

And so, what are we going to do, we don't know where they live, we don't have no money to take a taxi or anything like that, we can't walk there either. So we went in the park and slept in the park. Summer, it wasn't so bad, June, I think. And so the next morning we got to -- I don't know how -- we asked people where the street is, and we got there. And sure enough, my older sister and her husband were there, and he wasn't so well but he wasn't too sick. He was very fortunate, he got into the kitchen wherever he was, he somehow worked in the kitchen, he's a very handy man, he said he's an electrician -- he wasn't but he said he is -- and somehow he worked in this field and he survived.

Q. SO THEY WERE BOTH IN THE CAMP?

A. Separately, not together. And then my sister said, oh, where do you go, what do you want to go to school for, why don't we go home, let's see, maybe somebody will come home. She believed very much that somebody will come home -- and let's go and see, and that.

So my niece and I decided we'll go with her -- my younger sister decided we'll go with the other older sister -- and came back to Prague, and eventually my sister that was hurt, she married her husband, they're still together, and they came to the United States with my younger sister, they came about two years before we did.

And my older sister and my brother-in-law/and my niece I went back. They lived in Romania, as I already mentioned to you, that this country was all one once upon a time and it was divided, and what not, and we went there and then I went home to our village.

Q. YOU WENT TO RUMANIA?

A. Pardon me, it was in Romania already, where my sister lived. But it was Hungary before, like we were Hungarian. And then my sister said go home and see what's what. And I went there, in my village, and we found some friends and some young people. Like I said, I knew who they are, although we were separated but thank God they survived, some didn't.

And there was already a kitchen set up from the joint and so we had something to eat. But I didn't find anything, I mean the house was empty, there was a piece of furniture here and there. It was a terrible, terrible thing to come back -- a most terrible thing to come back to see what there isn't.

Q. THE WOODEN FLOORS?

A. The wooden floors -- that I started to cry, the wooden floors. And the people, Hungarian people, neighbors, none of them came and said, "Oh, you poor thing. You survived. Let me help you out, let me do something for you." Not even a meal, not even saying, "Come and have dinner with us, come and have tea with us", or whatever. Nothing. Just praising them, how my father helped them to build their house, and what not. And that's it. I didn't need no praise but by that time I was too proud to say a word or anything, "Who the hell needs you," you know. I knew that I'm not going to stay there, I knew that I'm going to go away from there. Not a life for me, I wouldn't want to live there.

Q. YOU GOT NO WELCOME AT ALL?

A. No, no. They were afraid that we are going to demand for them to give us back what was ours -- for example, somebody told me that our cow, which we had a cow before, you know we lived in a very small village, and somebody had the cow. It was a Swiss cow, you know, it wasn't that everybody had a cow like that. It sounds funny today but it wasn't so funny then.

And I got to go to that person and I said, "Listen, this cow is our cow", and he had to give it back. So why should they welcome you when you take away their things? And I sold the cow, so I got a few -- nothing for it. But it was okay, I didn't mind selling it. At least it was me who gave it away and not them taking it away from me.

And in the same way, like my father had a house and

somebody came and said, "I would like to buy that house." Not the house that we lived in but another house. And I said, "Okay, you want to buy it? Sure, I'll sell it to you, and how much will you give me?" And I don't know if somebody said if this is the price, and he paid me and I heard afterwards that he never owned the house because I was not allowed to sell the house because I didn't live there. Besides, under communism you don't own anything so you can't sell anything. Not that I had a lot out of that money, I did not. So actually, sure they didn't want to see you because you would have demanded your own things, and why should they give it back to you, they got it all free.

Q. SO THERE WAS NO ONE IN YOUR FAMILY OR NO OTHER CLOSE JEWISH FRIENDS THAT SURVIVED THAT WERE IN TOWN?

A. Well, family, yes. Two of my cousins that we worked together in the camp at a time, and then we were separated, they came home. A third one, their sister, she didn't make it. She died already after the liberation, in May. And there were some friends that I met. But not -- just different people, like I said, just the ones I knew that they survived and we were together for awhile.

And we all slowly knew that we had to leave and slowly this one left and that one left, because that was not officially, you couldn't leave officially.

