Interview with LUCILLE EICHENGREEN
Holocaust oral History Project
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Interviewer:
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Q TODAY IS AUGUST 14th, 1990, MY NAME IS ELLEN SZAKAL AND TODAY I WILL BE INTERVIEWING LUCILLE EICHENGREEN WITH THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO. AND ASSISTING IN THE INTERVIEW TODAY IS MARIA JENSEN.

LUCILLE, WOULD YOU PLEASE BEGIN WITH YOUR FORMER NAME AND YOUR MAIDEN NAME, YOUR BIRTHDAY AND YOUR PLACE OF BIRTH.

A My name was Cecilia [Lundaw.] I was born in 1925 in Hamburg, Germany. My parents were Polish nationals living in Germany at that time and I lived the first 16 years of my life in Germany and Poland alternately. We traveled back and forth for reason of family and partly business and to retain citizenship, which was mandatory that you return home to get your passports renewed.

I had a younger sister, five years younger, to be exact. We lived a very comfortable life. My father was a businessman. I went to a private Jewish school. I started school in 1930. I'm really not sure why my parents decided not to send me to public school but to parochial school. It could have been for religious reasons. It could have been that there was just something in the air that they sensed and rather enrolled me in the private school -- Jewish school.

Life at home was very easy, very comfortable. My parents

did not travel; did not go anyplace without us. We traveled all over Europe with our parents; sometimes with a maid, sometimes without. And the first inkling that something was not right came in 1933. I had been sick that entire winter previous to April, 1933 when Hitler came to power and the doctor recommended that I go to a resort that had the cure facilities like the mudbaths and some other waters that are supposedly beneficial. So we traveled for the summer of 1933 to (Badschwalter). We rented a house on an estate. The owner of the estate was German and he had several other houses and we became sort of friendly; to the extent that my father would sit down and talk to him. My father was tall, blue-eyed, not very Jewish looking. He spoke fluent German. My mother's German had an accent, but my father's did not. He was very outgoing; he was very charming and the day we were supposed to leave in the summer of 1933 the owner of the estate invited us for coffee in the afternoon and we sat down and out of the blue he said to my father, "Isn't it amazing what Hitler has done in these short three months for the Germans? He is working on unemployment and other social ills and last but not least he is taking care of the Jews." [Crying]

My father got very angry. He got up and he said, "I'm a Jew" and the answer was, "I don't mean you, I mean the others." And from that point on things changed. The German

children living on the same street on the apartment would not talk to us. The boys would hit us. Some of the children in our school would leave for Palestine. It was a slow change and yet it was a sudden change. It is contradictory but it was really strange. There were days when you forgot about days and there were times when you were very aware of it. This type of life became progressively worse. Personally it didn't touch us because we were considered foreigners with a permit to live in Germany. We were not considered as Jews. It did not appear in our passports. We were just treated like an American or like an Englishman would have been treated living in Germany.

School was difficult. I got into a lot of trouble. Mainly because I just was too lively and just couldn't listen long enough; couldn't sit still long enough and the grades were B or C. And once my sister started school she was a model student with model grades and that's all I heard, so it was very, very difficult. The other thing that was very difficult in school was the fact that it was a fairly religious parochial school. We learned [Homish and Gemurra and Evlict] but most of the children in that school came from German backgrounds. Out of the 500 children, 20, maybe 25 had parents that either came from Hungary, from Poland, from Russia. And in the mid-thirties when it became -- when the German authorities requested that the Jewish

children state their parents' date of birth, place of birth - nationality -- it became very obvious to everyone who was Polish and who was German by nationality. And there were children, Jewish children in that school that made very derogatory, very ugly remarks. Some for a while wouldn't talk to me or wouldn't play with me and I remember coming home and asking "What's the difference between a German Jew and a Polish Jew?" My parents couldn't answer it.

And this has really been one of the major problems in Germany before the war, during the war, in Poland during the war and even in Israel. I mean there is this separation, this ethnic separation which just -- we can't overcome. There is resentment on both sides. There's anger on both sides. And I'm not blaming either party but it is so unnecessary.

In 1938, a month before the Kristallnach - the German police, not Gestapo, just general police, came to the house at 6:00 in the morning and asked that we get dressed and come downtown. Whatever that was. My mother was after surgery and my father talked to the police lieutenant, I think it was, I'm not sure, and he said, "I'll come - leave the family at home." By afternoon the phone started ringing and people told us that the Germans had rounded up all the Polish Jews in Germany and were shipping them back to Poland or rather pushing them over the border. The reason for this

or the cause of this action was that the Polish counsels in Germany refused to put a certain stamp into the Polish passports and this was only reserved for Jews. So it was antisemitic on the part of the Poles.

By late afternoon somebody told us where they were holding those people - men, women, children - and we should bring a suitcase with clothing. They said not to send my mother because they would keep her but to send the children. So a cousin and I - his father was also taken - lugged those two suitcases downtown. We went into the courtyard of what seemed like an old school. We found after much searching my father, my uncle and we gave them the suitcases and I remember looking around and saying to my father, "The gate is open. It's not guarded. Why don't you walk out with me?" And my father said, "No, you can't do that, that's not honorable. We don't do those things."

So they shipped these people to Poland, I'm not sure exactly how many, from all over Germany, and they pushed -- physically walked them over the border and pushed them across. The Jewish community on the other side which was Poznan took them in for the while and then distributed them all over Poland. My father went home to where the family lived which was [Sambor] and stayed with them until May, 1939. In the meantime we had to move and we had to find new apartments and the restrictions were more severe. A maid

could not work for a Jewish family. We tried to obtain a certificate for Palestine. My father had two brothers there. They left Berlin in '34 and when they asked my father to come with them or to follow, my mother said, "I don't want to go to Palestine, too many Jews."

And my parents were fairly certain that as Polish nationals they would leave us alone. We were comfortable; money was no problem. There were bank accounts. There was real estate. It was a comfortable life, an easy life. My father gave up the business voluntarily in '37 because he really didn't need it; he could live without it. My mother decided to ship the contents of the seven or eight room apartment to Palestine and it was packed ~~and it was packed~~ and shipped under the supervision of the German Gestapo. We shipped everything legally; we didn't smuggle anything and we waited for certificate which was supposed to come any minute.

In May of '39 my father came back with a four-week pass to Germany with the permission from the Germans to stay four weeks and then take all of us back to Poland unless we receive a certificate for Palestine. Time elapsed. He got an extension. He got a second extension. The certificate still was supposed to come tomorrow or the next day or the next week. We lived in a small furnished room. Four people used somebody else's kitchen and bath. We still believed that we would be able to leave. My father knew the Italian consul in Hamburg

and he suggested that he pack us up; he could give us a three day visa. My father said, "I can't go for three days. I need to stay." He said, "Just go. Don't ask any questions." And my father said, "No, I can't do that. I can't have a visa to give me permission to stay. I can't go on a three day visa." He, in effect, told them in that many words that "Take your chances, nobody is going to do anything. They'll let you stay." But he didn't want to; he was afraid.

In the meantime most of our friends, acquaintances, had left. I remember Martin Buber coming to the house just shortly before he left and saying, "It's time to go." He was a friend of my father's. And my father said, "We'll see." He didn't say yes, he didn't say no.

War broke out on September 1st, 1939. The Gestapo was at the house an hour afterwards. They picked up my father. They interned him in a county prison for a couple of weeks and we brought him laundry every week and afterwards all those Polish men that they had interned, they sent to [Ranenbuch] to Sachsenhausen, and then to Dachau. We got mail very, very seldom. We had to move again. We lived in another furnished room. We had to wear a yellow star. We had food rations. We bought our food in a specially designated store. We were not allowed out at night. People were beaten. People were arrested. Some people managed to leave. We practically pitched a tent at the Jewish community center just trying to

get some sort of an exit permit for my father. Not for us; just for him because they would have let him out had he had a permit.

I know on one of those visits in December of 1940 there were whispers and people were very excited. Jacob [Leinfeld] had been released from prison. He was a friend of my father's. We rushed home. My mother called ~~them~~ him. He didn't really want to see us, but he consented to let us come back after noon. I was very worried about going out in the late afternoon. It was December. It was dark very early. I talked to my mother about it and she said, "Don't worry. It really doesn't matter. We'll be back in plenty of time." I wanted to take the star off the coat and she said, "No, don't bother. It's not important. It's more dangerous to take it off than not." I reminded her that a week earlier an elderly lady had been found dead one morning and to the yellow star they pinned a note that roughly translated "Out at night, dead at daylight." She was dead. They had beaten her to death.

We rushed to Jacob's house and we went up to the third floor, took the elevator. We opened the door. A thin, six-foot tall man who used to be very stout, gray skinned, his front teeth were missing, his hair was shaven. We just stood and stared at him. We didn't recognize him. He didn't even ask us to sit down. He said, "[Benhov]"which was my father's name -- "is fine. He's working. Don't worry. I leave for

Italy tomorrow and I will see what I can do." He couldn't wait for us to leave. He couldn't talk to us. He just couldn't. We had overstayed our visit. We got outside; it was dark. Germany was blacked out - there were no lights from the windows in the streets. There were no lights from street lights. Nothing. Street cars, no lights. Street cars, you couldn't use. You had to walk. Jews were not allowed. It was cloudy and dark, no stars, no moon, nothing. As we were walking we heard steps behind us. They were sudden. We didn't even hear them coming. By the time we heard them, they were close. We saw also the beams of flashlights. We panicked. Mother ran to the right, I ran to the left. And the lights and the boots kept coming closer and I twisted my ankle. I fell and landed in a gutter and got all wet. The boots kept coming and I could feel them step on my hand - I had a badly bruised hand and they were yelling "Halt. Stop. Stop" and they kept going. We saw the flashlights disappear in the distance across the street and then I heard my mother's voice and she helped me up and we slowly got home. My ankle was broken and it took a long time to heal. It was a nasty fracture.

But the nightmares. (Crying) I couldn't get rid of them. I still don't.

In February of 1941 the Gestapo came to the house. They rang the bell. I happened to open the door. They had their hats on, long leather coats and boots, standard uniform. They

asked for my mother. My mother was in the kitchen and they dropped a cigar box on the table. (Sighing) It's easier to write than to talk. The cigar box had a rubber band around it and was fairly small and they said three words "Ashes from Dachau." Something was burning on the stove. My mother was screaming and that's about all I can remember.

The next thing I remember was an orthodox funeral when Chief Rabbi [Caliba] was killed in [Ria] and after that we just had a few more months. I went to school. They combined the boys school and the girls school. I got a job at the local department store doing some sewing at night. I couldn't really sew - the sleeves were backwards and the skirt was sideways and after about three months they said they couldn't use me but I gave it a try.

My grades were fair. I graduated from school. It wasn't much of a graduation. And everybody really either had left or was leaving. A lot of those people who were arrested with my father died or were killed and then in fall of 1941 we received notification that in two days we had to report to a downtown location to be shipped east. No details other than "east". It was labeled "relocation." Relocation to us didn't mean a thing. We assumed that if it would be Poland we would manage. My mother spoke fluent Polish. I probably assumed I could learn it, which I did eventually, and but no details. We were allowed a suitcase each and sort of a

duffel bag. We didn't have many belongings anyway out of that one furnished room. There were about a thousand of us. We were put into railroad cars. The cars were guarded and sealed from the outside. It was still sort of stuffy and warm outside, sort of Indian summer. It took a couple of days. It was not a fast train. When the trains were opened the Germans almost stepped back. We were confronted by men in black uniforms with black hatss and an orange band around the head and a star. And the moment we got out of the train my mother asked the first one, "Who are you, what are you?" He did not understand German. My mother switched to Polish and he said, "I'm the Jewish police." And they walked us into the ghetto. It was not much of a walk by today's standard but in those days it was a two-hour walk. The streets were unpaved. The beginning of the war it was almost country like and then it became more city; cobblestone streets, old delapidated houses. It became really obvious that it was a slum of a city. The city was large, we were told. And the [Baloot] was a slum before the war. It did have some Jewish inhabitants but it mainly had the underworld. The luggage came later on in a wagon and as we walked some of the inhabitants of that place passed us. Some were ragged looking. There were some children, instead of shoes there were rags tied with string. It was a scene out of a movie. It was not real. A huge drum passed us on the street and as it passed

us a smell was just unbelievable. We asked one of the police - Jewish police, that was walking along with us and making conversation with my mother, "What is that?" And he said it's a [ficalia - vi-vek]. We don't have toilets. We have outhouses. We don't have running water, we have pumps."

They brought us to a school, [Renaska 25]. The school is still standing. It's not being used but it is there. They kept us there for a few weeks - four or five weeks. We slept on the floor. The suitcases came. We got a little bit of food, not very much. Outside the school the Jews that had lived in the ghetto already a year prior to our arrival had little piece of cabbage and butter and bread and tried to sell for whatever valuables or currency we had, which was very little. Next to us on the floor was an elderly couple. She had bright red hair that was turning grey and we used to have some mutual acquaintances years ago -- parents of a classmate of mine -- and when we were assigned rooms in the ghetto we shared the room with four other people - small room. They were assigned a room on the opposite side of the ghetto. The ghetto was divided by a wooden bridge at various points. We were on the right of the bridge, they were on the left of the bridge and this lady, whose name was Julie, said (crying) "If you come to New York before I do, call my son." I didn't call him. Those people were transported to a death camp three months later. I couldn't call. I met him at a

party and somebody evidently had told him that I knew his parents (crying). We got married in 1946.

When we got the room on [Pavia] Street, No. 24, Room No. 9, we shared the little room with four other people. There were wooden bunks; a little iron stove with a long pipe but never enough coal to heat it. We cooked on it. The room had one window that looked down on the Polish side and on the barbed wire on the guardhouse and the guard was marching day and night, back and forth every two hours a new one. We saw the Poles carrying bread and food but it might just as well have been a thousand miles away. There was no contact; there were no underground sewers; there was no in and no out. We were sealed off without the possibility of any contact.

The four people who shared the room with us were childless; two elderly couples and it was very difficult living this way. They were very intolerant of two children. We had a bucket in the corner which substituted for a toilet. They made us carry it down every day because after all, we were younger. We were supposed to take turns, you know, cleaning the oven, but it didn't work out that way. It was difficult. In about January of the following year which was 1942 they started harassing me, "Go out and get a job. Go out and do some work." Because they couldn't find work. They were old. Probably 60 or 65. That was considered old. I tried finally to get a job but at age 16 where are you going to get a job?

I was not trained for anything. I did not speak the right language. I learned a year later but at that point I didn't. I went to the department of labor. The director at the department of labor was, oh, maybe seven or eight years older than I. He had come to Poland from Hanover in 1938 when they pushed the Jews across the border. I waited for hours till he granted an audience. It was not easy to even get the audience. You put your name on a sheet and if you didn't get the audience today, you came back tomorrow and you sat and you waited.

Q DO YOU RECALL HIS NAME?

A I'll give you his fictitious name, I'll not give you his right name. I call him, in my stories, Leonard Loft. His right name, I cannot, I will not give you. He lives not far from New York.

He did not ask me to sit down. He was very brisk. He spoke with me in German and he said, "There are no jobs, period." In spite of the fact that the ghetto was full of factories - metal and wood, hat making, uniform making, carpentry - you name it, there was a factory. We made the straw boots that the German Army wore over the snow in Russia.

I asked him whether I may come back in four weeks and ask for a job or maybe he would find something. He said, "It's useless, but if you insist." I left, I came back in

four weeks and he greeted me with the words, "After a long wait, I told you it was useless. You waste your time. Go and don't come back." I waited a couple of weeks more and I did go back and I said, "I really need work" because work meant an extra ration of soup. "I also would like some sort of work for my mother, she can sew" and they had sort of schools tucked away in the factories for children and I wanted my sister to go the hat factory or wherever there was a possibility to at least have her attend some sort of make believe school and get the soup. He was very angry. "I told you I have nothing. There is nothing." He got up from his chair. He had his feet with black boots on the desk. He opened the door and he said, "Hier aus" German style.

I saw him ride in his carriage which was drawn by a horse. He had all the food that a person needed. He had no shortage of anything. His sister was one of the right hands of one of the go betweens between the German administration and the ghetto administration because she was bilingual and she was young and she was very capable. Not necessarily a decent sort of a person but she was very capable.

I can either tell you that I saw him one more time after the war or I can tell you at the end, whatever you prefer. What would you like?

Q I THINK IT'S BEST NOW. SINCE YOU'VE BROUGHT HIS NAME UP.

A I worked for the English Army for war crimes in 1945. I gave them a list of 42 SS which we arrested. They stood trial, but it entailed going to Hamburg because I was in a camp not far from Hamburg at the end of the war and we were ringing doorbells and picking them physically up. Putting them into jails. We took time off for lunch. There were four officers, a driver and I. I did the translating, mainly, the German part. We were walking down one of the main streets, the equivalent of Fifth Avenue in Hamburg, which was pretty shabby in those days, and we had had lunch I think at the officers' club. It was slightly uphill and it was drizzling and as we were walking somebody walked towards us with a cap, a sort of a Burberry trench coat, except it wasn't Burberry in those days and a briefcase under his right arm. We passed on the left side, he and I. His left arm and my left arm practically touched. Our eyes met maybe for 30 seconds but there was instant recognition on both parts. He turned. He ran down the hill and around the corner. The English asked me, "Anybody you know?" and I said, "No." And that's the last time I saw him. I could have met him now in New York or Minnesota but I said "No." I don't care to.

