INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA SHILO

BAY AREA HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2000 PLACE: FORESTVILLE, CA

INTERVIEWER: ANNE FEIBELMAN

TRANSCRIBER: JULIA A. KOHNKE, CSR, RPR

(Begin Tape A.)

Q WE'RE HERE TODAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2000, IN FORESTVILLE, CALIFORNIA, WITH BARBARA SHILO.

ON BEHALF OF THE BAY AREA HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, MY NAME IS ANNE FEIBELMAN, AND CAMERA IS THAYER WALKER. END OF SLATE, TAPE 1.

BARBARA, JUST TO START OUT WITH SOME OF THE BARE FOUNDATION FACTS, TELL ME YOUR BIRTH NAME AND SPELL YOUR LAST NAME.

A Sure. I was originally born in the name of Betty Schultz. I changed it, obviously, to Barbara because I never liked the name. It was -- do you want me to talk about where or --

Q YEAH. IF YOU WOULD SPELL BETTY AND SCHULTZ.

A Oh, sure. Betty, B-e-t-t-y, Schultz, S-c-h-u-l-t-z.

Q AND WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A In Fulda, Germany.

Q COULD YOU SPELL THE NAME OF YOUR TOWN?

A Sure. F-u-l-d-a.

Q AND WHERE IS FULDA LOCATED?

A Fulda is located not that far from Frankfurt am Main. And it's a Catholic city town. And I lived there only for maybe a year, two years, or so, because I really don't know it.

Q WHAT WAS THE YEAR OF YOUR BIRTH?

A 1923.

Q AND THE DATE?

A April the 28th.

Q AND WHEN DID YOU MOVE FROM THIS TOWN?

A I believe we moved from there probably in '25, '26. To Kassel. That's K-a-s-s-e-l. Which is more central, the central part of the country, in the province of Hessen.

Q TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, BARBARA, YOUR FATHER'S NAME, YOUR MOTHER'S NAME.

A My father was called -- his name was Joachim Schultz. I believe he had a middle name of Meyer, M-e-y-e-r.

And my mother's name was Hannah. Do you want a spelling on that?

Q WITH AN "H" AT THE END OR --

A With an "H" at the end. Sometimes she

dropped the "H", and sometimes she didn't. All depended on, I guess, what her mood was.

Q AND YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A Yes. I have two brothers, an older one -- two older brothers. One was Frederick, and another brother, Julius.

Q AND HOW OLD? WERE THEY OLDER?

A They were older than -- my oldest brother was four years older than I; and my middle brother was two years older than I, or two and a half years older.

Q AND WHEN YOU WERE IN THE SECOND CITY YOU LIVED IN, IS THAT WHERE YOU GREW UP REALLY?

A I spent probably about the next five or seven -- probably, in other words, seven years there. Yeah, until I was ten.

Q AND WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT TOWN? WERE YOU IN SCHOOL?

A I was in school from the age of six. And -- however -- I spent a few years until 1933. So by now I was ten. And, obviously, Hitler came in in January of 1933. And I believe by about maybe three or four months later, we were told to leave school, that Jewish children had to leave school, which was -- in retrospect, this was unusual: Many, many cities allowed children, Jewish children, to continue in the

same schools, the hochschule, gymnasium, until 1938, which is so very unusual.

And so we were sent to a Jewish school, which was really not a formal Jewish school. It was attached to an orphanage in Kassel. And in that -- and in that place, it was totally disorganized, and they were totally inadequate for the numbers of children that they now had to accommodate. And so it was very poor schooling. And no order, no discipline, and no real scheduling. I mean, it was nothing to speak of, particularly compared to the other school where we came from.

And so my father, who had been traveling a good deal, understood the situation of how progressively worse it would get in Germany. And I even remember the parades that were on the streets with huge swastika flags. I mean, they were as tall as a building. And people marching. You know, the brown shirts and the black shirts marching. And we all had to stand on the sidewalk and watch them. It was mandatory. And, of course, I felt -- I think it was very, very confusing. And I understood that they were the enemy and they didn't want us. And it was also very frightening. Very frightening. To this day, I think I have a real inner anxiety about

uniforms of that kind, because I've had a lot of run-ins with them throughout -- you know, in that period of time.

And so my father was aware that we would have to certainly move; and by the end of that year we did move. And we moved to Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia.

Q WHAT YEAR?

A In 1933. The end of 1933.

So that was a bold move on my parents' part to move that quickly, that early.

Actually, in our city, there must have been a good number of arrests that early and men taken to, you know -- to prisons. And I heard stories of tortures. I didn't understand half of the anatomies that they talked about.

And so it was evident that he felt that there was no point in staying. And not easy for a family to move. To, you know, pick up everything. Luckily, he was a -- my father was a manager of a large factory of Nurnberg, in Nurnberg, which was a distance, but because he traveled so much -- and he was actually in charge of sales of the company; so he traveled from town to town and -- in Germany and in Czechoslovakia. And I don't know where else he did.

But primarily those two areas.

So then we moved to Eger, which was a border town, right on the border of Germany, in the heart of Sudetenland. Sudetenland was part of Czechoslovakia as of World War I, but it was primarily a German population. And most of the German population were as, you know, pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic as the German population in Germany. In fact, possibly more so because they felt that they had been penalized by belonging to another country that they didn't want to belong to. So they wanted desperately to get back to the fatherland. So -- however, we spent five years there.

Q HOW DO YOU SPELL EGER?

A E-g-e-r.

In Czech it's called Cheb, C-h-e-b.

Q AND WHEN YOU MOVED THERE, YOUR FATHER STAYED AT HIS --

A He retained his position, and he still continued to travel. He would go back to Germany on a regular basis. Then he would then come back and report about, you know, the number of troop movements, armaments that he saw on roads. His Christian friends would tell him stories about the seriousness of what was happening in Germany towards the Jews. And he

took all of that very, very seriously.

Q AND WHAT DID THE COMPANY MANUFACTURE, AND DO YOU REMEMBER --

A Yes, they manufactured paint brushes, house paint brushes, shaving brushes, sign painter brushes. Things of that kind.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF HIS COMPANY?

A I don't. I don't.

Q SO IN THE '30s, WAS THERE A DEPRESSION ON IN GERMANY?

A Yes. Yes.

Q BUT YOUR FATHER MANAGED TO --

A He always worked. He always made a good living.

Q NOW, WHAT ABOUT YOUR --

(Whereupon the videographer interrupted the proceedings, and a break was taken.)

Q YOUR DAD, IN MAKING A GOOD LIVING EVEN THROUGH THE DEPRESSION, I WAS WONDERING ABOUT THEIR EDUCATION. YOUR PARENTS' EDUCATION.

A Yeah, my parents both came from Poland. My father probably was in Germany probably before -- certainly before World War I, I believe. I mean, went to Germany probably before World War I. His parents

also lived in Germany.

And then my father was married before he married my mother. So my oldest brother is really my half-brother. And his wife died in childbirth. And then he went back to Poland, and he knew, I think, my mother before and brought her to Germany. Literally smuggled her in, I was told, into Germany, I believe, in about 1917 or '18.

Q WHY DID HE HAVE TO SMUGGLE HER?

A She probably didn't have papers for her visas, you know.

And I think by marrying her, it legitimized her. Something of that nature.

Q SO THEY WERE EDUCATED?

A Not highly educated, no. I think my father was probably -- he was always a businessman. His mother had a store where she sold, I think -- she sold mostly kitchen ware. You know, dishes, crockery. And he would take that -- and at that time was still in horse and wagon -- to other towns and sell it. And maybe the time came when I think she might have given it up.

His father, my grandfather, whom I never knew -- I knew my grandmother only. I mean, I didn't really know her personally. I just knew of her. And

I was an infant when she died. And my grandfather supposedly was simply religious and spent his whole time with the Torah, the Talmud, studying. And so it was up to her to earn a living.

And my mother's family, I believe, well, they came from a town called (Jeromene). And there were a lot of children in her family, and she was the oldest. In other words, she had a lot of brothers and sisters. She was the oldest and was always in the position of having to take care of the children, the cousins, whoever was there. They would send the oldest daughter out to do that kind of thing. And so her ability of her education was, you know, probably maybe halfway through high school. And so when she met my father and was sent to Germany, was taken to Germany, she probably felt liberated. Number one, she was away from her family, where she had duties to observe, which she was not happy about, and had a totally different life of her own. They -- I mean, she learned German. She was fluent in German.

Spelling

Interestingly enough, both of them forgot Polish even though they probably grew up with it. The language that they did remember was Yiddish. And the only time when they would talk Yiddish to each other is when they didn't want the children to understand

what they were talking about. So it was German at home. And it was interestingly enough, when we came to this country, it was the same story. They wouldn't talk German anymore. They now talked English. And so that was the rule of the house.

Q TELL ME ABOUT FAMILY LIFE BEFORE HITLER AND IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. JEWISH LIFE, RELATIVES.

A Actually, where we lived, since we lived in Fulda, where I was born, my grandparents lived, and probably some aunts. When we left, obviously there was no -- in the town, Kassel, we had no family in Kassel. There was family -- there were cousins and aunts in Berlin. So we would visit them, probably, once a year, maybe.

And I don't remember -- and maybe some of the cousins would come to visit us maybe once in a great while.

Germany before -- before Hitler, life was -- I thought, was wonderful. I had an easy childhood. I don't recall any great, you know, rebellious times. I was too young for that. And I adored my parents and thought that, you know, that's how life was going to be from now on till the end. Of course, it changed irrevocably. It didn't take a long time for that to happen. And then, of course, things began to be a

little bit more anxiety-ridden at home.

Q ANY RELIGIOUS LIFE?

A Well, my parents did go to synagogue, and I had a religious fervor. I remember probably between 10 and 13 where I would insist on going to synagogue. In fact, my parents' home was kosher up until, probably, I might have been -- up until we moved to Czechoslovakia. Then my mother decided she didn't want to be bothered anymore. She probably did it simply not out of conviction but out of habit, that this is how she grew up and it was expected. But now there were no constraints on her. There was no family around. There were no mother-in-laws. So none of this she had to worry about. And she was very happy to let go of it. Of course, I gave her a hard time because I wanted her to, you know, change the dishes for Passover. And so she did it one year, and then the second year, I think maybe not.

But my religious fervor didn't -- you know, didn't last terribly long. Maybe a couple of years, where I would be part of the Shabbat, the Friday night congregation services. I would go to synagogue on Saturday. Even if the rest of family didn't go, I would go. And so it was very important to me.

And, of course, there was also the social

life part of the synagogue. The friends were there. And there were some activities around that young people had. I mean, some slight organization about -- nothing would compare to what you have today. I mean, nothing. But there was a little bit of -- certainly around the holidays, there were all kinds of things going on as part of the synagogue. And so I'd like to participate in that.