So one day I said that's enough, I had it, I don't need anything from here, I don't have anything here, and I went back to my sister in Romania, which is called Sighet. And they found their house and they moved in, at least in their house, and my niece moved in with her, and then my niece found some relatives in Nordvada, it's another city where she found an aunt. She was

married to a non-Jew, and how she survived I don't know exactly but she survived. So she had a home so my niece stayed with her for awhile, and she got married and, you know, spouses, and she needed a home-- And then we left again.

Q. AND YOU WENT ON BACK TO YOUR SISTER AGAIN?

A. Yes. I went back to my sister and I was there for a while and -- well, helping my sister, I suppose that's what I did. There wasn't very much doing, either.

Q. HOW WERE THEY SURVIVING?

A. Well, they started doing business. You see, there was -- Hungary was cut off from that part of Hungary -- what salt was, salt. In Hungary there are no salt mines, there is no ocean, no sea in central Europe where we come from. And Romania has lots of salt, very close to the Hungarian border. So what they were doing at that time is they bought salt, they used the Russians, they made business with them-- they used the Russians to drive the truck full of salt -- they had the connection in Hungary and they would deliver through the Russians -- somebody with them, sometimes I went with them with the truck to deliver to Hungary the salt and you would be paid with dollars.

So that's how people lived. I mean, you have to live, something, and this was a very good business. Sometimes you were caught, sometimes the truck was caught, so --

Q. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU WERE CAUGHT?

A. Well, they took the salt, of course, you know. But they weren't that serious either, I mean, you know, it was still a chaos, it still wasn't -- nothing was established, although there were borders. But for money, if you gave them something,

the Romanians, the Russians, they were all very happy to take it.

So I was helping my sister and my brother-in-law in that. And then I met my husband and he already had a business.

Q. HOW DID YOU MEET HIM?

A. His two sisters were getting married on a Sunday, and this was Saturday, and I was in the town -- I wasn't in my sister's town but I went to visit a cousin of mine -- Susmar -- and my husband, a good friend with my cousin's first husband, but he didn't survive -- so I was prominading on the street on Saturday afternoon with my cousin and with her mother, they survived in Budapest, they weren't in the concentration camp, and here comes my husband he says to my cousin, "My two sisters are getting married tomorrow, I would like you to come to the wedding." There was no invitations, there were no parents, it was not like today, you know. So my cousin said, "Well, sure, we'll come, we'll be happy to." I mean, everybody was happy to go to a wedding and to see that these people get married and establishing themselves.

And then my cousin said, "Well, this is my cousin," and he said to me, "Would you come to the wedding too?" and I said of course, why not. So from them on we dated, and this was like in June and we got married in September.

Q. AND THEN DID YOU TAKE YOUR OWN APARTMENT?

A. Yes, we got our own apartment, although we shared a kitchen with somebody else. It was a bigger apartment and we had two rooms, and the kitchen we had to share with the landlady. It didn't bother us in the beginning.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY AFTER-EFFECTS LIKE NIGHTMARES OR POOR HEALTH?

A. Poor health I did not, I was okay, I was healthy. No, I can't say that I was in poor health. The only thing that affected me was my gums. And dreams, we had terrible dreams. Dreams that we are back there, dreams that we are hungry, dreams that my father is home and he is waiting for me and I can't get there, and dreams and dreams. As a matter of fact, even when we were already in the United States, which was already years after, and I still would have a dream now that I went back and I couldn't get out.

So this was going on for many years. We all did. We all had dreams. But thank God -- it took many, many years, the dreams, you know, that I have the child and that I can't get to him. Terrible, terrible dreams. Now it's wonderful to get up, to wake up...

Q. NOW THEY'RE GONE?

A. No, no. Now, unless I see a picture or we talk an awful lot or -- then I would have -- but no, the dreams aren't as bad. Not as bad any more. Thank God, thank God for that.

Q. ANYWAY, THEN YOU WERE STARTING A NEW LIFE; YOU SAID YOUR HUSBAND HAD A BUSINESS?

A. Yes. He was in business with his brother, he had a shoe business and we got married and we had a very lovely apartment and furniture. And we had our son the first year.

