

Interview with Leo and Helen Fixler

Holocaust Oral History Project

Date: February 8, 1989 Place: Oakland, California

Interviewer:

Transcriber: Carla Diane Miller

1 THE INTERVIEWER: We are here with Mr. and Mrs.  
2 Fixler and today is February 8th, 1989. We are at the Beth  
3 Jacob Congregation Synagogue, in Oakland, California.

4 Q: COULD YOU PLEASE TELL US YOUR NAMES?

5 MR. FIXLER: Leonard Fixler. I live in Oakland  
6 and we came from Canada here.

7 MRS. FIXLER: And I am Helen Fixler. What else  
8 would you like to know?

9 Q: OKAY.

10 MR. FIXLER --

11 A: Yes.

12 Q: -- MAYBE WE WILL START WITH YOU. CAN YOU TELL  
13 ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

14 A: I was born in Czechoslovakia, 1922, and we  
15 lived a happy life until 1939, 1940, then the Hungarians came  
16 into our country, caused -- the trouble started then.

17 Q: CAN YOU TELL US WHAT TOWN YOU WERE BORN IN?

18 A: In Teresva?

19 Q. TERESVA?

20 A: Teresva, yes.

21 Q: WHAT PART OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS IT?

22 A: They used to call it the Carpathian Mountains.

23 Q: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY,  
24 WHAT IT CONSISTED OF?

25 A: Well, my family we were 16 children from two

1 mothers. Eight children survived and the other eight perished  
2 including my father and my mother.

3 Q: AND WHERE WERE YOU IN THAT AGE-WISE IN YOUR  
4 FAMILY?

5 A: You mean before the war or after the war?

6 Q: WHAT ORDER WERE YOU IN THE CHILDREN, FROM THE  
7 OLDEST TO THE YOUNGEST?

8 A: No, I was almost 'til the last one. Not the  
9 last one, but I had two more -- three more sisters and two  
10 little brothers.

11 Q: SO YOU WERE ONE OF THE YOUNGEST?

12 A: Yeah.

13 Q: WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION DID YOU HAVE?

14 A: Well education, I finished high school because  
15 there was no time for education. The war erupted so there was  
16 no time for education.

17 But in 1939 I left home and I went to Budapest,  
18 Hungary, and I worked there for about two years and then the  
19 trouble started. The Hungarians drafted me in forced labour and  
20 we worked there and then they shipped us out in 1944 to Germany,  
21 the Hungarian Austrian border.

22 Q: BEFORE YOU WENT TO HUNGARY, DID YOU HAVE ANY  
23 IDEA THAT THERE WAS ANY TROUBLE THERE FOR THE JEWS?

24 A: Yes, they started the trouble -- they rationed  
25 food stamps and this and that, and we couldn't go places already

1 where we wanted to go.

2 Q: THIS WAS BACK IN HUNGARY?

3 A: In Hungary, yes.

4 So I decided I'm going to leave home so I went to  
5 a big city, but from there I was 21 years old and they drafted  
6 me to the Hungarian forced labor camp.

7 Q: WERE THEY JUST DRAFTING JEWS TO GO INTO THE  
8 FORCED LABOR?

9 A: Just Jews, yes. Just Jews. Of course we had  
10 to wear a yellow ribbon.

11 Q: A YELLOW RIBBON?

12 A: Yes.

13 Q: WHERE?

14 A: Around our arm.

15 Q: WHAT YEAR DID THAT BEGIN?

16 A: That happened in 1943, and from -- we worked  
17 'til 1944. In 1944 they took us to the -- in a cattle train to  
18 the Austrian Hungarian borders and there where I met my brother  
19 in a cattle train and they didn't give us nothing to eat, no  
20 water, nothing. So finally we came together there and from  
21 there on it started. We were there from about the whole winter,  
22 1944, and in --

23 Q: WHERE WERE YOU?

24 A: They call it Karczag.

25 Q: KARCZAG.

1                   A: Yeah, and from there we started before Easter,  
2 1945. We started on a death march and we marched all the way  
3 'til Mauthausen, but before we came to Mauthausen they called  
4 that mountain Eisen Erts (phonetic), one of the tallest  
5 mountains in Austria. I'll never forget it in my life. It took  
6 us three days to reach that mountain. It was snow 'til our  
7 knees and when we came up to that mountain, a Friday night, they  
8 came out, some SS soldiers, German soldiers. One didn't even  
9 have an arm, one arm, and started shooting at us with machine  
10 guns and the snow was not white anymore. The snow was red from  
11 the blood. A lot of people died that night down there.

12                   Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE YOU?

13                   A: We were about -- I would say about 20,000  
14 marched and if it left 15,000 was a lot. A lot of people died  
15 down there.

16                   Then we came to Mauthausen and we crossed the  
17 bridge and they told us that you coming in on a nice camp where  
18 you're going to get food and clothing, shelter. Before we came  
19 in there they opened up the bridge and the people just went in  
20 in that water, in that ocean, in the Danube.

21                   So finally we came into Mauthausen and we stayed  
22 down there for a while. There was a real bad camp. There were  
23 crematoriums down there. We stayed outside, and then they  
24 transferred us to Gunskirchen through Linz and Wels.

25                   Q: BEFORE YOU LEFT MAUTHAUSEN, HOW DID YOU KNOW

1 THAT THERE WERE CREAMATORIUMS THERE?

2 A: Because we came in down there and they were  
3 already -- we saw the chimneys down there, the smell from it.  
4 But when we left Mauthausen we came to a city they call it Linz,  
5 and in Linz we marched day and night, without rest without food.  
6 We came into Wels and they told us whoever stayed behind the  
7 line they were shot to death. I sat down. I couldn't walk  
8 anymore, I was very hungry, and my brother said good-bye to me  
9 because he knew they going to shoot me. So when the SS came up  
10 to me, he says, 'You cannot walk?' I says, 'Yes, yes, I can  
11 walk.' I started up and run, and I met my brother again in the  
12 line.