I finally found a job through a former neighbor of ours who had convinced [Rumkowski] who was a Jewish head of state of the ghetto that the ghetto needed beautification. It needed parks and schools and trees and buildings and God

knows what. Rumkowski thought this was very attractive, after all he was king of all this empire and he gave permission for this man, whose name was Adolph [Gertz], he was an engineer by training, to hire people to draw up plans. We were an office of paperwork only - drawing up plans. He was a former neighbor of ours. He heard through somebody that I needed work. He came one evening to the house and he said, "I give you a job." I was delighted. He must have been in those days about 70 years old. He was very short. He wore glasses - steel rimmed glasses. He was very nervy and very lively and a dreamer - like any artist or any creative person. He was an absolute dreamer.

We sat in this office for six months drawing up plans. I was a so-called secretary. I could neither write nor type nor anything, but I sat there.

Q WHAT HAD HIS PROFESSION BEEN?

A He was an engineer by training. I think he had an only son who had left for South America. I am not sure.

It was 1942.

Q HAD HE COME IN THE TRANSPORT WITH YOU?

A Yes, but I hadn't paid any attention, you know, there were a thousand people. You couldn't talk or know everybody.

He came with his wife and when he hired people he hired a great many Czech Jews from Prague. There was a director of [schada] who was really not used to sit and draw up plans but

it was better than not having the soup. There were a great many other people with all the credentials and all the academic titles you could possibly imagine and we sat there and we drew up blueprints and we got our soup.

We got thinner. There was a lot of typhus that summer and towards fall or early winter it started raining before it started to snow. Rumkowski called Adolph Gertz to his office and he said, "I'm closing your office next week. It's useless; I've changed my mind." He pleaded and he begged; it didn't help. Adolph Gertz by then was just a skeleton - just skin and bones. He cried when he told us and he really couldn't help; there was nothing he could do. When I said goodbye and thanked him, he said, "I'll try and find you something, but I can't promise." He was dead a week later. I went to his funeral; he's buried in the cemetary, no marker. There were no markers and it's one of 70,000 graves.

I started looking for work and it was difficult. It was Catch 22. You had to know somebody to get a job, but how do you get to know somebody? When I tried to get my sister into a little school that was operated out of a factory, the manager of the factory said, "What will you give me in return?" Naive as I was, I said, "I've nothing left, the Germans took all the jewelry, all the money; I have nothing." "That's not what I'm talking about." So then I realized that in the ghetto there was nothing free. You received something for

something, as a rule. There were exceptions.

I had a co-worker in that building who worked on the second floor. I went down to the second floor and wanted to talk to her. She was not in the office. She was sick or she was out but the office had a stove - a black pot bellied stove and I put my arms around the black pipe that went through the ceiling just to get some warmth out of it, but there was nothing left, it was cold. There was no coal, there was no wood; and I stood there and on my right side I could feel that somebody staring at me, but I didn't look up. Eventually he walked over and he stretched out his hand and he said, "I'm [Yeshia Huspiegel]" and he said, "I know who you are, I've heard your name. You're looking for work." I said, "Yes." He said, "I've been ordered to start a new office in two weeks to fill out the applications for coal rations for the German Reich. They'll send in the individual household applications; we will compute them and we'll send them back. The same way we sew their clothing or their uniforms and send them back, we did the office work. He has been asked to have this office. The head of this office was [Hemrich Neftalling], he was a lawyer before the war; he was also - he could handle Rumkowski. He was hard to handle; temperamental and very difficult, very difficult. I didn't believe that he would give me the job. He said, "Come on Monday in two weeks." For two weeks I didn't sleep. I

couldn't breathe; I couldn't function because I didn't believe he would give me the job. I walked in two weeks later. I did get the job. I worked as his secretary. I'd learned a little, but not a lot; but he didn't mind. I worked for him probably for nine months from the fall of 1942 till 1943, probably summer. But in the meantime what I forgot was 1942. My mother died. She did not just die. She blew up like a balloon from hunger. There was nothing one could do. She stopped talking. I saw the little black wagon on the streets and eventually it was in front of our house. They didn't bury the dead in July of '42. They didn't have enough people.

My sister and I walked after a week to the cemetary. The old man in front of the building said, "Go home. Nobody buries the dead today." We didn't go home. We entered the building. The building is still standing. It's right outside the cemetary gate. And inside the big hall there were bodies piled from the floor to the ceiling. The bodies were between two wooden boards tied with a string and on the feet were name tags.

We found two shovels. We went outside. We eventually found a little space on a walkway and we spent most of the day digging. We dug a grave and then we went looking for my mother. We found her and we carried her outside and we buried her. (long pause) No tears. No prayers. Nothing.

About six weeks later the Germans decided to effect a

curfew. Nobody was allowed out of the buildings. Nobody was allowed to work. The curfew was supposed to be lasting a week. Rumkowsky had the proclamation pasted all over town on walls on buildings and we waited. One of our neighbors [Schuler] kept going up on the roof as lookout. We contemplated running away to a different building but there was no hiding. They went street after street. They had dogs.

Q WHEN WAS THIS?

A September, 1942. I have the exact dates at home. I don't have them. It's in [Lucien's] book.

On the third day they came to our house. It was warm. We still put coats on. I was worried about my sister and I put makeup on her face. It was really the only reaction I got out of her. She smiled and she talked. Since my mother's death she didn't talk any more. She was totally apathetic.

Q THIS HAD BEEN SIX WEEKS - - -

A Right.

Q AND HOW OLD WAS YOUR SISTER AT THIS TIME?

A Eleven.

We went downstairs. Our neighbor upstairs had a little baby which was rare but there were still some pregnancies; some children, newborn children. She came down without the baby. She had hidden the baby. Downstairs the Germans had an amplifier and they said, "Everybody out of the building." We stood in the courtyard and then they went into the building

with their dogs and they brought out a father and a son and one other man. They immediately put them on the truck which stood in front of the street. Then they looked at us, "You to the right, you to the left" - selection - the older people and the very young people were pushed onto the truck so fast it took seconds. My sister was among them. I tried to go to her but they didn't let me. They hit me with the barrel of a gun and the truck took off. We never heard again from these people. None. I'm not sure of the exact figure of how many they deported in that action but I think it was the one single largest number of all the deportations.

I moved next door and shared a room with two girls who had lost their parents. Our co-inhabitants of the room had also disappeared on the trucks. And they asked me to join them in the room. It was probably mainly a matter of sharing coal or lumber or whatever could be shared; not necessarily food.

Q YOU ARE NOW ALONE AT THIS POINT.

A I was totally alone. And shortly thereafter I lost my job. I went out of sequence. And then I found the new job working as a secretary. All jobs had a lot of politics involved. A lot of favoritism, a lot of you call it [plaitsis] in Yiddish which translated means "shoulders" or means "connections". Knowing the right people; having the right connections, that was all that mattered. Nothing else really

mattered.

I worked for Huspiegel. He was a very quiet man. But slowly I found out more about him. He was a writer. He wrote in Yiddish although he spoke German and English and some French and after a few months he asked me to stay late after work and he wanted to read some of his stories to me. There were poems and there were ghetto stories. They were first drafts. They had never been printed.

Q HOW OLD WAS HE?

A He was about 38, 39. We were very good friends. Maybe more than friends. He walked me back to the room every night. There was a lot of talk. There was a lot of resentment. There was an estranged wife. There was talk of marriage. But it was a time when you really didn't think about tomorrow. He was on Rumkowsky's black list. He had written a poem about a child and the father told the child there are no raisins, there are no almonds. (Crying) And the story told of the father not being able to work or not getting work. It was indirectly a reflection on Rumkowsky's role. And Rumkowsky got very angry when he heard the poem and he said in Yiddish, "As long as I am here he will never write again." He was ready to deport him. With the intervention of Henrich Neftalling he changed his mind with the understanding that nothing would be written about him. And in the fifty years that passed since I have never read anything in

the 20 or 25 books that Spiegel wrote that made any reference to Rumkowsky. None. I mean in conversation he called him terrible names but he never wrote about him.

Q SO HE SURVIVED THE WAR?

A Yes. He died three weeks ago.

Work was not difficult. It was strange. We had three or four hundred people filling out those forms. Computing forms. We knew that the job was of limited duration because once the forms are completed then this office would be superfluous. And so Rumkowsky knew the same. Rumkowsky had a habit of making inspections of his factories - his in quotation marks; of his offices. He could dole out favors which were few; he could also take people and say, "You don't need people in offices. I need them in factories" which was much harder work. Physically, if you worked in the straw factory you handled wet straw. The room was damp and wet. It was very bad. He came to our office because he evidently knew that there was an end in sight. He interviewed practically each of the 400 people. It took seconds but he said, "You do this and you do that, one, two three." And somebody took notes. Spiegel sat in the main office and they ignored each other. It was very strange. They did not -- one knew of the other but they didn't speak to each other. Henrich Neftalling did the talking. Rumkowsky spoke Yiddish; Henrich's Yiddish was fair but he mainly spoke Polish. Rumkowsky could

understand Polish, but he didn't speak Polish.

I tried to hide. I tried not to be called in and I managed till pretty much towards the late afternoon. Then my luck ran out and somebody said, "She hasn't been in yet." They called me in. Rumkowsky asked me my name. He asked me about my parents. He asked me what kind of work I did. He asked me how old I was. And then he said, "You'll stay here, but you'll hear from me." And that was it.

Q WHAT WERE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE MAN?

A At that point I had a childish dream. I always thought; you saw him on the street in a [droshky] and a horsedrawn wagon -- what would I do if I ever met him? I would ask him for bread; I would ask him for sugar; I would ask him for some boots that didn't let the water in and I would ask him for a better job. I had these daydreams - almost hallucinations of what I would do. Yet when I stood in front of him I trembled; I couldn't talk. Nothing. He made fun of me in a few words that my Yiddish was more German than Yiddish at that time. And he said, "You are a German." I said, "No, I'm a Polish national. I'm a Jew." But I had no impression, really, at this point. He was a white-haired gentleman; very well dressed and that's all the impression I had at that point.

Q Was he emaciated?

A No! He was overweight.

About a month later Henrich Neftalling came into the office and he said, "I would like you to transfer tomorrow morning to the statistical department." I said, "Why?" I didn't really want to leave. This was a place I knew; I had friends. I didn't want to leave Spiegal. And he said, "Don't ask a lot of questions. You have to go to the statistical department." It was not a matter of choice, it was a matter you were asked, you did it. I walked into the statistical department the next day and Oscar [Zinger] who was the director introduced himself. I spoke fluent German. His Polish was bad; his Czech was good and he told me what he wanted me to do. He said, "I'll have daily reports. Try and rewrite them or type them, depending if a typewriter is available. Go down to police headquarters on [Plattskotschenie] and get the daily statistics -- so many died, so many were deported, so many committed suicide and keep a log of it, day by day. I won't be much in the office. I'm usually all over". And he hobnobbed a great deal with the ghetto elite - the Jewish elite because that's where you got the information or any information if you wanted it. He was a very brilliant man; he got extra food rations because of his position. He was well liked. He had two children. A daughter my age and a son a couple of years older. He introduced me to his daughter but it was just "Hello, how are you?" And I worked for him probably for six months.

Q WAS HE A ? KIND INDIVIDUAL?

A I would think so, yes. He was busy. He was preoccupied. He was making plans for after the war. He was a very creative person. He was a journalist by training. Kindness never really entered into that relationship. It was more a relationship of boss and secretary .

Q AND WAS HE WELL FED?

A I wouldn't say he was well fed. He was considerably better fed than I was. Well fed -- for that he wasn't high up enough. He got a [bei-rod] which was an additional ration. He got an occasional allocation of some gift or something of that sort but I don't think I would consider him well fed. I knew that he lived with his wife, his two children, his sister and two elderly ladies from Prague in a small home. I worked for him for six months when the telephone in the building rang. It was just an inter-ghetto telephone. The pharmacy had a phone but no medications. Some of the offices, the bigger offices had a phone. Some of the factories had a phone. You operated it through a central switchboard. You know you got an operator and say, "Give me the factory on [Skerskesse Street]" and you would get it. The phone rang and the girl who answered started screaming. When she had calmed down she said it was Rumkowsky and you are supposed to come to his office tomorrow morning. So I went the next morning and to get to his office you had to go through the

Jewish police, or the German police, through his varied secretaries, you know it was probably as involved as getting to the president of the United States.

Q WERE YOU IN THE SAME BUILDING?

A No, no. Rumkowsky was in the [Ballutaring Balustky Rinik] And opposite the ring was a Jewish police station and in front of the ring was a German sentry, a sentry house. The administration was surrounded by barbed wire and you couldn't get in and out unless you either worked there or you were summoned. I came in and he said, "You know that there is a [Maleschin] at the end of the ghetto - there is a house for children or young people, either with or without parents and they get some schooling and a little more food than the average. So now I have decided to open another branch and the branch would be three kitchens in the ghetto. I need personnel to staff the kitchens and the offices and if a worker has done very good work in a factory he'll get a coupon to come two weeks to a designated kitchen and get an extra meal in the evening." He wanted me to run one kitchen.

Q FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

A No. This was only for old people. But the staff were young people. They were all teenagers except for the cooks. Those were older people. He said, "I want you to run the office."

Q SO THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY HE WAS GIVING YOU BECAUSE --

A For the extra meal. I don't for what he gave me the opportunity - for whatever reason.

It was sort of a hobby of his to come every afternoon and inspect and see the people come in with their little coupon and get this extra meal - of course, we got the one meal extra too and I had to compute how many grams of the total food allocated would go per person. I couldn't figure that out so I found a young man at the kitchen down the block and he helped me but Rumkowsky didn't like that. He was very upset about it; very angry, because he came every afternoon; you could hear him coming. He shuffled and he carried a cane. You could hear the shuffling; you could hear the cane. So you had a minute or two warning to clean up the desk or do something. He also used the cane to hit people if he was displeased; and he was displeased rather frequently.

My friend Spiegel was very unhappy about the job. He said, "Be very careful. He can do you a great deal of harm. He also has a horrible reputation." He was known as a child molester. He ran an orphanage before the war and he would have gone to trial had the war not broken out. "Rumor has it that he is impotent, but he's still a molester. Be very careful. I'd rather you wouldn't work for him."

But you don't turn down Rumkowsky because if he was displeased he would ship you out of the ghetto. He didn't care. He came every day to the office for a visit. He was

friendly enough. He had several things on his mind. He wanted me to move to the upstairs apartment above the kitchen and I started crying and I cried so hard that I couldn't talk and he couldn't talk any more. "No, I don't want to move, I like where I live with those three girls. No, I don't want to move." He was really displeased and as he left he hit me over the head with a stick. He came back the next day and wanted to know whether I had family in Palestine and I told him yes. My father had two brothers. And were they well off? I said I really didn't know, but to my knowledge one of them was. Would I make a promise? I said, "Yes, I'll make a promise." "After the war, I want you to promise me that your family in Palestine will help me financially and also out of Poland." I was sort of surprised. I mean, he was so sure that there would be an after the war. I was not. He was. There was no doubt. None. If anybody survived, he would survive. He assumed I would survive; I was young enough, I was 17, 18. It was a strange request and in the subsequent evenings that he kept coming he kept repeating that I had made a promise and not to forget that promise.

Q AND IN RETURN YOU WOULD WHAT?

A Tell my uncles to bring him to Palestine and to support him financially.

Just because he was decent. Because he had gotten me the job. About the apartment above the kitchen we didn't

talk any more but somebody else occupied it in my place; a woman much older and she really didn't care. She laughed about the whole matter. I didn't think it was funny.

In the kitchen I met Oscar Zinger's daughter, Ellie. She worked there. He had secured a job for his daughter and we became very close friends.

Q YOU HAD MET HER ONCE BEFORE.

A Once before. But we only became friends in the kitchen. We walked home together and I could never ration my bread that I would only eat a slice a day so I gave her my bread and she would bring my slice. I trusted her that much that she kept my bread.

Q WOULD YOU NORMALLY EAT YOUR BREAD RIGHT AWAY?

A Yeah - a day, a day and half and it would be gone. You had to last eight days.

Q HOW LARGE WAS EACH PIECE - RATION?

A Well, it was be weight and at first bread was for four days. Then bread was for five days and for six days and I think we went up to eight or nine days for a round loaf of bread. It sounds like an awful lot of bread but if there's nothing else - the soup was water. The potatoes were frozen, mushy and, I don't know what you call it - you know, it had turned into alcohol - it had fermented, that's the word. The turnips were vile, that's all I can say. I mean, if they weren't frozen they were vile. If they were frozen they were

not edible. We cooked whenever we had heat with soda so it would act as a tenderizer and cook fast because we had no coal or no wood. A great deal of the stuff we ate raw and while I was working in the kitchen I turned yellow. The whites of my eyes turned yellow and I had terrible pains in my sides and a very high fever and I finally couldn't get out of bed. Turned out I had jaundice which I didn't know. Rumkowsky sent his doctor to come and look at me and he sent somebody home each day with soup and he gave me a ration of two pounds - a present - of two pounds of sugar and something else, I forgot the other item; it wasn't bread, it was something else. There was really nothing to do. There were no medications. The doctor said against jaundice and gallbladder trouble what would help would be atropine. The only atropine I had heard about was for eye examinations. Rumkowsky arranged through somebody who brought in provisions to bring in atropine and I got four plastic or whatever you call them - vials - and I got the shots - it didn't do any harm, it didn't do any good. It just took its course and after about four days I decided to go back to work. I was afraid not to work. I looked funny. My neck was very yellow. My eyes were yellow. But before I went back to work, while I stayed alone in this room; the girls went to work; I locked the door from the inside because people were stealing - they were desperate. They were stealing anything that wasn't nailed

down for firewood. They were stealing food if there was food. They were stealing clothes. So, you know, it was understandable. I locked the door from the inside and I had a fever; I really felt miserable and the knocking on the door was very loud, very noisy. "Open up, open up." I didn't open up.