Q. WHAT'S HIS NAME?

A. Gabriel. He lives in Tiburon. He's a medical doctor

and he has two children. So, we had him and just after he was born my oldest sister, with her husband, they decided they are going to come to the United States.

In the meantime, my other sister that I went through the whole -- Ausahwitz, etcetera -- and my younger sister, they already were in the United States, they came already. So one came one year and then my other sister came another year, and then three years later we came.

Q . SO YOU STAYED ON THREE YEARS?

A. We stayed on until my son was 15 months old. So it was almost 2-1/2 years after my first sister came here that we came.

Q. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME?

A. Well, because it was getting to the point where we knew that communism was taking over in Romania and that there is no -- you couldn't be in business. And my husband was -- he played socker and he was organizing socker, he was in the sports very much, and he could already tell that they discriminated against him because he's a capitalist, and that the business will be taken away, that you cannot have your own business and you have to go to work and you have to work in the factories, and things like that, and he didn't want it.

So people were slowly, slowly leaving. They went to Palastine a time, pretty soon it was Israel. And people went to Australia, and people -- well, the first thing we did was we went into Hungary -- I mean not only us but whoever left -- first into Hungary and then from Hungary into Austria, and in Austria

there were these displaced persons camps, and that's where they waited for whatever or wherever they went.

So we were talking a lot that that's where we should go, but it wasn't exactly the easiest thing to go because you have to have a guide and you have to have money -- the guide would take you over the border because you couldn't go officially. Some people went officially. A niece of mine that was with me, she married, and they had official passports and official visas to get out. He wasn't Romanian, he also was a Czech, and she was Czech, but my aunt was Romanian, see, so he didn't get an exit visa. Why should he want to go away?

So, well we are always talking that we are going to go, we'll make it go, and people were leaving, and always in the evening, and some were caught and some were shot and some were put in jail. And we still decided that we are going to go, so it was December 28th, it was my husband's birthday, and he came home and said, "Tonight we are leaving". Well, I didn't know what to take and what not to take, because by then we already had some little something. And I had a 15 months old child. So, should I take diapers? should I take a picture out of the frame? should I take clothes? What do I take? You have to walk, we know we cannot go by bus or truck or car or anything, we have to walk. As a matter of fact, we had a little sled for the child to pull him through the field.

And -- I don't know, I'm still confused even today, what one should take. But I took a few diapers and I put double clothes on and coat and boots -- I mean the hike-up shoes like, you know, like walking shoes. And I had already prepared for

the child -- fur sack to put him in so it's not cold -- and we gave him a sleeping supository so he sleeps through the night.

And we started out, and it was very, very, very hard to go through the fields, through the border, unbroken snow, and from the last crop of corn, still some of the stalks there, and you don't know where you step. This guide was taking us and we were pulling the little sled. It was my husband, his brother, his wife and I and our child and another couple, also with a child. I think they had -- no, no, only we had the child.

And all of a sudden my child started screaming. We didn't know what happened. We figured he is warm, his supository--he's sleeping--what could it be? So a stalk from the corn cut through his sack and his little feet were hanging in the snow, and so my husband picked him up and pushed his leg inside, you know, and he screamed, he screamed, he must have been hurt, I'm sure. And my husband was putting his tongue in his mouth to quite him down. I didn't have a bottle. Can you imagine, to leave without putting a bottle in? That just goes to tell you how foolish people can be and how foolish young people can be. And if I think of it today, I don't think we would ever make it, we would never, never have started out with a 15-months-old child.

So this is on top of everything we went through already. And then my brother-in-law took him in his arms and the guide kept saying, "Why did I have to bring people with children? they are going to hear us," and we could hear the dogs barking, you know.

