

Interview with HELEN LAZAR
HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Q: I'M BARBARA BERER AND THIS IS HELEN LAZAR AND WE ARE IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, TODAY, FEBRUARY, 13, 1989. HELEN, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME BACKGROUND QUESTIONS BEFORE WE COME INTO YOUR EXPERIENCE DURING THE WAR. HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?

A: I just turned 60, January, 1. It hurts.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A: I was born in at the time of my birth it was Czechoslovakia, ~~it is now~~, I believe, Russia, Russian occupied; and it was Hungary during my father's time, when he was a little boy.

Q: SO, FOR YOU IT WAS CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

A: Yes.

Q: HOW MANY CHILDREN IN YOUR FAMILY?

A: Ten.

Q: WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

A: Third from the bottom. I had two younger sisters, four of us left, one brother out of four, and two sisters and myself out of six girls. All the others were too young. My older sister was married and had three children, I believe, and so she went with the kids and everyone there had a different reason, of course, the others had all gone.

Q: WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOUR FATHER DO?

A: My dad was at one time, mayor of the town, he also had an inn, with lodging, food, I believe a bar, I guess you would call it as well, and also property.

Also, he had an orchard of sorted fruits, several hundred trees and things like that.

Q: SO, HE WAS A PROMINENT MEMBER IN THE COMMUNITY?

A: Yes, very much so. He was a man that everyone in the community looked up to so much that when this whole business was coming to a head, when we were there everyone, came looking for him in town, which is a little humorous, I think, whenever there was a problem or there was a problem between husband and wife; if a cow was sick or a wife was not happy or a child was sick before they ran to a doctor or a veterinarian or anyone, first they came for my dad. So, he was very well loved and a brilliant man, he was in the United States for a couple of years, too.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FAMILY LIKE WHEN YOUR MEMORIES OF YOUR NORMAL CHILDHOOD?

A: Well, needless to say, every meal was a party and I had wonderful parents, not just your glorify for them in your mind, because there gone so long ago, but truly wonderful people, my mother was my father's first baby, and he always treated her like that and the rest of us were very special to my father. He was exceptional. I loved my mother very much. I absolutely idolized my dad. He was very good and if he stood next to me, I knew nothing could possibly go wrong.

Q: SO, WHEN WERE YOU FULLY AWARE OF THINGS STARTING TO GO WRONG?

A: That's interesting. The first time I was aware, but I was very young, was, we weren't rich people, I would say we were very comfortable, certainly was everything that you could want, food, clothing, nice big home and things like that; but we always had the help in the house and my awareness was when we were not allowed domestic help anymore, or when I think it must have been somewhere either in '39 or '40 that it happened.

That the Hungarians occupied our area; and that's when Jewish businesses were taken over by Hungarian people that were brought in; they were corroborators with the Germans and instead of German Nazis, we had Hungarian Nazis. It was same idea, and they took over Jewish businesses.

Q: HOW DID YOUR PARENTS EXPLAIN THE HELP DISAPPEARING? HOW DID YOU BECOME AWARE OF IT?

A: I don't recall an explanation of it. I just recall that Jewish kids were not allowed in school anymore and Jewish businesses were being closed; Jewish people weren't allowed help and what I heard my dad talk about, that you know, there is a war going on and there is a lot of discrimination, and I'm pretty sure that they had no idea of the extent of how bad it was.

Q: WERE YOU GOING TO THE SCHOOL AT THIS TIME?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: GOING TO A PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A: I was in a public school. As a matter of fact, this friend of mine, this next door neighbor, a boy, and myself, were the only two Jewish kids at school and it wasn't something that I wasn't used to-- anti-semitism; because all my life that I'd remember the boys would pull my pigtailed or beat me up and the poor other kid, he came over with a bloody nose, fighting my battles.

Q: YOU DIDN'T GROW UP IN A JEWISH COMMUNITY?

A: Yes, I did; but when I was born my father believed in higher education, if you went to a certain school you couldn't go further than elementary, but if you went to the school where we went all my family went, you could go although you had to go out of town for high school and college, as my sisters did. I wasn't old enough, so we did go to this particular school for that reason because of further education was possible.

Q: SO, DO YOU REMEMBER THE TIMES BEING TOLD THAT YOU COULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL ANYMORE?

A: Yes, I remember my dad saying for a while we'll just have to go without it. The people at that time did not go into details like our children ask a question and we feel compelled to be very honest and very straight forward as much as they can comprehend. Those days, they didn't say it so we just took it as my father said, you can't go, you didn't question him.

Q: DID YOU LEARN AT HOME?

A: There wasn't that much time before we went to the (Ghetto).

Q: SO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?

A: First, actually to begin with, my first awareness, complete awareness was in '41 when the Hungarian--they were some of the people some of the men like my sister's husband, my older sister Goldie, she's not alive. Her husband went where it was called (Shovel Army). The Hungarians took those young able bodies--men, to work to dig fox holes to work for the Hungarian army, for the German army, to do the labor. In '41 they took all the Jews except the families of those men which included my sister and her children, and being that my sister was alone with the kids for so long, I was with her a lot. I stayed there helping with the kids, I always loved children so that's one of the reasons and when they came, we were out and when they came without warning, without anyone knowing about it. When they came to my family to take away my mom and dad, all of them, this boy that I went to school with, my next door neighbor, his name was Saully. Thank God he came running to my sister's house and he said (Hiku) come quick, come home they're taking your family away and so I ran and they were already out of the house going towards the headquarters, police headquarters, I'd guess you'd call it.

And I hung myself on my dad's neck and I told you he was my idol and I said, no, I want to go with my dad and this policeman, his name was (Tokach), who had spent a lot of time in my house.

Q: HE WASN'T JEWISH?

A: No, he was a Hungarian, a policeman and he tore my arms open from my dad's neck and said, no, and I was left sitting in the middle of the street while they were taken away.

Q: ALL THE CHILDREN?

A: All the children and my mom and dad, and the reason they didn't take me is because I spent so much time at Goldie's house. They kind of felt that I belonged there and that was the last time I saw my dad.

Q: YOU WERE HOW OLD THEN?

A: Let's see, '41, I was almost 12.

Q: SO, YOU WERE RIPPED AWAY FROM YOUR FATHER'S ARMS?

A: That's the last time I saw my dad and my brothers and they were taken to a place in Poland called (Commenitspadalski).

Q: HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

A: My sister, my oldest sister Toby, not oldest by older than I, my sister Toby, they stopped in a place called (Huradanka), it was just like a stop-over place for a lot of thousands, I don't know, thousands and thousands of Jews.

Q: HOW DID THEY MOVE THE PEOPLE?