You know, at Hanukkah you would make the menorah. You would, you know, carve it or make it out of wood, and this kind of thing. And there were competitions around this sort of thing. That's about all.

And, of course, Hebrew school was part of it, too.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR RELIGIOUS TRAINING?

A Basically, it was conservative. And I learned some Hebrew. And it lost its -- once we came to this country, it lost its meaning, totally.

Q WHEN YOU WERE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HOW MANY YEARS WERE YOU THERE?

A Five.

Q AND DURING THAT TIME, WAS RELIGION AN INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE? WAS YOUR SCHOOL SECULAR?

A The school was secular, yes. And religion,

yes, was a part. It was -- I think it was a way of not only retaining identity, but understanding why one was separated from the rest. For instance, I would have -- in my school, they had religious class on Monday morning, maybe from 8 to 9 or something like that. And, obviously, I wouldn't go because I was a Jew, and they were not. And it was probably -- I believe it was probably a Protestant -- it was probably a Protestant teaching. And so when I arrived at 9:00, an hour later than the rest of them, the whole feeling, tone, of my so-called friends changed. Literally, I was not spoken to anymore for probably two days thereafter. This was -- it was so clear and it was so open that even the good friends that I had just would not sidle up to me. There would just be a difference. There would be a separation. There would be a shunning of me. And it was very apparent. So I was used to it, even though you don't really get used to it. You really feel extremely isolated. And it was very, very painful because I was the only Jew in the class throughout the entire five years.

And, of course, we had some rabid anti-Semites as teachers who -- and I still remember math. It's certainly not my neither favorite nor am I very talented in it, so -- and, of course, my anxiety

was so huge because -- and I would be called up to the board every time in math class by this particular teacher. And he wore a little swastika in his lapel, and he wore this gray uniform which designated him to be a Nazi. It wasn't exactly -- it was an accepted type of an outfit that a lot of the Germans there wore. It was gray, and it had green lapels, and it had a short jacket. And it was very -- very sporty. And it was just in between belonging to the party, but almost party. I'm talking about the Nazi party. And so he was very open about his pro-Nazi attitude.

And so he would put me at the board; and, of course, I was so anxiety-ridden that I never was able to answer the questions. I don't ever remember being able to. And I'd have a stomachache the whole day thereafter.

And so school was not -- at least with him was not -- was no fun. Some teachers were neutral, and some were not.

Q DID YOU HAVE GENTILE FRIENDS?

A Yeah. Only. I mean, I shouldn't say only. Since I was the only Jew in the class, and I didn't know any others -- maybe there was one or two other Jews in the school. And I was only -- so most of my friends were Gentile. And they were, of course, like

I told you, from Wednesday to Monday. Wednesday to Sunday. And then a couple of days not. So that was just the way it was.

I did have some Jewish friends in my neighborhood where I lived. There was one family, where we lived, closeby; and we were good friends with them. And so that took -- that usually was, you know, weekend friendships.

But I didn't consider it -- you know, I still felt very, very comfortable and happy and not -- I didn't think I was burdened by anything. I didn't feel that life was terribly difficult. I don't think I was aware of the overall picture of -- and perhaps nobody was -- of what was to come. And we were a little bit more shielded from what was happening in Germany. And my family didn't talk much about what was going on in Germany. And we didn't hear any stories. Maybe they shielded us; maybe they didn't talk about it; maybe they didn't want to know themselves. I don't know. I don't know.

We did have family in Berlin. Some of the cousins -- well, actually, everybody was still in Berlin by the time we left. And they only got out later. Some did not, obviously.

And the Polish family, I never knew. I

never met them. In other words, my father's brother had a large family. My mother's family, the one that she -- in other words, the one that she left with her brothers and -- she only had brothers. They went in 19 -- I think in 1923 they went to the United States. My maternal grandfather had come to the States in 1917 and then waited through the war and then some years later, I guess, to be able to bring the rest of the family over.

Q WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A Kiva, Kiva Dyvan. They spelled it D-y-v-a-n. Later, when they came to this country, they changed it to D-e-v-a-n.

Q TELL ME ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM. AND YOU TALKED A LITTLE ABOUT THE BROWN SHIRTS AND THE BLACK SHIRTS AND YOUR GENTILE FRIENDS.

A Um-hmm.

Q WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES WHEN GROWING UP, BEING AFRAID OF NAZIISM?

A Yes, I think I was quite -- I was quite afraid, but only after a certain period of time when I began to put things together.

For instance, one time we were still living in Kassel, in Germany. There were two brown shirts, Nazi uniforms, in brown uniforms. They're called the

SR.

Q WHICH STANDS FOR?

A That stands for -- well, originally they were called, of course, the Social Nazi -- Sozialnazi Arbeiterpartei. Yes, SNABP. They were -- meaning the National Socialist Workers' Party. And they -- and so they were -- the difference between -- they were -- the SR were the brown shirts, and the SS were the black shirts. The SS were like the -- they were the Gestapo. They were the -- also known as the Secret Police. And the SR were simply the lower echelon of people who could only enter the party through simply being members of the party and possibly working their way up. And they were, so to speak, the troops.

And I remember two men, young men, very young men -- they probably were no more than maybe 17 or 18 at the most -- who handed me a ticket. It was a railway ticket. And it said on it, "One-way ticket to Palestine." So I came home. I was thrilled. I was beyond myself with joy. I said, "Look, Mom, we have" -- you know, "We can go to Palestine on these tickets." And she didn't laugh, but she, you know, informed me what that meant. And so then I began to realize that this was a cruel joke.

Q WHAT DID SHE SAY?

A I believe -- she tried to explain that they really wanted us out of the country, and they really didn't -- Jews were really not wanted and that this was their way of telling us. And it was really not a railway ticket. It was really saying, "Get out of here, Jew."

I was maybe nine. Eight, nine. No, no, I was more. I was about -- must have been -- I must have been close to ten.

There were plenty of Nazis around before Hitler came in to power. I mean, they were parading, and they were marching, and they were showing banners, and they were flying flags, and they were singing, you know, horrible songs of Jewish blood is going to run from these sharp knifes. That was their anthem.

Q AT WHAT AGE DO YOU REMEMBER THAT? IT MUST HAVE BEEN FIRST GRADE.

A Yeah, I think I must have started hearing that about eight or so. Yeah.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT IT?

A Nothing. Nothing. I think I kept it to myself.

I remember living in -- we had a very nice apartment that overlooked a plaza, so to speak. And

on the plaza there was what is known as a kiosk. It's sort of a round structure. And around that were always these posters. And there were Nazi posters on there. Lots of Nazi posters. And I could see that from my room. With a swastika. And the swastika, of course, became, you know, a sign of fear, a sign of this strange new element that has now invaded this country, which I thought was a wonderful country, and is now telling us very openly that they're in power, they're in charge, they can do anything they want, and everybody is now subject to their will. That's probably what I read.

Q WERE YOU SCARED FOR YOUR LIFE? DID LIFE CHANGE?

A I wasn't really scared for my life, no. No.

Q AND WHAT ABOUT FAMILY LIFE IN TERMS OF RESTRICTIONS ON JEWS? YOU KNOW, BEING ABLE TO SHOP OR BE FREE TO --

A I remember we left early enough. The only thing that I do remember was that neighbors in the building where we lived were -- I think, became suddenly very overt about wanting us not there. I believe there was a dentist who had an office down below, and I think my father was a patient there, and

I believe he was told not to come back anymore, that he wasn't going to treat any Jews. Things of that kind.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A No, the only thing that was really, really vibrant in my imagery of the period is, like I told you, the parades. And there were quite a few. And they were like the whole class would have to go and stand, you know, mandatory at the curb, watching the parades. And it was very confusing to me because I didn't quite understand what they were about, where they were going, what did that mean. And everybody was cheering and, you know, doing the Hitler sign, making the Hitler sign, and clapping and screaming and "Heil Hitler", the whole bit. And I didn't know what I was doing there. And it was -- yeah, I was -- that was scary for me. And, of course, I felt very -- you know, very vulnerable.

Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WERE AFRAID OF OR WHY YOU WERE AFRAID?

A Oh, I just knew that they weren't welcome, and I knew that you would have to hide being a Jew.

I think that that you learn very early, that you don't openly say, "I'm a Jew." If somebody attacks you and -- or confronts you and says, "You're

a Jew," you're not going to deny it, but you're not going to say, you know, proudly, "Oh, I'm a Jew, and I'm proud of it." You're never going to do that. I think you learn that early on. I mean, you know, I probably wasn't more than a toddler when I learned that. You can see body language of people. And, of course, watching my parents, how they behaved. And the whole -- I think the whole idea about Jews in Germany, particularly -- you see, it was probably different for Polish Jews to try to assimilate. My parents certainly assimilated. They didn't even broadcast that they were Poles originally because German Jews looked down on Poles, too. So there was this no man's land. They wanted to be German Jews, but they weren't really German Jews. So you don't necessarily lie where you're from, but you don't necessarily offer the information.

Actually, what they did do was -- I think it must have been in the late '20s when they decided that they wanted to become German citizens. They still had Polish passports. And they made the application, and I believe they were turned down once; and they tried it again. And I think they were probably turned down again. And by this time, it was probably 1929 or maybe 1930. No, it must have been

maybe between '30 and '33. And so they decided not to try it again. And had they tried it, had they become German citizens, they would have become stateless by 1933. The moment Hitler came in, anybody who was not a German -- a born German citizen or a German citizen before World War I would have become stateless. When you're stateless, you don't have a passport. You can't get visas. You would have literally been caught.

So it was a tremendous blessing in disguise that they didn't get it. This way, we could get out on a Polish passport. In fact, we children carried Polish passports even though we were born in Germany. It's not like in this country. When you're born, you are the nationality of your parents.

Q SO WHEN YOU WENT TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, YOU WERE ON POLISH PASSPORTS.

A Um-hmm.

Q FOR FIVE YEARS.

A Right.

Q AND THEN DID YOU BECOME CZECH? WERE YOU --

A No, I didn't. I don't think my parents even tried. I don't know if they did, to tell you the truth.

Q HOW DID THEY ADJUST TO LIFE IN

CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

A I think quite well. They felt that now they were safe. And they felt that here was a possibility -- in fact, my father -- yeah, things began -- in the company my father worked for, this brush company in Nurnberg, I believe they probably dissolved the company or were taken -- were probably taken -- what am I talking about? They were probably taken over by the Nazis, probably, maybe in the late '30s. '37. Certainly by '38. So I think my father in probably 1935 or '34 -- he started his own company in Eger. And I think he had a partner. And he still traveled. By 19- -- it must have been '36 or '37, he went back to Germany on one of his many trips. He never had any problems before. This time when he came to the border, trying to get back in to Czechoslovakia, he was stopped by the border police, and they had told him to go into a room. They undressed him. They took his clothing. They kept him there for a whole day. And they confiscated his car. After the day was over, they said, okay, you can get dressed now, and you can go home; we're going to keep your car. So they did.