13 So then we came into a city we call Wels and in  
14 Wels they told us if anybody steps out of the line they'll be  
15 shot to death and I couldn't walk anymore. I was so weak.

16 So I smelled -- when we walked through the city I  
17 felt a smell from a bakery and I run out from the line, I went  
18 in down there and the woman saw me and she says, 'What do you  
19 want?' I says, 'Please, give me a piece of bread.' She says,  
20 'I don't have no bread but I have cooked potatoes,' and I says  
21 to her, 'That's okay. I'll take cooked potatoes,' and I started  
22 to leave to stuff myself and tie up my pants and put them in my  
23 pants, the potatoes, and all of a sudden before leaving an SS  
24 man saw me, a German soldier. I says, 'That's the end of it.'  
25 He grabbed the rifle and split open my head, but I was so strong

1 with those few potatoes that I start running and came into my  
2 brother in the line and we ate potatoes, we both were blown up  
3 from the potatoes.

4 We came in in that camp. We were not very long  
5 down there, only 10 days - they call it Gunskirchen - it's only  
6 three miles from the city, and we were liberated in May down  
7 there.

8 Q: LET'S GO BACK TO MAUTHAUSEN FOR A MINUTE.

9 A: Yeah.

10 Q: WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS LIKE IN MAUTHAUSEN?

11 A: Very bad. First of all no food, no water,  
12 nothing.

13 Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN MAUTHAUSEN?

14 A: In Mauthausen we were about three weeks.

15 Q: THREE WEEKS?

16 A: Yes.

17 Q. SO YOU HAD NOTHING TO EAT FOR THREE WEEKS?

18 A: No. Mostly we were on a death march and no  
19 food at all whatsoever. If we found a little bit -- if we found  
20 a little bit grass, we ate grass. The only thing we survived  
21 when it was raining. We had a little bit water. Otherwise  
22 nothing.

23 Q: WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE IN THE FORCED LABOR  
24 CAMP. HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE FORCE LABOR CAMP?

25 A: In the forced labor camp I was from 1943 'til

1 1944.

2 Q: WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS LIKE THERE?

3 A: The conditions we worked down there very hard,  
4 we built tunnels and they give us food, yes. I cannot say they  
5 didn't give us food, but they did give us food.

6 Q: WHO WERE YOUR GUARDS?

7 A: Hungarian soldiers, and then they turned us  
8 over in Budapest. They turned us over to the SS. To the German  
9 soldiers.

10 Q: THAT WAS AT THE END OF THE THREE YEARS?

11 A: No, that was 1944, beginning of 1944, and the  
12 Germans took us over and they took us to Austrian Hungarian  
13 border.

14 Q: SO AFTER THE THREE YEARS AT THE CAMP THEY  
15 TURNED YOU OVER TO THE GERMANS IN BUDAPEST?

16 A: No, we were not three years in the camp. I  
17 was in a forced labor camp.

18 Q: THAT'S WHAT I MEAN. IN THE FORCED LABOR CAMP?

19 A: From 1943 'til '44. Only one year.

20 Q: ONE YEAR?

21 A: Yes. Yes.

22 Q: HOW DID THE HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS TREAT YOU IN  
23 COMPARISON TO THE SS OR THE GERMAN --

24 A: The Hungarian soldiers were all right. Either  
25 we worked and we made them happy with the work we was supposed



1 to do and they give us food and everything there was okay, but  
2 then we came to the Germans there was nothing down there. There  
3 was no food. We used to sleep in 30 below zero in tent, you  
4 know, like canvass tents in the wintertime. It was awful.

5 Q: WERE YOU GETTING ANY INFORMATION ABOUT --

6 A: No.

7 Q: -- THE OUTSIDE WORLD ABOUT THE JEWS?

8 A: No, we never had no information. The only  
9 thing is we had the information in Mauthausen that came a  
10 transport with people that they were in Auschwitz and they told  
11 us what happened.

12 Q: WHAT DID THEY TELL YOU?

13 A: They told us that there were crematoriums and  
14 that they gassed all our people down there.

15 Q: DID YOU BELIEVE THEM WHEN YOU FIRST HEARD IT?

16 A: Yes, I did believe them. Yes, I did believe  
17 them.

18 Q: IT DIDN'T SOUND TOO --

19 A: No, we believed them because they were telling  
20 the truth because they just came from there. See the Russians  
21 were coming so they took them to another camp.

22 So then 1945 when we were liberated, that Friday  
23 night, me and my brother, we were together all the time, and we  
24 went into the city when were not supposed to go into that city,  
25 Wels, where the woman gave us potatoes. Actually she saved our

1 life, and we knocked on the door and nobody answered and then I  
2 told her this is the man that you saved my life, you give us the  
3 potatoes. She opened up the door right away and she let us  
4 sleep for two nights down there.

5 And from there we found a bus, a Czechoslovakian  
6 bus that they said they were going home to Czechoslovakia. So  
7 they took us on that bus all the way to the Czechoslovakian  
8 border. There they stopped us and they told us that you cannot  
9 go further because they're still fighting down there. So a  
10 family came up to us, they said, 'Do you want to stay in our  
11 house?' I says, 'Sure.' They started to fill us with fat  
12 meats, you know, and everything, and both of us got sick Flec  
13 (phonetic) Typhus and both of us went into a hospital in  
14 Germany, that's the Czechoslovakian border, and there it was all  
15 SS soldiers - it's a military hospital - and they ask us what  
16 nationality are you. I told them I'm Czechoslovakian and they  
17 took us in and we were -- I was there for six months. The first  
18 night when the nurse came, the Sister came in, it was a Catholic  
19 and she brought me in a cross.