A: With those famous trains. They were not exaggerating by the way in the movie, Holocaust, and Toby is a very, very, brave sole. She somehow, I can't tell that story I wasn't there. She smuggled out my mother and two little sisters from that camp during the night into town and when they were coming back for my dad and brothers, they were already gone from that place.

Q: AND YOU NEVER KNEW?

A: No, yes, I know what happened believe it or not, my oldest brother Max came back literally from the dead when they left from (Huradankia), and they went to a place called a mass-grave. They, of course, made them dig the graves and they ran machine guns where my dad and four brothers were and my father and my 3 brothers got killed and my fourth brother, Max, fainted as the machine guns ran and they all fell into that grave and during the night when he came to, hours after that, he pulled himself out of that grave from under all the bodies. This was close to the Russian border, and moving only at night in the fields of high wheats, grass, whatever they had, not to be seen. He crossed the border, into Russia and spent the remainder of the war there; and of course, we never knew about that until after the war which my sister, Toby, and I, we were together when he came back and he saw us and we saw him, he thought we were dead and we thought he was dead, and he fainted; and that's when we thought we lost him and that was to retract to the beginning of it all.

Q: IS MAX ALIVE TODAY?

A: Thank God, yes.

Q: WHERE IS HE?

A: He is a gorgeous man and successful, living in Cleveland, Ohio.

Q: HE WITNESSED ALL OF IT?

A: He did. He witnessed all of that and--

Q: HELEN, TO GO BACK TO THAT TIME, WAS YOUR FATHER'S BUSINESS TAKEN AWAY?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A: Yeah, very well. We had a very big house and the Hungarians that occupied, took over the entire front of the house where the business was,

where we had a dance hall.

Q: LIKE A BALL ROOM?

A: Right, right, a ball room, which we had tea, dance, all the young people, I peeked, I wasn't allowed then, I was too young, and Hungarian army officers took over the entire front of the house, the entire part of the big house, we had in the back of the house, where it was called a summer house, a small, little house attached to a barn that we cooked in the summer and baked and ate so that the big house didn't get too hot or messy, so we lived--my mother, by the way, and my sisters that had escaped were in hiding, and they came back from Poland, tracking back to the house to our home town.

Q: I'M A LITTLE BIT MIXED UP IN THE SEQUENCE OF WHAT HAPPENED?

A: In 1941 when my family was taken away and I told you they went to Poland my father, my brothers got killed, that's when my mother and the three sisters escaped and they tracked back from Poland to my home town but they were in hiding because, needless to say--

Q: SO WHO WAS LIVING IN THE BACK HOUSE?

A: Well, just the Hungarians, we only lived in that back house until '41 until the family was taken away and the Hungarians took over.

Q: WHEN THE HUNGARIANS WERE THERE, THE 12 OF YOU WERE IN THE BACK OF THE HOUSE?

A: That's right. That was until '41.

Q: AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

A: When my mother and three sisters came back and they were in hiding and my oldest sister, Goldie, who I stayed, she and her husband had a grocery store which was closed up, of course, and it was a dark small room and that's where my mother and sisters would be during the days because they were not allowed officially they were not there and they stayed there and every now and then the gendarmes, the Hungarian policemen, would make-- it was called (arazea), I don't know the English word for it, but they would kind of surprise

you and come in and search the house for people like that, like my mother and my sisters that ran back.

Q: YOU WERE THERE WITH GOLDIE?

A: I was living with Goldie, was only living with Goldie, but I had two others, Miriam, and Henya and Toby, the three sisters and my mother and ask me what you want to know?

Q: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, THE WHOLE STORY?

A: Well, next it was just kind of existing for a couple of years, hiding from one place to another, going to the barn and to the hay loft.

Q: BUT IN YOUR TOWN?

A: Yeah. In '43 the last day of Passover, my mother had just made bread, we were allowed bread and my mother had just made flour, the beginning of the--where you mix the yeast for bread for after Passover. At dawn, they came again, the Hungarian policemen and soldiers, they came and just chased--said, we're leaving and we were given I'm not a 100 percent sure but we were allowed just few things and we went to a (ghetto) which was just maybe 20 kilometers. We were given very, very small quarters, my mother and my sisters and myself and we stayed.

Q: AND GOLDIE AND HER FAMILY?

A: Her husband was still working with the army, I don't think she ever saw him again and this was called a (Ghetto) and we were hussled in there and we were there somewhere between 6 and 8 weeks, I'm not a 100 percent sure; there were rumors that we're going to be taken away to another place.

Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE THAT OTHER PLACE WAS?

A: No, no. The name Auschwitz didn't come up at the time but there were rumors that I had very long hair, very pretty hair too, and there were rumors that anyone, mainly kids, that had very clean hair or very long hair or

whatever the rumors were, would be cut short and the very last thing my mother did for me was wash my hair and brush it and she brushed it until it was like a mirror and she said in Yiddish, My goodness, anyone that would have the heart to cut this hair short is got to be a murderer. Needless to say, they didn't cut it short, they cut it off within a matter of a day in Auschwitz but things like that, it's--

Q: TELL ME THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS FROM THE (GHETTO) TO AUSCHWITZ?

A: Give me a second, you wouldn't happen to have a Kleenex? It's been a few years since I thought about this or tried not to anyway, but anyway, when we were in the (Ghetto) and we heard these rumors and sure enough the rumors came true, much sooner than anyone expected, within days we were on the famous trains, there was no exaggeration in the movie, Holocaust. We were on the trains, I don't know how long I would venture to say about a week or so, everybody said that you couldn't take any belongings with you just what you have on you, each one of us put on three dresses, whatever you could put on the body.

For that Passover that famous last Passover, I used to get a pair of new patten-leather shoes--I'll leave that one out.

Q: DO YOU HAVE TO?

A: My dad--I would get a new pair of patten-leather shoes for Passover and a new dress and the last Passover where things were not so easy anymore, my dad looked and said in Yiddish, (Hiku), I think those shoes are pretty good and you know money is tight for your shoes right now and maybe I just won't buy it. I said, that's all right daddy, my shoes are good and when I used to put on my new patten-leather shoes and a new white handkerchief, you'd put it on every Passover in the afternoon and on every step you'd take you would polish the patten-leather. On my last Passover I put my last years

shoes and I didn't polish them and my dad looked, he had bought himself some shoes because he needed them and he said you know, I think you need new shoes and he gave his back-- we can't stop for a minute.