So that for him was the sign that this is the end. Number one, I can't go back to Germany

anymore. Otherwise, they were really -- I mean, there's no question they would, you know, arrest him the next time and keep him and send him God-knows-where. But because we had -- my family in the United States, uncles and -- uncles in particularly kept writing and saying, you have to come here. Because they read in the papers here how unsavory things were, how difficult they were, how dangerous it was, and that war was impending. Apparently, this is what they wrote to him.

So they sent my parents, I believe, a ticket to come to the United States. And they went there in 1937 as a visit. And they came back home -- they didn't take the children, us children; they just went by themselves. And when they came back home, they said, well, we're moving to the United States. We're going to try to get visas.

So my uncles provided -- and I think my father -- this is my mother's family. My father has a niece who was well-established in this country. I think she was a reporter for the American Express. A travel reporter.

Q WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A Her name was Ruth (Moscovitz).

Spelling

Q IN WHAT CITIES WERE YOUR RELATIVES ON BOTH

SIDES; DO YOU REMEMBER? IN THE STATES.

A In the States, yeah. They were all in New York. Brooklyn. Yeah. Actually, my -- the cousin that I mentioned was -- where had she lived? She lived in California. Yeah, she was the only one -- she and my father's sister, they lived all in California. One sister. Right.

Q WHAT WAS HER NAME?

A It will come to me in a minute. I never met her. I knew her two daughters. Three daughters. I knew her three daughters. What was her name? Yeah. Her Yiddish name was Fromut. Fromut, and they called her Fran. Francis, maybe. Something like that.

(Whereupon the videographer interrupted the proceedings, and a break was taken.)

Q OKAY. THIS IS TAPE 2 WITH BARBARA SHILO, ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2000.

BARBARA, YOU WERE TELLING ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IDENTITY AS A JEW AND WHAT MADE THAT A REALITY.

A Well, it was reinforced by the synagogues, by simply having services, by connection with a rabbi, by connection with whatever, you know, Hebrew school was offered. All of which I attended.

Certainly the holidays were very important. They were -- they were actually -- it was all very

joyful. And it was -- according to my memory, it was all a sense of things are fine; they're normal; there is nothing to be frantic about; whatever change is going to take place, we will, you know -- we, within this -- what should I call it? Within this community of souls, we are together; we will remain together; we will keep our faith; and we will keep our sense of being Jews in the same manner as we always have. Nothing is going to change that. Nobody on the outside can tell us that we're not clean people because we're Jews, or whatever they want to call us.

So it was an important -- it was an anchor.

Q NOW, WHEN YOU CAME TO AMERICA, HOW WAS THAT? DID THAT CHANGE?

A It changed totally. Totally. Number one, there wasn't the need. And I had an experience with my grandmother, my maternal grandmother, who I just met when I came here, who did not -- who spoke very little English. And, of course, I couldn't understand Yiddish because I spoke German. And she would say to me -- I wanted to go -- the first thing I wanted to do was the first Shabbat to go to the synagogue with her. And she said no. I said, "I can't understand. What do you mean, no?" She said, "Well, you won't like it." I said, "No way I'm not going to like it." So I

insisted on going. And I think these were the high holy days because we had come in September, and the high holy days were right after we arrived, shortly thereafter.

And I had to admit that she was right, because it was so different. The synagogue that they went to -- number one, my grandfather was orthodox. We were not. My parents were not. And so he was -- like it was, you know -- since the time that he arrived, there were all these little shuls, these little teeny synagogues, in different neighborhoods. They were nothing more than a store front with a long room with, you know, fold-up chairs to sit in with -- yes, they did have a Torah, but, yes, they were only, you know, old men -- anyway, that's how I saw them -- with beards, who, you know, did their schokln back and forth and back and forth, which was not my experience in Germany, nor from Czechoslovakia.

There, the synagogue was beautiful. It was a marvelous, magnificent building. You were surrounded by aesthetics. And there was a decorum. And it was totally different. The population was different. They talked differently. They acted differently. And it was -- for me, it was such a disappointment. And it was probably the last time I

went to synagogue.

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU?

A 15.

Q LET'S GO BACK. WE HAVEN'T LEFT CZECHOSLOVAKIA YET.

A Okay.

Q HOW DID YOUR PARENTS DISSOLVE THE PROPERTY? AND WAS THERE TROUBLE WITH THAT?

A Well, it took us quite a -- what they did was, I believe it was like -- by now, I think everybody was aware -- the beginning of 1938, there was tremendous awareness that something very, very radical was going to happen. I mean, he walked into Austria; and he was going to walk into -- nobody had the notion that he wasn't going to continue on. Everybody seemed to know that, yeah, this was dangerous.

And so I think it was probably the beginning of the spring of '38 when my parents were very serious about a visa, had been -- all the papers had been done for the visa, and they started going to the consuls, and they began to pack up.

My mother would pack up, and they ordered what is known as a lift, which is a large container-type of a thing made out of wood. And

she packed whatever she could.

Not only did they do that, but they also bought crystal, Czech crystal, which was highly desired in the United States and could be sold here. So they bought a whole -- a whole slew of that. They bought -- apparently my relatives in this country told them what they thought they would like to have from Europe. They wanted quilts, down quilts. So she brought that. Things of that nature. And I think also -- you know, things of that kind.

So they were very just matter-of-fact about packing up their things, ordered the lift, the furniture and books and, you know, clothing, and linens and household ware, and all that was packed up and sent. And you crossed your fingers that it would arrive. We had heard stories that other friends had done the same thing, and their lifts had been broken into or never got there or were diverted to other countries and so on and on. We were extremely fortunate they arrived all intact. Nothing had happened to anything.

And after everything had been packed and sent away, we moved to Prague and lived there for the next, probably, five or six months.

Q WHY?

A We didn't have a visa yet. We were waiting for a visa, so every day was a trip to the consul and stand in line for hours all day.

By now a lot of people were doing the same thing. Consul offices were notoriously filled. I'm sure you've seen pictures of that. And the American State Department was not very favorable towards immigration, so whatever they could do to -- not to hasten your departure, they did. Any kind of -- any kind of deterrent that they could think of they would use, such as if you had a boil or, you know, even a slight infection or a slight -- a wart or something that they thought could be dangerous, they would examine it; they would make you come back to the doctor three or four times; and they would simply not be very helpful.

Q WHAT WERE THE MONTHS THAT YOU WERE IN PRAGUE LIKE?

A We didn't go to school. It wasn't possible. We didn't have an address, so to speak. We simply rented two rooms in one of the apartments that people rented rooms at. And apparently there were lots of places where you could do that. And it was early enough so it was still very reasonable. In other words, reasonable in terms of accommodation. It

wasn't too bad.

We went out to restaurants a lot, obviously, because there was no way you could cook. Or you could possibly, you know, make some sandwiches, which we did; but you couldn't do any kind of cooking there. They wouldn't permit it.

And we did also go -- we spent some time in Brussels. Maybe a month or two, two months, probably, in Brussels for the same reasons, trying to get the visa.

So there was still difficulty.

The other thing my -- friends of my parents, their two daughters, whom I was friends with, they were able to get visas because they were children, and there was a -- there was a protocol about them being able to leave. The parents could not leave. So they asked my parents to take the children, their children, with us to the States, which meant that if anything was wrong with either one of those children, my mother would be sent back with them to Europe. And at the time, I'm not sure how much aware they were of that situation. They probably were. And so we, you know, kept our fingers crossed.

Actually, my brother had a problem. I forgot what it was. I think he had an eye -- a sty on

the eye. And luckily that cleared up before the end. But the doctor told him that if it didn't clear up, he wasn't to go.

So he was -- we were living in a sense of anxiety from day to day. You know, was it going to happen; were you going to be able to get out.

I still remember, though, you know, being able to look at Prague with a sense of, you know, curiosity and great desire to see everything. And we tried to, you know, see what we could.

Q SO, BARBARA, THE VISAS CAME THROUGH IN BRUSSELS? HOW DOES THAT WORK? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A No, I think they might have come through in Prague, and I think we had to wait for a ship. We got a ship in -- actually, in September of '38, which was the last time that this ship went. It was the Normandy, and it became a war ship after that. I think a war transport, a soldier transport ship. I don't know why. I don't know why.

Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE LEAVING, FIRST LEAVING CZECHOSLOVAKIA THEN LEAVING EUROPE? DID YOU HAVE ANY FEARS?

A Oh, I had a tremendous sense of sadness and tremendous sense of loss. I didn't want to leave Europe. I didn't want -- did not care to go to the

United States. Don't ask me why. I don't know. I don't know. I should have been joyful and happy and excited and, you know, totally thrilled that I could go. I probably had no idea at the time of -- I probably sensed that there was no way you could stay. And maybe that was the whole notion. I didn't even think about going -- going to another country. I only thought about leaving what I knew, what I liked, and what I enjoyed, and what was part of, you know, my upbringing.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS; WERE THEY DISTURBED?

A Oh, sure. Yeah. Yeah, of course. Number one, you know, you have to start a new life. You have a family. Tremendous responsibility. My parents did not -- were not able to take much money with them. They were able to -- I don't even know if -- I don't even think that they were able to sell the business. There was nobody to sell it to. Nobody would buy a business from Jews. Ridiculous. Even in -- I mean, even in Czechoslovakia. Because everybody knew that it was going to be taken over in no time. And so I think they left with literally, I mean, just enough to get over there and hopefully enough maybe to live for a couple of months. And that was about it.

Anyway, that's as much as I knew.

Q SO IT WAS YOU, YOUR TWO BROTHERS, YOUR --

A No, actually, my older brother was sent to Palestine. So it was just my brother and I. And he was in an agricultural school in Palestine. I think he went there in '36. And he was going to -- supposedly going to stay there.

Q AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

A He, I think, by '39 or '40 -- by probably '39 or '40, he came to the States. He didn't want to stay in Palestine.

Q SO YOU GOT ON THE SHIP?

A Um-hmm.

Q OUT OF BRUSSELS?

A No, out of Le Havre.

Q OUT OF LE HAVRE. AND YOU LEFT LE HAVRE ON THE NORMANDY.

NOW, WHAT WAS THE SHIP LIKE? TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

A That was an interesting ship because --

Q I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU.

A Go ahead. Sure.

Q IF YOU COULD GIVE ME THE DATE, OR CLOSE.

A Well, it was probably -- it could have been September the 15th. Around that. 1938. Because I

would assume that it would have taken probably a minimum of five days to cross. Maybe six. And so maybe it was the 16th, because we did arrive on the 21st.