Well, luckily we went through the border and came to

Hungary. The snow was deep, I couldn't carry my handbag, I was ready to -- first we had white sheets to cover ourselves over our coats so we are white so they don't see at night in the dark in the white snow you don't -- but slowly you are shedding this and you are shedding that because you can't carry yourself, not that you can carry things on you. And I remember I had a handbag and I threw that down and my sister-in-law picked it up and said, "What are you doing?" and I said, "I don't care what I am doing, I just can't, I can't--"

Q. NOBODY KNEW HOW MANY MILES IT WAS?

A. Well, I don't know exactly. It was some kilometers. It lasted from evening 8:00 o'clock until after midnight, so it was quite a walk. Although we couldn't walk too fast, but it was quite a walk.

So we finally made it to this Hungarian village where this guide was taking us and where he was paid off and these people gave us a cup of tea and what not. And of course my son fell asleep from then on and luckily he slept until the next morning. And then we hired a horse and buggy to take us to the train station, because this was on the border, to take us in the village where there is a train station so we can go to Budapest and then to Austria.

And he was taking us at night, he wouldn't take us during the day, of course, right away. And it was terribly cold, terribly cold. Okay, we didn't have to walk, although my husband and my brother-in-law got off the buggy and started in walking because they were so cold that walking was a better thing to do. And then I was holding my son and he was covered; I don't know how

he never suffocated but he didn't, and my sister-in-law had her nose frozen and we tried to cover ourselves as much as we could.

So finally we got to this village and bought a train ticket. Well, we had some money, we didn't come empty-handed. We bought some bread, tried to get a 15-months-old child to chew on the bread. There wasn't much food yet in Hungary, you know. There was, but -- more than in Romania. Even then they had more food than in Romania.

And then we went on the train and the conductor came and he saw how cold we were and then he said, "Well, you with the child, I'll take you to another one where they have heat, which is warm." And so we all went, of course, we didn't want to be separated. So we all went in that warm wagon where it was warm.

And then on the way going to Budapest I said to my husband, "Where are we going to in Budapest, where are we going with a 15-months-old child?" The child didn't have a diaper left, I didn't have really milk or anything of that kind for him to eat. I mean, he was a very good child. And he was chewing on the crust, you know, he was okay. So I said, "Well, let's go to which is another small town in Hungary, where I had another sister of mine. You know, we were a big family, there were nine children to start off with. She also went through the concentration camp. I was with her for a part and then we were separated, and she came back and found her husband -- he came back, too -- and by that time she already had a child, she is older -- Judy is about a year-and-a-half older than my son is -- and I said, "Let's go there, at least I have a home, I know her, she has diapers, at least I am--" Where do I go in Budapest? I don't know.

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So my husband said that's a very good idea, so we asked the conductor where should we change trains, and what not, and we headed for my sister, who was unbelievably surprised, I have to tell you that. She couldn't believe it. She had a 2-room place but we all slept on the floor and all over the place, but at least my baby had a crib and we had clean diapers.

And the next day my husband and my brother-in-law went up to Budapest to see how they can get out from Hungary and go further. So I stayed with my sister. My sister-in-law, which is my husband's brother's wife, and I and the child stayed with my sister.

And came New Years, and after New Years I got a telephone call from my husband from Budapest, "Take a taxi right away and come to Budapest because the Hungarians are closing the border and you cannot get out," they are going to put us back to Romania.

So my brother-in-law took a taxi for me and he came with us, my sister and I and the baby, and we went up to Budapest. And right away my husband was waiting for us at a certain place, and right away we left and went to Austria, to Vienna, to that Rothschild Castle. It was kept terrible. I mean, it was dirty, it was filthy, there was thousands of people there and they put I don't know how many people in one room, one big room, and they gave them little cots like, you know, And with the child, you know, I was beside myself. And they said, okay, with the child we'll put you in the hospital part so you're going to have at least a bed with your child and there's not hundreds of people in the room.

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So sure enough they put me there. And in the meantime my husband knew somebody in Vienna who was also from and he settled in Vienna and he found him through asking around people because this guy who stayed in Vienna he inherited from his uncle a factory which they gave back to him and a beautiful house, which they still live in.

And these people, he got in contact with them and then they heard that we are here and they will rent for us a place. And I stayed there with the child for a few days.