20 MRS. FIXLER: Why don't you explain why you did  
21 it.

22 MR. FIXLER: Okay. And she brought in a cross and  
23 she put it on my neck and she says to me, 'This will help you.  
24 God will help you with that thing.' I was so sick for 6 months.  
25 But when I started to get a little bit stronger -- I couldn't

1 walk on my feet I had to learn to walk like a baby --

2 MRS. FIXLER: Excuse me, I must interrupt. The  
3 point you should tell why you didn't want to say that you're  
4 Jewish.

5 MR. FIXLER: Because they were all SS soldiers and  
6 we were afraid that they going to kill us there.

7 MRS. FIXLER: In that hospital.

8 MR. FIXLER: In that hospital.

9 So when we got stronger already, cured, after six  
10 months, the Red Cross came. There came a law that all  
11 Czechoslovakian people must go home. So they came with an  
12 ambulance and they took us from the hospital and they tucked us  
13 in in a blanket and the Sister, the Catholic Sister came out,  
14 and she says, 'Well, you feel better. You going home now.'  
15 Then I took off my cross and I give it to her. She says, 'No,  
16 you keep that thing. Keep that thing because this is going to  
17 help you and it helped you so you're healthy now again.' I says  
18 to her, 'Sister, I am Jewish,' and she looked at me and she  
19 accepted it back but never said nothing. We came home. We came  
20 home and we met our family, whoever survived.

21 Q: WHO SURVIVED FROM YOUR FAMILY?

22 A: We survived five brothers and three sisters  
23 from the whole family.

24 Q: FROM THE WHOLE FAMILY?

25 A: Yes.

1 Q: HAD THEY SPENT THE WAR IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA?

2 A: My brother spent the war in Budapest. He was  
3 working in the Czechoslovakian Embassy down there as a  
4 Christian, and my younger sister, she was working with the  
5 Germans has a Christian girl and my other two sisters were in  
6 Bergen-Belsen, in concentration camp.

7 Q: AND THEY SURVIVED?

8 A: They survived.

9 Q: AND YOU ALL MET BACK AT HOME?

10 A: We all met in 1945 in the city -- they call it  
11 Teplice Shano (phonetic).

12 Q: THAT'S YOUR HOME TOWN?

13 A: No, no. That was the Sudetenland. Yeah,  
14 there we met all of us and later on I went to Germany in a  
15 displaced person camp, me and my brother and my sister and I  
16 enlisted in the U.S. Army, Labor Supervision Camp 'til 1949, and  
17 '49 they sent me out to Canada where I came out and worked and  
18 one day I met my wife on a blind date and we went out and six  
19 months later we got married.

20 Q: LET'S SWITCH OVER TO MRS. FIXLER AND WHY DON'T  
21 YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO GROW UP?

22 MRS. FIXLER: My story is entirely different. I  
23 come from a medium size city from Poland near the Russian  
24 border, it's called Ukrainian. I come from a family of five  
25 children. I come from an orthodox home where Judaism was

1 stressed a lot. As a child I went to Hebrew school. I knew  
2 Hebrew when I was about 11, 12. I knew very well Hebrew, and  
3 when I was about 13 years old -- I come from the part of Poland  
4 where it kept changing countries 'til 1939.

5 Q: BETWEEN --

6 A: Yes, it was Poland. In 1939 Russia occupied  
7 all part of Poland, so I was two years under Russia.

8 Q: WHAT YEAR WERE YOU BORN?

9 A: 1927. So I was still very young. I was what,  
10 12, 13 years old.

11 In 1941, of course, this is when the Germans came  
12 in and this when, of course, all the trouble started.

13 Q: MAYBE YOU CAN SLOW DOWN JUST A LITTLE BIT.

14 A: Yes.

15 Q: MAYBE YOU CAN JUST DESCRIBE, IF YOU WOULD,  
16 WHAT THE LIFE WAS LIKE IF YOU WERE FROM AN ORTHODOX FAMILY AND  
17 WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR JEWS IN YOUR VILLAGE? DID THE JEWS AND  
18 GENTILES MIX?

19 A: Yes, we had Gentile neighbors, of course,  
20 Polish neighbors. The Ukrainians were not the greatest people.  
21 They really didn't care too much for Jews. Polish people, you  
22 know, not as bad. We had Polish neighbors and we got along very  
23 well with them.

24 We had a nice temple in our city. My father used  
25 to go every morning and evening to the temple and I used to go,

1 just as I went to public school, every afternoon, every day, I  
2 used to go to Hebrew school and I knew very well at that time it  
3 was -- you know, my brothers -- like we come from a family of  
4 five of course, three brothers and two sisters, I was the fourth  
5 in line, I was one of the youngest, and then there was another  
6 sister younger than I. She's not alive of course. Younger than  
7 I, and a very loving family, very close family. I had  
8 grandparents in my city.

9 Q: SO WOULD YOU SAY IN YOUR TOWN, IN YOUR CITY,  
10 THERE WAS FREEDOM TO PRACTICE JUDAISM?

11 A: During Poland, yes.

12 Q: WHILE IT WAS UNDER POLISH --

13 A: Polish, yes. Under Russia not too bad, but  
14 not as much as under Poland, but of course the minute the  
15 Germans came in everything stopped.

16 I remember I was at that time still child and when  
17 I saw through the window Germans coming I used to run and hide  
18 in a corner. I was so frightened of them. I was so petrified.  
19 It was just terrible.