The ship was interesting because it had -- I don't know what the numbers were, but it had returnees from the Spanish Civil War, Americans who were probably in the American -- in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. And they were young guys. Some of them hurt, some of them injured. Maybe most of them injured. I don't know.

And they were -- what I understood, when we arrived in the United States, and a little bit from what they said -- and, you know, I didn't have much contact with them, but I was able to observe them -- was that they were put in a -- I think they were put into isolation. They were kept separate. They were not allowed to leave the ship and get on -- you know, get on board -- get on land. And I don't know if they were totally quarantined, but certainly were kept for a period of time. And they were probably investigated by the Justice Department. They were all assumed to be Communists. And, obviously, Communists in 1938 were an unholy lot and not to be wanted in the United States. And, of course, maybe even considered

traitors for an American to go to Europe to fight as a Communist in an unholy war. So -- yeah.

Q YOU WERE ALL REFUGEES.

A Yes. Yes. So I felt a tremendous sadness for them because they had, you know, fought the good fight and lost. And that, of course, was the beginning of the war, the very fact that they'd lost. And the United States didn't help their republicans in Spain.

Q DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT YOU WERE ALSO A REFUGEE?

A I was told I was. I was told I was. And, yes, we knew we were refugees, yeah.

Q CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE 15 AND A REFUGEE?

A That's a great question.

Well, you were suddenly given a new status. I didn't think it applied -- I mean, I knew it was the facts but didn't think it said anything about me. I simply knew that this was a fact of life, that now we were refugees from having once, you know, lived a different kind of a life. So this was like an unknown territory. I think that's probably how I looked at it. I didn't know what was to come.

Q AND PERSONALLY HOW DID IT AFFECT YOU? HOW

DID YOU FEEL? FEAR?

A Not -- maybe not fear, but confused and not -- it certainly was not -- it wasn't -- it certainly wasn't ego-building; nor was it a sense of -- a tremendous sense of self about that. I think it was a bit of a -- it was a tag now. It was a -- you were tagged now. You were maybe in a sense marginalized. This was now a new population coming, or a new population that was now -- had formed, who suddenly became refugees, who were not that before, who suddenly because of circumstances became refugees. And as a refugee, you don't have the rights as a citizen has. You can't claim anything. You have to sort of wait in the shadows or in the wings for somebody to make a space for you.

Q HAS THAT SENSE FOLLOWED YOU?

A It probably did for many years. Yeah. I think so. Certainly through the war years. Definitely. And in school they pointed out -- there was one other child who was a -- also a refugee. And they pointed us out. They didn't do it in a negative way. They thought this was fine. You know, this was something curious, a new curiosity on the books. And they didn't quite know how to treat us, so they treated us in the beginning very carefully and very

gently. In school. I'm talking about primarily in school.

Q WAS IT HARD TO LEAVE FRIENDS OR RELATIVES?

A Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yeah. I had a couple of very good friends whom I had a hard time leaving; and, you know, I've never been able to find them. I do know of one friend that went to England, but I've never been able to find her again.

Q DO YOU KNOW THEIR NAMES?

A Yeah, one I remember very much is Brigitta Stross. We were very good friends.

Q S-T-R-A-U --

A S-t-r-o-s-s. And I believe that when they came to England, they converted. They were an extremely wealthy family who lived outside of Eger in a -- well, they had -- they literally owned the town. They were textile manufacturers. And so they had the ability to leave. They left about the same time we did, I think. But I think they probably lost everything.

Q AND THE SECOND PERSON?

A The second one was a -- was a Christian girlfriend, and I don't know what happened to her.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT SHE WAS CALLED?

A No, I don't. I don't remember. I remember

her face and everything else about her.

Q I'M SURE.

A Yeah.

Q WHAT WAS THE SHIP LIKE? AND WAS IT AN AMERICAN SHIP?

A It was an American ship, yes.

Q SO WHAT HAPPENED IN AMERICA THAT --

A No, wait a minute. No. Normandy, it must have been a French ship. I think it was a French ship that stayed in the United States. It was a French ship.

Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE ON BOARD A SHIP?

A It was fun. It was fun. I think it was the only -- it was like suddenly a relief, you know. It was all play. There was no danger anywhere. We were out in the open sea. Nobody could attack you; or, you know, you weren't fearful of anything. Everything was behind us. Everything else was in front of us. So this was party time. I mean, it was a joyful time. Yeah. I remember that.

Q AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

A They were probably a little bit more somber than we were, I would assume, because, you know, there was -- looming in front of them was the new life, which they really didn't know how they were going to

manage. But my father was an extremely resilient man who -- he already made three life changes. You know. From Poland to Germany, from Germany to Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia here. So --

Q WHAT YEAR WAS HE BORN?

A He was born in 189' -- '91? 1891. Yeah.

Q AND YOUR MOM?

A My mom was born in 1899.

Q SO THEY -- YOU ARRIVED?

A My God, she would have been a hundred years old. I can't imagine.

Q WHAT WERE THEIR BIRTH DATES? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A Oh, yeah. My father was May the 29th, 1891. My mother was December the 15th, 1899. The only thing is, she claimed she didn't know when she was born exactly. She only knew that there was snow on the ground. So we decided to give her December the 15th. She would always say, oh, it's -- it's sometime when it was very, very cold, and there was snow; so it's December, you know. So we said, okay, middle of December. Because we wanted to know when should we give her a birthday present. And God knows she probably had -- on her papers she probably gave different dates, you know.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING, ANY EVENT, ON THE SHIP, GOOD OR BAD OR --

A No. The only thing, as I mentioned before, was simply the awareness of these soldiers, of these men who -- these volunteers, who took -- who literally took their lives in their hands, went to Spain to fight for a worthy cause -- I mean anti-fascism -- and were then -- came here and were going to be, you know, marginalized and isolated and frowned upon and maybe even put in jail, all of which was possible, that they would have been put in jail.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU WHEN YOU GOT OFF THE BOAT?

A We arrived in the middle of a hurricane. That was the only thing that was exciting about it. Of course, the ship was, you know, shaking and moving and was very much -- we were very much aware that it was pretty rocky. And the ship had a hard time anchoring because of the hurricane. They just couldn't -- I think -- eventually they did after many, many hours. By now it was like, probably -- I mean, really late, 10, 11, 12:00 at night. And my father's niece, my cousin, was waiting for us. My uncle, whom I'd never met, my mother's brother, was waiting for us. And they came to the ship, and it was

very difficult for them to come because of the hurricane. I mean, trees had blown down, and it was really -- it was a bad one. It was a really bad one.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE DATE AND WHERE IT ANCHORED?

A It anchored in New York Harbor. Yeah, the date was September 21.

Q 19 --

A 1938. Yeah. And we were -- because of the hurricane and because my cousin brought the manager or the director of the American Express Company, they were able to simply get us off the ship very quickly, and we didn't have to go through all of the bureaucratic, you know, lineups that you usually go through.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION, BESIDES BEING TIRED?

A Well, I remember the wild car ride in -- I think it was probably in my uncle's car, going back, because we had to circumvent blown-down trees and power lines and detours and flooded streets, because we went from there to Brooklyn, which was probably a two-hour ride with this detouring. And -- maybe it wasn't that late, but it seemed late.

And when we arrived at my grandmother's

house, there were all these people whom I'd never seen before, and they were all, you know, American Jews. All had come from Poland. And they were relatives of relatives. None of them looked interesting to me. I didn't want to know anybody. And they looked at us and called us, of course -- they called us by the Yiddish name called -- they said ("grina"), meaning "the green ones". It means you don't have any experience; you're new; and we'll teach you how life is.

Spelling

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY SENSE AT THE TIME OF CONFIDENCE IN THESE PEOPLE?

A No. No. No, I knew -- I knew I didn't want to live their life. I didn't want to be like them, and I didn't want to live a life that they lived. That was not -- was totally uninteresting to me.

Q BECAUSE?

A Well, I guess I was a -- I guess by now I was a German Jew snob.

Q WAS IT THEY WERE ORTHODOX?

A Well, they weren't even orthodox. Well, my grandfather, but they were -- they weren't even orthodox. It was just a total culture shock coming from a country where the aesthetics were high, coming

to an area where the aesthetics were second-rate. And everything about dress, you know, the apartment, how it was laid out, the furniture, all of that, was -- wasn't just up to par.

Q UP TO PAR.

A (Laughter.)

Sorry about that.

Q SO WHERE DID YOU END UP LIVING?

A Well, we lived probably for maybe a couple weeks in my grandmother's apartment, which was kind of small. And I lived -- I probably slept on a cot. You know. In probably a living room or somewheres. It was not a fancy apartment. My grandfather was a hard-working -- at that time he still worked. He was a presser. He worked on the press, meaning he -- you know, an ironing board where you press. Extremely hot. In the summertime it must have been unbearable. And I don't know what age he would have been then. He probably was in the early sixties maybe by then. Maybe, maybe not. No, he couldn't have been. Certainly in the late fifties. No, he must have been more than that because my parents must have been forties. Maybe not my mother. My father was. I think my father was middle forties. Okay. He died in '76, so he would have been -- I'm just -- I'm just

trying to figure out what age my grandfather might have been.

He must have been -- he must have been in the early sixties. Yeah.

Q AND HE GOT THE VISAS?

A Well, my grandfather didn't. My uncle did. His son. See, he remained -- my grandfather remained the way he had always been. He started -- he came here as -- probably started as a presser and remained a presser throughout his life. That was totally unimportant to him. All he was interested in was finishing his work, eating his food, and doing -- and going to study the Mishnah or the Talmud. That's all he cared about. And that was his main life. And life on this earth wasn't important. It was the afterlife that was important.

Q WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME?

A Kiva, K-i-v-a, Dyvan.

Q AND HE CAME WHEN?

A He came probably in 1917, I think.

Q WHY?

A Well, probably for religious persecution and for economic -- for economic reasons, yeah.

Many small towns were very, very poor, where if you -- you know, you have a little business of your

own, you could do a little agriculture, or you could maybe sell chickens or whatnot, or have a craft -- if you had a craft, it was maybe a little bit better. But then the population that you sold it to were the other Jews. You didn't -- see, in Poland, the Poles didn't really permit Jews to go into the city to sell their wares. They were marginalized. They were isolated. They were ghettoized.

Q WHAT TOWN DID HE COME FROM?

A He came from -- I believe he came from (Jeromene). That's the only name that I know. I've never been to Poland.

Spelling

Q SO YOU WERE LIVING AT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S?

A We were living at -- right.

Q THEN WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

A Well, then my parents rented an apartment not that far from there, which was much nicer. My mother had a tremendous sense of aesthetics and immediately organized it, you know, the way she understood. And so it felt more like home. And we had the furniture, and we had all of that. So, therefore, it became a very quick adaptation to a life that was do-able. And I went to school almost immediately.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR LANGUAGE?