When I went back to work and Rumkowsky came back to the office he said, "I came to visit you with my driver. You didn't open the door." And I was very glad I didn't open the door. But I didn't know it was he because I had no way of telling.

Q YOU WERE AFRAID OF COURSE THAT HE MIGHT MOLEST YOU?

A Yeah. I was very afraid.

From one day to the next he closed the kitchen because he ran out of food. There was no food coming in from the German side and he closed the kitchen but something happened, I don't know why I skipped it, probably because it's painful.

When I first started working in the kitchen, at the very beginning, one morning at 5:00 o'clock there was a knock at the door and a Jewish policeman stood at the door and he said, "You have been summoned." And I said, "Summoned to where?" It was winter. There was snow outside. He said, "The Gestapo." We called it "Cri-Po" for Criminal Poletzi. And I said, "Why"? He said, "Don't ask me any questions. I don't know. Just get dressed and come because we'll have

trouble if you don't hurry." We walked in the early morning to the Gestapo. We had to go over the wooden bridge to the little red house. Many walked in; few walked out. The little red house still stands. It's still red.

He got me to the front door. He opened the door. He yelled out my name and he ran. When we passed the building we passed on the second (?) side of the street or we didn't pass at all. It was just not a place to go. The German behind the desk - the room was warm, it had a big green tiled oven, a little lamp on his desk - it was still dark outside. The German behind the desk wore a coat and a hat. It was warm and I couldn't understand why he wore a coat and a hat.

Q WAS IT COLD OUTSIDE?

A Very cold. There was snow and frost; but not inside. Inside it was hot. He was alone in the room. He asked me my name, my address and he said, "It has been reported that you have a radio." I said, "No, I don't have a radio." And for about two hours we went through this game of "You have a radio", "No, I don't have a radio" and every time I said "No" he would hit me on the side of my head. I had a couple of open scars on the head and was bleeding.

Q WITH HIS HANDS?

A With his fist; closed fist. He also hit me on the left side of the head, which was very painful, and I got to a state where I just hoped I wouldn't faint. I was doubled

over; I didn't stand any more. And then just as sudden as all this started, he opened the door and pushed me out into the snow. I eventually made it back to the room and a friend of mine cleaned me up. Things healed pretty much in due course. But Spiegel one day put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You know that you don't hear? I talk to you and you don't turn your head. And when I talk to you, you look at me. You'd better see my doctor." It was Dr. Kronenberg. I made an appointment to see her. She asked for the story. She looked at the ear and she said, "Can't be repaired. Maybe after the war." I don't hear on the left side; just on the right side.

The one thing that hounded me for a long time was the Gestapo's remark, "Somebody denounced you." I never really could figure out how, why, for what reason. I never had a radio. One evening going home from work somebody followed me and I stopped and I turned around and I came face to face with a woman in her late thirties, I guessed. Her hair pulled to the back, sort of reddish brown, blondish brown, she work a black coat that sort of hung on her and she looked terrible. You know, you could see the wear and the tear, the hunger, and she said "You are Cecelia Lundaw" and I said, "Yes, who are you?" Because I didn't know her; she knew me. She said, "I'm Spiegel's former wife. You stay away from him or you go back to the Gestapo." So there was my answer. I

looked at her. I was so incredibly angry I don't know; I probably would have been capable of hitting her, because I knew the damage she had done. I turned and I ran. The result of this was that I didn't see much of Spiegel any more. We sort of passed occasionally but not very often, but we didn't talk; we didn't see each other. He didn't pick me up at work any more.

I saw him one more time in the ghetto after that. My name appeared on the list - I think it was January '44 - to be deported. I didn't want to leave the ghetto. My friend Ellie, who was Dr. Zinger's daughter, suggested, "Why don't you talk to Spiegel? He knows enough people of influence, maybe he can intervene." I said, "No, you go see him." She did and just hours before I had to report the name disappeared from the list and I could stay. He had used his influence. The man who actually helped was [Polowski] - he was the director of the leather factory and he had some influence and they used to be friends from before the war. I went to see Spiegel and to thank him and he gave me a scroll of poems and there were a dozen or more poems and we said goodbye and we really never saw each other again till after the war.

Q HAD YOU EXPLAINED TO HIM WHAT HIS WIFE HAD DONE?

A No. I did that last year.

Q WHAT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING ABOUT YOUR NOT SEEING HIM .

A Nothing. He just accepted it for what it was.

Q HE DIDN'T TRY TO SEE YOU AGAIN?
A No, I don't think so.
Q HAD HE GOTTEN BACK TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE?
A Towards the liquidation of the ghetto, yes. But before that he lived with his parents.
Q AND HAD HE COME INTO THE GHETTO WITH HER?
A Yes. Yes. And with a child. One year old child and the child died.

After Rumkowsky liquidated the kitchen we went to work in the saddlery,(?) sewing the frames into which you put a spade which a soldier carries on his belt. We worked there until August, 1944 when it was announced the ghetto would be liquidated. We had no warning; no idea. They said they would send us to another camp and they would close off certain streets and those people had to report. Mine was one of the first and there was really no reason for me to wait. I packed one little suitcase. I knocked at the door of one of my friends who shared the apartment with one of the high Jewish police officials and his wife and her mother. I knocked on the door early in the morning and he came to the door and he said, "Get lost." He did even let me in. I knocked on the door of another friend and I could hear them inside but they didn't open the door. So finally I made my way to the railroad siding and there I saw Dr. Zinger, his family and he said, "Come stand with us. We'll get into the

same compartment."

Q WERE YOU ALONE?

A Yes.

He didn't know there would be no compartments, but cattle cars. And we boarded the cattle cars together with each a loaf of bread. The cars were sealed from the outside. They started moving slowly with stops and starts because troop trains or whatever had preference.

Q WHERE DID YOU BELIEVE THEY WERE TAKING YOU?

A No idea. Not the vaguest. We didn't know whether it was north, east or south. Nothing.

Q MAY WE MOVE BACK JUST A LITTLE BIT. WHEN DID THE FIRST WAVE OF DEPORTATIONS BEGIN IN YOUR MEMORY?

A Well, I came to the ghetto in '41. There could have been deportations between '40 and '41. I am not entirely sure. The first major deportation that I was aware of was in winter of '41 when they deported a lot of the elderly Jews that had come from Western Europe. And then there were deportations on and off for various "reasons" if you want to call it that. All during the time our name was on the first deportation list but somebody told us - - -

Q THAT WAS ABOUT WHEN?

A Three months after arrival - '41. Somebody told us that it was mainly meant for either German or Austrian Jews, so my mother gave me our Polish passports and she said, "Go

to any of the -- all of the ghetto administrations and tell them we are not German Jews." And eventually it worked. I mean, here this little 16-year old started running around with those passports arguing. They thought I was crazy. I probably was. But we stayed. And the people that left on that transport - nobody survived.

Q WHERE DID YOU THINK THEY WERE BEING TAKEN?

A To another camp. We never really knew. If somebody had any kind of a notion -- there was no way to prove it.

Q Did that continue until you left - there was no inkling of your - - -

A No. I have an acquaintance who nows lives in Australia - he's probably 10 or 15 years older. He claims he had a radio. He claims he knew. He worked for the metal working factory. If he knew, Rumkowsky would have known. If he knew, maybe we would have acted differently. Maybe there would have been resistance; I don't know with what.

I find it very hard to believe that any of us really knew of a place like Auschwitz. I have asked people who have done research; I have asked Spiegel who left on the last transport out of the ghetto. I have asked the daughter of [Moshe Kago], he was the director of the school system, and who was hidden after the liquidation for a few weeks until she was found, whether she knew. Nobody knew.

Rumkowsky himself went on the last train with a letter

of recommendation from the German SS [Be-bof] saying, "When you arrive, accord him all courtesies." And he believed it. So if he didn't know better, how could we have known better. So until the trains - the cattle cars - opened in Auschwitz we had no idea. Nothing.

Q IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT AFTER CERTAIN DEPORTATIONS THAT SHIPMENTS OF CLOTHING AND POSSESSIONS WOULD COME BACK -

A Yeah. And some was bloody. Still and all, two and two wasn't put together.

Q WERE YOU PERSONALLY AWARE OF THESE SHIPMENTS?

A Uh huh, yes. Because some of the shipments came into the basement of [Libner Aid] where I worked. They had sort of a depot of sorts there. I'm not sure what you would call it.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR PERSONAL REACTION TO - - -

A Oh -- I didn't know whose clothing it was. I did not recognize any piece of clothing that could have belonged to anyone I knew. Reactions in the ghetto were strange; they were not your norm. They were not the reactions that you would expect out of a normal human being. You become callous; you become selfish; you become like a thing without feelings because it hurts too much to feel.

I had good friends in the ghetto. I had few enemies, if any at all. And still, I had one friend, Spiegel who said to me,"don't ever talk about bread or food. It's demeaning;

it's vulgar. Don't talk about it." And yet you were thinking about it day and night. It never left you. Hunger is difficult to describe. I mean, we think we fast one day and we are terribly hungry. But to have food, or an unbalanced variety of food, I mean either people swell up, people lose tremendous amount of weight. It's a sensation which - - which you can't put into words. You close your eyes and you see bread. You open your eyes, you still see bread. But there is no bread. You keep talking of what you're going to do after the war. "I'm going to sit down and never stop eating." It's almost an insane reaction. It's not rational.

Q WHEN YOUR MOTHER DIED, DID YOU NEED TO REPORT HER DEATH?

A Yes. You needed to report and you needed to hand in the cards - the ration coupons. There were people who did not and if you got caught it meant instant deportation. I mean it was a felony, so to speak.

Q DID THIS HAPPEN A GREAT DEAL?

A I wouldn't know whether it happened a great deal but it did happen. It's hard to put figures and numbers on it; I don't know.

Q WHY WOULD PEOPLE NOT REPORT A DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER?

A Because you could cash in the rations for food. There were instances where a father would eat the food of a child or vice versa. You know, we are surprised now at child abuse

or parent abuse, as you call it, you know when you have an elderly, incapacitated parent or bedridden parent; there have been horror stories. Well, in a war you have the same horror stories. You have other stories as well, but anything is possible. You have parents who went to their deaths with their children because they wouldn't give them up. But you have the other side of the coin.

Q WERE ALL THE DEPORTATIONS DONE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION?

A Orderly in what way?

Q YOU WERE CALLED, YOU COULD TAKE YOUR FAMILY, YOU COULD TAKE SO MUCH LUGGAGE, THERE WERE LISTS - - -

A I would say more or less. More or less. Not entirely orderly but -- more or less, yes. The lists were drawn up by various arms of the internal ghetto administration. The Germans said, "You can do either do it yourself or we'll go in there." So Rumkowsky said, "We'll do it." So at times a factory would draw up a list; othertimes the department of labor would draw up a list. It varied. It was sometimes by age; sometimes by gender; sometimes by occupation. It wasn't always a person who was expendable or who did not produce. It was hard to really predict in which way they would draw up a list or who would be on the list and who would not.

Q NOW AT THIS TIME, DURING DEPORATIONS WAS THIS THE TIME THAT THE GERMANS WOULD COME IN AND CONDUCT THESE DEPORTATIONS?

A No. They only did that once during the [schpella] -

during the one week house arrest. They actually physically came in. At other times they left it up to the Jewish police.

Q SO THE JEWISH POLICE WOULD THEN COLLECT THE PEOPLE --

A Yes, yes.

Q - - -AND BRING THEM - -

A Bring them to the railroad siding at Môraschien.

Q WAS THERE A NAME FOR THAT STATION AT THAT PLACE?

A Moraschien. It's where the cemetary is. It's the [el-ya] or it's like a city quarter. It's pretty much out of the city; out in the country. And that area was called Moraschien. Still is.

Q WAS IT NICER THAN THE REST OF THE GHETTO OR WAS IT MUCH THE SAME?

A It was pretty much uninhabited. It was not built up. It had a couple of buildings there. I think Rumkowsky had his house there. It had this little orphanage there. It had another sort of recuperation house. There you were sent if you were very deserving for a couple of weeks to get three free meals and not work. It had the railroad sidings coming into the ghetto. All the food came in at Morachien - the trainloads. It was unloaded by the Jews or mainly by the Jewish police, to a large extent, and brought into the ghetto in horse-drawn wagons. It had a lot of green open spaces and it had an enormous cemetary; one of the largest cemetaries I've ever seen - even before the war; very old, very large.

Q AND THIS IS THE CEMETARY WHERE PEOPLE WERE TAKEN TO BE BURIED ALTHOUGH THERE WERE FREQUENTLY NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE TO DO THE BURYING?

A Yes. Right. They were no longer buried in the central part with the walkways; they were buried wherever you could find a spot, really. And if you look at the hill now it's full of weeds, it's grassy, it's overgrown. There may be a dozen, two dozen markers, stone markers which people placed for relatives right after the war -- '45 -- when they either knew or could identify. When I went to the Jewish community I gave them the dates and the names; they couldn't identify because nobody kept records during that particular period. So, even if they had given me an area, it would have been impossible to find - you know, 60 or 70 thousand dead; you can't find it; it's impossible.

Q IN AN INTERVIEW WITH ONE SURVIVOR WHOSE FAMILY WAS IN GHETTO, YOU TALK ABOUT HOW YOU SPOKE TO ANOTHER SURVIVOR AFTER THE WAR WHO SAID THAT HIS FATHER, MOTHER AND SISTER WENT ON THE TRAINS BECAUSE THEY FELT THAT IT HAD TO BE BETTER THAN WHAT THEY WERE GOING THROUGH THERE.

A That's very true.

Q AND DID PEOPLE TALK ABOUT "WELL, MAYBE I SHOULD LEAVE", DID YOU HEAR PEOPLE SAYING, "MAYBE - - -

A Some people say, "Maybe the next place will be better" although there were an equal amount of people who said, "It

never gets better; it always gets worse." But being human, you hope. You think if it's a work type situation it has to be better. I mean nobody ever imagined that one human being could do to another human being what the Germans did.

Q WHEN YOU REPORTED TO THE STATION WITH THE ZINGER FAMILY DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOUR FRAME OF MIND WAS, WERE YOU --

A Blank. Nothing. It didn't matter. Whatever.

Q AT THIS POINT WERE YOU WONDERING - YOU'D LOST YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR SISTER, WERE YOU WONDERING, WAS DEATH SOMETHING THAT YOU HAD COME TO TERMS WITH AT THE AGE OF 17? 18?

A Death was something that was all around us. It had lost some of its horror -- it was not unusual. We came to realize that we had lost control -- that we were not in control of our destiny and there was really nothing we could do. So whatever happens, happens. You become numb. You try not to think. It's a strange frame of mind because after living like a normal human being this frame of mind leaves you. It's gone. You become somebody else again. There are some that did not change; who lived in the past. The damage was permanent and who have never come to terms. It's understandable.

Q WERE THERE EVER ANY THOUGHTS OF ESCAPE THAT YOU HEARD OF?

A There were thoughts of escape, especially out in

Morachien. The people wanted to crawl under the wire but the guards were stationed at such regular intervals that you had to walk and to get away was difficult because it was an open field. I think in the beginning there were some escapes. During the time that I was there, there were no escapes because it had become so impossible. People killed themselves because they didn't want to live but escapes were so few and if you were caught, you were hung. There was a public spectacle near where I lived on a square and the bodies were swaying or swinging in the wind for days before we were allowed to cut them down; so we were pretty much intimidated.

Q YOU LOST YOUR FAMILY -- DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF COMMUNITY WITH ANYBODY -- WHERE YOU LIVED, THE PEOPLE YOU LIVED WITH, THE PEOPLE YOU WORKED WITH?

A Uh huh. I had friends. I still have the same friends if they are alive.

Q WAS THIS ONE FRIEND, TWO FRIENDS, MANY FRIENDS?

A Not many. There was my friend Felicia in Minneapolis. There's my friend Ellie in Israel. There is my friend Spiegal -- was my friend Spiegal in Israel. There were friends then and they remain friends. Not a great many, but you don't need many friends - if you have good friends.

Q IT HAS BEEN SAID BY SOME SURVIVORS THAT YOU COULDN'T GET THROUGH ANY GHETTO OR CONCENTRATION CAMP EXPERIENCE WITHOUT A BUDDY -- AT LEAST A BUDDY.

A That's true. It depends on instances. It depends on luck. It depends on being at the right place at the right time or the wrong place at the right time, whichever. But you need friends. A human being does not stand by itself. It never will; it never has. People rely on you; you rely on people. Yes, I owe my life to Spiegal. I think the camps - it helped a great deal to have Ellie as a friend. I think friends are essential. It's as important as breathing.

Q BEFORE WE LEAVE THE GHETTO, WERE THERE SERVICES IN THE GHETTO AND HOLIDAYS IN THE GHETTO?

A A couple of them, yes. But those were Hasidic services and they were in somebody's house. You know, ultra, ultra orthodox.

Q DID YOU GO TO THEM?

A I went, but basically they didn't want women; they wanted the men. Yes, I did, because I had a young woman who worked with me; she wanted to become a dancer. She never did. But her father and her brother were ultra, ultra orthodox and she took me home and I attended services several times. I attended a concert in somebody's house. I attended a dance in the basement of the offices once. Several poetry and prose readings.