Anyway, so when we were getting off the train, I put on that dress that my parents bought me and on top of that three others, little did we know that when we got off the train in Auschwitz, my mother, my little sisters and my Goldie and her children went to one side and myself and Toby went to the other side. I might divert a little bit. I was very young but I was the same size as I am now, I think I was chubby and also had a bosom developed which none of my friends had. So, nobody my age went with me; all the kids my age were like skinny, little girls they did not look old enough to or strong enough to work so in my age group from my home town I was the only one, I was the youngest survivor.

Q: THEY MISTOOK YOU?

A: They asked how old I was and the first thing that came out was that I was 16, and I wasn't, and my mother and my sisters and the other little kids heard.

Q: WAS THIS AFTER YOU GOT OFF THE TRAIN?

A: As we got off immediately after we got off the train there were German soldiers standing there, I don't remember if they were Hungarians or Germans. I think Germans and they would say, you go here and you go here and still--

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING SEPERATED FROM YOUR MOTHER?

A: We were still unaware that we were seperated and I was never to see my mother again because when I was in Auschwitz for two, three days I had asked a Nazi lady, I said, where's my mother? and she being all heart pointed to the chimney, you see that smoke coming out, that's probably her; and that was really the first time that it hit--this is where we are, this is what is happening.

By this time of course, we are already shaved, our heads, and everywhere

else where hair grows, and they gave us blue and grey striped dresses.

Q: CAN YOU STAND TO TELL ME THE PROCESS WHEN THEY BROUGHT YOU IN?

A: Yes. When we were off the train and we were taken to-- marched to the place nearby which was close to the place where the chimney and crematorium was, we were asked to strip, this is why it was so ludicrous why we put on two or three dresses, we were asked to strip totally in the nude and stand. We stood, waited, lined up. Many of us you have to understand that now I don't feel like standing in the nude and having people parading back and forth, but we were so much more shy so much more modest that even in front of your own dad I don't think I would ever go unless I had a slip or anything like that. We were standing totally in the nude and all the people that shaved our heads and as I said everywhere else, were men, they were inmates. Most of them Polish Jews that were there already in Auschwitz for several years. When we got there we were asked to strip, throw everything into one pile. We stood there naked for hours and hours and after that, we went through a place which was like a shower but it wasn't water it was like a disinfectant and then we're given those striped dresses with no underwear and the shoes you were wearing you had left. So whatever you were wearing, it better last for the duration. We went to the barracks in Auschwitz and in the barracks we were.

Q: AT ONE POINT DID THEY PUT A NUMBER ON YOU?

A: I don't have one, because there were barracks that we went to and the numbers were afterwards, we were tattooed, one or two barracks at the time and when it came time to your barracks our place, just hours before that, we were taken away to another camp from Auschwitz. We were in Auschwitz, my sister and I and 5 cousins for six weeks. For myself, myself personally was worse than for most. I became very, very ill. Days after we got there, my kidneys were infected and you know there in Auschwitz it wasn't you needed to go to the bathroom, you just went in, they took you twice a day to the bathroom and that was it.

(Of course, bathing was totally out of the question, so was a toothbrush or anything else; but I don't know how much you know about kidney problems, but you have to go to the bathroom frequently and that was a big problem for me. We knew what was the matter with me because one of the inmates was a doctor and she knew that my bladder was swollen and I was so hot and that I ran such a high fever. We all slept on little square things with slats about this far apart and we could only move so much, like on one side and in the same direction all of us or there wasn't enough room and I ran such a high fever that on one side, my poor Toby was burned all night and on the other side the other eleven kept changing off because I was too hot. I was so hot I was burying them. So, some of them were my cousins and they kept changing off because they were so close; it was like you know--

(When we got up we would have to go out and stand at attention for any amount of hours to be counted; and if they found out that you were sick you went straight to the ovens. So, however I felt even if my sister half the time would hold me up in the back. I had to stand there because if they knew that I was sick that was the end of me and so I didn't for the 6 weeks that I was there, I never touched a bite of food, just a sip of water that we got. One time my sister Toby who loves to eat fortunately for her that I didn't eat because she ate hers and mine. She cried all the time, she was hungry.

Q: WHAT WAS THERE TO EAT?

(A: We got a slice of bread which had green mold on it for a day. We had a cup of water for the day or it was cup of tea it was a horrible smelling things and then you got, which was your dinner as far as I'd remember, it looked like there were a couple of potato peels, dirty. Once I heard someone say that there was a couple of meat pieces floating around that if they found a dead horse someplace, they would throw it in-- a couple of pieces.

It didn't look like anything you could open your mouth to. You had to really be hungry, like my sister Toby.

Q: SO, THEY KEPT YOU THERE A MATTER OF WEEKS?

A: It was anywhere from six to eight weeks. We then went to Stuttof.

Q: HOW DID THEY DECIDE WHO WENT OR WHERE?

A: I don't really know.

Q: IT WAS BY TRAIN?

A: Yes, by train and we went to Stuttof.

Q: WHAT WAS THERE?

A: Another concentration camp. A lot of T.B., a lot of illness; a lot of people died. And, also there were a lot of Polish non-Jews, of course, that were corroborators with the Germans. I think if possible, they were worse than the Nazis.

Q: IN WHAT WAY?

A: Beatings. I got hit once. His name was Marx, I even remember his name. We slept like here, and his quarters were here, where he slept and he had some girls with him and the bathroom, you had to go to the bathroom to pass his place and you didn't do it frequently. You didn't do it unless it was an absolute must; and one time my kidneys were quite bad and I had to go, I kind of blew past his place, I ran and he went right after me and I was sitting on the toilet, he came in and I guess he was insulted or whatever the reason was that I just went through so fast or I don't know really, he slapped my face so hard that my face just blew up like this and I was deaf in that ear for months and months just because I ran to the bathroom and we stayed there, I don't know how long it was months I would say. From there we went to many, many camps.

Q: WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU DO?

A: Digging front fox holes for the German soldiers, that's where I got my muscles.

Q: WERE YOU TOGETHER WITH YOUR COUSINS AND WITH TOBY?

A: Yes, through all this. With Toby all the time and with my cousins, I was almost to the end except that towards the end whenever the Russians advanced or the Americans, or whoever we were evacuated by foot and it was in the winter time and we walked days and days and the only time we rested is once in a while and it was usually outdoors in the school yard or some kind of a yard or in a barn with a little hay or straw. It was always snowing and it was always cold and we had that gray striped dress. I have a picture of it if you want to see it. It was taken after the camp, but I still had the dress right after I came out in Bucharest, Romania.

After we were in this working camps from one to another and we dug fox holes and there was a lot of sickness and a lot of beatings and then when the Russians advanced and we had to take retreat, the Germans would be on motor cars for hours and we walked all of us and whenever a woman or two or three or however many couldn't walk any further because maybe her feet were frozen or she was dying of starvation; if she fell down, the Gestapo would just go over there, shoot her and you walked on and you just picked up your feet, stepped over her. We literally did that, it's strange that I can't look at a dead body but I stepped over many of them then.