20 Q: WAS THERE ANY SIGNS OR WARNINGS THAT THE  
21 GERMANS WERE COMING WHEN THEY FIRST CAME?

22 A: Not really, no. Within a few days they  
23 took -- you know, it's not such a big country my country I came  
24 from, and within a week they were in our city.

25 Q: HOW DID THINGS CHANGE ONCE THEY TOOK OVER?

1                   A: Once they took over we couldn't go no place.  
2 We were not allowed to go any place. We had to wear yellow  
3 stars or ribbons and we were not allowed to do anything, just  
4 stay at home. The people like my brothers, my father, they had  
5 to go to work every day. I was still too young. But no food,  
6 no nothing.

7                   Q: THEY WERE ABLE TO GO TO WORK? THEY HAD TO GO  
8 TO WORK?

9                   A: They had to go to work, yes.

10                  Q: WHAT KIND OF A BUSINESS WAS YOUR FATHER IN?

11                  A: Like grain. He used to buy and sell grain,  
12 you know.

13                  Q: WAS HE ABLE TO KEEP HIS BUSINESS IN THE  
14 BEGINNING WHEN THE GERMANS WERE THERE?

15                  A: No, not at all.

16                  Q: HE JUST COMPLETELY LOST EVERYTHING?

17                  A: Lost everything, and eventually they put us  
18 into ghettos. We had to leave our home and they took -- in our  
19 city one street or two streets and everybody had to move in that  
20 street.

21                  Q: WHAT WAS THAT LIKE TO ALL OF A SUDDEN GO INTO  
22 A GHETTO?

23                  A: In a ghetto? We were about what, 5, 10  
24 families living in one room or what. You know, it was just  
25 terrible. No food, no nothing, and we couldn't walk out of the

1 ghetto. The only people that could walk out is if they came to  
2 pick up people to go to work. Otherwise we had to stay in the  
3 ghettos.

4 Q: AND THE FOOD SITUATION?

5 A: Very little. Hardly any food. Any food.  
6 Many times -- I wonder to this day, every day of my life lately,  
7 I think how was it possible to survive what I've been through in  
8 my life. I just can't believe it. That any youngster can go  
9 through life and -- you know. Just unbelievable.

10 Q: DID ALL THE JEWS -- WHEN THEY PUT PEOPLE IN  
11 THE GHETTO, DID ALL THE JEWS GO TO THE GHETTO OR DID SOME PEOPLE  
12 ESCAPE OR RUN AWAY?

13 A: There was no place to escape. Eventually,  
14 yes. Eventually people did escape and I did escape with my  
15 family from the ghetto and we fled to the woods.

16 Q: HOW DID YOU GET OUT OF THE GHETTO? DID  
17 SOMEONE HELP YOU?

18 A: At night. My father -- we heard that they're  
19 going to kill us all somehow. It was rumor in the ghetto that  
20 this is it. They're going to round us up and kill us so we fled  
21 in the middle of the night and we fled -- I come from the  
22 Ukraine and we have there a lot of woods around our cities, big  
23 woods, within 10 miles, 20 miles, and I fled with my father and  
24 mother and the whole family to the woods.

25 Q: WERE YOU ABLE TO JUST WALK OUT OF THE GHETTO?



1 IT WASN'T SEALED OR WERE THERE GUARDS?

2 A: There were guards, but somehow we fled. We  
3 crawled and we escaped.

4 Q: DID YOU TAKE ANYTHING WITH YOU?

5 A: Nothing at all. Nothing at all. Nothing at  
6 all. A matter of fact we fled to the woods and I was in the  
7 woods for about a year and a half and in my country we have  
8 severe winters. I mean we have below zero. We used to get  
9 probably around 20 below and a lot of snow and I had to spend a  
10 whole year winter in the woods. What we did is we dug out  
11 bunkers, covered them with a little wood, with ground, and we  
12 stayed there a whole winter. We had no food. At night we used  
13 to go out sometimes in the field and look maybe for a rotten  
14 potato or whatever so we can eat and we were of course very cold  
15 also. So we used to make fire at night because we were also  
16 afraid of the Ukrainian people.

17 In my country, where I come from, it's not only  
18 the Germans that were so bad to us, but the Ukrainians just as  
19 bad as the Germans.

20 Q: THE UKRAINIANS WERE LOOKING FOR --

21 A: For Jew too. We had to hide from them.

22 MR. FIXLER: They were worse than the Germans, the  
23 Ukrainians.

24 MRS. FIXLER: Just terrible. Just terrible.

25 So literally without food, without nothing, and I

1 was very young still, you know, a child growing up without food  
2 without nothing. Many times I used to cry so hard and all I  
3 would wish many times that somebody should come and kill me in  
4 the back.

5 Q: WERE YOU WITH ANY OTHER FAMILIES OR PEOPLE?

6 A: Where we are a few families and believe it or  
7 not that from all the families that were in that part of the  
8 woods that I was, I think about 11 or 12 of us survived.

9 Q: 11 OR 12 PEOPLE?

10 A: That's right, 11 or 12, yes, out of a few  
11 hundred. I don't know how.

12 And of course my mother and my brother and sister  
13 were killed in the woods. In the woods the Ukrainians killed  
14 them and I survived with my father. My father was wounded and I  
15 had nothing to tend to his wounds. I had a few pieces of rags,  
16 a little few pieces, so at night I used to go and break the  
17 creek, there was a little creek in the woods, so I could wash  
18 the few rags and change and tend to his wound.