Q WAS RUMKOWSKY PRESENT AT ANY OF THESE?

A No! He wasn't supposed to know. We would have had trouble if he had known. No.

Q WASN'T THERE A LIBRARY AS WELL?

A No, there was one at one point. I never used it because I've trouble reading Polish. I only learned to read Yiddish -- I could read Hebrew but I couldn't read Yiddish until '43. So there really was no time to read. We worked 12 or 14 hours and there was no time to -- there was no light; there was no energy; there was no desire, which was the worst part.

Q WAS THERE ANY NOTICEABLE CHANGE - OR WAS IT IN TERMS OF AN ATMOSPHERE OR MOOD OR ANYTHING ON CERTAIN HOLY DAYS FOR EXAMPLE -- OR WERE THERE ANY DAYS WHERE PEOPLE WERE PARTICULARLY AFRAID -- ANNIVERSARIES OR - - -

A No. I remember when I lived in Germany that Jews were afraid during Hitler's birthday or other anniversaries of German importance but other than that we lived pretty much without a calendar or without a watch.

Q SO HITLER'S BIRTHDAY, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH WAS --

A It didn't matter in the ghetto. It mattered in the work camps, because the SS personnel was very - in close proximity to us - so if they wanted to punish or to hit or to do something, they could; whereas in the ghetto the Germans were outside. They didn't come inside and if you stayed away from the barbed wire they stayed for us. So it was not a close contact.

Q ONE THING I WANTED TO KNOW IN TERMS OF RATIONING OF THE FOOD. WHAT WAS THE SYSTEM? DID YOU GO TO SOUP KITCHENS, DID YOU --

A There were really two systems. One was the soup kitchen which brought these milk cans of soup to the factories and you got the one soup at lunch time. The quality of the soup varied with the rations. It could be just pure water; it could have one potato swimming in it; it could have a handful of peas in it; it could have nothing. The people that scooped the soup out of the cans into your little bowl which you handed them were also Jewish people and working in a kitchen, of course. You never went hungry. And if you knew one of those people you got a little more potato in your soup. You know, they went to the bottom of the barrel. If you didn't know them, you ended up with water. The other system was at irregular intervals the Jewish ghetto administration would post a proclamation saying that on such and such date or between the first and the fifteenth you can go to -- there were certain ghetto - I wouldn't call them "stores" but the equivalent of a store where they would parcel out the portions and on these proclamations they would say, "Everybody will receive between the 1st and 15th on Coupon No. 5" or whatever the name was "100 grams of sugar, 200 grams of baking soda, a kilo of salt" and those proportions. I don't know. 5 kilos of turnips or whatever the ration was. But you would never know when you would get the next ration. It could be two weeks, it could be four weeks, it could be six weeks. It depended on when the trains with

the new supplies would come in. The new supplies were allocated in various ways. A great deal of it went into the soup kitchen. Some of it went into the extra rations for the privileged and some of it went to the rest of us.

Q I'M SORRY TO KEEP TALKING ABOUT FOOD - -

A That's all right. That's okay. Food is very important.

Q DID YOU KEEP YOUR FOOD WITH YOU IF YOU HAD EXTRA FOOD? I MEAN, YOUR LOAF OF BREAD WAS TO LAST YOU - - -

A You kept it in your room but you were careful to lock the room very well. You wrapped it in a towel and you hoped that your roommates wouldn't steal from you.

Q DID YOU EVER CARRY IT WITH YOU IN A RUCKSACK, I MEAN, DID YOU EVER FEEL - - -

A No, you couldn't. You didn't have the strength to carry yourself; much less anything else. It was too hard to walk just on your own.

Q YOU'D COME FROM A VERY NICE HOME.

A Yes.

Q WHAT WERE THE FOODS YOU USED TO THINK ABOUT - HERE YOU WERE, A TEENAGER.

A I used to think of a lot of bread; any kind of bread - white, black, anything. Just bread. I was a terrible eater as a child. I was very thin and I didn't eat. My mother had to beg me to eat a slice of bread for breakfast. What would I think about? I would think about a birthday cake. I would

think about a real five course dinner - you know, from soup to nuts. I would think of the things that I could cook or would cook had I the material to cook with.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAD SOMETHING DIFFERENT OTHER THAN THE TURNIPS AND THE POTATOES AND THE BREAD? DO YOU REMEMBER SOMETHING DIFFERENT? A PIECE OF FRUIT?

A No. Fruit, I didn't see.

Q FOR HOW LONG DIDN'T YOU SEE FRUIT?

A Probably from 1940 to 1945. My cousin came from England to see me in Bergen Belsen and he brought me apples and oranges.

Q SO FOR FIVE YEARS - - -

A No fruit, no bananas. No milk. A little bit of horse-meat. Three times I recall eating horsemeat, which is horrible, sweet.

Q HOW DO YOU FIX IT?

A Like you fix beef.

Q BOIL IT? TOUGH?

A Tough like a horse.

Q You can recall three times eating meat.

A Yeah, horsemeat.

Q VEGETABLES WERE POTATOES AND TURNIPS.

A Few potatoes. Turnips, some dried peas, beans, not too many -- potatoes were very often frozen. That means they were soft and mushy. I remember cabbage. I remember red

beets. And I remember potato peels.

Q AND BREAD.

A And bread. I remember you had to have special connections to get a bag of potato peels -- from a kitchen.

Q DID WOMEN SEEM TO HAVE ANY GYNECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AS A RESULT OF THIS - - -

A No. Everything stopped. Women didn't conceive and women didn't have children. Nothing. Three months down the road everything stopped. It was sort of strange to understand. We didn't know why. It never dawned on us it was malnutrition until a medical person told us.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HOW MUCH YOU WEIGHED WHEN YOU WERE IN THE GHETTO?

A Uh, I pretty much weighed the same before the war and during the war. I gained a lot of weight after the war. I would say it hovered between 100 and 110 pounds.

Q HOW MANY HOURS A DAY WERE YOU WORKING?

A Roughly 12 hours.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR SCHEDULE LIKE?

A It varied, sometimes I worked evenings; sometimes day times. As a rule I went at 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning, till 8:00 at night.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN IN THE GHETTO?

A There were different kinds of children. There were the street urchins which in the beginning stood in their rags on

street corners and would sign a song about Rumkowsky and sell [saharine], ten for a mark or twelve for a mark. It was like the gold market up and down, like the stock market. You could buy that. Those kids ran wild. Nothing.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THEIR SONGS?

A Some of them.

Q CAN YOU SING ONE OF THEM?

A No. You have to ask [Guilof Lange] in Washington. She'll sing them for you.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THE WORDS - - -

A The words were spontaneous, like a street singer. They were made up right then and there. They would sing, for instance, "Saharine, buy ten for a mark, ten for a mark, they'll make you like sweeter than Rumkowsky." In the beginning of the ghetto they used to sell - it's called in Yiddish "cha" which is really the meat of the legs of beef or veal and then you sort of jell it and cut it in squares and it has a lot of garlic in it. It's a Jewish dish; you can get it in New York. And they used to sell that on the corners. I don't know what was in it, but you could buy that and there were songs to go with that. There was a street singer in the ghetto who went around and made up songs and there's a great deal of literature and information on him in Jerusalem. [Ufiel Schientoff] has done a lot of research on his songs.

Q Was this the fellow who had a fiddler as an accompanist?

A Uh huh. There was also a boy - well, they were brother and sister, really and they had come, I think from Vienna or from Prague. They were very musical and they went around, you know, stood on street corners singing, trying to earn a few - - -. But the money was worthless. You couldn't buy anything with the money. My salary would not buy a slice of bread. The salary was only good to pay my ten or twenty marks together with a coupon and get the ration. That was all it was good for. You couldn't buy anything else. Anything else you bought you either sold some food and didn't eat or you sold some belongings you had that you thought you could spare, but otherwise you couldn't buy a thing.

Q THERE WAS NO RENT.

A Rent? No such thing. There was such a thing as electricity and you were allowed one bulb from the ceiling but you never got a bill because the ghetto had a central electrical department. But if you knew somebody and I had a friend who knew somebody, you could get a wire, a spiraled wire which you find sometimes in a cooking element, in a heat plate, and you could get a heat plate like that if you could afford to pay for it on the black market. Or you could get a wire, one inch in diameter, and string it from one side to the other and just hook it up on two electrical poles and have the wire come in above the meter so they couldn't tell that you were using extra electricity and my friend could

afford to get such a wire. So that could be done. There were ways and means -- if you have to you become very inventive.

Q BEFORE WE MOVE OUT OF THE GHETTO, I'D LIKE TO GO BACK TO YOUR FAMILY AND FIND OUT WHETHER YOURS IS A RELIGIOUS FAMILY?

A Yes. Grandmother's side was very, very religious. My father went to heder before he went to public schools. He did not ride a car on Saturday. He did not write on Saturday. We went to services. We had a kosher house. We observed the holidays. It wasn't ultra religious, not hasidic, but it was a religious house.

Q WHERE WERE YOUR PARENTS FROM IN POLAND?

A The name of the town is Sambor. It's not a very small town; it's on the map.

Q WHAT PART OF POLAND IS THAT?

A It was called Galicia; it's now the Ukraine. My father lost his parents either to typhoid or cholera, I'm not sure which, when he was very young. He came from a very well off family. His grandfather had regular property, either in his name or in a non-Jewish name, I'm not sure. But nobody took care of the three little boys so eventually the boys apprenticed -- were taken out of heder and apprenticed and they slept in the store or wherever they were apprenticed and one day my father ran away. He made his way to Vienna and there was a distant

in Vienna and he went back to school.

Q AND THAT'S WHERE HE WAS EDUCATED?

A Yes. In Vienna.

Q AND WHEN DID HE GO TO GERMANY?

A Well, he joined the Austro-Hungarian army, or was drafted, I'm not sure which, in 1914. He was four years in the army. He was wounded. He came to Germany, I guess, in 1918 and he had met a young man who had a brother in Dresden in Germany, import and export of wines, and he offered those two young men a job. He worked for him for a couple of years, maybe even longer and this man brought his sister from Poland to go to school in Germany. My father met the sister and they got married in 1922. They moved to Hamburg.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER HAMBURG AS A CHILD?

A Yes. Yes, I remember.

Q AN INDUSTRIAL CITY?

A No. It has a port. It used to be a very big city; not it seems like a very small city. It's on an inlet, a bay, similar to the San Francisco Bay. Not as grand. It's a very clean city. It's one of the three Hanseatic cities. It was supposedly more liberal than the rest of Germany although I didn't notice that. It had a substantial Jewish community.

Q AFLUENT?

A Yes, I would say so. Probably not as afluent as Berlin. Not as large as Berlin but afluent.

Q I HAVE HEARD THAT IN HAMBURG MUCH OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WAS SO ASSIMILATED THAT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE YIDDISH USED. IS THAT TRUE?

A Well, in Germany you don't use Yiddish. You use either Hebrew or German. Yiddish is not a language that basically was used in Germany ever.

Q DID YOU SPEAK IT IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD GROWING UP?

A My grandmother did when she came to visit. My parents spoke it but they spoke Polish or French at home -- when we weren't supposed to understand. Hamburg had the first reform temple I would say in Western Europe. I was not allowed to go there. It is now occupied by the German radio stations. It has a plaque. The temple had an organ. The prayer books were not in Hebrew so it was something very, very new and unusual and it was either liked or disliked.

Q WAS THERE MUCH DISCUSSION IN YOUR HOUSE ABOUT THIS NEW - -

A Not really. My father thought it had no place. He didn't approve of it and if he didn't approve of it, he didn't go there.

Q NOW, WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S LINE OF BUSINESS?

A He was a wholesaler - imported and exported wines.

Q SO HE HAD OCCASION TO TRAVEL AROUND EUROPE AS WELL - FRANCE, HE SPOKE FRENCH?

A My parents did. I didn't learn it till much later.

Q NOW YOU MENTIONED MARTIN BUBER BEFORE. CAN YOU TELL US WHO HE WAS? HOW DID YOUR FAMILY COME TO KNOW - - -

A Martin Buber is now regarded as a writer, as a philosopher and he had a tremendous influence on Jewish thinking. He used to be on the lecture circuit in the thirties. He traveled around a great deal. He came to Hamburg. He came to Berlin. I don't know how my father met him or who introduced him. My father was a Zionist from way back. His family had left for Palestine before the First World War. So I guess there must have been some common ground. I know

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Interview with LUCILLE EICHENGREEN
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: 8-14-90
Interviewer: Ellen Szazal
Transcriber: Philippa Benson
Tape 2

Q WOULD YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISITS AS A CHILD TO POLAND; WHAT YOUR FEELINGS WERE AS A JEW AND AS A GERMAN.

A The first time that I came to Poland that I really recall walking on my own was when I was four years old. We came to Poland. We got out of the train. We traveled, I think, for three days in a first class compartment. The porter came at night, making up the beds. I thought it was great fun. We arrive at the railroad station and a relative picked us up and took the suitcases outside the station and there was a buggy and a horse and a driver. I refused to get into that horse (sic); I absolutely -- I threw a tantrum. I wanted a taxi. I would not get into a buggy with a horse. The horse was alive. The horse moved. I wanted a taxi like I was used to.

Coming to my grandmother's house - it was a nice house. Not as nice as what I was used to, but it was nice.

Q THIS IS YOUR MOTHER'S MOTHER?

A Mother. She had a store. She spoke Yiddish to me. She wore a wig. She was very religious. She would always give me candy but I had to hide it. I wasn't supposed to eat so much candy.

There was a lot of ground around the house. The ground was cultivated by the peasants and they had a lot of huge yellow cucumbers which were then pickled and sold. A little bit down the road I had an aunt who cultivated poppies. I mean, acres and acres of red poppies and the poppy seeds were used -- were dried and used as poppy seeds. Not opium.

The front of my grandmother's store faced out on one of the main streets or larger streets. The street was not paved. It was raining. It was summertime. The peasants with their horse drawn wagons would come and bring chickens. The chickens were alive; the feet were tied, but the chickens were alive so with the tied feet they couldn't take off. When the unpaved road of the main street was mud and wet the peasants would take off their shoes. They didn't wear stockings - socks - and they would walk barefoot and I would stand there and look and see the mud would ooze out through the toes, you know, in between the toes and I thought they were very strange people without shoes. I had never seen that before.

I remember going to my uncle's store who lived in the center of town on the ring and he had a hardware houseware store and I remember my father scolding him that nothing had prices. The buckets didn't have a price; the brooms didn't -- nothing had a price. My father had lived in Germany already too long and his mind was too orderly to comprehend

that you went in and you bartered - you bargained - you didn't just pick up a bucket and say "Oh, it's five dollars. I pay you five dollars." That wasn't done.

I know that my uncle had three sons. They were ten or fifteen years older than I. They were at the university. They had trouble as Jews; they were standing in the last row for lectures for instruction. So my father and my uncle pooled their money because they had much more money in Germany and they sent the boys to study in Paris. One was a lawyer, one was an architect and one was an engineer -- no, one was a doctor, I take it back.

The architect fell off a building in Israel and was killed - very young. The doctor went east with the Russian army. I don't know what became of him. He might have remained in Russia; he might not have. I don't know. But nobody of that family - my mother had four sisters there - nobody survived.

Q HOW MANY CHILDREN IN HER FAMILY?

A Eight.

Q Would repeat the name of this town again?

A Sambor, S A M B O R. It's not far from Tarnapol.

Q AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR THIS WAS THE PORTION THAT WENT UNDER GERMAN -- RUSSIAN CONTROL.

A First under German control, then under Russian control. First the Germans had it. And then the Russians occupied it

when they liberated Poland.

Q SO DURING THE DIVISION OF POLAND IN 1939 IT WAS UNDER - - -

A It was still under German rule. Because I remember one of my uncles writing a postcard that he had to do forced labor and that the aunts were no longer in Sambor. And that was already fairly late, so it was under German occupation because the postcard had a German stamp.

Q ONCE THE WAR COMMENCED, WAS THERE ANY COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR FAMILY, BETWEEN YOUR MOTHER'S FAMILY OR YOUR FATHER'S FAMILY?

A Yes, there was still - as long as we could we wrote which I would say was probably until early 1941 or so and the letters were really very careful language. They were phrased -- my mother would write to her brother and say, "How does Uncle Ivan feel" that means "Are the Russians there or how are the rations". I once wrote a postcard and I signed my name Cecilia Lundow, WW. "WW" is a German abbreviation for widow so when my uncle got the postcard he wrote back "I can see that only you are left." There were little things that you try to cover up as you got some communication but - - -

Q UP UNTIL WHAT TIME WERE YOU GETTING ANY KIND OF COMMUNICATIONS FROM ANY FAMILY MEMBERS?

A Probably 1941, summer, and then I got one postcard out of Sambor in 1944, early. One single one.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER WHO IT WAS FROM?

A Uh huh. My uncle.

Q WHAT DID HE SAY?

A He wrote that this aunt, and that aunt, and that aunt don't live here, are not here. He was a very sick man. He had some spinal trouble. He couldn't stand straight. He was working, he said.

Q IN THE TOWN?

A Yeah. Enforced labor. There were a considerable amount of Jews in Sambor. He did not really give any details. It was an open card. It happened to slip through which was unusual, but it did.

Q SO PEOPLE WERE RECEIVING - - -

A In the beginning we received some mail and we could send out three or four postcards during the first two years and then it ceased, completely.