A Well, I knew English. We had all taken English lessons. Separately, as an afterschool -- English and French we learned. So that was -- my parents were very insistent, of course, on education. And so I knew enough English; I didn't have any problems.

Q YOU HAD FRIENDS?

A No, I didn't have any. I didn't have any. I didn't know anybody here.

I went to high school. And I got into an advanced class because probably the schooling that I had was better than was here. And I stayed marginalized in school.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THE ADDRESS YOU LIVED OR THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL?

A Well, the first address was Third Street in Brooklyn. And it was in -- no, it wasn't Borough Park. It was in the Prospect Park area.

And the second address was Seventh Street, which was also Prospect Park, but it was really a better neighborhood.

And I walked to school.

Q WAS IT A JEWISH SCHOOL?

A Public school. Public high school, yeah.

Q SO IT WAS BROOKLYN PUBLIC?

A Yeah, Abraham Lincoln High School.

Q AND THEN WHAT GRADES WERE YOU THERE?

A Oh, God. Okay. It was probably 10th, 11th, and 12th.

Q AND WHAT ABOUT CULTURE SHOCK?

A Constant. Constant. Well, Brooklyn was my least favorite place. I could not identify -- the only thing I liked about Brooklyn was the -- Prospect Park, which was a beautiful park. Do you know Brooklyn?

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Okay. And Brooklyn Museum. The concerts and the Brooklyn Museum. That kind of life that I liked.

The high school was okay. So it was fine.

Q WERE THERE OTHER REFUGEE CHILDREN THERE?

A Only one other in my school. And a lot of -- there were quite a number of Jewish children there. Brooklyn, obviously, has a lot of Jewish children. A lot of Jewish people I mean.

Q WHAT ABOUT JEWISH COMMUNITY?

A My parents didn't join anything. They never went to synagogue again. The earliest my father went -- my parents went to synagogue was probably maybe 20 years later.

Q AND WHAT ABOUT HIS WORK? WHAT DID HE DO?

A Well, my father started immediately a -- I mean immediately -- a company. What he did was -- he started his own work. What he did was he bought -- he went someplace; he found where to buy -- he went to a distributor, I assume, and he bought paint brushes. And he started to sell paint brushes. Now, mind you, this is still depression time in the United States. And I think with the money that he had left, he managed to buy himself a car. I don't know how he passed a driver's license. I mean, he obviously did. His English was fair. Fair. He learned very quickly. And he started traveling. He started selling brushes. And he traveled around the vicinity of New York. You know, Long Island. You know, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and New Jersey. He learned how to get around. It was remarkable. He was a real survivor.

And so he would bring these brushes home. He'd bring the orders home, and then he'd bring the brushes home, and then we children would many times be asked to take the brushes and to deliver them to the paint stores. So we'd have to learn how to get about on the subway. And that part was interesting.

Q DID YOU GO WITH YOUR BROTHERS?

A No, every -- I don't remember going with my brothers. You know, I didn't really grow up a lot with them. Very little. It's interesting, for somehow, early on, we each had different friends, and they, of course, were very -- I mean, my middle brother particularly was very much in the sense of you-don't-play-with-girls kind of story. So he didn't play with me very much.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOM?

(Whereupon the videographer interrupted the proceedings, and a break was taken.)

(Begin Tape B.)

Q WE WERE TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL.

A Yeah, that was my only outlet, really. It was very important to me.

I began running. Interesting, the coach I had was -- running was not part -- track was not part of the school. Basketball was. So I played basketball. And so I had to have an outside coach. And the coach was German-American. Organization. And so I would go over to his place. I only remember it as being a hole in the wall, literally. It wasn't even a garage. It was just some darkened place where he had like a large barrel that was heated water, where you would put your legs into it. And then he

would massage them. And any time we had any problems with them, that's what would happen. And he would just -- he was a minimal -- minimal trainer. I was not his favorite person on the team because he was a German-American.

Q WAS THAT DIFFICULT?

A It wasn't easy because I understood that he was not very comfortable with me. But, then again, Claire Isaacson was also Jewish. Actually, she was a Jew but knew nothing about Judaism. And her parents, also. It was like -- it was nonexistent. They just knew that they were born Jewish, and that was about it. And so we would simply go to -- you know, travel to different meets. And the one time -- the very last time that I would do this was when there was a meet that was held in Rikers Island in New York. And the strangest part was that they allowed -- well, they had Germans who were competing and -- because this was the German-Americans, and they invited Germans to come up, to compete. And they flew the Nazi flag. And I could not believe this. So I -- I simply -- I wouldn't run. That was the last time I ran. So I walked away from it. I walked away from it. I just couldn't do it.

Q WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A I think it must have been -- it must have been '40. It must have been '40.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A In the United States?

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Well, I was -- I read something in the papers. My family from time to time would say something, but just -- they would only say about they hadn't heard -- hadn't got any letters from my father's brother, so they weren't sure what was going -- what was happening there. They didn't really know. They had very little contact. I was told that some of my cousins had gone to Palestine and were okay there. And that's about all I knew, other than, of course, you know, you would read in the paper what was happening. Not on the front page, but it was certainly in the paper.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A I think I was -- I don't think I really -- it didn't really sink in. It didn't really penetrate. I don't think I allowed it to. I still remember a sense of numbness about the whole thing, in a sense of this is like a dream, like a nightmare, that is happening somewhere else that I didn't really want to know about.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A I think there was very little of that. It was almost like -- it was like the kind of secrets that the Germans kept, where in German families they don't talk about the past. It was the same kind of thing because I think the guilt of a survivor is so overwhelming that you don't dare dwell on the reality. Because I'm sure that my parents knew that his brother and the families weren't going to be able to get out. And I think he had another sister who, too, wasn't able to get out. Or, actually, she might have been able to get out, but none of -- they didn't believe that it was going to be so bad. That particular sister, I think, lived in Brussels. Another one -- no, I think that was only one left. Two of them were in this country. No, another one had already died. And other cousins had gone to -- we knew that other cousins had gone to Cuba, and others had managed to get to Palestine. And then I think my father did find out that his brother and the family, and his family, five children -- they had nine; four of them had gone to Palestine. One of them, I think, was caught behind the Iron Curtain. And the rest of them all were killed.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A No. Nothing. Nothing.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Yeah, I think so. I think they -- well, you also have to remember something else. And that is the survival mode is so overwhelming that the concentration is on how do we survive, you know, here. And the adjustment and the adaptation to a new culture, new language, whole new way of life, was so -- took all of the energy that there probably wasn't that much left for anything else. And maybe that came later when they were already quite comfortable. And by this time I think there was a lot kept to themselves.

Also, it was a generation that didn't talk about their feelings.

Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU TO BE IN A NEW COUNTRY?

A I didn't feel a sense of, well, here's a new country and what am I -- you know, and I can do some wonderful things here. I didn't feel that. I think I began to go a little bit numb and not know exactly how to deal with my feelings. And my feelings were rather directed towards how can I do what I want to do and get my parents to agree to it. You know, like a teenager. Because by now their restrictions

got to be very difficult. They now concentrated on their anxiety about the children, rather than, you know -- you focus on something else when you're deeply moved by something. You try not to deal with that, but you deal instead with something else. So they became very restrictive about me. In other words, you can't go here; you can't go there; you can't do this; you can't do that. And it got to be very difficult for me.

Q WHAT DID YOU DO?

A Well, I just rebelled. You know, I -- I would just disobey. That's all. My father would get very, very upset. Very upset.

Q YOU WOULD JUST DISOBEY?

A Oh, yeah. A lot.

Q IN WHAT WAY?

A Well, I got to be very political. That was my only way of -- of dealing with something. And so my politics were totally against my father's politics. I got to be very leftist. I did nothing but made marks and angles. I joined the American Student Union, and actually had it in school even. Mind you, in school I ran into difficulty because I was a member of the American Student Union, which at that time was a leftist organization, somewhat left. And they --

they simply took away some prizes because I refused to go to some dean's tea or something because they -- another member of the student union wasn't allowed to go, so I -- you know, I protested for the same reason. So they said, okay, you just don't get -- you don't get the award that you're supposed to get. That's all.

So it was -- you know, so I realize that I couldn't deal with authority.

Q DO YOU THINK THE WAR AFFECTED YOU?

A Sure it did. Sure it did. Both my brothers volunteered for the Army very quickly. And I tried to volunteer for -- I think it was the WACs, and they wouldn't take me because you had to be a citizen, and I wasn't a citizen. So that made me -- you know, again, it was another way of saying you don't belong. You just don't belong. And there was no place where I belonged, to me, you know. I wanted to be political, and that wasn't cool, not accepted. So I just kind of went my own way.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR OWN WAY? HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

A Well, I would go to groups that expressed the sympathies that I had, which were more left than

certainly my family. My family were very much middle-of-the-roaders. And also, of course, you know, my family thought that adaptation was important, so you don't make any waves. You don't belong to leftist organizations because it's just not done. And there wasn't, you know -- and my father forgot what it's like to be young because he belonged himself to leftist organizations when he was young in Poland. And he forgot that.

So that was kind of my way. And I met writers and poets and musicians, and so this is what got to be my direction.

Q AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

A After school?

Q YES.

A I had friends on the side, and I would try to simply express myself by simply exposing myself to more artistic things, you know, endeavors. Music and art and so on. And right after high school I went to college.

Q WHERE?

A First I went to Hunter. For two years. And then I went to NYU.

Q AND WHAT WAS YOUR EMPHASIS?

A I really wanted to -- I wanted to do -- I

actually -- foolishly enough, I started to take -- my first major was in -- was a science major because I wanted to do pre-med. But I wasn't cut out for that at all. I couldn't even pass the courses. So I immediately switched over to some -- you know, to liberal arts. And my major was psychology and art.

Q WHAT ABOUT CITIZENSHIP?

A Yeah, I became a citizen. But, actually, I -- my parents became citizens way before I did. I waited. I think I -- I think I really didn't want to adapt, and becoming a citizen would really mean, you know, that you're really saying, okay, this is my country. And it took me -- I think I must have been 24 before I became a citizen. And I could have been probably by the time I was 20.

Q TELL ME ABOUT YOUR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE. DID YOU MARRY?

A Yeah. Actually, I got married before I finished school. And I was married for one year. And I was only married because my parents insisted I get married.

Q WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A His name was Tom. He was the son of probably the best-known montage artist. His name was Hartfield. His name was John Hartfield. Actually,

Hatsfield was his real name. He moved to England, and he changed it to Hartfield. And when he was in Germany -- I think he didn't leave Germany until the late -- mid-thirties. Maybe the mid-thirties. He made incredible posters that were the most expresssive symbolically and factually in every way of -- you know, for anti-Nazism, anti-fascism. These were well-known.