Q: WERE MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER?

A: Just women and many, we walked for about two weeks or maybe longer than that. It was in January and you know in Germany and Poland the snow is the coldest. I had taken off my shoes for the entire time that we were walking. I didn't feel my feet either and then we were walking one day and then a German soldier in the green uniform not a black one, on a motorcycle saw us and he came over to me and he told me to fall down, he said don't worry, I'll protect you and I didn't know quite what he meant, whatever it was, and I did. And he took me into a barn out of the line where all of us walked.

I said, Hey, I've got a sister and five cousins and he brought all of them there, to me, in that barn. He wanted us to escape.

Q: TELL ME WHAT THE GREEN UNIFORM IS?

A: The green uniform is just military. They were not the Gestapo.

Q: THE BLACK IS THE GESTAPO?

A: Yes. Unfortunately we were caught.

Q: HOW WERE YOU CAUGHT?

A: There were five cousins, my sister Toby and myself, there were seven of us. There were too many of us and he told us to go from here to there where he could hide us and they, the Gestapo, that were from our group, you know watching us, we were caught and they of course were ready to shoot us and this green uniformed soldier said, if you do, you will be shot also, and he put his life on the line for us and he saved our lives but couldn't save us so, we continued on our evacuation.

Q: HE PICKED YOU UP BECAUSE YOU WERE A YOUNG GIRL?

A: I was a young kid. I must have looked pretty pathetic. In our evacuation a few days later, we stopped in a school yard to rest and I said to Toby, this is it. I have to take my shoes off because they wouldn't let me, but Toby is a few years older than I am and she knew that once I took my shoes off I could never put them back on; and if I couldn't put them back on, I couldn't walk in the snow barefoot, and they'll shoot me, and she'll have to watch and she said, no, I don't care what your saying, I have to, I said, to take these shoes off, I have to see if there are feet in those shoes because I don't feel them and of course, as Toby said, I took my shoes off and my feet were totally black, frozen and they just popped out like a balloon, and there was no putting those shoes back on and so we were faced with either Toby watching me die or we take a chance of both of us dying or surviving.

At dawn before we got going, Toby and I, we didn't even tell our cousins or anybody there in the school yard. There was a big field of snow and at the end of that field was two houses, one on one side and one on the other, and before it was complete daylight, Toby said we are going to walk over there and seek help. If we get caught, both of us get shot and I prefer that, to watching them kill you. I don't want to live without you and sure enough we did that. Barefoot. I could never get those shoes back on and now, the two of us, in the dark, ran away. Toby says should we go to the left or to the right? And I said, you know what, I'm left-handed, let's go to the left and fortunately for us, on the left house where we went in there was a Polish family, quite sympathetic with us, not Jewish, but sympathetic with the Jews. On the right side of the house were Nazis, a house full of Nazis which would have, needless to say, fate would have been. The house we went into, the man was absolutely petrified. He says, I have nine children if you are caught in my house, we are all shot, my children and us, we're all killed immediately; but he says, I also have God in my heart. I cannot put you out just the way you are. He says, I'll give you some clothing, I'm going to do something about your feet; I'm going to give you some food and before it's daylight, he took my black frozen feet and he put them in hot and cold water and hot and cold until I had a little feeling in my feet. They gave us food, very little of what he had, but he shared it with us and he gave us some clothing. With tears in his eyes, he says, I'm so deeply sorry, but I have nine children. I cannot--we didn't blame him, we perfectly understood.

We started walking, he said walk in that direction, he said, you will be going away from the Jewish camps and you're going toward the military, and if you can lie well enough you may survive, and so we did. Toby and I walked and walked all day long and when it came dusk, we were very hungry and very cold,

(and very tired, and really, I didn't give a damn if we live or not and we didn't know where to turn and so Toby remembered the story my dad used to tell when he was in World War I. He said that one of the most easiest deaths was freezing to death because once you fall asleep you just don't wake up. Toby said that's what were going to do. There was on the side of the street, like a ditch. It was snowing, it was very cold. She said, let's lie down in that ditch, you and I, and let's try and fall asleep really quickly and we just won't wake up and then we're lucky, and it's over, so we did that. As we were lying in the ditch, trying very hard--I still can't fall asleep, maybe it has something to do with that--and a German soldier, one of the green soldiers came over and looked at us and said, now, for heavens sake, what are you girls trying to do freeze to death; and Toby said, well, we have no place to go and he said, who are you and she is a very clever lady, and was always very brilliant, and so she immediately decided on the lie that we were going to live if we were going to live, she says, well were (cry - en- yians) that were gentiles. Our parents were pro-Nazis and they were killed by the Russians because they were pro-Nazis and I have this little kid who is a mute, and she says, I don't know what to do with her. She's sick, I guess we'll just lie here and die. And he says, I won't let a comrade like you--your parents were one of us. You come with me. He took us into a house which was in Poland, Nazi occupied. He said to the men, the owner of that house, he said, do me a favor, put these two girls up for me just until I find a better place for them. That man took us in and it was warm in there and the first thing he did was put me on the bed because I was running a very high fever and I was very tired and low and behold, I fell asleep and I started not only talking, which I am not supposed to do but talking in Yiddish, and Toby my poor sister, she stuck her hand on my mouth, she almost suffocated me, killed me. She woke

me up. We stayed there for quite a bit. I would say the entire evening. Then the soldier came back. He said I found you the best place. I spoke to my officer, my superior, and I told him about the unfortunate flight of the two of you and he said we don't have--every battalion of German soldiers were allowed to wash their underwear. He says we don't have those two women and my superior said that you can come and stay with us with the German soldiers. I was all for it. I was very tired and it seemed very good to me to just be some place and Toby, being a whole lot smarter at the time, said, my God no. I'm not going to take no for an answer, your coming with us, he said.

Q: TOBY DIDN'T WANT TO GO?

A: She was scared, she had enough reasons to be scared, I didn't. I had to be a mute. The thing is if you got me here and someone got Toby on the same side and every step of the way had to be a lie we wouldn't tell the same lie.. We went with him, to his superior and they did take us as their washer women evening. They had a bathtub full of little chickens, little roasted chickens and being the good eater that my sister was, she ate so much she almost died. They let us eat as much as we wanted.

The following morning this German, whatever his rank was, I don't really remember, but he called his entire battalion of his soldiers together and he said, he explained who we are and why were orphans and why we are in the predicament we are; and he says, anyone who lays a hand on those two kids will be shot immediately and so fortunately they did not touch us, because of that.