Q BUT IN 1944 YOU DID RECEIVE - -

A That one postcard came in. It was just unreal.

Q WAS IT DATED 1944?

A Yes. It had a current date. It only traveled a week.

Q WHERE DID YOU GO TO GET YOUR MAIL? DID YOU GO TO A POST OFFICE OR DID SOMEBODY - - -

A There was a post office. There were several post offices - sort of little like a substation. I even remember seeing a letter carrier in the very beginning which later on

disappeared. I don't know whether somebody called me or said to pick up a postcard or whether somebody just dropped it by the house. That I don't remember.

Q DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING OF THE HISTORY OF SAMBOR SINCE BOTH OF YOUR PARENTS WERE FROM THERE - HOW LONG THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED THERE AND HOW BIG OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY IT WAS?

A It was a large Jewish community. I believe before the war or during the twenties and thirties the town had 10,000 inhabitants. I think it's 10,000. There has been some dispute between 10 and 100 but I don't know for sure. It had a community. I know that people who ran for political office would make a stop there. It had a Jewish community. It had a Jewish cemetary. It had a Jewish synagogue. The amount of Jews I'm just not able to tell you how many.

Q DO YOU KNOW FOR HOW MANY GENERATIONS YOUR FAMILY - - -

A My family was there for - my mother was born there, my grandmother was born there and her mother before her was born nearby. So there is a story that my father's family came from Spain over Holland into Poland but again since they are not Sephardic Jews I'm not sure that this is true. It could be, I don't know.

Q WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW SAMBOR? AS A CHILD, I MEAN.

A 1935.

Q DID YOU CELEBRATE HOLIDAYS THERE?

A Sometimes. If it happened to -- uh huh.

Q WAS THIS THE WHOLE EXTENDED FAMILY KIND OF CELEBRATION?

A Uh huh, yeah. We had a lot of cousins and a lot of aunts and uncles.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR HOLIDAYS THERE AND WHAT THEY WERE LIKE?

A Well, they were very traditional. I remember before Yom Kippur my grandmother having a chicken - there is a Yiddish expression for it, I don't know what it is in Hebrew, right now. I remember going down to the river and emptying out the pockets. They were very traditional things that you don't do or did not do in the western countries. You sort of skip by them.

Q HAVE YOU RESEARCHED THE FATE OF SAMBOR? WAS THE TOWN DEPORTED?

A Yes. The town was deported to various camps. Most of them were killed even before they had Auschwitz. In small sub camps like Chelmno or whatever,.you know, they have these vans that were gas equipped. There was really no -- I have not run across a group of people that really stayed in Sambor until very late and survived. I tried to go back but there was a problem crossing the border into the Soviet Union - into that area with an American passport from Poland - the next time I'll probably tackle it in a different way. I

tried but it didn't work.

Q THAT TOWN NOW IS IN POLAND?

A No. It's in the Soviet Union. They call it the Ukraine. But the language spoken there is Russian.

Q IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE UKRAINE WAS UNDER RUSSIAN DOMINATION UNTIL 1941, JUNE OF 1941.

A There is a slight difference geographically between the Ukraine and Galicia. Galicia liked to call itself the Ukraine because it's adjacent but it's not really the Ukraine because some of it was German occupied.

Q WHEN YOU CAME TO YOU HAD A SUITCASE WITH YOU. DO YOU REMEMBER THE CLOTHES YOU HAD, THAT YOU BROUGHT WITH YOU? DID THEY LAST YOU FOR ALL THE FIVE YEARS?

A No, it didn't. Yes, they did in a way because the Jewish tailors in Poland were very ingenious. They could take something that had gotten two sizes too small, turn it inside out, make it two sizes larger and get you a new jacket. Essentially yes. I wore pretty much the old clothing.

Q AND WHAT WERE THE ARTICLES OF CLOTHING, DO YOU REMEMBER?

A I had a winter coat which was too light, so I wore two winter coats, one on top of the other. I had shoes which were useless because in winter they just did not do well in snow. I had frostbite. I almost lost the toes. I had a jacket and skirts and I had some blouses and a couple of dresses. My mother had a leather hatbox - you know, one of

those round hatboxes out of the twenties and eventually I took it to the shoemaker and I had a pair of boots made. I paid him by giving him the leftovers of leather. That was his payment and he made the boots. And I haven't worn a pair of boots since though the fashion here is for knee-high boots. I wouldn't buy a pair of boots. I've worn boots, thank you.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR FEET - YOUR STOCKINGS? YOU DIDN"T HAVE PANTS.

A No. Nobody had pants in those days. We had stockings and you repaired them, you repaired them. They were full of mending spots. New stockings I don't remember ever getting new stockings.

For money you could have gotten anything. For money or for food. But I didn't have either.

Q HOW DID YOU BATHE?

A We didn't. You had a little bowl - like a little [schisel] like a little bowl and you put some water in it and you hoped that there was no ice on top of it because at night it formed a crust of ice and you brought it up from the pump, which you pumped, and you sort of took the bowl and you washed yourself to the waist and then when you were through with that you washed the rest of yourself.

Q DID YOU BRUSH TEETH?

A Yes. There was no toothpaste. There was an old

broken down toothbrush because they don't last very long and the teeth started decaying and I lost fillings and I once went to a dentist and she had a drill that was foot operated with a foot pedal and in fact her daughter lives in Los Angeles, and she tried to repair it but there was nothing she could do. I mean, to visualize now to live four or five years without a shower or bath it is absolutely inconceivable, but we did.

Q WAS THERE A PROBLEM WITH LICE?

A Yes. They carried typhoid. If you wore a sweater, let's say a week or two weeks, if you turned it inside out in the seams, the sleeve seams, the shoulder seams, you would see little white spots and those were the eggs of lice. We had a lot of trouble and a lot of illness. I had thyphoid and typhus.

Q THOSE ARE TWO DIFFERENT DISEASES?

A Yes. One is intestinal and the other one is carried by lice - spots. Sort of measlely like.

Q LET"S TALK ABOUT THE DEPORTATION. YOU HAD DESCRIBED YOUR MEETING DR. ZINGER AT THE STATION WITH HIS ENTIRE FAMILY INCLUDING YOUR FRIEND, HIS DAUGHTER AND YOU BOARDED THESE CATTLE CARS THAT WERE SEALED. COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

A Well, the trip was stuffy. It was August. It was hot. There was a bucket on the train but vague recollections

whether they let us empty it or not. Here we had this loaf of bread but you really couldn't eat. And we speculated a great deal. Dr. Zinger was a great optimist and he believed things were going to get better. He was a Zionist and he had a sense of humor. After three or four days the cattle cars came to a stop. It was early in the morning, probably the watch said probably three or four in the morning. It was dark.

Q DID YOU STAND THE WHOLE WAY?

A No, we sort of crouched in corners. There wasn't much room. But we crouched sort of together. When the door opened the first thing we saw was huge spotlights from a platform onto the train; we saw the SS and the dogs - -

Q NIGHTTIME?

A It was four in the morning, three in the morning. Lot of screaming, lot of commands. They hurried us out of the trains and we were barely out when they said to drop the luggage, the suitcase, whatever we had. My friend dropped hers. I did not and one of the SS came towards me with, I don't know, either a gun or a whip, and she tore it out of my hand and dropped it. I didn't want to give up my passport and my papers and my birth certificate - you know, can't live without it. Almost immediately they separated the men from the women. It took minutes. Seconds. And we didn't even say goodbye to Oscar or to Irvin. I mean, they

were just on the other side. And then they tried to separate the women again; the young ones from the old ones; the children from the - -

QTHERE WERE STILL CHILDREN AT THIS POINT?

A Oh yes, there were still - you know, little children, two, three, four, six, any age. Not a great deal, but some. And I remember a man in a striped uniform with a hat and an arm band that read "Kapo" standing next to us and my friend asked him in German "Where are we?" And he said "Auschwitz." And she said, "What's Auschwitz?" And he said, "You never heard of Auschwitz?" She said "No," "That can't be." "Yes." Then he asked where do you come from. We said from Lodz and he said, "Do you know Luba? Do you know anybody named Luba? I'm looking for my sister but I work as a sort of a policeman, a Kapo for the Germans." She said, "No, we don't know anybody" and he left.

And after that separation, the young ones from the old ones, we went into a room, into a barracks and they asked to take off all jewelry, all watches, all clothing and whoever didn't took a terrible beating or worse. And there we stood naked, shivering in the heat and then they took us to another barracks and something happened in front of us, we didn't know quite what and the people in front of us sort of moved, moved ahead.

Q WERE YOU ALL BASICALLY IN A LINE?

A Well, it wasn't really in line - it was a line and the line was almost like a grouping and then we were in the front line we saw that the Kapos were shaving the hair - all body hair - and if you looked at the women once the hair was shaven it was just - it was a sight that was so terrible that it really didn't - at that moment - compare to anything we had seen. When you saw those bowling balls with protruding ears and those frightened eyes - it was like something out of a nightmare. They yanked Ellie out of line; they cut her -- she had long black hair - they cut her hair and before I knew it I was next and the SS woman who gave the order to the Kapo, who was essentially a prisoner, to shave my hair, was short and blond and squat and fat - the uniform didn't fit. She wore glasses and I hated her. I don't think I've ever hated anybody as much. I don't know whether she saw or whether she felt but she slapped me very hard and I just reeled over to one side. After the hair was gone they pushed us through a sort of a swinging door and the top part of the swinging door was glass. In that one second I saw a reflection that was I, ears and oval head and eyes -- it was nobody I knew. It was horrifying that sight.

There were some cold showers. We were sort of rushed through them. If you got a drop of water yes; if you didn't, you didn't. And at the other end an SS woman started laughing and she said, "The gas chambers are overworked

tonight -- or today. We'll get you tomorrow. There's plenty of time." We had never heard of gas chambers. We didn't know what it was. We were thrown a garment at random. Just a piece of cloth -- whether it was an apron or a dress - just one piece. No underwear, no stockings. Nothing. You put that thing on. Mine was black and it had sort of a red trim on the top. Very strange. Very large. It was sort of like cotton. We were lined up again in groups of five and the fifth in our group -- it was my friend Ellie and I and her mother and her aunt and the fifth woman was a little woman named Alice from Vienna and she got some wooden clogs. Nobody else had them. She had wooden shoes. You know, these Dutch shoes. And they started in marching us -- we didn't know that the camp was called Birkenau. Start marching us to the barracks. We passed an orchestra with the conductor in an impecable uniform with white gloves conducting Beethoven. I think it was Beethoven. These people with shaven heads and striped uniforms playing music. On the other side we saw three chimneys with black smoke. Somebody whispered in back of us "The crematorium". We didn't know what it was - why, what for, nothing. But we learned. We were crammed into the barracks. The center of the barracks had a walkway. On either side was sort of chessboard squares and five people were allocated to a square. You could barely seat five people in a square but

we wondered what we were going to do at night because you can't sit forever. So Ellie sat down against the back wall. She spread her legs and the next person would sit against her until all five of us was in that position and then we would lie down so everybody would lie on somebody's stomach, but you couldn't turn, you couldn't move.

Soup came in some time in the evening but no plates, no spoons, nothing. Some people scooped into their hands it and it was running through their fingers and somebody said to Alice, "take off your shoes." Alice took off the wooden clogs and Ellie took one and Alice took one and they stood in line and they filled them up with soup and they ate the soup like animals out of the shoes. Then they gave them to us and we did the same. And then Alice put the shoes back on. That was the end. The Kapo in this barracks was a young woman, Jewish, I don't know whether she was from Hungary or from Poland, I really don't know. She yelled a great deal and she ran around with a reed or stick and anything in her way she would beat and she took her orders from the Germans.

Q SO SHE WAS JEWISH.

A She was Jewish, yeah. But she had a supervisory position. And at night she had a little cubicle at the end of the barracks and there was a rumor that one of the SS came at night and spent the night with her every night.

But it was a rumor because the barracks were dark; we did not know. In 1946 the rumor turned out to be true. She was in New York with that man. I met her at Altman's.

In the morning they would round us up and we would stand for appel; they would count us and recount us for hours and hours. It was freezing cold at 5:00 in the morning or whatever. By noon it was boiling hot. My whole scalp was full of blisters from the sun - the ears. And this went on for a few weeks, maybe two, three weeks. I'm not sure of the exact amount of days. And then we were told -- she told us - that tomorrow morning Dr. Mengele will inspect. Procedure is you take off your dress, you carry it over the left arm and you walk past that committee of three, Mengele and two others, as fast as you can. And he'll indicate right or left. So Ellie and I decided that I go first, she follows me. We go very fast. We don't look right. We don't look left. Just almost run. I almost fell, but I made it. He motioned me to one side and Ellie to the same side.

Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANT?

A No. They said "selection." We later on found out it was either the hospital or the gas chamber or to a work camp. We were then marched to a new barracks. We were given shoes - regardless of size. Just shoes. And we were given a coat that had a big yellow stripe across the front but underneath the stripe the fabric had been cut away so if

you wanted to run away and take off the yellow stripe there would be no fabric. Then we were loaded into cattle cars and we were in those cattle cars, I think for three or four days, again stop and go, stop and go. It was very, very hot. It was Indian summer and the top of the cattle cars had a small opening, with barbed wire, and I climbed on Ellie -- it was so hot we took our clothing off. We just couldn't stand it. I climbed on Ellie's back and I looked out and I said, "Ellie, this looks like the vicinity of Hamburg." She got very angry and she said, "Sit down, you are out of your mind."

I sat down and we traveled another day or two and we arrived in evening at a siding and the doors were opened from the outside and the SS who waited for us, or the commandant of this group of SS said, "You are at Concentracion Schlage Neuengamme Albert Schlagezassel Stetedesseraloffer Hamburg.

Ellie looked at me and she said, "Well, you were right. Do you know anybody here?" I said, "Not a soul."

Q HOW LONG WERE YOU IN AUSCHWITZ?

A A couple of weeks.

So she said, "What good does it do it do you? So what good does it do you if you are here? What are you going to do with it? Nothing. It's the same thing as if you were in Poland." And she was right.

We worked for the first three weeks cleaning up

shipyards that had been bombed at night by the Americans. It was hard work and we had a lot of cuts and infections. I had a cut on the left hand and one of the German corpsmen, medical corpsman, lanced it and he said, "If you scream, heaven help you." So I didn't scream; I fainted.

Then they transferred us to another camp about 20 miles away and there we worked on construction. Temporary housing type thing. The treatment was harsh. The beatings were frequent. Two people died of beatings. Food was in very short supply. On the second day there one of the SS came into the barracks and said, "Rumor has it that one person here is from Hamburg. Who?" So since everybody knew I was the only one I had no way of hiding. And he said, "You will work in the office. You speak the language, you write the language. What's your name? Where did you live, where did you go to school?" I worked in the office which was not cold in winter, which was an advantage. But the SS were in foul mood or the commandant whose private quarters were adjacent to the office -- when he came through we had to stand up. Whenever he was in foul mood he would beat us. We were running around with bloody bruised legs; with swollen eyes and bruised faces. There was one other young woman who worked in the office.

Q WERE YOU WITH ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS?

A Yeah. With Dr. Zinger's daughter. She was my

closest friend. She went straight through?

Q SHE WENT STRAIGHT THROUGH?

A Yeah. And you know people envied us -- our friends envied us. "You sit in the office. You're not out in the cold." We didn't have more food. We had the same amount of food unless we stole something and that was very risky and very difficult. We did twice. If I could spare something, I gave something away.

Ellie got very pale. She coughed a great deal. She envied me a great deal. She was very angry that I was in the office and she was not. But there was nothing I could do. I couldn't tell the Germans, "Take her to the office." In fact, I didn't even dare speak to them. When I showed her the bruises she said, "Forget it. That's nothing." So it's relative. If you hurt, you hurt differently than the other person. There was one very low ranking SS guard who patrolled the perimeter or rather the entrance of the camp. It had barbed wires and towers but it only had 500 inmates. One day he called and he said, "Pick up the rubbish here." And I picked it up and he started talking and said, "I hear you're from Hamburg." I said, "Yes." He said, "What was your name? Who was your father?" He said, "I don't like this duty any more than you do. I was a Communist before the war." He lived in a very poor section of town. He lived in [Altima]. We talked for a little while. Both of

were afraid. I said, "I have a proposition. You find me a place to hide. You look the other way and get me some food and I will sign over one of my father's houses. I'm the sole heir. -- To you." Well, he came back the next week and he dropped a box of paperclips and made me pick them up so he could talk. He said, "I checked you out. The houses are there. Your father was the owner. And I'm very tempted. I'm a very poor man. I'll never be a rich man. I was a lowly civil servant and this is very tempting." I said, "All right. Let me know." Well, the weeks passed. We saw him, but he didn't stop, didn't talk. One day he disappeared. He never came back. And then the commandant came into the office and he yelled, "Remove Vackmeister Smith from the roster. He has a bleeding ulcer. He has been replaced." So the man actually had a bleeding ulcer and he had himself replaced. Either legitimately or otherwise. I never heard from him again until 1947 when he dug me up through the very efficient German system and wrote me a letter, "Remember what you promised me?" In 1947 I had a very short temper and I tore up the letter -- I wish I hadn't -- and I threw it away.