Actually, there was an exhibit here in San Francisco just about maybe seven, eight years ago of his work. And he continued doing that for quite some time in England.

And so, yeah. And the only reason I married him was because my parents literally -- I was living in a little apartment by myself, and he and I shared the apartment. You know. And marriage was really not of great interest. What for? But I had to -- you know, I didn't have enough money to pay it by myself, so we shared the apartment. He was a printer at the time, so he earned a living, and I had marginal income from, you know, tutoring and things like that. I was still going to school. And so they came and they said, well, if you want to live here, you have to get married. So they brought the rabbi, and they said, get married. So I got married. A year later I said,

I can't be married. And it was very hard to divorce him because I felt terrible. I felt -- you know, I felt I was betraying him because he was now -- he was now a soldier, and it was still war time. And it was '42, '43. And I also felt that -- what if he came back and he was wounded? I'd have to stay with him for the rest of my life. I couldn't do that. So, yeah, it was my very big betrayal.

Q YOU WERE HONEST.

A Yeah. I didn't tell him why I'm divorcing him. I just told him I can't stay married, that that was uppermost in my mind.

Q WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

A After that I just continued with school, my friends. I moved around. My parents kept pressuring me about settling down. I became literally their focus. My father by now had a business of his own. He had two partners. Business was doing well. It was war time. They had -- again, it was a brush business. But not paint brushes. It was artist brushes. Sign brushes, artist brushes. And it did marvelous; it was a great business. I mean, he did great work to develop it and to build it and develop wonderful products, great products. And --

Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE BUSINESS?

A Delta. Delta Brush Company. It was in existence -- it's still -- I don't know if they kept the name. It was sold about a year after my father died.

Okay. What was I about to say?

Yeah, and so they kept pressuring me about, you know, settling down, settling down. And I had met -- I had a good friend who was a -- she was a doctor at -- she was an intern at -- no, she wasn't. She was a resident. At one of the hospitals nearby. I lived in Manhattan. And she was a resident at -- God, I forget the name of the hospital. It was a well-known hospital, university hospital. And she also became my roommate. I rented her a room in my little apartment. I had to make a living. And so she brought this man, and I met him, and we kind of -- I kind of was interested in him, but not enough. But my parents pressured me, and I eventually ended up marrying him. And he's the father of my children.

Q HIS NAME?

A His name is Michael Monchek.

Q MONCHEK?

A Monchek, yes. My children's name is Monchek.

Q SPELL IT, PLEASE.

A M-o-n-c-h-e-k.

Q AND YOU HAD TWO CHILDREN?

A Two sons.

Q AND WHAT ARE THEIR AGES AND --

A Their ages are -- Mark is the oldest. And he was born in '53. And so now he's 45. He'll be 45 this year. Is that right? No. 47. I can't believe this.

And the younger one is Peter. And he was born in '57. So he will be -- he was 44 this year. Am I right?

Q 43 MAYBE?

A Yes, 43. Thank you.

This is emotionally too much, to realize the ages of one's children.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND HAVING A FAMILY? HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCES OF THE WAR, EVERYTHING, DETERMINE HOW YOU RAISED THEM? DID IT INFLUENCE HOW YOU RAISED THEM? WOULD YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT?

A Yes. Definitely. Definitely. I taught them about prejudice. I taught them about equality. I taught them about, you know, there were no racial differences other than what's in our minds. I taught them about values.

Q DOES THE WAR AFFECT YOU TODAY?

A You mean World War II? I'm sure, yes. Of course. Of course. Absolutely.

Q HOW?

A How? When you think about a generation that had to go through this total upheaval of lives, they were so -- not only uprooted but, of course, you know, six million-plus, and then there are the others, 20 million Russians, Soviets, it's -- it's -- it's not to be believed that in our lifetime there was such a killing field and that so few people managed to totally enslave so many and that the world stood by and did nothing. Nothing. And the most horrendous part was that after the war was over, the DPs, the displaced people, the survivors of this horrendous, you know -- what shall I call it? A rampage, a bloodletting. They were the ones that still suffered. It took five years for people to be repatriated. The ones who were best off were those who could go back to their countries. The Jews were the last because they had lost a place to be. I mean, if you were a German Jew, would you want to go back to Germany? Not only that, but you wouldn't be welcomed there, either. If you were a Polish Jew, would you want to go back to Poland? Many Poles did, but they were only -- they

were not welcomed there, either. There were stories of Polish Jews who were literally run out of town the moment they arrived because they wanted their property back and nobody wanted -- you know, no more Jews; we're happy without Jews.

So, yeah, no, it's -- it's in me. There's no way I can ever let go of it. I mean, I don't obsess about it. But I think that the lessons, if there are lessons, is that we are capable of such horrendous things.

Q HOW DOES THAT THEN FORM YOUR EVERY MOVE TODAY?

A Well, it makes me totally, totally appreciative and grateful for the peace that I do have and for the ability to live fairly secure and -- life with my own -- with -- how I want to live it. I have the opportunity to live how I want to live my life. Which is a total gift. And I thank the cosmic forces, the gods, whatever, every day of my life for this.

Q HOW DOES THAT FEELING COME OUT?

A Well, it heals my soul. It allows me to breathe. It allows me to be creative. It allows me to be who I think I'm meant to be.

Q CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT MORE -- BACK TO THE CHILDREN -- JUST A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY TO GET SOME

FACTS OF WHERE THEY WERE BORN AT, WHERE YOU HAD THEM?

A Okay. Mark was born in Queens. And Peter was born in Queens. Both. And we lived in Queens until Peter was six, which was 1962. And then we moved to northern Westchester County.

Q WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE HOSPITAL THEY WERE BORN AT?

A Queens General Hospital.

Q AND YOUR HUSBAND WAS --

A He was a doctor. He started off as a general practitioner and became a psychoanalyst.

Q AND THIS TOOK HIM TO WESTCHESTER, OR --

A No, I simply wanted to move. One of the things was that he had his practice in -- his office in the same house where we lived. And the children were still young enough to be, you know -- I mean, the office, even though it was soundproofed, really wasn't soundproof.

Q WHAT WAS THE ADDRESS?

A The address was a hundred -- Jewel Avenue, Queens. And it was a very nice house, very livable. And, in fact, Mark, my oldest son, loved it because the school was down the block. There were probably five boys exactly his age on the same block. They all went to the same school. They all went to the --

started kindergarten together. And when I moved there, he was probably nine, going on ten. And I think it broke his heart. And I didn't realize it. I thought moving to the country, bringing up children in the country, is a wonderful thing. We can learn about nature. We can, you know, appreciate all that nature has to offer us and so on. He didn't want to hear about any of that. I took him away from his friends, and I took him away from his own ability; he could walk to school; he could walk to his friends' house; and he was mobile. Now here he was dependent on me taking him places, because it was also a similar situation about -- you know, in order to get him to his friends, I'd have to drive him for five minutes, seven minutes on country roads.

Q WHAT CITY WAS IT?

A Pound Ridge.

Q AND WERE YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR HUSBAND INTERESTED AT ALL ABOUT THE WAR? (INAUDIBLE.)

A I tried to talk to them about it. I'm not sure how big the interest was at that time. It was not an issue for anybody. Including anti-Semitism was not an issue. Neither one of my boys ever complained about it. They say that they have had next to no experiences of anti-Semitism, which is remarkable,

even today. I don't know why that is. Just maybe they were very fortunate.

Q I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT CITIZENSHIP. (INAUDIBLE.)

A Once I became a citizen? Possibly I probably became more resigned to the fact that, yes, I was an American finally. And now I'm happy to be an American.

Q HAVE YOU BEEN BACK TO EUROPE?

A Yes, I've been to Europe. Several times.

Q WHERE?

A I've never been to my home town. I've been to Germany. But different parts of Germany that I never -- I'd never known those parts before. Very uncomfortable there. Not uncomfortable with the young people, but always uncomfortable with anybody my age or older. And, you know -- and I've actually visited people that I knew who had to know something. There was a woman that I knew who lived in Munich, which is, what, ten miles from Dachau? Fifteen miles? Not even that far. Who claimed to know nothing. Her husband was a doctor. They claimed to know nothing.

Q DID YOU TALK TO ANY AMERICANS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

A No. You mean in that period? Or growing

up, or even later? No. No. The whole atmosphere was not one -- nobody talked about it. Nobody talked about it until maybe 20 years ago, 15 years ago.

Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO KEEP IT SECRET?

A I didn't think much about it. And, actually, I had collected -- I don't know when I started, but I had collected over the years quite a few books on the Holocaust and glanced at them and then put them on the book shelf and left them there and never took them down again. Yeah, until I started this project.

Q TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ART AND THIS PROJECT. WE REALLY DIDN'T TALK ABOUT YOUR PAINTING AND YOUR --

A Um-hmm. Well, actually, I started -- I never -- I started painting -- I started, actually, as a writer. And that was my main goal, even before my children were born, is to be a writer. And I wrote a couple of things that were published.

Q WHAT WERE THEY?

A Short stories. I had actually written a novel which I could have published with some changes and so on. But this was the time when I was pregnant. And then at that time I was worried that once the children would arrive, I would not have this block of time. Because for writing I knew I needed a block of

time totally undisturbed. But I'd already started painting just as a hobby. There was somebody I knew who was an artist who had a studio when I was still living in New York, and I would go to his studio. Just, you know, to fool around with paints. And I got to be -- it got to intrigue me. It intrigued me, and so I would take my paints home. And so I always made sure I had a little space in the house where I didn't have to break it down and put things away. And so this came to be a hobby, you know. It's not important; it's a hobby. So when the children came, I said, well, it makes sense, if I have a canvas, I put it on the -- it's on the easel; all I have to do is go look at it and I know where I stopped. I don't have to read two chapters in order to know where I've been. So I thought I would do that. And I sort of stopped writing at that point.

Q JUST FOR THE RECORD, BARBARA, CAN YOU TELL US THE NAME OF YOUR PUBLISHED STORIES?

A It was -- I think it was Vanguard Publishers. And it was part of a short story selection. Vanguard Publishers, yeah. I forgot what it was called.

Q I'M SORRY. YOUR NAME AS THE AUTHOR?

A My name at the time? Barbara Monchek.

Q BACK TO PAINTING.

A Okay. And so then painting became -- then I would go regularly to the -- you know, to study painting. Then I went -- after a while I went to the Art Student's League and spent some -- spent a year there. And then I went to the New School for Social Research and took another couple of courses there. And then I said, the hell with you all; I'll be on my own. And I started working on my own.

Q IN WHAT MEDIUM?

A Oils.