Q. WHO WAS RUNNING THE ROTHSCHILD OPERATION?

A. I think it was -- it was committees, everything was a committee. I think it was supported by the United States, who else? But the only trouble was that they kept it in such terrible condition. On the other hand, so many people came by there -- you don't have all the facilities, all the bathrooms, all the -- you don't -- and the kitchen. You know when you have a public bathroom, too, what it can look like, so you can imagine hundreds and hundreds of people using one bathroom. It was a nightmare, I have to admit, it was a nightmare.

Q. HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?

A. We were there not too many -- maybe a week. Not even a week. I don't think it was a whole week. I can't recall, I was so sick. After all we went through and here we are free, and here we are going through -- okay, I don't have to be afraid like they are going to kill me or take my child away, but still the conditions were unbelievable.

So then -- they always organized, you know, for people

to go further. But this was already the American zone, we weren't under Russians.

Q. FROM BUDAPEST TO VIENNA YOU CAME BY TRAIN?

A. From Budapest we went by bus, which was hired by the committee. We came to the border and that day -- I think it was all paid off. They played that they are looking at our papers, which was -- if they wanted to -- you know, we don't have too many papers. And they let us through and we came to Vienna.

And also we had to walk a very short distance from the border, from the Hungarian border to the Austrian border. It was all arranged, you could tell. It was all organized, very well organized, I must say, until they could -- and then the orders came, whoever was caught in Hungary they have to put them back to Romania or they have to put them back wherever they came from. So slowly, slowly it was harder and harder to really cross those borders.

So then from Vienna we went to Linz in a D.P. camp, which was next to Linz, and that's where we stayed until we got our papers to come to the United States. And there also we got one room, maybe as big as this, and we divided it and my brother-in-law and sister-in-law lived in one and the three of us lived in the other. And there was a big, big kitchen downstairs where everybody could cook. But we had a little stove in our room so we tried to cook for ourselves so we don't have to go into this mess kitchen because it was not fun there.

Q. DID YOU BUY YOUR OWN FOOD?

A. We -- my husband was already working, he was a little

black-marketing. He was always a good businessman and he already had a little money. So, yes, we bought our own. Although, they were supplying it, they were giving us too. It was all coming from, again, I have to say, from the joint. But we got extra, of course. It wasn't so bad. That was already liveable, we already could buy some clothes, and we were waiting for our papers to come to the United States.

Q. HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?

A. Nine months in the D.P. camp. But that was already a better part in our lives.

Q. HOW DID YOU OCCUPY YOURSELF DURING THE DAY?

A. Well, I had a child. And then I started taking English lessons. My husband was working, he went to the black-market and was selling chocolates by the carloads, and I went to -- like I said, I had a child. And then we had to go to Linz, to the city, to private tutor, and then with another--someone--and we went together. And then we said, okay, now we're going to listen to the American soldiers speak English and we are going to hear if we learned anything. Not a word could we understand, not a word. For instance, "I gotta go", what does that mean? "I gotta go", it wasn't in the dictionary.

Q. DID YOU EVER GIVE ANY THOUGHT TO GOING TO ISRAEL?

A. Yes. Well, we had options. I mean, we were thinking of where do we want to go? At that time, Israel was very young. This was 1948, '49. We had family that went there and life was very, very hard there, and we just felt like we would want something easier if we can. And so we applied to the United States, Australia or Israel. I mean, we didn't say no. If this doesn't go, Israel is going to be the place.

So we were fortunate. My husband was liberated by the Americans and at that time there was a law if you were liberated by the Americans you had the right to come to the United States. So that's how we got here. But it took nine months.

Q. YOU ALREADY HAD A RELATIVE THAT CAME HERE?

A. Yes. My sister was already here and-- my sisters were here and we corresponded and sent pictures to each other. I didn't need anything. Thank God, my husband made a living. They had a hard life here-- I mean, they were working harder than-- because I really wasn't working then. And, yes, we were in touch, of course, and finally came to the States. It took us almost a year until we met. We didn't come to California right away.

Q. WHERE DID YOU COME TO?

A. We came to Milwaukee, because in the meantime my sister discovered a cousin that lived in Germany, and she was in Shanghi, and she lived in Milwaukee, and somehow-- I don't know, really, to this day-- I guess I wasn't that interested.