We stayed in this camp until end of March, 1945 and then they suddenly put us in trucks and when we got off the trucks they made us walk. We really didn't walk very well by that time. I leaned on Ellie and Ellie leaned on Sabina

and we came through a gate - it looked similar to Auschwitz. Watch towers. I looked on the right and the left - there were huge mountains of shoes. Just shoes. Any color, any size. Maybe 10 feet tall. Mountains of shoes. No feet, no legs. Shoes. They crowded us into a barracks. Somebody got the information that this was Bergen-Belsen. That night a woman screamed continually. No bunks. And she gave birth to maybe a half pound or pound large infant. The infant died immediately. She didn't even know she was pregnant.

In Bergen-Belsen there was no water. There was hardly any food. There were open, not even ditches, huge pits with bodies. Naked bodies. Most of them were decaying and green. There was a tremendous amount of typhoid. There was no work to be done. No work details. Nothing. We were there approximately, I would guess at two weeks, give or take, and then one morning we saw the SS on the other side of the wire and they had white armbands on the left sleeve. It didn't mean much to us. Everything was the same. Maybe less food. But they didn't come into the camp. They as a rule didn't. By lunchtime we heard enormous noises and then we saw tanks rolling in the main avenue. That was it.

(crying)

I started working for the English that afternoon.

(crying)

Q DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A None. Nothing in, nothing out. The British didn't know. They had no idea what they were finding and they were looking for interpreters because they had trouble with this multitude of languages and I could manage a couple of them, not all of them. But at least the Hungarian Jews, they could speak Yiddish. The Polish Jews either Polish or Yiddish. With the Russians I sort of spoke some Polish or some Russian but they were not Jewish -- the Russian prisoners.

They had no idea what they would find. They found people - that night they disbursed food stuffs from the German warehouses and there were two pound cans of pork and fat. Being hungry, you open them and you eat and in the morning you are dead. And that's how we lost Ellie's mother. Ellie got very sick and she couldn't even eat. She by then had tuberculosis. She lost a lung in the meantime. For some reason I had the common sense to ask the major for whom I worked for some biscuits and I didn't eat the pork. I just ate dry biscuits the first day, the second day. We went from barrack to barrack and he wanted to talk to the people and to know where they're from. Half of them couldn't even talk to them. It was too late.

There was a man who had a knife in his hand. He just have weighed all of 70 pounds. He was slicing away at a corpse and eating the raw flesh. It was unreal. Because

you walked around. You could see it. I think the first order was to bring in water and food and bury the dead and to get some hospitals opened. While they made many mistakes they also did a lot of good. I mean, they tried.

I worked for them as an interpreter until they had to rush me out of Germany in December of '45. Sometimes a translater. Once I was asked to translate when they had caught a German who never was in the Army, who never was an SS. After much interrogation it turned out he was SS. He was stationed in [Oreanenburg] and towards the end of the interrogation the major took his gun out of his holster, released the safety and put it in front of me. I picked it up and I couldn't shoot. I couldn't.

When I asked him whether he's interested in the 42 SS from the camp near Hamburg. I had memorized their names and addresses from just doing the paperwork. He said "Yes. Let's pick them up." We picked them up except for two and they were found in Southern Germany. They stood trial, I think October, 1945. They were convicted. Various sentences. Some pleaded with me for intervention or mercy. They were so good, I couldn't understand that. Two of them were sentenced to death - the two commanders.

Then some of the families made threats. "We are going to get her." I was a witness at the trial. I don't remember anything. I remember going in. I remember being

asked whether I would speak English or German. I said, "English please." And I don't remember nothing. Blank.

Q THIS WAS THE 42 SS AT WHAT CAMP?

A [Ezazzel]. And then when the threats started coming a few weeks later the English War Crimes Division wrote a letter to the American embassy in Paris and said "Help her to get out." They drove me and three other young women first to Holland. The Dutch didn't want to let civilians in out of Germany so we turned the car around and drove through a river bed with the Dutch shooting after us and entered Holland illegally. Then we went to Belgium the same day. We got to Brussels and the captain who was in charge - there was a captain and a driver of the car - knew some people in Brussels and we spent the night there although the lady did not want to have prisoners in her house. They were dirty. So we had to stay in the hallway.

The next morning the three girls remained in Brussels and we crossed the French border. The French border was, compared to Holland or Belgium, almost elegant. I had a so-called visa from a young officer in Bergen-Belsen whose name was rather famous. His father used to be a cabinet minister and he was just a young officer in the French army stationed in Bergen-Belsen. He made out an entry permit for me in French. When they saw his name which was Francoise Ponce, they just said "Of course". Not this government, but the

government before that, he was also a minister but I've never seen him again.

We drove as far as Lille. In Lille we parked the car. We were terribly hungry and the three of us went into a small restaurant. We had a terrible chicken dinner and some wine. An awful dessert that was sticky. Someone in the corner was playing the accordion and Captain Alexander and I had one fox trot. I always thought he was very nice but I knew he was engaged to be married so I was not going to waste my time. We came outside. The car was stolen. I mean, it was a British army car with the insignia, everything on it, numbers here - Gone. The little luggage I had was gone. So we walked to the railroad station. He bought a third class ticket for me to Paris and he said, "When you get to Paris get to the Jewish youth hostel. Don't get lost. You have anough French. Otherwise use any other kind of language" and he put me into the compartment. I rolled down the window. We talked for a while. We shook hands and I asked him, "Why did you do this? What made you take these chances?" (Crying) He said he was a Jew. He lived in Berlin. He left in '36 and he got out in time. We see each other every year.

I arrived in Paris at 4:00 in the morning. Eventually I found the youth hostel and I knew some people there who had been at Bergen-Belsen. Then I started the Catch 22

with the American Embassy. We'll give you a visa if you bring us passage. But there was no passage, only empty troop ships or merchant marine ships going back. It cost $600 to get a ticket. My uncle in Palestine sent the $600. He also sent a certificate and I had entry into Palestine. Sooner or later I had some money left. I bribed some people. I got the passage and I got the visa in February of '46. My family in Israel made the mistake to send a cousin who was in the English army and he put the pressure on to go to Palestine. They also decided whom I was going to marry ---

Q YOU HAVE TWO UNCLES IN - - -

A My mother had a brother in Israel - there was lots of family at that time and they all had gotten together and made the decisions for me and that didn't work any more. You know, I was 21 years old and the decisions were going to be mine. I was not going to be told by aunts and uncles now you do this, now you do that. So I decided to go America. My cousin sat on the train with me all the way to Bordeaux arguing. It didn't help. I went on the merchant marine ship to New York. It took 22 days. I left him behind. He went back home. The family was very angry. I at first didn't write but they changed their mind. They thought I had made a great mistake. But I don't think I made a mistake. I mean I wouldn't have minded living in Israel - ~~in the country~~ on the contrary - but what I didn't mind is being told what to

do. That I couldn't take.

Q DID YOU KNOW WHO YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO MARRY?

A Yes, I knew. Very good looking; very stupid.

Q WHEN DID YOU FIRST CONTACT THEM - OR HOW DID THEY FIND OUT THAT YOU HAD SURVIVED?

A Three days after liberation I asked the major whether he would post a letter over his name. I would write the letter; he would mail it. Over his army number into Palestine, and he did and I had an answer a week later, because I knew the address. There was no problem.

Q I WANT TO GO BACK A LITTLE, IF WE COULD. WHEN YOU WERE WORKING IN THE OFFICE, DID YOU TAKE IT UPON YOURSELF TO MEMORIZE?

A No. But if you, not consciously, if you have a roster of 40 names, I also had a roster of 500 Jewish prisoners -- but if you have a roster of 42 names with addresses and you keep writing it and rewriting it over a period of six months, it sticks. It was just there. Just like you memorize a phone number that you use over and over.

Q WHO WAS THE COMMANDER, HEAD OF THE OFFICE, WHO WOULD BE IN THE FOUL MOOD AND - - -

A There were three of them. We started out with one and then he was transferred.

Q WHAT WAS HIS NAME? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A At this point I'm pretty much through with the

names. They're available in the German records but 50 years, I don't retain them. I didn't want to retain them.

Then he was replaced with the second one who was a very high ranking army officer before the war and then turned into SS so he had an education and he had some basic background but he was trained to behave a certain way and he behaved accordingly.

The third one used to be a gardener in southern Germany, stuck into an SS uniform. He could barely read and write and he was vicious. He had little brown squinty eyes and he was a nastiest of them all. He was vicious. His son wrote me that his father had been convicted and so on and so forth. Would I please write a letter and intervene. I threw it away. I should have saved these but in those days you didn't think that way.

Q MENGELE WAS [illegible] DID YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS THAT WERE GOING ON THERE?

A I heard about it in Auschwitz. There were rumors. There were rumors about twins and some of the other things but I didn't see and I didn't hear. These were just whispered rumors.

Q NEITHER AT AUSCHWITH NOR ? YOU DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THESE?

A No. There were just rumors that this was done but - -

Q YOU SAID THAT PEOPLE WERE BEATEN FREQUENTLY. WERE

YOU BEATEN YOURSELF?

A Yes.

Q WAS THIS IN THE OFFICE, OR IN FRONT OF PEOPLE OR - -

A Well, if you committed a grave offense like there was a Mrs. [Crohn] and she used to be the wife of one of the ghetto police chiefs so she was not used to any kind of deprivation or any kind of hardship. When she came to the workcamp she couldn't walk fast enough and she couldn't work fast enough and she had a 15 years old daughter. She was very conspicuous and the one thing you were not to be was conspicuous. She had large feet and her blond hair of course was gone. She had a very grotesque face that rested on sort of a funny neck and a strange figure. Very uncoordinated. One time she walked out of line, you know, she didn't keep up the proper speed and the commandant flew into a rage and she had to kneel in the middle and we had to stand around and he beat her mercilessly. There was just nothing left but flesh and blood. It was just horrible.

Q IN FRONT OF HER DAUGHTER?

A Yes.

Q AND THE DAUGHTER COULDN'T BREAK RANKS AT THE TIME. THE DAUGHTER COULD NOT RESPOND OR SHE WOULD RECEIVE THE SAME THING.

A The same thing. We couldn't even pick her up. We had to wait till it was a little later. But I don't think

she survived.

Q AND HER DAUGHTER?

A Her daughter lives in Albany, New York. I've never seen her again but I know people who have talked to her.

Q I'D LIKE TO GO BACK TO YOUR ENTRANCE INTO CAMP. WERE YOU AWARE OF ANY SELECTION GOING ON AS SOON AS YOU GOT OFF THE TRAIN AND YOU WERE SEPARATED MEN ON ONE SIDE AND THE WOMEN ON THE OTHER?

A No. We just naively assumed that there was a separation between male and female and the second selection between young and old we assumed that the older ones would probably be treated a little more considerately or better or whatever.

Q SO IN EFFECT THERE WERE SELECTIONS GOING ON BUT YOU WEREN'T AWARE THAT THESE - - -

A The implications, no, huh uh.

Q WAS MENGELE PRESENT UPON YOUR ARRIVAL?

A If he was I wouldn't have known. Upon departure on that selection we were told by then we knew [offer]. In a sense we had to walk past him at three feet distance. You couldn't miss it.

Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE HIM?

A Not really. Because all I saw was a uniform. And I made it a point not to look right and not to look left and he was on my right. And I didn't look. I mean, I had a

glance but not to draw you a composite picture to take to the police station for identification, no.

Q IT WAS DANGEROUS TO LOOK AT HIM.

A It was. It was dangerous to look at any SS because they considered that provocation. So you didn't look.

Q YOU KEPT YOUR FACE TO THE GROUND?

A Uh huh.

Q WERE THERE, AT THAT POINT IN TIME -- WERE YOU AWARE OF MANY TRANSPORTS COMING IN DURING YOUR STAY IN AUSCHWITZ?

A Not really. We were aware that the ghetto was being liquidated. The ghetto had a 150,000 people, give or take, it varied. A transport had probably roughly a thousand at a time. So we knew they would be coming in but they were not - we were not mixed together. We got no word from outside. Nothing.

Q BUT WERE THE CHIMNEYS ALWAYS SMOKING?

A During the time that I was there, yeah, they worked overtime.

Q COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CHIMNEYS AND THE SMOKE AND THE SMELL.

A Well, first of all I wasn't in front of them. I was at a distance. So all you could see is like a factory type chimney, you know, sticking up into the sky. And the smoke was black. Very smelly and very black.

Q HOW FAR AWAY WERE YOU?

A Far enough away - close enough away to walk there, but far enough away not to actually see the building. It was obstructed by other buildings.

Q HOW FAR APART WERE -- YOU ENTERED AUSCHWITZ - - -

A Actually Birkenau, which is part of Auschwitz.

Q HOW WERE THEY SEPARATED?

A I didn't know. I found out in May. Auschwitz are old brick buildings more or less prisonlike. About five kilometers from there is a camp that is nothing but barracks surrounded by wire, with chimneys and that's it. But you know, miles of it. As far as the eye can reach.

Q SORT OF A CITY.

A Yeah. So they're totally two different entities in terms -- I think they housed permanent prisoners, political prisoners, they housed in the stone type buildings. The Jews which they either destroyed or sent to work camps - they housed in those barracks. Which probably had to be built because there were just millions of them.

Q CAN YOU REMEMBER YOUR AWARENESS -- AT WHAT POINT IN TIME DID YOU BECOME AWARE OF WHAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS CONCENTRATION CAMP WAS?

A A couple of days. And then you only had one choice. You could either hope or you could stop caring or you could walk to the wire and electrocute. Those were the three choices. And most of us just vegetated. We didn't want to

think. We didn't want to talk. Nothing.

Q FOR WHAT WOULD YOU BE HOPING?

A A miracle. We didn't hope for our god, because there was no god, obviously. But for a miracle. Some unreal miracle. Like I had hoped for a slice of bread or meeting Romkowsky, I'd hoped for a miracle that maybe the English would fall out of the sky. Something. I don't know.

Q WERE YOU AWARE AT THIS TIME IN AUSCHWITZ OF THE PROGRESS OF THE ALLIES AGAINST THE GERMANS AT ALL? DID YOU HAVE ANY CONCEPTION WHATSOEVER?

A NO. I didn't even while I was in Hamburg, back in the camp. I had no idea how close it was. I did not know that Holland and Belgium had been liberated. I didn't know that Poland had been liberated. Nothing. See, people - I once was at a camp that mainly housed men. I was taken along to do some translating. I was sitting on the back of a truck tied to the rails and there was a young man scrubbing the floor in prison uniform. He looked horrible. I was actually in Neuengamme and he talked to me in a language I couldn't identify and he couldn't understand me. He smiled. He had no teeth. And he kept saying over "Cri kaput. War finished." I had heard that for five years. I wasn't about to believe that one. The SS who saw him, you know fairly close, scrubbing the floor, hit him and pushed him away and scolded him

in vile language to bring clean water and to scrub better and he took the bucket and he came back, I hoped he would come back ten minutes later with clean water, and in his hand was a little ball of brown paper and he sort of gave it a push next to my foot and I watched and watched and looked right and left. I smiled and he smiled. And when I thought I was safe I picked up the little piece of paper, stuck it in my pocket, and later on I found out it was dry bread that had been half eaten and crumbled.

Q And this was in Nuremberg?

A Yeah.Q Did you ever find out his name?

A No There were thousands of people. Thousands.

Q DID YOU GIVE UP? YOU WEREN'T AMONG THOSE WHO WERE GOING TO WALK TO THE WIRE.

A I had contemplated it. But then I said, "Well, let's wait a little."

Q DID YOU AND ELLIE, YOUR FRIEND, DID YOU CHEER EACH OTHER UP? DID YOU TALK TO EACH OTHER? DID YOU MAKE IT A POINT TO STAY TOGETHER THROUGHOUT THE DAY?

A We made it a point to stay together, in fact, at one point when we had numbers and names they said "Line up alphabetically". Her name started with an "S" so I just changed my to an "S" and she was very upset with me and she said, "What if they ask", I said, "Well, I'll just say I married your brother some place along the line." I knew that there

there were no records to really prove it. But it was still a chance I took. That way we stayed together.

Q DURING THE DAY YOU TRIED TO WORK TOGETHER?

A We worked together as much as we could. In Auschwitz we stayed completely together. In [Desauofer] we stayed completely together.

Q YOU WERE WITH HER MOTHER AS WELL.

A Her mother and her aunt. In [Zasel] I was in the office and she was not. But we saw each other every night.

Q HER FATHER, OSCAR SINGER, WAS QUITE AN ELDERLY FELLOW, WASN'T HE?

A He wasn't that elderly, no. You must think of Oscar Rosenfelt.

Q I HAD LOOKED UP THE DATE AND IT SAID 1883, I BELIEVE, THAT HE WAS BORN.

Q Could be. No, could have been '93. '83, definitely not. He was about the age of my father, give or take, he was in his fifties. No, he wasn't that old.

Q SO HIS WIFE MUST HAVE BEEN IN RATHER GOOD SHAPE TO HAVE GONE ALL THE WAY, MADE IT ALL THE WAY TO BERGEN-BELSEN.

A Yes, she was. She became a very nervous woman; a very angry woman. Very difficult. And she could have lived. She could have lived.

Q SHE COULD HAVE LIVED BY -- HOW DO YOU MEAN THAT?

A If she hadn't eaten those three pounds of pork and

lard she would have made it another three, four days, and would have gotten some other food. She could have made it. But whatever somebody couldn't eat she still took and ate. Not only her own ration, everybody else's too. She just couldn't do it.

Q DURING THIS TIME, PARTICULARLY -- WERE YOU EVER BLAMING -- WHAT WERE THE THINGS YOU THOUGHT ABOUT SOMETIMES - THE RESENTMENTS, OR THE ANGER -- WHAT WERE - -

A I blamed my parents for not going out of Germany when the going was still possible.