19 Q: BREAK THE ICE?

20 A: Break the ice.

21 I had no shoes, my feet were swollen, no clothes,  
22 no nothing.

23 Q: SO IT WAS JUST YOU AND YOUR FATHER THEN?

24 A: Yes, because the others were killed.

25 Q: BY THE UKRAINIANS?

1 A: By the Ukrainians, yes.

2 Q: WERE THE UKRAINIANS TRYING TO CATCH JEWS?

3 A: Yes, they tried.

4 MR. FIXLER: They got paid for that thing.

5 MRS. FIXLER: They helped the Germans.

6 MR. FIXLER: See for sugar or for flour that was  
7 their reward to catch a Jew.

8 Q: SO THEY WOULD KILL YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE  
9 ESCAPING THEN?

10 MR. FIXLER: Well, because you were Jewish.

11 MRS. FIXLER: They were working with the Germans.

12 MR. FIXLER: They were working with the Germans.

13 MRS. FIXLER: They are with the Germans working.

14 Q: BUT I MEAN IF THEY COULDN'T CATCH YOU TO GET  
15 THE REWARD THEY --

16 MRS. FIXLER: They could tell on us. We had to  
17 hide from them and from the Germans.

18 Like even many times I sleep at night and I shake.  
19 I always think somebody's running after me.

20 MR. FIXLER: They want to get us.

21 Q: DO YOU HAVE THAT DREAM?

22 MRS. FIXLER: Yes, I still have it. I still have  
23 it. Even while my husband was talking I get so, you know, tense  
24 and, you know.

25 Q: MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE A LITTLE BREAK NOW.

1 MR. FIXLER: Yeah, let's take a little break. Have  
2 a little bit water.

3 Q: AS LONG AS YOU NEED. A HALF AN HOUR?

4 MR. FIXLER: You know something, it's  
5 unbelievable. Sometimes you forgot what it -- you don't want to  
6 even think of it. What people -- how mean people could be.

7 MRS. FIXLER: And, you know, many times I was  
8 still a child, what was I, later 14, 15, I used to pass by a  
9 house at night, you know, and from the woods, you know, and I  
10 would wish, gee if I could only go in sometimes in a house and  
11 be able to sleep one night even not in a bed, at least on the  
12 floor.

13 MR. FIXLER: I used to look at a bird, how the  
14 bird is flying and I says to myself, 'At least that bird is  
15 free, but I am not free.' I admired the bird that the bird was  
16 free.

17 You can ask us questions. Whatever you want.

18 Q: I JUST WANTED TO SAY ONE THING. THAT WHEN YOU  
19 WERE TELLING YOUR STORY WE WENT MANY YEARS IN ABOUT FIVE OR 10  
20 MINUTES. THERE'S NO RUSH. THAT'S ALL.

21 MRS. FIXLER: Let me tell you what kind of  
22 orthodox home I come.

23 Q: OKAY.

24 MRS FIXLER: While I was hiding in the woods I  
25 never had a piece of bread. I hardly could eat anything, and

1 then somehow I knew when Passover was and it just happened so  
2 that at one time I went to some home and they were nice. They  
3 gave me a few pieces of bread, and I had the bread and I saved  
4 it. But I knew it was Passover. I didn't eat the bread.

5 MR. FIXLER: Well, I couldn't say that I knew it  
6 was Passover, but I didn't have what to eat.

7 MRS. FIXLER: I didn't have what to eat so at  
8 night many times we went and picked a few cherries so I ate or  
9 whatever, but I didn't want to touch the bread. I thought, you  
10 know, it's...

11 Q: WERE THERE ANY OTHER WAYS IN WHICH YOU TRIED  
12 TO OBSERVE JEWISH HOLIDAYS?

13 MRS. FIXLER: There was no way to observe.

14 MR. FIXLER: Sometimes you didn't even know when  
15 it was a holiday.

16 MRS. FIXLER: There was no way.

17 MR. FIXLER: No.

18 MRS. FIXLER: There was no way.

19 But at that time we knew. I don't know. There  
20 was a very orthodox man with us. In fact he survived and he's  
21 in Israel. His son, as a matter of fact, was a big general in  
22 the army, and he knew all the exact holidays. He kept track of  
23 every day. That's how he knew.

24 Q. WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT HE DID --

25 MRS. FIXLER: There was nothing he can do. He was

1 much older than I am and he survived, believe it or not, with  
2 his family. One of his sons was killed in Israel in the army I  
3 heard.

4 Q: MR. FIXLER --

5 MR. FIXLER: Yes.

6 Q: -- DURING YOUR TIME IN THE LABOR -- FORCED  
7 LABOR CAMP AND AFTERWARDS, DID YOU SEE ANY SIGNS OF ANY KIND OF  
8 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE?

9 MR. FIXLER: No, we did not. In fact we didn't  
10 even know when there was a holiday.

11 You see, we were in Hungary because we were cut  
12 off from the work and we didn't know nothing. Absolutely  
13 nothing. The only thing is when we met those boys when they  
14 came from Auschwitz and Mauthausen and they told us - in fact  
15 from my town - and they told us what happened down there.  
16 Exactly when they went to the chamber, to the gas chamber, there  
17 was Shavuot, the second day of Shavuot, they went to the gas  
18 chamber, and that's about all that we knew. Otherwise nothing.  
19 We never heard nothing.

20 Of course when we came home I went to visit my  
21 city where I was born, the Russians was there, and we used to  
22 have a maid. She was with us 20 years, and when I came home I  
23 found her and she asked me - she used to call my father and  
24 mother mama and daddy - and she asked me, 'Where is mommy and  
25 daddy?' I told her that day what happened. She started to cry

1     like a baby. She was so devoted.