And, actually, when I lived in Pound Ridge, I painted regularly, every day. Every day. And I began to have shows and so on.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR ART IN THE BEGINNING?

A I was -- no, I was never an abstract painter. I was perhaps abstract in terms of when I did landscapes. Those were abstractions. But not abstract to the point of total abstraction. There was always a subject matter for me. And I liked to do figures. And so I would try to do -- my work was somewhat expressionistic. German expressionism is really a great interest of mine. And then I got more interested in surrealism. Like Magritte's and

Chirico. Yeah, Chirico. Chirico is the pronunciation. And so those were -- people like Max Beckmann from the German expressionist school, and present day, you know, like people like Rauschenburg and a whole slew of them.

So today I'm much more eclectic.

Q WAS IT A PASSION?

A Yeah.

Q YOU HAD TO DO IT?

A Yeah.

Q AND HOW HAS THAT PASSION BEEN MARRIED TO YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE WAR?

A It only showed up in shadows. The only way I can explain that is that there were periods when I painted very dark. And those are the only shadows, but -- and I would be attracted to images of tragedies. Those are the images. Photographic images of tragedies that were literal, that were -- for instance, I painted a whole series on -- God, this goes back to the Cyprus War -- images of the -- what were they? The Algerian war, you know. Those kinds of things. World War II, no, I didn't. I didn't. But, of course, I would use -- the Vietnam War, of course, I did some work on that. But I would just focus on certain images that would appeal to me, that

would attract me, and I would just take off from there.

Q DO YOU KNOW, WAS IT A PART OF YOU THAT YOU HAD TO GET OUT?

A You know, I always knew that I couldn't do anything that was just flippant or -- or, you know, ornamental. That it had to be something that had a greater depth to it than simply a description of something that was, you know, aesthetically good to look at. So that's why abstraction isn't -- didn't appeal to me.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A No. It was conscious because it's the only thing I would be attracted to. It's the only thing I would consider.

Q HOW DID YOU GET TO CALIFORNIA FROM NEW YORK?

A Okay. My husband and I got divorced. Let's see. I divorced him in 1969. And --

Q IN NEW YORK?

A In New York. I had gone in '67 to Israel for a trip. And I had met my cousin. That's the son of my father's brother, whose whole family -- not his whole family, but a good part of the family died in the -- in the concentration camps. And he was --

Q WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

A -- a member of the kibbutz --

Yakov. Yakov Shilo. And he was a member of the kibbutz in the northern part of Israel. And we were very attracted to each other, but, you know, I forgot about it. I was married. But I'd never had -- did not have a good marriage to begin with. It was not, to begin with. So I had a plan that I would divorce when the children were old enough to go to college. But I couldn't wait that long. So I -- Mark -- I think I divorced him when he was about -- in '71 -- yeah, he was still in high school, and Peter was going to middle school.

Q AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

A And then what happened?

(Whereupon the videographer interrupted the proceedings, and a break was taken.)

Q OKAY. WE'RE ON TAPE 4 WITH BARBARA SHILO AT HER HOME IN FORESTVILLE, CALIFORNIA, ON SEPTEMBER 9TH OF THE YEAR 2000.

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT.

A We were talking about -- oh, yes. My going to Israel and meeting my cousin. And -- okay. I divorced my husband. And in '67 I'd gone there. In '69 I divorced him. And then went back again to

Israel a couple of more times. And it looked like this would be a serious thing. And, of course, it was, you know, a family member, cousin, first cousin. So -- in addition to that, I met the family, which I -- whom I hardly knew. I'd met them before, of course, but now this became a double meaning, so to speak. From a cousin I'm turning into an aunt and into a sister-in-law, kind of stuff.

So we married. And he wanted us to move to Israel. And by now my son Mark was ready for college, and I offered that -- let's move to Israel, and it will be a very good for you. This was the turbulent days. You know, it was the early '70s, the '60s, of the whole, you know, anti-war movement and so on. And, actually, my son Mark was now -- by now he was draft age. And we were doing the anti- -- the anti-war preparations, so to speak. What was he going to do in case he was drafted? Was he going to be a conscientious objector?

And so we went to do -- he and I together went to do some counseling and joined groups. Was this a possibility? And what was -- so on and so forth.

So, of course, first, he was going to school. And he said, well, he's not -- he refused to

go to any school other than an American college. So going to Israel was out. I wasn't that eager to go, anyway, myself. Number one, my parents were still alive.

Incidentally, what I forgot to mention was that they had literally, from the moment I got married the very first time, to Tommy -- every time I moved anywhere, they moved after me, which was a little daunting because now I felt this total responsibility. My whole marriage was dependent on how do I please my parents, you know, kind of thing. And so -- yeah, and so once I had moved to Pound Ridge, they moved after me, too. So it became a problem.

By now my father was in the upper seventies. And he was of the belief that -- he would always say, well, how much longer can I live, kind of thing. I'd say, well, okay, you come with us, and we'll come to Israel; you know, you're used to moving; it's not a big deal. And he wasn't that sure. But he would have gone. He would have gone. Not happily, but they would have -- they both -- I don't know. I think they might have. But it was -- it wasn't in the cards. And so my son gave me the out. I said, there's no way I'm going to leave him and move, you know, 14,000 miles away. And so I did.

In the meantime my father got very, very sick and died the same year. And then my mother, as a widow -- she had always been very dependent on him. Now I felt that it was my responsibility to take care of her. And so she moved in to our house for a period of time. And I said, you know, I'm not -- my divorce was a very bitter one, in addition. And I lived too close to my ex-husband. And I was still in the same town. And I didn't like anything about it. And I wanted to move away as far as possible. And it had always been my dream to move to San Francisco. So I said, I'm going to San Francisco.

And so then Yakov, who said, okay, he'll come and live in the States, he was happy to go to San Francisco, too.

So we moved to San Francisco.

Q WHAT YEAR?

A 1973.

Q AND I MEANT TO ASK YOU, WHICH KIBBUTZ?

spelling

A Oh, (Laya Bote) Habashan.

Q AND HE CAME -- WHAT DID HE DO?

A He was a very interesting man. He had done an incredible project in Israel. He had just finished it when I met him, actually. He had -- up in the valley, called the Hula Valley in northern Israel,

was a swampy area that he dried up and made an irrigation project out of it. So he -- they -- what's the word? Relocated? Not exactly. But changed the flow of the -- of the -- oh, God. What's the biggest river there? The Jordan. The Jordan. And utilized the Jordan to irrigate that area. And now it's become a flourishing area. And all the kibbutzim in that area are members of the water system. They all live off it, and they now have a -- it's a flourishing agricultural area. So he got a prize for it, and he was sent to the United States and the whole bit.

So he has an engineering background, and he has an organizational background and business background. And then he started -- when he came here, he became a manager for a technological electronic business that was located in Israel. So he began to commute for -- he would stay there for two months and come back four months and things like that.

Q WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE COMPANY?

A Oh, God.

Q WAS IT LARGE?

A Hmm?

Q WAS IT LARGE?

A No, it was not a large company. I don't even know what happened to it. He had to leave it

after about three years or so.

Q IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. I JUST --

A Yeah. I don't remember it. I was not too involved in it because it was only from a distance. You know, I would go to visit, but --

Q WERE YOU MARRIED HERE OR ISRAEL?

A Here.

And that was also difficult for the family. My parents were not happy about that at all. They didn't like the idea. They didn't like me divorcing to begin with. You know, I'm a Jewish lady married to a doctor; I mean, you know, what more can you want, right? So now they didn't have this connection anymore.

Anyway, so we moved to San Francisco and started a new life here.

My oldest son, Mark, went to Rochester University, and he chose not to come out west. I wanted him to. I sent him all kinds of applications for UC Berkeley, for, you know, every imaginable place around here. And he didn't even fill them out. It was his way of rebelling.

And he had a hard time with my divorce. Not that he had a good relationship with his father, but he had a hard time with my divorce.

So -- and life out here was very interesting. Very interesting. We lived first in the peninsula for about five years and then moved up here.

Q WERE YOU A MEMBER -- I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS.

A Uh-huh.

Q WHAT ABOUT GOD AND FAITH?

A Okay. That's been always a problem for me. It only became -- once -- I studied for a long period of time, you know, Zen Buddhism and the eastern religions and began to feel that I desperately wanted to believe in a God. I was never able to really do that. But I think through Zen I believe in the existence of the Higher Power, if that's a good word for it. I mean, it's used a lot. And in the kind of an energy that is a spiritual energy that's out there. I don't believe in an animate, you know, personal God. But I do believe in a -- I feel I'm a very spiritual person and have a tremendous sense of the value of every living being. You know, and/or a human being. It doesn't matter. I mean, it does matter, but I think the value, in terms of how you look at the life of a plant or life of another species, shouldn't be that much different as to how you look at the life of a human being. You have to treat it in the same way.

In other words, the respect and the dignity has to be accorded to anything that's living and nurtured.

And so, no, I don't have any affiliations to anything, and my synagogue-going has long stopped. I mean, I go to weddings and funerals and bat mitzvahs, but I'm not a member of any -- of anything. I would go from time to time to a Shabbat service, but not as a member.

Q YOU HAVE FAITH? IN LIFE AND --

A Yes, enormous faith in life. Yes.

Q WHERE DOES THAT WELLSPRING COME FROM? (INAUDIBLE.)

A I don't know if I can put a name to it. I think that it's a continual renewal which I think expresses itself in creativity for me. Right now, I'm totally anxious. I'm actually in a total state of transformation because I'm still totally hooked to this project, and I'm very, very anxious to get back to some real work. And I think now is the time I'm only going to for the very first time maybe do some real work.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Well, it's going to be in an art form. And it's going to be oils and collages together. In what exact mixture, I don't know yet; but I do have, you

know, images on there, constantly. So I'm anxious to --

And that, you know, it's a renewal. It's a constant renewal. And it's a -- and I can't be without it. I can't be without this. I'm not -- I'm not who I am without it. Let's say, if you force me not to do this, then I will be just a copy of myself. I mean, not a good one. And --

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Yeah? I'm sure you can.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Exactly.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Exactly.

Q NOW, JUDAISM. I FEEL I SHOULD ASK IF THAT INFLUENCES YOUR ART, YOUR LIFE, YOUR WORK.

A I think it does, as a member of the tribe, as someone who wants to communicate the spirit part. In what way, I don't quite know. I mean, obviously, this past project, the Holocaust project, has been my contribution in that way. And it's been very, very important to me. And perhaps, you know, in the future work it will evidence itself again, because I have opened up this whole new -- which I think is new but probably isn't new -- but I've opened up this

subterraneal fountain that has probably been waiting 50 years to be acknowledged.

Q WERE YOU SURPRISED THAT IT TOOK OFF LIKE WILDFIRE?