We had to live an entire lie every step of the way. Six o'clock in the evening we would go to bed, we never, never spoke to each other; because we were afraid--suppose someone hears us--our biggest pleasure was because we were so close to the front, was the German soldiers would take food and in turn they brought back the dead; and so first thing in the morning we would raise

the shade, and count the feet. How many Germans were dead and that was a good thing and we were with them as washer women for a long time. Every time the Russians advanced, they had to go back and one time they had to retreat and I was sitting on the kitchen, you know with a wagon with horses, and next to me was this man this soldier and he was always talking to me and of course being a mute I couldn't answer him and he looked at me and he was at the time, an older man, he was somewhere in the late 30s, early 40s, and he always told me he had a daughter about my age and he always talked to me without me answering, and at that time he looked at me and said in German, for goodness sakes, have you never said a word in your life? You will say at least my name. Now, because I want you to so much and I've been talking to you so much and I looked at him like that and we continued and we went and we continued for a long time to retreating.

Q: WHEN THEY MOVED, YOU MOVED?

A: We moved with them. Our choices were to remain behind and hopefully be liberated by whoever was fighting that it was the Russians. I wasn't for it. I really and truly was feeling more secure not talking, going to bed just living in total silence and darkness, somehow it was a more secure feeling than I had had for years and I couldn't think beyond that.

Just as when I was in the camps, my girlfriend and I, we were very hungry, like in Stuttot. We were very very hungry, she would say, let's go in the corner, which meant you would go in the corner and talk about food your mother used to cook. My girlfriend would say do you know when I get out of here, I will never-- when I become a grown-up--wear a purse. I will just put a piece of bread under my arm, instead, so that if I am some place and I'm not near a kitchen and I want to eat something, I'll have it. It was so important.

I never thought for a minute that that would happen no more than I ever

(thought we would get out or when we were in the working camps and we never never bathed, we just took off our clothes and brushed off the lice. There was a lady who was a nurse, she was from (Latria) and she would take a pale of snow, and she would say, (Hiko) come here, I'm going to show you how to clean your body because that's important; and she would take the snow and rub me all over, she says, it's not only going to make you feel better, it is also going to make you cleaner, you will know how nice it is to have a bath. I never believed it. The same way we went with the soldiers as much as Toby wanted to stay back. I never believed that we'd really be liberated or there was anything for us or any future. I just really wanted to be secure in that hole of ours.

Q: FROM DAY TO DAY?

(A: Even if it was just for tonight. I just never thought beyond tonight. I never cared beyond tonight.

Q: SO, YOU HAD TO CONVINCE HER NOT TO MAKE A CHANGE?

A: Toby is a soft touch. If I started to cry or to tell her I don't want to or I'm scared or I know I'll die or anything of that, she said, okay, all right we'll do it your way. When we did, we continued with them until almost the end of the war.

Q: HOW LONG A PERIOD OF TIME?

(A: It was just a matter of I think maybe I would guess six to eight months, and then when we were in the woods with the German soldiers, the Russians were already in the town and we could hear them. They shelled us back, you know, you could hear them shelling not here it was there as a matter of fact, when the shelling from the tanks became so intense, Toby and I, there were fox holes, we always laid down on top of each other because whatever hits one, should hit the other. Our main concern was one should not have to watch the other, whether it be hurt, wounded, or dying, that was our main concern, that whatever should happen to both of us.

Q: WHAT A BOND BETWEEN YOU AND TOBY?

A: Well, there wasn't much else, or anything else as far we knew. We didn't know anybody else survived. I don't think we ever gave it any thought.

Q: SO, HOW DID THE LIBERATION OCCUR?

A: We were in the woods, with the German soldiers, it was a battalion of I would venture to say about 100, 200, 300, I don't know it was a big battalion whatever it takes to be a battalion.

Q: THEY NEVER TOUCHED YOU?

A: No, no, they never laid a finger on us. Of course, they also didn't realize who we were.

One time, I was sitting on the floor and I was cleaning this officer's boots and that was one of the last speeches Hitler was making and he was still saying we will win and all of this stuff and this officer looked down at me and he said, you little dummy, you don't even know what I'm talking about; but he said, you know something, if I had hit one hundred Jews I would take him and just tear him into two pieces because they are the ones that are responsible for this war and the predicament that we are in and I looked at him, like I don't know what you're talking about, so because they thought we were you know --they never touched us they in fact, officers from other battalions bet the officers with us a case of champagne because our officers said I have those two girls, he says they were hurt so badly that you'd never see them smile, you never see them talk, you never see them with their heads up and the other ones say, sure, you must have a great time with them. He said, no, come six o'clock or before darkness these girls are in bed, these girls do nothing but work and just do nothing. They don't even talk, one is a dummy and the other officer didn't believe it, they thought we were having a great time and he bet him a case of champagne that it's not so. He says,

I will show you and it was barely dark. It was still dusk and he brought the other officers and very, very quietly opened the door to our room and he says, you see, they are in bed already and so--

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE NOT TO TALK?

A: It wasn't easy, especially for me, it was after a while, it was a matter of routine.

Q: AND SURVIVAL?

A: And survival. You'd be surprised, a person want to live so badly that you never think about it on a daily basis, thank God this morning and I'm on my feet as much, except when it is your biggest gift from God that you did wake up this morning and that you did survive the day, it's living is something you want very badly under any circumstances.

So, to go back when we were in the woods and the Russians and tanks, and bombs shelled us heavily. The soldiers that we were with, dying they were getting killed, I mean so many and so much. Toby and I were always on top of each other and after the bombing stopped for a few minutes we were completely covered with blood. Is that your blood or somebody else's? No, no, it's not mine, it's somebody else's. It doesn't hurt so as long as it wasn't yours, fine. By the next morning there was us, Toby and I, and I believe one soldier remained alive, everyone else was wounded or dead or you know.

Q: WEREN'T THEY FIGHTING BACK, DIDN'T THEY HAVE AMUNITION?

A: They sure did, you have to understand we were right here in the wooded area and here was the town and in town were Russians with tanks above us were Russians with bombs on the ground were Russians with rifles, whatever. By the morning, that's all there was, Toby, myself, and a German, I believe he was an officer and Toby said to him, my sister and I will go into the town to the Russians and I'll tell them a lie, that we are Jewish and that you, the Germans saved our lives and all of this whole big story and we'll

come back for you and he showed us a rope that he had and he said, if you're not back by noon, or whatever, it was, I will hang myself and Toby having a heart as big as a barn, and when we walked away she says, maybe we'll come back for him. I said you are crazy. Well, all I'm gonna wait for is the time that I can tell them he's dead. Don't be ridiculous, he's a German isn't he. Then our problems began.