And she went up to the Jewish committee and said, "Would you sponsor a family?", and they said sure. Because in Milwaukee they didn't have as many as in New York and San Francisco, and I don't know where, you know. So we said okay, we'll go to Milwaukee. So we came to Milwaukee. And this cousin was there, whom I didn't know. I mean, I was a child when she left, about two years old, or something like that. But they were also new-comers, they didn't have very much either, you know. But still it was somebody you could talk to.

And we were in Milwaukee for a whole year and my sister

wrote to us that we should come there, "You have nothing in Milwaukee, you'll have nothing here, but at least we'll be together."

Q. WHERE WAS SHE?

A. She was already in San Francisco. They all were in San Francisco. And after one year we didn't want to just go because we were such greeners, we didn't know nothing. We just couldn't take our life in our own hand because in Milwaukee you had the doctors -- I mean, the joint took care of you. They gave us the doctor, they gave us a little place to live. Okay, we got a job afterwards and we didn't need their help as far as finances are concerned, but somehow you are afraid to just lose everything. So they said, "If you go to San Francisco we are not responsible for you, you are on your own completely."

So we didn't feel secure enough in the first year to do that, but next year already we were a little bit more adventurous and we said okay, we'll come, at least the family is together. Thank God, it worked out well.

Q. WHAT KIND OF WORK WERE YOU DOING IN MILWAUKEE?

A. My husband was working in a cement factory in the winter in the cold, 10 below zero. He was making cement shields. This was a Jewish man who owned the factory and he gave him the job because he was Jewish, so he gave him a job. But he told him that, "That's not a job for you," and he said, "I don't care, I have to make a living, I have a family to take care of." So he said okay. So he worked for him. He paid nicely, I mean, he paid pretty nice. And I had the child, of course. In the meantime he was two years old already. And my sister-in-law worked, my cousin worked, everybody worked. And I got very-- I had to do

something, you see, I just knew that I have to do something, so I put him in a nursery and I went to work. And I didn't know English, the English that I learned in Austria wasn't very much, and there was not far from us a meat packing factory where the girls were packing the meat in this cellophane paper, at that time by hand, there were no machines. They used a hot iron to close the hot dogs and the ham and whatever. You know how the packages are today-- they weren't wrapped and sealed like they are today. And that's where I started working.

And we were 10 girls around the table and those girls were constantly talking and talking and after three or four months I walked out and I spoke English.

Q. AND THAT WAS YOUR EDUCATION?

A. That was my education, the origin of my education. And in the meantime, like I said, a year went by and I came here. Here I went to school and then I worked in the Bank of America.

Q. WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DID YOU GO TO?

A. I went to adult school. Typing and English and bookkeeping. I went to Washington Hi. And I put my son in nursery school, and it hurt because I didn't make money, only my husband did, and not very much. And I had to pay for him, but we had to do something, I didn't want to go and pack meat again or something like that. So I went to school and I finished and -- I don't think it was a whole year -- and then I went to the Bank of America as a bookkeeper, and I stayed there until my husband needed me in our business.

Q. HE GOT A JOB WHEN HE FIRST CAME HERE?

A. When he first came to San Francisco he got a job --- My brother-in-law was working as a shoe clerk and he got my husband a job as a shoe clerk. And after one year they got together and they made a business, the brother-in-law -- two brother-in-laws, one my brother-in-law and his brother and my husband, the three. And they opened a business, and the first year the women were working and bringing in the money to live on so we could keep everything in the business. And then we women came into the business, and by that time they already had a better business so they needed us.

Q. HOW WAS IT FOR YOU ADJUSTING HERE?

A. In America I was always happy. I loved the United States. Nobody tells me what to do, nobody tells me not to do, I get up when I want, I go to bed when I want, and I go where I want, and I was very happy. My husband wasn't. He missed very much his friends. For me it was easier because I already left my hometown. I married into a different city already, so to me where I was married it was strange too and I didn't live long enough to feel at home like my husband did.

And then we went to the D.P. camp, and then we went to Milwaukee, and then we came here. So to me this was home. Finally I had my own apartment with my own kitchen, everything was mine, there was nobody else in there. I was very, very happy here, very happy. Still are.