2                     Of course there was just a few -- we were a city  
3     where we used to be about -- I would say about six thousand  
4     Jewish families before the war and when I came home you could  
5     count them on the fingers.

6                     Q: DID ANYONE STAY FROM YOUR FAMILY?

7                     A: No, I don't think anybody stayed there. Two  
8     of my friends stayed down there but I hear they immigrated to  
9     Israel. In fact we going to go there. I want to meet them.

10                    MRS. FIXLER: You know I come from a family of a  
11    few hundred at least and what are we, three? I know one cousin  
12    in Israel. About four or five of us survived from a family of a  
13    few hundred.

14                    I would like to go to my hometown. In fact I  
15    inquired last year. I became a travel agent so -- of course you  
16    can go to Russia now but not to every city. You can go only to  
17    major cities and I'm waiting 'til I can go to my city because in  
18    my city there's a grave of all the Jews from our city and I'd  
19    like to visit it.

20                    Q: YOU MENTIONED THAT ONE TIME YOU WERE ABLE TO  
21    GET A LITTLE BIT OF BREAD THOUGH YOU DIDN'T HAVE IT BECAUSE IT  
22    WAS PASSOVER. WHAT KIND OF FAMILY GAVE YOU THAT BREAD?

23                    A. There was one family that we knew and they  
24    were kind to help. I don't know what nationality they were. In  
25    the woods -- and somebody told us that this family's helping a

1 little bit. So at one time or another we used to go at night  
2 and knock at the door and if we were lucky they gave us a piece  
3 of bread. But even going there you were afraid because what if  
4 somebody will see you, and the dogs also they would tear you  
5 apart.

6 Q: SO YOU HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON  
7 IN THE REST OF THE AREA OF THE COUNTRY?

8 MRS. FIXLER: Not at all.

9 Q: WHAT WERE YOU WAITING FOR?

10 A: Actually what we were waiting -- even when we  
11 were liberated I wouldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I  
12 didn't think that I'll ever survive this war, but then the  
13 Russians came. They liberated us.

14 Q: SO THAT'S HOW YOU FOUND OUT THAT THE WAR WAS  
15 OVER?

16 A: Yes, but they were still very good people.  
17 There was some good people. The first year when we fled my town  
18 my father used to deal with a Czech family, they were farmers,  
19 very fine people, and when we left they let us in in their  
20 stables and I stayed in their stables with my father for about  
21 six, seven months. And at night they used to bring us a little  
22 food, you know, but then it got very dangerous for them and we  
23 had to leave them.

24 Q: AND THAT'S WHEN YOU WENT INTO THE WOODS?

25 A: Yes.



1 Q: WHEN THE RUSSIANS CAME IN, WHAT WAS THE FIRST  
2 THING -- YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T -- YOU COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT --

3 A: I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't  
4 believe it. In fact, you know, when they came in of course I  
5 knew the language, I know Russian, and when they said they  
6 liberated -- in fact one Russian came over he said, 'Come on I'm  
7 going to marry you.' I said, 'Leave me alone.' I was so young.  
8 I didn't know.

9 Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THE TIME OF THE  
10 LIBERATION?

11 A. When I was liberated? Probably what, about  
12 16, 17. So this happened not in my hometown, I was liberated,  
13 but about 20 miles from my city. It was a village. And after  
14 we were liberated, in about a week or so, we went to our city.  
15 Our city was very much destroyed but our home was still left so  
16 we went to our home.

17 Q: WAS THERE ANYONE IN YOUR HOME?

18 A. Nobody. I mean maybe a family before but they  
19 fled even, you know. So we came and we stayed in our home for a  
20 while and then we left Russia. It wasn't easy but we left  
21 Russia and we left for Germany.

22 Q: YOUR FATHER AND --

23 A: My father and my two brothers, yeah.

24 Q: SO WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO GO TO GERMANY?

25 A: Because this was the only way to leave -- to

1 Israel or to the United States.

2 MR. FIXLER: That's right. That's the only way --

3 MRS. FIXLER: That's only way.

4 MR. FIXLER: I was in Czechoslovakia but they told  
5 us if you go to Germany to a displaced persons camp you have a  
6 chance to go to United States or to Israel. So I enlisted in  
7 the U.S. Labor Supervision Camp.

8 MRS. FIXLER: And I went to -- we went to -- first  
9 we wanted to go to Germany, but then we were stopped in  
10 Czechoslovakia and we were about six months there and in one big  
11 room we were about, I would say, close to a hundred people.  
12 They wouldn't let us go here nor there.

13 Q: WHO WAS IN CHARGE THERE?

14 MR. FIXLER: The underground. The Haganah.

15 MRS. FIXLER: Or whatever.

16 But then they picked us up from there. We went to  
17 Germany and I was in Pucking (phonetic) Germany for about a year  
18 and then I had -- my brother left before I did to Canada and  
19 then he sent papers for me and I went to Canada.

20 Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER AND --

21 A: My father didn't make it. He survived the  
22 war, but he had surgery after the war and I'm sure the Germans  
23 did it. It was in a German hospital and he didn't make it. It  
24 wasn't a major surgery that he had. He just didn't make it. So  
25 he died in Germany.

1                   In fact three years ago I went there to Germany to  
2 the cemetery and I hope to go again. My mother was killed in  
3 the woods and so did my brother and sister.

4                   Q: YOUR BROTHER HAD GONE TO CANADA SO HE SENT  
5 PAPERS FOR THE --

6                   A: Yeah, he sent papers for me. Yeah.

7                   Q: WHERE IN CANADA?

8                   A: Winnipeg. He lives in Winnipeg as a matter of  
9 fact, and I have a brother here in Oakland.

10                  MR. FIXLER: I used to have two brothers. One  
11 died a few years ago. I have a brother and I have two sisters  
12 in Cleveland, Ohio.