We were liberated by the Russians.

Q: SO YOU WALKED INTO TOWN?

A: We went into town. I'm gonna say something I'm not liking. The first Russian, an officer that we met was Jewish and I for one was ecstatically happy, I said, Toby you see.

Q: HOW DID YOU KNOW HE WAS JEWISH?

A: He told us he didn't believe that we were Jewish and so he asked us to say the (Mu-de-ani), the prayer that we used to say every morning before breakfast. He asked us to speak Yiddish, which we can very well, he asked many questions that only Jews would know, when he was finally convinced that we were Jewish, it was great, we were there, we were with the other refugees. This was in a town called (Grossmelon), it was German, the border of Germany and Poland. There was a lot of fighting, a lot of bombing, and there were girls that were liberated. The day before, Toby was talking to them and they were crying and this--sure enough in the evening the soldiers with rifles came through, the two Jewish little girls from the (Kerryon) Mountains, which were us and I thought they were coming to give us dinner, liberate us, they were really celebrating with us, that is not exactly what they had in mind and my sister is crying and crying and protesting, she isn't going and I don't know why, I'm saying why are you crying? She said, shut up. The soldiers said, look ma'am I was told to get you no matter what it takes, I'm going to get you, you come with me. You got any complaints you got any protests, you tell it to my officer, the one that sent me for you. So we had no choice in the matter.

We went and we came in there, the table was set for a feast, food, drinks, and two beds were made up very nicely. One was this way and one was this way and there was this Russian officer, the Jewish one and another one, also a Russian officer, a non-Jewish one and guess who was the prize? My sister Toby and I. That was what they sent us for and I didn't know why Toby was crying but that's why she was crying because they sent for us so that they could sleep with us. When Toby started talking to the Jewish officer, she said, look she's just a child, she has very little hair. I was very thin, and very short and very little and I looked like an 11-year-old little boy. She said, look she's 11 years old, she's a child, you wouldn't want to sleep with a child like that you are kidding. In Russia children like that already have children, so that didn't matter. At any rate, my sister has a gift of gabbing and she talked and talked until he said, you get out of here, I'll find someone who will be happy to come here and we ran out and we spent the night in an armoire standing up with other refugees, men sleeping in front of it closed, and we stood up in that armoire all night long just to be safe from other soldiers and the next morning the Germans bombed that town and were ready to take it back, and guess what? We were in the middle of bombing and so where do we run to? Those two officers in a jeep with the two girls that didn't mind going with them and we ran over to them crying, please help us, the town is on fire, both sides of the street are burning with the bombs all over and he says, you get away from here, last night you were crying, today you can do anything you like, you are on your own and we were, we ran through town, holding our hands like this because from the intense fire from the bombing but we managed.

Q: WHERE WERE YOU RUNNING TO?

A: Just running. We didn't know where to, just trying to run away from the fire, really that was our main concern; and we did and I cannot tell you how

long it took. It seems like weeks and weeks before we got to which was the capital of Poland, Lodz. There was a displaced persons' camp.

Q: HOW DID YOU SUSTAIN YOURSELF ON THAT, WHEN YOU WERE RUNNING?

A: We slept in fields we picked a potato here and there, whatever we found, however, we managed it was just a matter of really trying to survive anyway you can.

Q: DID YOU KNOW WHAT DIRECTION YOU WERE GOING?

A: No, no, we just went occasionally there was a train that would just kind of go, and we went.

Q: ON THE TRAIN?

A: We just hopped on the train or someplace where we could hide on the train where the soldiers wouldn't get us. It was a constant battle with the Russian soldiers. The minute they saw a female, whether you were young or old or whether you were 88, 18, or 28, they didn't care. They raped you, raped you when you were pretty young, fat, skinny, it didn't matter. It was a female and so we--with us it was like a matter of can we out smart them in that department.

Our survival as far as eating or sleeping was almost secondary.

Q: STAYING ALIVE WAS NOT THE--

A: I don't think I ever fought as hard for our virtue--my own, I just couldn't think of my watching anyone doing it to you because you're a baby, and you are my baby sister, I think I will regret that, Toby said. I know, a 150 percent for sure that if it wasn't for Toby, I would not have survived the liberations. Once we got in the direction of Lodz, we were told by other refugees, when we came there we were supposed to, you know we thought once we got to the camp, the displaced persons--my goodness, they are going to make a big-to-do with us and send us home, of course, which was not the case. They were supposed to, but every time the subject came up we don't have enough trains, you are going on the next transport. It was always on the next one, and again, of course,

(the liberators were the Russians and there was one, I didn't think he ever looked at me or did anything. I believe he asked my sister if he could marry me and take me home. I don't know why, I don't even remember which one he wanted to marry; but after being there for a few months, we really wanted to go home.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THE D.P. CAMPS? DAY TO DAY LIFE?

A: It wasn't a whole lot going on, we were there just there. I couldn't give you a total description, I don't think we were over fed but we were not starving, I think we had clothing from German homes. Russians were overseeing us, and they weren't particularly in a hurry to let us go.

Q: WERE YOU ALL JEWS THERE?

(A: Yes. There was, I believe, there was one girl that she said that the Russians liberated her, kept her in a room for something like 8 days and nights and the Russian soldiers stood in line and just raped her continuously, night and day, you know, and it was tough, it was horrible and so after a while, Toby had heard that there was a transport going to our part of the world where we were born and if we could manage to get to the station, they would take us, they didn't really want to but so we did. We ran away once again from the displaced persons camp and got to the station and the Russian officer that was in charge was, he looked like an eskimo. He was from the Syberia, he took a liking to me, I guess, and he said, it's very dangerous for him but he will take us on the train and will deliver us home and once again we thought we were home free.

Q: WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES IF YOU WERE CAUGHT LEAVING THE D.P. CAMP?

A: I think we would have been kept there for a long time.

Q: WHERE DID HE TAKE YOU?

(A: Well, his transport this long train, many hundreds of people were going to my part of the world, to Czecholovakia, where I was born, displaced people, you know.