Q DID YOU THINK ABOUT IT A LOT OR WAS IT SOMETHING --

A No. There was no point to it. It was too late. We could have all lived had we left. We could have all left at a given time. We didn't.

Q WHEN YOUR FATHER OBTAINED A VISA WHICH HE TURNED DOWN BECAUSE IT WAS ONLY A THREE DAY VISA, WAS THAT FOR HIM ALONE?

A No, for all of us. For all four of us.

Q AT THAT POINT IN TIME THAT COULD HAVE BEEN THE TURNING POINT FOR YOU.

A We could have gotten in the early thirties to Palestine.

Q SO DURING THE WORST PERIOD OF THIS -- OF GOING FROM AUSCHWITZ TO THE CAMPS -- THE THINGS YOU THOUGHT ABOUT -- DID YOU RUMINATE ABOUT YOUR PAST, DID YOU WONDER WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN? WHAT WHERE THE THINGS?

A No. The past was very far away. Very distant. There

there no point in wasting energy on it. It would not come back. It would never be back. It was.

Q DID YOU KNOW THAT? DID YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS DECISION?

A I knew that. Yes. I didn't know whether there would be a tomorrow or a future. But I knew the past was gone. There was no retrieving it.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK SUSTAINED YOU?

A Age. Youth. I don't know. Little bit of luck. Some good friends. That's about it.

Q WHEN YOU ARRIVED IN AMERICA, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

A I had a classmate who went to high school with me and who left for England in '39 and who stayed at our house prior to leaving. She helped me. Her family took me in for two weeks and she got me a job in a factory sewing gloves, which I hated. I found a furnished room.

Q WHERE WAS THIS?

A In New York.

Q IN THE CITY?

A No. In Sunnyside. In Queens. I made $30 a week and I paid $5 in taxes, $8 in rent, the rest on clothing. Very little on food. The rest on clothing. I could live on a candy bar. I needed clothing desperately.

Q DID YOU SHARE WITH YOUR EXPERIENCES AND WHAT WAS THE REACTION? DID YOU LET PEOPLE KNOW WHERE YOU HAD BEEN?

A No. Nobody knew. It was nobody's business.

Q YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

A Nobody asked me. Nobody really cared. And I didn't care to volunteer.

Q I WANT TO GO BACK, JUST FOR A SECOND, TO THE DAY OF LIBERATION. IT'S BEEN WRITTEN THAT THE BRITISH SOLDIERS HAD NO IDEA WHEN THEY CAME INTO - - -

A No, they didn't.

Q DID THE OTHER WOMEN AROUND YOU, DID THEY BELIEVE IT, WAS THERE - - -

A Nobody believed it.

Q WHEN DID YOU KNOW IT WAS FOR REAL?

A When they opened -- first of all they didn't let us out of the camp. They came in through the gate. They asked for somebody to please speak English to them. There were several of us who could. Then they asked questions and then they told us that the Germans are gone, finished. And then it sort of sank in, but it wasn't sort of a screaming jubilant occasion. It wasn't. It was subdued.

Q IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU WERE FUNCTIONING AND ON YOUR FEET.

A Sort of. I had two badly damaged kidneys. I was fighting, at the date of liberation, typhus.

Q WAS IT FROM DEHYDRATION? THE KIDNEYS?

A No, I don't think so. I had kidney trouble already in the ghetto. I don't know what it's from. It's from the war but not exactly what caused it. I was on my feet but that's

about all you could say. My brain was working. My body was not functioning. I had a terrible, terrible trouble with the skin infections that go into huge boils that you have to lance. They are caused in wars and from malnutrition. You know, you have them all over, on your neck, on your head, on your legs. It's very painful and very - they leave horrible scars. So, these are the things that -- but compared to others I was pretty much okay. It's relative.

Q WHERE DID YOU LEARN ENGLISH?

A I learned English in the third or fourth grade. I was very poor at it and the English teacher who was English English called my parents to school and said, "That kid is hopeless. Get her a tutor three times a week privately" and they did. After a year I was straight A in English. There was no problem at all. I just had trouble catching ~~up~~ on.

Q DID YOUR PARENTS SPEAK ENGLISH?

A None at all. They spoke French, Polish, Russian, no English.

Q HOW DID YOU KEEP UP YOUR ENGLISH IN - - -

A Well, I went to school until '41 and I used my English. I also had French and Latin, but not as much as English. Once I had occasion in '45 I just decided to talk - it was more English than American - and I'm great at improvising. If I miss a word I will talk around it in any language. Whether it's Polish or Hebrew or whatever it is, I'll talk

around it.

Q YOU WORKED FOR THE BRITISH ARMY, THEN AT THAT POINT. DID THEY MAKE YOU A SOLDIER, DID THEY - - -

A No. Civilian employee.

Q YOU WERE A CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE. AT THAT POINT HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU WERE TAKEN OUT OF BERGEN-BELSON - -

A I could have gone earlier but I thought I would get papers directly to Bergen-Belson and get out of there. I didn't realize that there really was no way of getting out of there because nothing went out of Germany. But I was waiting for my family to do something. I had two cousins in the Army so I assumed that somebody would take some action ~~would pay for my keep~~. They took me out in December - November, December of '45 mainly because they were afraid somebody would kill me.

Q WHERE DID YOU LIVE BETWEEN the time OF LIBERATION AND - - -

A Not far from Bergen-Belson was some permanent Army housing. Brick type housing. It was sort of like you would imagine a college dormitory. Individual rooms and then a huge bathroom at the end and no kitchens. They relocated us into that particular building. One of those buildings. There were hundreds of them.

Q DID THEY HAVE HOT WATER - -

A Yes. They did have hot water. They had toilets, but down the hall. They put about six or eight people into one room.

Q AFTER WHAT YOU HAD BEEN THROUGH THOUGH, WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? WAS THAT A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT OR WERE PEOPLE STILL - - -

A No, it was clean. It was very clean. There was food, not necessarily food you wanted to eat, but very starchy food. You had freedom. If you had a pass you could get out of camp, which I did. I made friends with several English men and women in the English Army.

Q HOW QUICKLY DID YOU REGAIN YOUR STRENGTH AND YOUR HEALTH?

A My health, I didn't regain for 15 years. Needed a lot of work. Including my teeth. Strength superficially was back within a few months. I was bloated, I was 150 pounds.

Q THIS IS WATER.

A Yeah. The kidneys didn't function. The food wasn't right. But I did what I wanted to do. I worked. I did not want to go to doctors or to a hospital. I guess on a scale of one to ten I probably came out six or seven or eight, something like that.

Q WHY DIDN'T YOU WANT TO GO TO THE DOCTOR'S OR TO A HOSPITAL?

A Because there was this old fear still from the ghetto. If you were in the hospital you were deported or something bad would happen. We could not imagine that a British Army hospital would be just ~~was~~ what it was, a hospital. We thought,

maybe they stack you up there one on top of the other and you just vegetate. So there was a great deal of mistrust. A great deal.

Q SO, WHILE YOU'RE SPEAKING OF DISTRUST AND ACTUALLY BECOME EMOTIONAL REAC[illegible] CORRECT IN SAYING THAT WHEN [illegible] SHARE THIS. THAT YOU WERE [illegible]

Skipped 42,43 by mistake

A No. I was ver [illegible] itry without prejudice, without c [illegible] the free. I trusted everybody [illegible]

Q AND IS THAT TR[illegible]

A No. When I we [illegible] atten I found out a Jew coul [illegible] articular office. So I was just devastated. I had not expected that.

Q DID YOU THINK ABOUT GOING TO PALESTINE AT THAT POINT?

A No. Not at that point. No, the family was too old-fashioned, too European, too strong, both in numbers and opinions and I really did not want to do battle.

Q YOU MENTIONED HOW THEY HAD ALL ARRANGED EVERYTHING. YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T GOING TO DO THAT. HOW MUCH OF THAT CAME FROM THE FACT THAT YOU WERE 21 AND HOW MUCH OF IT CAME FROM THE FACT THAT - - -

A It had nothing to do with 21. Nothing at all. It could have been 17 and It wouldn't have made a difference.

Q IS IT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU HAD BEEN THROUGH?

A I'd lived on my own for five years. I'd been through hell and back. And while they were well-meaning and kind people I could not have somebody control me to that extent. I'd been controlled for too long. I couldn't.

Q SO YOU WERE LIVING IN NEW YORK AND WORKING IN A FACTORY AND THEN WHAT?

A And then I met my husband at a party.

Q HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

A Somebody invited me for dinner and he was there. When he heard my name he said, "You were in the ghetto" because somebody told him and I said "Yes" and he said, "Did you meet the Eichengreens?" I said, "Yes, I knew them very well." One day we walked from Regal Park to Woodside - takes about four hours and I told him. The story. (crying) Just once. Not a second time. We went out a great deal. We went to concerts. Then he said, "Go to school and learn to type." I went to school and learned to type and I took some college courses at Hunter's College at night but I still couldn't type. I just couldn't learn to type. Still type 100 words per minute but with four fingers.

Then I got a job in an office - downtown Manhatten. They just wanted to be sure I knew English. I said "I'll spell you any time." And I talked to the president of the company that used to make those electric trains - Lionel - that used to whistle. Probably your father played with

it. I worked there and they had a great many Jews in the office. Practically all Jews. The president was Jewish. I became very friendly with the office manager and she said, "Learn the dictaphone." So I learned the dictaphone. I had a very good job until 1949 when a friend of my husband's came from California to New York and said, "Come to San Francisco. I have a small factory and you work for me." So we packed up the car. We sold the two room apartment and went to California.

Q WHEN DID YOU GET MARRIED?

A '46. End of '46.

And we moved to California. In California I worked for Westinghouse and then I had the children and I worked only a little bit part time and then I went back to school - California College of Arts and Crafts. I did a lot of painting, a lot of artistry. I loved it. And when the kids were old enough to be till 3:00 o'clock in school I went to Golden Gate College and I got a insurance license and credentials and I got a job and I worked at that job - well between two jobs for 20 years and I retired in '86.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR HUSBAND'S PROFESSION?

A He was a businessman. He was in marketing. He had gone to school. He had studied economics at the University of Brussels and then he made the mistake and he went back to Germany and he was arrested. The family got him out with a

forged visa to Cuba. He was in one of the three boats - one was turned back - "The Voyage of the Damned" where he was on the one that landed the week before. He was a farmer in Cuba for two years. Then he came to New York and he was drafted right away and he was four years in the army overseas in intelligence because he speaks six languages. He was in intelligence.

Q YOU SAID THAT YOU DIDN'T TELL YOUR CHILDREN UNTIL THEY WERE MUCH OLDER.

A When they took off for college I told them where I was and when I was there, but no details.

Q HAVE THEY EVER HEARD?

A They've read them. They've read them once I put them on paper. They have read them. They really don't - what should I say -- they can't cope, really, with the past. The younger one was on a bike trip in Germany when he was in graduate school and he was in Munich and the leader took them to Dachau. I said, "Did you find your grandfather's (crying) name?" He said, "Yes." But he wouldn't talk. The older one has been to Germany three times. Once to Berlin, once to Kehl and once, I think, to [Constance] on conferences. He's an economist. He said, "I can't relate to those people." They have to speak English because the language in economics is English. That's the only language spoken. But he said, "I can't cope with them. They obviously know I'm a Jew

by that name but nobody would dare even say something. And he goes in and out, a day, two days--out.

Q YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU TRAVELED.

A Yeah. Not to Germany.

Q BUT NOT TO GERMANY?

A Not to Germany.

Q BUT YOU'VE BEEN BACK TO - - -

A I was in Germany back right after the war because I lived there.

Q BUT SINCE YOU'VE BEEN TO AMERICA, HAVE YOU - - -

A Been to Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland. You name it. Scandinavia.

Q YOU'VE TO POLAND TOO?

A This May. It took me 50 years to go back. It wasn't easy.

Q WAS IT HARDER THAN YOU EXPECTED OR EASIER THAN YOU EXPECTED TO GO BACK OR WHAT WERE - - -

A It was neither harder nor easier. It was painful. The cemetary was painful. The ghetto was painful. The Jewish community or what exists of it are the temples or the synagogues. It was pitiful. It was so -- it was not even a remnant. The poverty among the Jews is painful. Anti-semitism is well and alive.

Q WAS THERE A GREAT DEAL OF ANTISEMITISM AS A CHILD. DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WENT THERE?

A Yes. Yes. This was one of the reasons my father said "Germany or France are much more civilized and they don't have the pogroms that we have. I want my kids to grow up there." Well, he happened to have been wrong but it was a good idea.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER - DID YOUR FATHER EVER TALK ABOUT THE POGROMS?

A My mother did, once. My mother, when I was quite young told me that she was youngest of eight children. She was very beautiful. Small. Black hair. Brown eyes. White skin. There was a warning in town, "The Cossacks are coming. or There's going to be a pogrom." So grandmother hid that youngest child, the youngest daughter, I guess the other ones were hidden someplace else, I don't know. They hid the little one, must have been 7, in the kitchen stove. You know, that old fashioned kitchen stove? And she told me that story. I couldn't imagine what a pogrom was. I also didn't know what Cossacks were. I also didn't know what it means to kills Jews. I listened to this and then I said to my mother, "It must have been summer." And she said, "Why?" "You couldn't have hid in a stove otherwise." So I had no concept. None. That came much later. I didn't know about killing or persecuting.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION TO ALL THE CHANGES THAT OCCURED IN GERMANY LIKE THE NUREMBURG LAWS AND - - -

A In a way it was frightening because you were exposed to it on a day to day basis and the kids were harassed very much in streetcars and on street corners. Yet it probably wasn't as frightening to me until 1939 as to some other because I still hid behind this foreign national and it gave you a false security. It gave you some larger food rations. But we were very aware of what was going on. We did not wear a star until Poland lost the war. The other Jews did. We did not have to. You were just fooling yourself. You were just kidding yourself.

Q WERE YOU SUBJECT TO ALL THE LAWS THAT THE GERMAN JEWS WERE SUBJECTED TO?

A No. We did not have to hand in the silver. We did not have to hand in the gold. No. The Nuremberg Laws did not apply to us until 1939.

Q IN, I BELIEVE, 1939, ALL THE JEWS IN GERMANY HAD TO CHANGE THEIR NAME TO SARAH AND ISRAEL.

A No. That didn't apply to us either because we did not have German papers. But the moment Poland lost the war in September, 1939, it was no difference. It was the same story. A Jew was a Jew.

Q NOW, YOU STARTED OFF IN A JEWISH SCHOOL - MANY GERMAN JEWISH CHILDREN WERE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEN WERE FORCED -

A We had an influx, gradually, of Jewish children - the later it got, you know it started in '34, '33, and the later

it got the small towns, the small -- I wouldn't even say villages -- small towns, very small towns, they had to take the children out immediately; if they had four or five Jewish kids. The bigger towns, medium sized towns, took a little longer. But eventually all kids had to get out of nonJewish schools and they were either with their parents or without their parents shipped into the larger cities to attend Jewish schools.

Q WERE NEW JEWISH SCHOOLS CREATED OR - - -

A No. Nothing. They were closed, not created.

Q YOU MENTIONED YOUR GRADUATION. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE? CAN YOU REMEMBER - -

A It wasn't like anything. You finish today and tomorrow you didn't go back. That's it.

Q THERE WAS NO CEREMONY? THERE WAS NOTHING LIKE THAT?

A There were very few of us in '41. Shortly thereafter there was a law passed that the schools had to be closed permanently. So between that time and the time they had deported all the Jews the kids had no education whatsoever. No schooling.

Q AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, AS CHILDREN IN THIS SCHOOL, DID YOU ALL TALK ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON?

A No, we only talked about going some place. Going to Palestine. Going to Bolivia. Even going to Madagascar. It was just a matter of going some place. Wherever a door

would be opened. That was all that mattered and the children were excited by it. It's exciting to go on a trip. To go some place.

Q I WANT TO JUMP AHEAD FOR A SECOND. THERE WAS SOMETHING YOU MENTIONED -- THE WOMAN WHO WAS THE KAPO AT AUSCHWITZ. YOU SAID YOU RAN INTO HER AT ALTMAN'S.

A Yeah. I was at Altman's, must have been about 1950, '51, in New York. It was cold. It was fall and I needed a pair of gloves. From California you don't take gloves. And I went into Altman's on Fifth Avenue. I was alone. I didn't go with friends. Went to the glove counter and I tried on gloves and I couldn't decide whether to get red ones or black ones. There was a lady next to me, much taller than I, with very black hair - either natural or dyed and sort of cut almost like a man's cut - very short, very striking, well dressed and she was trying on gloves and she smiled and I don't know why or what but I turned and I looked at her and she looked at me and I said "Maya". It wasn't a question. It was a statement. And she said, "Yes, how do you know?" I said, "Auschwitz." And she turned white and she said, "Oh, I can explain" and "You know, I had to," and "I wasn't really bad" and "I didn't kill anybody." She just beat us. She didn't kill us. It just sort of burst out of her that she really wasn't bad.

Q IN ENGLISH OR IN POLISH?

A In English. We spoke in English. And I said, "What about the SS that came at night to visit you?" She didn't deny it. Then I looked at her hands and she wore a wedding band and I said, "Are you married?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Whom did you marry?" I don't know -- normally I'm not that fresh or that nosy and she didn't answer and I said, "Not the SS" and she said, "Yes. He followed me from camp to camp in Occupied Germany. I couldn't get rid of him. He even followed me to New York. And then I decided that there was no point running away from him. He's really quite a decent sort and we both have our past." I looked at her and I said, "Do you have children?" She said, "No." I said, "I pity them. I hope you never have them." I turned and I walked.