13                  In fact we going to go now to Israel in April and  
14 we going to have a family reunion down there. I have a brother  
15 in Israel and a sister in Israel.

16                  Q: HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO -- THAT YOU WERE GOING  
17 TO GO TO CANADA?

18                  MR. FIXLER: I was in the army and one day the  
19 lieutenant came in and says they need some tailors in Canada.  
20 So I was the tailor in the army. So he says to me, 'You want to  
21 go to Canada?' I says, 'Sure.' So just pack up your stuff and  
22 we went to Canada.

23                  MRS. FIXLER: He was not really a tailor. He  
24 pretended.

25                  MR. FIXLER: Yes, and I stayed down there and I

1 met my wife and we got married.

2 Q: WHAT KIND OF A TRAINING DID YOU HAVE BEFORE  
3 WHEN YOU WERE WORKING?

4 A: As a tailor?

5 Q: NO. YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY TRAINING?

6 A: No, I never worked because there was no --  
7 there was the war that I couldn't learn nothing. I mean I  
8 learned a little bit tailoring, but not much.

9 But we came to Canada and there we worked a little  
10 bit in a factory making -- I learned to make ladies garments.

11 Q: WITH YOUR BROTHER?

12 A: No, no, just by myself. All my family was in  
13 Cleveland. I went to Canada.

14 And then in 1957 we came to California and since  
15 then we are here.

16 Q: SO YOU MET?

17 A: I met my wife in Winnipeg.

18 MRS. FIXLER: In Winnipeg we met.

19 Q: HOW DID YOU MEET?

20 MR. FIXLER: Well, I met her brother. I never --  
21 I saw her a few times I mean in the bus when I went to work, but  
22 I talked to her brother and I ask her brother for a phone  
23 number, so he gave me her phone number. I took her out a couple  
24 times and we happened to fell in love with each other and we got  
25 married.

1 Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU AS A SURVIVOR TO COME  
2 TO - AND ALSO TO SURVIVE THE WAR IN THE WOODS - TO COME TO THE  
3 UNITED STATES OR CANADA? WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

4 MR. FIXLER: It was like that you come to a  
5 country where you didn't have nobody. You had to make a new  
6 life. A new start.

7 MRS. FIXLER: We had no family. Nobody to help us  
8 with anything.

9 MR. FIXLER: I didn't have nobody.  
10 Well I started to work and all of a sudden I met  
11 my wife and it's going to be 39 years that we are married and  
12 then we came out here to Oakland and I opened up a mens wear  
13 clothing and --

14 MRS. FIXLER: We worked very hard.

15 MR. FIXLER: We worked very hard in our life.

16 MRS. FIXLER: It's not like you people that are  
17 born here. They have a little help from parents, they have  
18 somebody, and we had -- we didn't know the language either so it  
19 was very hard for us.

20 Q: DID PEOPLE ASK YOU -- WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO  
21 NORTH AMERICA WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE THAT YOU MET,  
22 FOR EXAMPLE, WHO DIDN'T GO THROUGH WHAT YOU HAD GONE THROUGH?

23 MR. FIXLER: Well we met -- we became members at  
24 Temple Beth Abraham.

25 MRS. FIXLER: In Canada you mean?

1 Q: WHEN YOU FIRST CAME FROM EUROPE TO NORTH  
2 AMERICA, WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF THE --

3 MR. FIXLER: The reaction was very -- I'll tell  
4 you the truth, we met -- we used to belong to a temple, you  
5 know. We met a lot of people, made friends down there and  
6 little by little.

7 MRS. FIXLER: I had some distant relatives and  
8 they were very nice. They gave me a lot of moral support and  
9 they took me into their home and I stayed with them I would say  
10 maybe for a half a year and after half a year, as soon as I  
11 learned a little bit the language, I went to work and I took an  
12 apartment with my brother and about a year and a half of course  
13 I met my husband, we were married, and we worked very hard, very  
14 hard. But we are happy with whatever we have because we did it  
15 on our own.

16 MR. FIXLER: We appreciate because we did it on  
17 our own with no help from nobody.

18 Q: DID YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WHEN YOU  
19 FIRST CAME TO NORTH AMERICA?

20 MRS. FIXLER: Of course.

21 MR. FIXLER: Oh sure.

22 Q: WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE WHEN THEY  
23 HEARD YOUR STORY?

24 MRS. FIXLER: They were very sympathetic. They  
25 were very nice.

1 MR. FIXLER: Even here in Oakland when we arrived  
2 people were very nice. Especially in our temple we are members  
3 already down there since we arrived 31 years. We met a lot of  
4 friends. Very nice people.

5 MRS. FIXLER: As a matter of fact I told a friend  
6 of mine - I go to Berkeley, I take classes, different courses -  
7 I told her what I'm doing tonight and she gave me some -- and I  
8 told her I feel a little nervous about doing it tonight, but she  
9 says you have to do it because people have to know what was  
10 going on because there are still some people that don't believe  
11 it. You have to do it and she's Mormon, very nice lady, and I  
12 made a lot of friends and I get a lot of support and people make  
13 me feel so good. It's a great country here. It really is.  
14 It's an opportunity for everybody, if the people want to use  
15 opportunities.

16 Q: DID YOU COME ACROSS ANY PEOPLE THAT DIDN'T  
17 BELIEVE YOUR STORY?

18 MR. FIXLER: No. To who I talked everybody  
19 believes that. Of course if you meet sometimes people that  
20 they're laughing -- I never met people that don't believe it.