Q. I HEARD YOU REFER TO A DAUGHTER TOO.

A. Yes, I had a daughter. She's an American daughter, she was born in San Francisco, after 10 years.

Q. IS THAT YOUR ONLY OTHER CHILD?

A. Yes. I couldn't afford one in between. Then we decided that it's time -- if we wanted another one now is the time to do it or we won't have one. She was born in San Francisco.

Q. AND WHAT'S HER NAME?

A. Her name is Suzzane. She's a lovely girl.

Q. WHEN YOUR CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP DID YOU TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR WAR EXPERIENCES?

A. Yes. I always did. As a matter of fact, I did to my son so much so that there was a time when he said, "Oh, when I grow up I am going to go and kill the Germans." And then I realized that this is not exactly the right way of telling him things, but we continued to tell him what happened to us, and he knew, and he asked me many times to write it down, or whatever, which I never did. I think I told you already, until my grandson asked me, that's when I decided it's time to do it.

Q. AND YOUR GRANDSON IS YOUR SON'S SON OR YOUR DAUGHTER'S?

A. Yes. My daughter doesn't have any children. She's not married right now. Yes, my son's son is 11 years old. He has two little girls, and I think they should know. Although I tell them, I talk to them about it. I don't want to say an awful lot either because they are too young and I don't want to scare them off that they should say, "No, I don't want to be Jewish because this happened to you because you are Jewish", you know, so -- It's really hard which way you present it to them. It is.

Q. HOW ABOUT YOU, WHAT'S YOUR RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW OF ALL THIS?

A. Well, I was always a believer and I still am a believer, and I believe in God. I am not very religious but I am religiously inclined. I guess if I would have a more religious husband I might have been more religious. That's how I feel about it. My oldest sister has a Kosher house, my other sister has a Kosher house, so actually we come from a religious family. Not bigots or anything, but still a religious background. My son, thank God, belongs to conservative shul, I am very happy about that.

Q. HE LIVES NEARBY, YOU SAID?

A. He lives in Tiburon and we see him every week, usually he comes or we go there. Thank God for that.

Q. BUT YOUR DAUGHTER LIVES --

A. And my daughter lives -- she's quite far away. For some reason they are different, the two children are different. But we're in contact, she comes home, she wouldn't want to live here, but what am I going to do?

Q. HAVE YOU EVER MADE A TRIP BACK TO YOUR HOMETOWN?

A. Not to my hometown because it belonged to the Russians right away. And the first time when my son came to Europe with his wife -- and they have a Volkswagen camper -- and we decided we would join them and go all over Europe, and we are going to show them around and we would go to my husband's hometown and to mine too, but I have to apply for a visa to go there because that's Russia, and I was denied. I mean, I could have gotten the visa to any other city, which would not mean anything to me and not

to my children either.

So we decided we are not going to go there, what's the use, but we went back to where my husband comes from, and we traveled through Europe with the children, and we took them even to one of the concentration camps, we wanted them to see where my husband was. We did not go to Auschwitz.

Q. YOU DID NOT?

A. No. We went to one in Austria, and that's where we took the children, and my son was already married and my daughter was like 13 or 14 years old.

Q. YOU DID NOT WANT TO GO BACK TO AUSCHWITZ?

A. I don't know if I could go back, I really don't. There are always trips that they go back to Austria and they go to Hungary and they go to Israel, and all that. But I don't know if I could go back there. But you see, the concentration camp where my husband was it didn't mean as much to me as Auschwitz would, so why go back?

Q. IT WOULD STIR UP HORRIBLE MEMORIES?

A. Why go back? If there would be a place where you could go and see where they are buried or anything, you would say, well, okay, I'll go. But no, why go back?

Well, it sounds like I talk more after what happened than during the camp itself because I guess in the camp it was -- I am sure you heard all the stories from everybody else. I just read a book that my friend wrote in Sweden and I said, "My God, it could have been written by me almost." I mean the experiences that we had, the feelings that we had, how humiliated we felt all the time and how inhuman we were.