Let's say for arguments sake there was 500 on that train, now it's 502 and two people he couldn't account for, if he was asked but he did, he took us and for the duration of the trip, I was his girlfriend, believe it or not. There was one lady on that train that I would like to find. He decided that I was going to be his, he was going to sleep with me and he was going to marry me and he was going to take me home to his parents. This lady, the Jewish lady, who was in the concentration camp and who had been married before the war, she was maybe late 20s, early 30s, or there about, she slept with him and I can't say made love because that's not what I would call it but had sex with him, so that he shouldn't touch me and while he had sex with her, he held my hand, and he definitely decided that when we got to where we were going, he wasn't going to let us off and once again, we're in trouble. When the train would stop someplace near a stream, because you know, we went forever, they needed a locomotive for the militray, they took our train so the train stood there for God knows how long and everyone was allowed to get off the train go to the stream or in the field or fresh air. I had to sit on the train with him there was a young man on the train from around our place, he was my age or thereabouts. We had talked and talked, when this Russian officer saw this, he ordered everyone into the train and so Toby and I were locked in the cars in the trains cars and that was the end of that. We got off after a long time and I cannot tell you how long we got to it was a place called (Bish-ten) it was very, very close to my home town, it was closest we were going to get, he wouldn't let us, he locked us up in the train cars, locked the train, windows, everything, he wasn't going to let us off, he was going to take us back.

We were sitting in the train station in this bordered cars and along comes a Russian soldier, and he was Jewish, and he said, where are you girls headed for?

Q: DID YOU THINK YOUR FAMILY WAS THERE THAT YOU WERE GOING TO FIND YOUR

FAMILY?

A: We were hoping someone would be there.

Q: AFTER ALL, WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU GO?

A: Everyone went there first, where they were born, hoping to find somebody and this Russian soldier started asking why we were not getting off and we told him our story, that we would like to and he wouldn't let us and he said, he is a superior and Toby said we're not even legally on this train and on that note, he came to the officer that was in charge of our train and he said, I do believe that you have illegal people on this train and he says, no, no, he started denying it. He says, well I just want to see your papers and we are going to count this people, after a long battle of words, we got off and it was, believe it or not, on a (pur-ium) and we celebrated in a Jewish home whoever the people were and this Jewish Russian officer got a little bit tipsy and he said, you see, do you want to know why this child was punished? Why she was in a concentration camp and why her hair was cut up and her parents were killed, only because her name was (Hiku). Because (Hiku) signifies a Jewish name and so he went on and on and after that we set out to go to our home town.

Q: WALKING AGAIN?

A: Part walking, part--we hitched a ride on a horse, however we got there, we got there, and my brother was there, the one that earlier in the story I told you Max that came literally from the dead and when we had escaped from the concentration camp, remember we left the cousins heard that two girls that had escaped were killed and assumed it was us, and they told Max don't get your hopes up too high.

Q: HOW DID THE COUSINS SURVIVE?

A: I believe they continued to a degree then escaped and then were liberated, like us. Some of them are in Israel. One is in Oakland, Cleveland, Canada, all over.

(At any rate, they told my brother Max, don't get your hopes up too high, we believe (Hiku) and Toby are dead and when we got into town because there wasn't any phone system that would let anyone know. My brother took one look at us and he fainted so badly we could not revive him and I don't have to tell you how we felt, dear God, we get through all of this and we now lose him. When he came to, he looked at me and said in Jewish, (Hiku) is that you, and he fainted again and it was really frightening, thank God, he did revive and he did come to and needless to say, I had enough hugs and kisses to make up for all the years from my brother.

A few days home already, he looks at me and says, (Hiku), how old are you? I told him, he says isn't it about time that you look like a girl, maybe you need a permanent. I didn't quite know what a permanent was, and he didn't quite know what I needed.

(Q: WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER TWO SISTERS?

A: I only have Toby and one other sister, her name is Ruthy. She lives in Cleveland, she left for Belgium when I was three or four years old. I didn't recognize her when I first saw her.

When we were home, Max and Toby went away and they left me in our home town or close to our home town, they went looking for a new home because there was nobody left for us, nobody came back. The house was occupied by gentiles that were very happy that we were taken, there was chaotic, we needed to get away; so Max and Toby went looking for a new home, and I remained.

Q: THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE AWAY FROM TOBY?

(A: YES. It was probably the only time I was totally alone for several months. They found a new home, oh, close to (Prog) and I went there, and I was almost, almost closed in by the Russians, I think when I left the borders were closed within a matter of days.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YEAR THAT WAS?

A: It was in '45. I have to tell you, I went from (Kutz) which is close by where I was born, where the (Carpathian mountains) to (Ustanablim) on my own. I don't know what money was in circulation at the time, I didn't have any, I walked out one afternoon, from where I stayed to the train station with no luggage or anything, just as I was, I had a blue skirt on, I just inquired, I don't know how or from whom, which direction I needed to take to get to where Toby and Max were and I started on my journey, and once again I was battling Russian soldiers, I slept on the cold and I hid under many places.

I have to go back in my story because I have said many things about the Russians that were not favorable. I have one story that is beautiful; about a Russian officer, who Toby and I were going from where we were liberated to Lodz, to the displaced persons camp, I told you we walked, we took a train, anyway we could, and one time we were on a train, and Toby put on a little (babushka) to look like a little lady, she kind of covered me up so I looked like a baby and we were on this train and a Russian soldier came and says, you two, with me and Toby said, Oh, come on I have a baby here, we can't go with you and next to us was a Russian soldier which looked like an older man, plain soldiers clothing, you did not see a rank anywhere. This young soldier in uniform kept at us, come on, come with us and Toby kept saying no, we've gone through so much, she's a child, always made me young and this older soldier said, leave them alone, very quietly, very softly, leave them alone, he says, why do you want them, for yourself, he says, come one just leave them alone, and he did not and he kept saying what is the matter old man, you want them for yourself or something to that; and in turn this older soldier took out something we never saw what it was and showed it to this soldier and man, he went away within seconds, saluting him,

he must have been an officer, big wheel thing, because he saw how much we were bothered and he saw how very sad we were and Toby told him our sad story, of what happened to us during the war, he said, you will never have to worry about that again, and he was the one that took us to Lodz, all the way to the displaced persons camp and there he got to the superior officer, or whoever he was and said, I brought these two young kids along way; you ask me before earlier why in the story, I didn't remember how we got there, I remember now. He says, I brought them a long way unharmed and unless you can give me your word they will remain unharmed you will do the right thing. He was on a secret mission, but he said I cannot, but I will if I have to, and that was a beautiful thing of a Russian soldier so there was all kinds. And now were back, me going to Czechollovakia. When I arrived, it was a long journey, my cousins, Helen's oldest sister was getting engaged and I had only their address, so I had Helen and her sisters and brothers address and I came there and I don't have to tell you what I looked like after being gone weeks. First I rang the bell. Helen's oldest sister came out, What do you want, she didn't recognize me. I was really filthy, she finally recognized me, she started crying and how happy that I was here, could you please stay here because I was absolutely foul, she brought out the bathrobe and I changed right there, she threw the clothes right in the chute and I was in the bathrobe and I went to her engagement party, and Toby and Max were there and it was the happiest reunion in this world. Several months later, the Jewish (joint) said, that any kid under 16 years, that were orphans from the concentration camps should register and will be taken to England to an orphanage to continue the education that we didn't have.