Q AND FOR THE REST OF THE DAY - - -

A The rest of the day I was just -- I went back to my girlfriend's house in Manhatten and she said, "What's the matter with you?" I just saw a nightmare walking through Altman's." She said, "Put it out of your mind. It won't help. You can call up the FBI and report her if you want." I said, "No."

Q YOU ALSO RAN INTO THAT JOBS COMMISSIONER ON THE STREET AND YOU DIDN'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING. WHY WAS THAT?

A A Jew is a Jew. To point a finger at another Jew is very hard for me. Some of us are guilty, some of us are

very guilty. Some of us are clean. Some of us are not so clean. I got off that train. Maybe somebody went in my place. I don't know. I couldn't point a finger at another Jew. I might detest them. I might not like them. But unless he really killed another human being I would not point a finger. I can't.

Q DID THIS WOMAN AND THIS MAN DID THEY HAVE REASON TO FEAR YOU? WERE THERE THINGS THAT YOU COULD HAVE USED TO MAKE THEM FEARFUL?

A Yes. Yes. He definitely. She - to some extent.

Q WHY DID THE JOBS COMMISSIONER RUN? FOR SHAME?

A Well, he drew up some lists for deportation. They came out of his office. He was very arrogant. He was very unpleasant. Very unsympathetic. And you don't open a door for a 16 year old and yell like a German. You just don't do that. He was born in Hanover. He went to school in Hanover until he was about 18 and then he was pushed over the border in '38 to Poland and he just thought the world was his and it turned out this way. His wife lived next door to us in the ghetto. She was married to a police man. She divorced him and married him. He came to New York. He changed his name.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHAT HIS NAME WAS?

A In the ghetto?

Q YEAH.

A That's a matter of record. Bernard [Fox]. His sister was Dora Fox. I mean, that's in the books.

Q YES.

A That's a matter of record.

He came to New York. Has a very good job, either import or export, I'm not sure. He lives out in a very affluent neighborhood. He has two children. He stays away from the Jewish community. He does not give interviews and if he does, his wife runs interference. She is a lot smarter than he is.

Q IS HIS WIFE A SURVIVOR?

A Yeah.

Q DOES SHE KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM?

A Oh, yes. She married him in the ghetto. It was practical to marry him. He had all the worldly needs that you needed at that time. Food and housing and clothing and Lou, she was very well off.

Q HE AVOIDS INTERVIEWS?

A Lucien [Dubelschitski] set up an interview with him and he came and the moment he asked the question and [Fox] started to answer, his wife ran interference to the point that you couldn't even talk. So Lucien gave up and he's pretty determined.

Q WHAT HAPPENED TO DORA?

A Dora died. She married one of the [Jaccuborich]

brothers, the younger one, who also were ghetto administration and she died after the war. Probably New York. I'm not entirely sure. But she was nasty. She was very sure of herself. Very good looking. She could not stand another woman in her presence and once when I applied for a job in the offices because I spoke German she couldn't get me out there fast enough. She was not pleasant. But she was smart. She had a brain.

Q WHAT WAS HER JOB IN THE GHETTO?

A She was a right-hand to Rumkowsky. [illegible] in language and in execution because she could run interference with the Germans. She could translate for him.

Q DO YOU THINK HER LOOKS HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT?

A She was not a raving beauty. She was good looking, but not -- nothing exceptional. No, I don't think so. She was very, very bright and very smart and she had the ability to juggle the two languages that were needed at that point. And, she was at the ghetto at the start, you know, when it was first founded, whatever you want to call it.

Q FOR THE RECORD, NOT THAT I'VE RUN ACROSS ANY, BUT WERE THERE ANY GENTILES WHO HELPED ANY OF THE JEWS IN THE GHETTO?

A There were no Gentiles in the ghetto.

Q BUT WHO HELPED IN ANY KIND OF WAY OR ANYTHING LIKE THIS. WAS THERE EVER ANY MENTION OF HELP - - -

A You couldn't get near the barbed wire. If you came too

close to the barbed wire, they shot.

Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY WHEN IT LIVED IN GERMANY BETWEEN THE TIME WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS DEPORTED AND YOU WERE DEPORTED, WAS THERE ANY HELP FOR OUTSIDE - INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS FRIENDS AT ALL - - -

A No. There were two, three instances that you might construe as help. My father had a lawyer who took care of the real estate and things of that sort. When they blocked our account and gave us $100 a month to live on, or whatever it was, he would sort of put in a bill for a plumber or something to smuggle some money out for us. It was our money but we couldn't get at it. That was the sum total of help we got from him. The man who packed our belongings and shipped them in huge crates, sort of containers, to Israel, to Palestine -- I wrote him a postcard from the ghetto. We left him also some money to set a stone on my father's grave or the ashes or whatever it is. He sent 20 marks to the ghetto. After the war, when I was in New York, he reminded me of that and I sent more than $20 for the food to him.

Then when we worked in the shipyards clearing up and I had this enormous infection on the left hand, the man who ran the canteen used to have a shop not far from the area where my father had the wine cellars and he seemed to -- he said he remembered him. I don't know, It was a working class neighborhood. It was not a residential neighborhood. On the

first of May you saw Red flags only, not a national flag, until Hitler, of course. He said he remembered my father. My father once gave him a bottle of wine. I'm not sure. He took me into the kitchen for three days and he made me eat everything that I could just possibly swallow which was difficult because you couldn't eat. He didn't let me take anything out because it was dangerous and he gave me an old, torn, leather jacket and I never saw him again and I don't have his name.

I think these are the only instances I could tell you that even remotely resembled help.

Q ON THE SAME VEIN DID YOU THROUGH THE REST OF YOUR INTERNMENT IN THE GHETTO AND IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP SEE ANY DISPLAY OF COMPASSION WHATSOEVER BY SS?

A There was, in return for favors. The camp at [Sazel] had a Jewish camp leader, she was the head of the Jewish group and she had one of the corporals of the SS from another camp come very week to visit and to bring food. But she paid for it in return.

Q HOW DID SHE PAY?

A They locked themselves up in some storage room or something - sex. There were occasionally some people who would, when we marched, that would drop an apple or something.

Q WAS IT DANGEROUS FOR THEM TO DO SO?

A Probably. Probably. But the Germans are not known

courage - danger or no danger. That is not their strong point.

There was, I would say, I can't say there was no compassion at all, but there was so little it was pitiful.

Q AT THE END OF THE WAR, WERE YOU EMBITTERED, OR - - -

A I was angry. I was terribly angry.

Q HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH YOUR ANGER? WHAT DID YOU DO TO -

A I worked for the English and let them tell me when to be angry and not to be angry. That was easier. I was angry. I was terribly impatient. I walked into the police headquarters in Hamburg and asked them for duplicate of a birth certificate - like city hall - and they said, "Come back tomorrow." I said, "You're out of your mind. Not only do I want it today. I want it now. I give you five minutes." Luckily I didn't go alone. I went with an English officer. I said, "Slam the gun on the table" and he did and I had my birth certificate. So, - - -

Q YOU HAD A CHANCE TO WORK OUT SOME OF YOUR ANGER?

A Some of my anger I worked -- I still don't like the Germans. I see them in an elevator in France or see them in Italy in a restaurant in their noisy, ugly way. I still don't like them, especially my generation.

Q HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED BACK BY HAMBURG?

A Yes.

Q WILL YOU GO?

A I did go for two days because my son was in Paris and he said, "I want to see." So he came and he lasted one day. I didn't last that long and we flew out to Paris. I couldn't. I couldn't stomach the people. Not the places; I could cope with. I could not cope with today's bureaucracy. I could also not cope with Hamburg's Jews. I went to the synagogue and I could not cope with them. They are different. There are a lot of Iranian Jews there, some German Jews. On a national basis they are asimilated. Not on a religious basis. They have made their peace. I don't know whether they ever have heard about not forgetting. I'm not talking about forgiving. This is unforgivable. But about not forgetting. The girl who worked in the office with me in the camps lived for 30 years in ~~Limbo.~~ Hamburg She married a Jewish boy from Poland and she lived in Hamburg. Had a child there. There is something wrong with the people. When they picked us up at the airport, they picked us up with Secret Service. Now, I wanted to know whether I needed to be protected from the Germans or the Germans from me. It never was quite clear. But I do not like a guard. I don't like a guard any place. I take my chances. The hotel was sort of a Holiday Inn type hotel. I figure if you invite somebody you either put them up at the Fairmont or not at all. The mayor of the city is a brother of the conductor [Vondowenny], was it. He was a conductor of -- a well-known conductor. He's well educated.

His father was a German officer. He was killed in the overthrow attempt at Hitler, but he did not put in an appearance. Jews were not important enough. His substitute made a statement to the effect that the past is past and what happened, happened, and we can only sincerely trust that it won't repeat itself. I found that unacceptable and I said so, right then and there. I made more enemies that I made friends -- in one day.

Q YOU STOOD UP AFTER HE SPOKE -- OR HOW DID YOU - - -

A Yeah. I stood up afterwards. I refused to be filmed. Whenever the news reel came near I turned my back. I did not want to be on television. I sat between two gentlemen at the luncheon. Not that I could eat, I couldn't. One of them was a friend of [Adenhouer]. He was instrumental in the peace treaty or financial arrangements between Germany and Israel. He knew Ben Gurion, he knew everybody. Anybody worthwhile knowing. He must have been in his seventies. He also went to school with a friend of mine in Berkeley. He threw names around rather liberally. He died a couple of years ago. My question to him was, "What did you do from 1933 to 1945" and he didn't want to answer and I didn't let go. And he said, "I sold sewing machines." And I said, "And that from a Social Democrat or a Communist in your youth. Do you find that acceptable? I find that totally unacceptable." So that killed the conversation on the right side. On the left side

spelling

was a young man. He was like, what do you call it, in city government - a councilman, or something like that. His claim to fame was that his father was a high ranking officer and he now married his Jewish girlfriend. He was probably fortyish, probably ten years younger than I was at the time, maybe a little older. He lived in the suburbs where one of the camps was. He was aware of it. He sent me a brochure that the teachers of the local high school had put together from the interviewing that they had done of the local population. It was full of errors. Full of flaws. Even the diagram of the camp was flawed. I made corrections and I sent them back and I said, "If somebody does research, why don't they talk to some Jews instead of some Germans?" I never heard again.

Q YOU SAID ABOUT FORGIVENESS - WHAT IS YOUR STAND ON FORGIVING?

A Forgiving whom?

Q WELL, THE GERMANS, YOUR PARENTS --

A My parents? I've never accused of anything.

Q YOU NEVER FELT RESENTMENT - - -

A No. They did the best they knew how to do. There is no feeling of any kind of resentment. The Germans -- I try to keep an open mind toward the young ones although it's difficult to do. I've met four of them recently in Berkeley and the lack of knowledge and lack of reading that they have done on the subject is appalling. The older ones - there is

no forgiving, no forgetting - not for me. But I don't hate. You can't live a life and keep on hating. But no forgiving or forgetting.

Q YOU SAID YOU WERE ANGRY - HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOU CARRIED A LOT OF ANGER WITH YOU?

A I think it ceased the moment I hit New York. It was -- I got away from "them". And there was no time. I was just too busy to adjust to work, to learn -- there was no time to be either angry or anything else.

Q AND YOU STILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH [COLONEL ALEXANDER]?

A Of course.

Q IS YOUR HUSBAND JEALOUS?

A No! They come here. He's married. They come here. We go there. His daughter stays with us when she comes.

Q AND ELLIE?

A Ellie lives in a kibutz in Israel. Ellie has no recollection of the past. If you ask her, "Do you remember our friend SACHMACH or do you remember the street going this way?" "Nope. Nope." Her answer is "No." Nothing. But I think it's a defense mechanism. I think she doesn't want to. Because once in a while something slips inadvertently. Ellie's brother in England who defected from Prague after the war, he remembers. But he was very shallow, very fun-loving. He was a cute kid. He's still the same Irvin. We see each other. We say "Hello" for old times sake but there's no

substance. We have nothing in common.

Q AND YOU KEPT IN TOUCH WITH SPIEGEL UNTIL HE DIED?

A We saw him ten times. We went to Israel, the first time in '63 with the children. He wrote to me in Yiddish, I wrote back in English. He wrote about once a month. We phoned about twice, three times a year. The last time in January, I think, it was for his birthday. We also had different memories. Some of the things he remembers I don't and visa versa. He swears that he took me to the shoes factory in the ghetto and he got me a pair of shoes. I swear equally much that I never got a pair of shoes. He also swears that he got to Auschwitz in October or November of '44 and he saw me in a rag, pushing a wagon. I never pushed a wagon in Auschwitz. I wasn't there in November of '44. So the mind after 50 years is strange. We decided when I was - April a year ago -- that we would just let it rest. I believe what I believe. He believes what he believes.

Q DID HE END UP WITH HIS WIFE?

A No. She was killed in Mauthausen. He remarried a school teacher after the war. Very nice woman. But she has Altzheimers. She's very sick. When we were there in April a year ago we took a walk in the garden and he said something and he used to speak in a very low voice and I said, "Say it louder or walk on my right side, not on my left side." He said, "You still don't hear." I said, "No, I still don't

hear." And he said, "Couldn't they fix?" I said, "No, they couldn't fix." He said, "What actually happened? You were at the Gestapo and they beat you. Why did they beat you?" I said, "I was denounced." And he said, "Denounced? For what?" I said, "A radio. I never had a radio." "Who would do such a thing?" And I looked at him a long time and I said either I tell him now or I'll never tell him. I'll go with it to my grave. And I said, "Renia" which was his first wife. He said, "She did?" I said, "Yes." And he looked at me for a long time and he said, "She could do things like that. But I ask you for a favor. Forgive her." I didn't answer because she's dead. Whether I forgive her or not is immaterial to her and to me -- maybe I should. I don't know.

Q I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE WRITING A BOOK.

A Yes.

Q WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE BY WRITING YOUR MEMOIRS?

A Just to tell --the stories are all pretty much alike yet they're all different. Just to tell one more story, I think. I don't write it for my kids. Certainly not for my husband.

Q WILL YOUR CHILDREN READ IT?

A Yeah, my son in fact corrected one chapter. At least he attempted. It's not his field. But he attempted and then we disagreed so. But it was an interesting experiment. I've given some chapters to some people whose opinion I would

value such Elie Wiesel, Lucien [Labuschitsky], [Centeur Ozcik] and the reaction has been very good. So, I hope. I also have a friend who is a professor of creative writing and literature and she does some editing which helps a great deal. You know, just the -- not the content but the mechanical parts. So maybe, I don't know. We'll see.

Q I THINK THAT SHOULD DO IT. I THINK IF YOUR BOOK IS ANYTHING LIKE YOUR INTERVIEWS IT WILL BE A WONDERFUL BOOK AND A GREAT ADDITION TO LITERATURE. I WANT TO THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A You're welcome.

Q (Male) DID YOU BRING SOME PHOTOGRAPHS WITH YOU? I'D LOVE TO GET A FEW SHOTS OF THOSE AT THE END HERE IF THAT'S POSSIBLE. WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHO THIS IS AND WHEN THE DATE WAS?

A Okay. This is my mother and I in 1925.

Q AND SO WHERE WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN?

A In Hamburg, Germany.

Q OKAY, VERY GOOD.

A This is my sister, Karen in 1936. Her first school day in Hamburg, Germany.

Q AND SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN HOW OLD THEN?

A Six years old.

Q WHAT IS SHE HOLDING?

A On the first school day European custom is - when you

are picked up from school you get your picture taken and a huge tube full of sweets to make it a sweet school year.

Q AND WHAT IS THIS? WHO IS THIS?

A This is I in Hamburg, Germany in 1930. First school day.

Q THE NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL WAS?

A [Israelish Madchen Schole Karl Lind Strasse]

Q OKAY, TELL US ABOUT THIS PLACE.

A This is 1926 with my parents in Poland. It is not at the beach in spite of the sand and the bucket. That was in a photographer's studio. It was just dummied up. (Laughter)

Q YOU WERE A YEAR OLD HERE?

A Just about.

Q PLEASE GO ON.

A This was in, I believe in Germany, in 1929. I was about four years old.

Q OKAY, TELL US ABOUT THIS ONE.

A Okay. This was my father in 1939 in Hamburg, just before the outbreak of the war.

Q HOW OLD IS HE IN THIS PICTURE, DO YOU KNOW?

A Yes. He was born in '92 so he was 47 years old.

Q OKAY.

A This is my sister, in Hamburg, in 1939.

This is also in Hamburg, that's my picture, in 1939.

Q ALL RIGHT. TELL US ABOUT THIS PLACE.

A This was taken in 1933 in [Butschwaldau] in Germany, just after Hitler came to power. It's my sister and I.

Q AND WHERE WERE YOU IN THIS SHOT HERE?

A I'm the taller one.

Q IS THIS SOMEONE'S HOUSE OR - -

A That was in a resort in [Butschwaldau].

Q TELL US ABOUT THIS, PLEASE?

A This was in a park in 1939. I had just received a camera and it was near Hamburg, Germany, and we were all dressed up, I think we were going to services, but I'm not sure.

Q AND LEFT TO RIGHT, WHO - -

A On the right is my sister, my mother in the center and I on the left.

Q WERE YOU EVENTUALLY TALLER THAN YOUR MOTHER?

A I really can't say because I was 16 when she died.

(END OF TAPE 2)