Q. SO EACH ONE WAS THEIR OWN --

A. Story. But I'm sure if you interview my sister she'll tell you other things and my cousin will tell you other things, and we all have our own -- maybe add to it, maybe you take away some. Add to it -- I mean our feelings, that the other might not have the same way.

But what was so sad, that once you are liberated and free and then you go back home and you start a life and then you have to start all over again and leave everything -- we left a second time. I mean, the apartment and everything was left there the second time around.

Q. WAS IT REALLY HARD TO START LIFE OVER AGAIN?

A. Well, it's not easy, it's not easy. But I had my husband and I had the child. And in the very beginning, well, we had hopes we'll create families, we're going to get married, we're going to have children, we're going to have families so we have something to look forward to.

So, it was hard. It would be very hard today. I don't think I would want to move into another community. But at that time when I was young -- I was 27 when I came to the United States, I felt I was so old. I was so old and I had been through so much, and when I think of it -- yes.

Q. ALSO, I WAS WONDERING, WHAT IS YOUR OPINION NOW REGARDING THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY? A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE QUITE FRIGHTENED.

A. Well, I feel that probably too because first of all I don't believe the Germans should have such a good life, and

for them to be free. And I still don't buy anything that's made in Germany, not knowingly. If I see something that's made in Germany I'm not going to buy it. We don't buy only American cars. My son bought a German car and he said, "I know, mother, how you feel but I didn't buy it from your money, I bought it from my money", and I said okay, okay. So, that's how I feel about it.

No, I am not happy to see them happy because they are intelligent people, smart people, cruel, brutally cruel people. I mean, no feelings -- such hatred, such hate it was. We weren't human beings, we were less than human beings. They could just throw children in the air and shoot at them. They just kicked you and step over you and shoot you. On the road on the death march, just because you couldn't walk any more -- I mean, what kind of people are they?

No, I didn't think in my lifetime the Russians are going to give over Germany, I thought they are going to stay there forever. At least that much, I hope. But the world changes.

Q. DID YOU GO THROUGH GERMANY ON YOUR TRIP?

A. Only once we went in Germany when we went in this concentration camp, and for some reason we couldn't stand it. Somehow, in Austria, we went back in Austria because we visited these friends of ours that were so lovely, and we even had a nice time there, but Germany -- like I said, Austria means something to me, the other concentration camp doesn't mean as much. But Germany was something I couldn't stand it. We went there in the

morning and by afternoon we wanted to get out, my husband and I, both of us; and of course the children felt that they were, you know, very willing to get out.

So that's all I have ever been in Germany. Like if you asked me if I want to fly to Frankfurt to go to Israel or to go to Europe or anything, I would say no, I don't want to go through Germany, I don't want to fly with your flight. I know they're wonderful but I don't want to.

Q. SO YOU'RE FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE --

A. Very uncomfortable. When we came to Germany and we wanted to go to the camp and my husband didn't recognize the place -- after so many years it changed, you know -- and he decided we are going to go to the police and we are going to inquire where it is, and we come there and they were so nice to us, they escorted us with our camper to the concentration camp, the German police himself. I mean, you know, I can't say that they weren't nice. But they can do anything. You can't forget them or forgive them. I mean, there is nothing they can do that I would ever, ever forget their cruelty.

Q. DO YOU THINK THE SAME THING COULD HAPPEN AGAIN?

A. Well, I don't know if exactly what happened could happen, but it's happening, a lot of it is happening. A lot is happening. When you see that they throw a grenade, or whatever they did, in the temple, or if they have -- if they wear a swastika somewhere, you know, it's all -- the hatred is there. And now with Israel and this Gulf situation -- I hope not. I hope it never happens. I hope it never happens.

Q. CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

A. Well, I don't think so. I would just like to say that I am glad that I could do this and that my grandson is going to see what he wanted to see and know about. And I hope that they are going to live in a better world where they won't have to experience what we had to experience.

Q. WELL, WE ARE VERY GLAD YOU DID IT TOO.

A. Thank you. I am really glad I could do that. I couldn't have done it years ago, I assure you.

Q. WELL, AGAIN, THANK YOU VERY, VERY MUCH.

A. It has been my pleasure.

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