Toby once again a big girl, decided that I should register since I was lacking in education and the truth of the matter is, we didn't know which direction we were going. Anyway, I did register and we totally forgot about

it. I stayed with Max and we had a motorcycle and we were wild, dancing, ice skating. We did it all together it was right after the war, chaotic existence and you did anything you could for money, none of it which was so legal, working from nine to five; it was you know, selling cigarettes on the black market, it was a lot of stupid things to do and made a lot of money, my brother did it. He had a drawer full of money, and I was with him and wherever we would go, to a dance; my first ball gown, we purchased, from a factory and went to the dressmaker and Max said, we want a very beautiful gown for Helen's first formal affair, and she said, no problem. How much to make it? 300 crowns. He said, I give you four and it will be ready on Saturday; she says, sure. And sure enough it was ready for Saturday. Max had a date and I didn't and in Czechoslovakia, when you went to your first formal usually under parents chaperone and since I didn't have parents, I wanted Max to be my chaperone and Max had a date, he was just maybe 20, himself, I think I started crying at six o'clock and by nine o'clock he broke his date and we went.

Q: YOU COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THE ORPHANAGE?

A: It wasn't until May of '46, we got a letter to show up in Prog at the train station to the Jewish Joint, and we're going to England. Max and I cried bitterly. He did not want me to go and I didn't want to go, and that was it, and Toby was the only smart one of the lot. She said, you're going, not that she wanted to get rid of me, I did exactly what she said, but Toby did not have the heart to take me so Max took me to the train station, and we cried a lot, it hurt a lot. It really was one of the toughest things I've done and I went to England with a hundred other kids and Max remained in Czechoslovakia and so did Toby; but shortly after Max went to Germany, to a displaced persons camp and we had relatives in America and sent to the oldest one, which was Toby, an affidavit to go to America. So, Toby had papers to go to America and Max didn't. So Max went to Germany. He was

going to Israel. Toby remained in Czechoslovakia. I went to England which was a long journey. Once again, I am on a train for a couple of weeks. You asked me earlier in private when I started smoking? That's when I started, because on the train we got left over cases from the American army, and each one was breakfast, lunch and dinner, and each one had a pack of four cigarettes in it and with nothing but time on our hands all of us smoked by the time we got to France we got off the train, we were full-fledged smokers, all of us. We stayed in Paris for a couple of weeks and then from there we crossed the channel on a boat, which out of the hundred, my girlfriend and I were the only two on our feet, the others were lying sea sick, we got to England in a hostel, on the east side of London. It was my first time I ever saw a black man or black person. Anyway we stayed in the orphanage.

Q: YOU HAD TO LEARN ENGLISH?

A: Yes. In Hungarian, we spoke a lot. We learned English, although I still have an accent, which is kind of impossible to lose, especially when I am nervous. We went to school part-time, a little bit and then they kind of placed us in Jewish organizations, mostly in factories, clothing, mostly. It was the clothing manufacturers that ordered, all right, I'll take a couple of kids and that's where I learned dress making.

I'm still in it and when I was in the orphanage, my sister was in Belgium, whom I haven't seen. I was a very little kid and she wanted to go there, she had tried for many years to get papers to go to America. Her husband was also an Auschwitz survivor and so she had asked me to come there and I went to Belgium, thinking that maybe I would stay there with her and I think that's how I convinced the people in the orphanage and let me go. Fortunately, or unfortunately, my sister got her papers. When I got off the boat my sister was waiting for me. I got off and she said, Helen, I didn't pay any attention and then finally as I was walked past her my sister said, (Hiku), and I turned

around and see this lady who is not at all familiar to me and I said, is that you? Oh, my God, yes, so I gave her my cheek and continued walking.

Q: DID SHE LEAVE AND GO TO AMERICA?

A: No, I stayed with her for a while and then they got the papers and you know, then I went back to England. Here I am again, and then the friends of mine, back to the orphanage, but not for long, you could leave the orphanage, if you made enough money to support yourself, they did not pay for you.

I stayed in England three and a half years and after that I came to the United States and Max was here already eleven months, Toby was here, a year, because while I was in England, they both wanted to go to England, there was so much fighting and I told them if they went to Israel they'd go without me. I am so young to go into another war, I still hear bombs, I can't, so they went here just to convince me, needless to say, we are still here.

Q: THEY WENT TO CLEVELAND?

A: They went to New York and then of course, Max moved to New York because he heard of opportunities which were great for him, thank God, he is a very successful young man, he has a construction business, and Toby lives in Cleveland, married, has two daughters and she has three beautiful grandchildren, and here I am in California, I have a husband, a wonderful husband, I married an Oaklander, I have a daughter, just about the most wonderful person in my life. She has two children that are great, very, very wonderful husband, a native Californian. What else can I say, but to dance at my Anne's wedding, who is my granddaughter and that's it for us.

Q: HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE NOW HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY YOUR EXPERIENCE?

A: With the exception of the past two hours, I've been speaking, I don't think I am terribly emotional about it. I have told it to many children at the high schools. It should be told I think. It made me a more understanding human being of human suffering. If anything, I am happy to say, I'm not a bitter person. I think it has made me a warmer human being, unfortunately,

I don't know how I would have been otherwise but I think I'm quite sympathetic if people are in pain or any reason at all or physical or mental.

Q: IS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE THAT I DIDN'T ASK YOU OR THAT WE DIDN'T TOUCH ON?

A: I don't think so. I think that we can't go into more details because we would need about six weeks. I think mainly I did tell you about things that there were a lot of people along the way that were both wonderful and terribly hateful, but I think you got the idea of it.

Q: YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHERE YOUR PARENTS ARE?

A: I've been told and of course, Max saw my brothers and my father being killed, and a Nazi lady told me where my mother was so as far as having any hope are you saying that anyone is still alive definitely not.

Q: YOU HAVE SOME RELATIVES IN ISRAEL?

A: I have lots of cousins in Israel, yes, some that were during the war with me, some that were just there, I've been there a few times, myself, and I certainly hope to go there a few more times in my life time.

Q: HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE TOBY?

A: She is coming here next month, which is March. I was there last June, we go on a tennis junket, the two of us, we're the most compatible two human beings. We are so completely different, you won't believe it but she is quite a lady.

Q: THANK YOU HELEN FOR SHARING ALL OF THIS.

A: I'm glad I could, I'm glad of my contributions of the future.

Q: THAT'S THE IMPORTANT THING.

A: Thank you Barbara.