A Yes. Yes. Yes. When I started the whole idea of doing it, I said, well, this is my goal; this is my -- you know, this is my goal, and that's all I want to do know. And until I finish this, I won't do anything else. I gave up all my other projects. Finished, done. Now I'm going to do this from here to here in whatever time it takes me.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHAT INSPIRED YOU?

A No, I don't have -- no idea. The only thing I know is it literally came as a spirit spoke to me. I will vow to that.

Q WHAT HAPPENED?

A I'm in a group that does authentic movement. I don't know if you know what that is. A group of women meet regularly, and we move in space, in a studio, on a wood floor, and with eyes closed. And amazing things happen. You don't know what happens. A part of you comes out that you're not aware of. And you get in touch with things within yourself that you haven't known before. And when you leave, you know, those hours that you've done this,

you walk away as a little different than you were when you walked in. It always happens. Invariably. It's, you know, without -- without -- it never fails.

So one day I was in this movement, and out of -- literally, out of nowhere, it said to me, you're going to do -- you've got to paint a Holocaust; you've got to paint the Holocaust. And I said -- I said to it, you are crazy; you don't do something like that; it's too, you know, sacred a subject. How can I possibly even think about -- you know, how am I going to approach this? How am I going to do this? It's not possible. So I said, no, no; just keep quiet. And it took six months of me trying to stifle it. It kept coming back, kept coming back, kept coming back. And I would say, okay, I'll just do one more painting like this, and I'll do one more painting like that, and then I'll do it. Just to appease it. And then I said, okay, I'm ready.

And that was it.

Q AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

A Well, then I began to take the books down from the shelves. And I looked at the books that I did have. And I've -- and I'm a member of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Some of us get something in the mail. And I was able to order some

books from them. And I began reading. And I began looking at pictures. I mean, I knew the same stuff that most people knew -- no more than that -- beforehand. And then I began to call them and order photographs. And by now I had a dozen, two dozen photographs.

And so I had pictures in front of me. And that's the only way I relate, is through images. So I looked at these images, and there were some images that just absolutely, you know, said, you've got to do me.

So I started off with -- the first one was the children. Images of children. 40 -- there were -- there were 18 faces on this particular picture. And these were all Polish children -- I'm sure some Jewish children, too -- who were going to be sent -- who were in holding -- in a holding place in Auschwitz, and they were going to be sent to Germany. And I still to this day have not been able to find out why or where. I'm sure some were -- some Polish children were probably, you know, sent to families to be adopted and the rest of them probably gotten rid of or maybe used as slave labor for a period of time. I don't know. I still need to find out what happened, but I haven't got -- I've tried to do the research. I

haven't been able to get anything out of it yet.

Anyway, that was the first one.

Q AND WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF YOUR WORKING?

A Of working? Okay. I would take the photograph, and I would reproduce it. At that time I used to go to a place like Kinko's, a reproduction place. And I would say, make me a copy of this in color, but color only meaning in a good black and white that was -- had gradations of gray. And I want this size; I wanted 5 by 7; I wanted 10 by 12; I wanted 11 by 18. And I would give them a -- you know, an enlargement size. Enlarge it 60 percent, 70 percent, and so on. And then I would take them, and I would play around with them.

And this particular one I cut up, and I multiplied it and duplicated it and used the same ones and did a bit of three-dimensional work on it.

And then I would paint them. I would order them on a board. And you'll see it later. And I'd do three-dimensional parts of it and paint them.

Once they were in color, everything changed in terms of how you see these faces. They then became so real. And every one of these little faces, you know, I still have in my mind. They're totally imprinted. I don't forget one of these little faces

that I've painted. And each -- and then I would -- as I multiplied them, I would change the color of the -- the dress, the dress and the outfits, and so on, so as to enlarge the numbers, multiply the numbers, so that you will understand these were numbers and numbers and numbers.

Q WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE TO DO AFTER YOU DID THIS?

A After I did that, well, then I put wire on it, you know, barbed wire. And we found -- Bob and I found two pieces of -- from the beach that were -- would hold the board -- that would hold the wire. Put it on, and that was the finished piece. Okay. I'm ready for the next one. What's the next one?

Q DID DOING IT END SOMETHING OR BEGIN SOMETHING?

A Oh, doing it began something.

Q WHAT DID IT BEGIN?

A Oh, it began, I dare call it, an obsession with having to find out the stories, with having to find out the truth, with having to find out the events, with having to deal with every -- each event in sequential order.

Q HAS IT CHANGED YOU INSIDE?

A Totally. Totally.

Q HOW SO?

A I think it -- not that I was -- not that I was dead emotionally before. I certainly wasn't. But it opened me up emotionally so much wider, so much more. I mean, just like a -- like a sea, as opposed to a container. You know, it's hard to even contain all that's in there, in terms of feelings about it. And yet I had to keep my objectivity. I had to keep my cool to be able to do this. I can't allow myself to, you know -- to either break down or just to melt in tears. It's not possible. You can't work when you are crying.

So I stayed very cool for one year. I don't think I really let it get to me consciously. And after the year was over, the beginning of the next year I got very, very sick. And I'm sure it was totally connected with that. I was -- had not been able to really process it. I didn't allow myself to. I just was going to do the work. Period. Yeah, so it was -- it was very interesting. Very. And the illness was very interesting.

Q WHAT WAS IT?

A I'd suddenly -- within a week's time, I'd gained 20 pounds of water weight. And I'd been on a trip up, and I went up to Oregon, and that's where --

it started before I left, actually, and it was galloping. When I came back, I wanted immediately to find a nephrologist, a kidney doctor, and I couldn't get an appointment. But I knew there was something drastically wrong. And this period when I had to wait, I gained more weight. And I also -- because I was then put on another -- another nephrologist, from out of the area, had put me on some diuretics, which then caused me to lose my electrolytes; so they were totally out of balance; and I fell and I broke my -- I sprained my ankle, and I couldn't walk. And I was 30 pounds overweight. So I had to get into a wheelchair. And my -- all my organs were affected. My -- I had gained about -- well, anyway, I ended up in the hospital. And they had to take out -- after days of treating me, they finally had to take out about three and a half pounds of water from the lungs because I couldn't breathe anymore.

So it was -- it was crucial. It was -- it was difficult, very difficult. But it -- it was also a -- it was also a very spiritual experience for me.

Q COULD YOU TALK ABOUT THAT PART OF IT?

(Whereupon the videographer interrupted the proceedings, and a break was taken.)

Q TAPE 4 CONTINUED.

TELL ME AT THAT POINT HOW MUCH YOU WEIGHED. AND WHAT DID YOU DO?

A Oh, I weighed -- by the time it was all -- the -- the maximum weight was 147 pounds. And in the hospital, they, of course, tried to get me down. You know, the weight, get the weight down. And it went down very, very little. But once I was home -- oh, they put me on Prednisone, which is a steroid. It's like a cortisone. And that's the only thing -- a high dosage of Prednisone is the only thing that would cure this thing. It's a very rare disease. It's called glomerulopathy, or minimal-change disease. Minimal change, now that's a very funny one. It wasn't minimal change; it was major change.

Anyway, so, yeah, a high dose of Prednisone for six months, which also made some awful changes in the body.

Q AND NOW YOU'RE OFF THE PREDNISONE?

A Oh, I've been off the Prednisone for a year. Last September. No, it took me months and months and months to get back.

Q WHAT WAS THE SPIRITUAL CHANGE?

A It was -- when I began to get treated and when I began to realize that -- in other words, when

my organs were beginning to work again -- because they were completely compressed by all this water. Every organ was, including the lungs. And, of course, that's, you know -- it could be fatal. If I weren't in such good condition, it would have been fatal. The spiritual experience was that it literally opened up all my pores emotionally and spiritually to be -- you know, to be much more open to anything coming my way and not to shut off and not to guard. I just felt a tremendous amount of love for everything. It was -- I still remember it. I mean, it was so -- it was so poignant.

Q WAS IT A MOMENT OR A STATE OF BEING?

A It was a state of being. And all my friends who came to see me, I would tell everyone my -- you know, what -- what the feeling was.

Q ARE YOU GLAD IN RETROSPECT THAT YOU WENT THROUGH THIS?

A Yes. Yes. Because, number one, it took away any fear that I might have of, you know, illness and old age, that I would know how to handle it. I would be able to somehow know how to do it, how to work with it, how to do something with it. And, of course, you know, it made me aware of my mortality, which I've always denied.

Q WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR ART?

A Which art?

Q HOW ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

A This project.

This project is important. Not because I did it, but because it allows the viewer to personally commune with the subject that it's looking at and possibly have a personal relationship to it, because you are looking at individuals. You are looking at people who probably no longer are. I mean, probably none of them are. You will see bodies in pits. Each one of them has been painted. Stroked, painted, put to rest. And the viewer can possibly imagine what these people have gone through, what they have experienced, what they have suffered. None of them had an ability to say good-bye to their loved ones. Nobody had a dignified death. And here, by having them out to view, it's a way of giving them dignity in life and a way of saying we recognize, acknowledge your life, those who have died in this horrible way, and want to not only acknowledge, but want to celebrate the fact that you have lived, the fact that you were a being, and commiserate with your, you know, horrific death. And it's a way of burying; it's a way

of a dignified burial.

Q WHAT HAS DOING THE PROJECT BROUGHT YOU?

A Humility. Here but for the grace of God go I. By what fortune, by what luck, am I here and they are not?

So I owe a debt. I have to account for myself in some measure.

Q AND YOU ACCOUNT FOR YOURSELF BY DOING THIS.

A By doing this, yes.

Q WHAT ABOUT ANY MESSAGE YOU'D LIKE TO SAY TO YOUR CHILDREN OR CHILDREN'S (INAUDIBLE)?

A To acknowledge our ancestry, where we come from. Never deny it. Never be ashamed of it. Take the best you can from your upbringing, from your background, from who you are. And value life. And don't waste your life. You have to get the most -- none of us really fulfill what we are capable of. Maybe a couple of percent? The more we can, you know, really fulfill our abilities, our talents, whatever you want to call it, our potential, the more the world can benefit from that. And every one of us can have something to offer that's precious and of value. And we have to live life in order to be valued and valuable members of the human race.

Q ANY MESSAGE TO YOUR SONS?

A I'm totally proud of them. They're wonderful, wonderful human beings. They know the value of life. They have spirituality. They are incredibly wonderful fathers. Where they have learned this, I don't know. But they are. I could not be more proud than I am.

Q BARBARA, THANK YOU.

A Thank you.

Q WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WANTED TO SAY?

A Yes. I would like to say thank you to you. I think you've been a most wonderful interviewer. And it's wonderful just to sit opposite you and look at you.

Q (INAUDIBLE.)

A Thank you.

(End of Interview.)