21 MRS. FIXLER: I never met.

22 MR. FIXLER: Of course I would not go in a  
23 conversation with people that I see they're non-Jewish or  
24 anything. I wouldn't tell them even.

25 MRS. FIXLER: Well, in a way you have to tell.

1 MR. FIXLER: You can tell them, but you never know  
2 to who you talk.

3 MRS. FIXLER: But they should know. I think it's  
4 important. They should know.

5 MR. FIXLER: Of course my children, they know  
6 exactly what happened. We used to tell them what happened.

7 Q: AT WHAT AGE DID YOU BEGIN TO TELL THEM?

8 MR. FIXLER: Well they were little, five, six  
9 years old, when they used to sit down and eat dinner and they  
10 didn't finish their dinner. I used to say, 'See I wish I would  
11 have had that thing so many years ago,' and they understand.

12 Q: YOU NEVER SPEAK TO THE NON-JEWS ABOUT --

13 MRS. FIXLER: I think we do.

14 MR. FIXLER: I did. I wouldn't say no, but I  
15 explained it to a lot of people, non-Jewish, and they believe it  
16 they believe it.

17 MRS. FIXLER: Oh, so do I yes. Yes. And as a  
18 matter of fact there are certain classes I went to and I was at  
19 times nervous or whatever and they could sense a little bit, and  
20 after I told them they became differently entire to me. They  
21 were so nice in every way and even to this day they became my  
22 best friends. So I think people are still --

23 MR. FIXLER: Oh, sure. Who understands that, you  
24 know, what we went through. But, you know, sometimes you don't  
25 even want to talk about it because every time you talk about it



1     you get the chills.

2                   MRS. FIXLER:  As a matter of fact when I talk you  
3     probably saw me a little bit shaking, you know.

4                   Q:  IT IS A LITTLE COLD?

5                   MRS. FIXLER:  No, it's not from the cold.

6                   MR. FIXLER:  The cold is nothing because we are  
7     used to cold weather.  We used to live in Winnipeg.  It was very  
8     cold down there.  I'll tell you the truth, I enjoy it.  I love  
9     cold weather.

10                  MRS. FIXLER:  I like a little bit snow but, you  
11     know.  It's not from the weather that I -- you know, all the  
12     memories and all the things we went through in our lives.

13                  Q:  HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY GATHERINGS OF OTHER  
14     SURVIVORS?

15                  MR. FIXLER:  They used to have it in Israel they  
16     had once and then they had it in Washington, D.C. from the  
17     survivors, but we missed it.  We went that time on a cruise and  
18     we couldn't go there.  But when I go to Israel --

19                  MRS. FIXLER:  We always go to visit --

20                  MR. FIXLER:  -- we always go to the -- I come  
21     together with people, you know, that we went -- they were there  
22     with me together and we remember everything.

23                  MRS. FIXLER:  We go to Yad V'ashem and all the  
24     places.

25                  You asked me something about people whether they

1 do believe us. I don't know what they think. They pretend they  
2 believe us, but what they think when they leave us who knows  
3 what they think or what they have in mind.

4 Q: DID YOU EVER CONSIDER MOVING TO ISRAEL RIGHT  
5 AFTER THE WAR OR IS THAT --

6 MRS. FIXLER: I would have moved, but at that time  
7 when I was in Germany we couldn't go there. The only place we  
8 could come is to Canada.

9 Q: WHY COULDN'T YOU GO TO ISRAEL?

10 MRS. FIXLER: It was in 19 -- at that time you  
11 couldn't.

12 MR. FIXLER: At that time you couldn't because  
13 they started to smuggle you in in 1947, you know, and you know  
14 when you have a family you don't want to part from a family.

15 MRS. FIXLER: As much as I like it here I would  
16 have been happy there too. I would have been very happy in  
17 Israel. Whenever I go there I feel so good there.

18 MR. FIXLER: I admire the living down there.

19 MRS. FIXLER: Oh, I like the life in Israel. I  
20 just love it. In fact we're planning to go soon and I would  
21 love to stay there a few months if I could.

22 MR. FIXLER: You see when you come to Israel you  
23 feel like you're a Jew. Those holidays down there, how people  
24 are happy. It comes a Sabbath, there is a Sabbath --

25 MRS. FIXLER: It's not only that. We hear so much

1 here in this country how much trouble there is in fighting and  
2 all that. We've been there a few times. The people feel safer  
3 there than they feel here. You see kids at night, 12:00, 1:00  
4 o'clock at night, 12, 13 year old kids, they walk the streets.  
5 They're not afraid. You wouldn't find this in this country  
6 where we have no wars.

7 Q: WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP, WHAT DID YOU -- DID  
8 YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT ISRAEL OR PALESTINE AT THE TIME?

9 MR. FIXLER: That time it was Palestine. To tell  
10 you the truth, my parents they were religious too, you know, and  
11 they never talked about Palestine, but I had a brother - should  
12 he rest in peace - in 1939 they drafted him in the Hungarian  
13 army and give a lot of money. We smuggled him out to Israel,  
14 and he went to Israel in 1939.

15 But religious people didn't believe that time in  
16 Palestine.

17 Q: WERE THERE ZIONIST GROUPS?

18 MR. FIXLER: There were Zionist groups and they  
19 felt like as soon as they go away down there they're not going  
20 to keep the Sabbath and the holidays, you know. They didn't  
21 believe in that thing.

22 Q: THOSE WERE THE STORIES --

23 MR. FIXLER: Yeah, that was the stories that time.

24 Q: THE SAME FOR --

25 MRS. FIXLER: No, we had a lot of Zionist groups,

1     you know, very active and all the youths used to belong there  
2     and go get together weekends and have a lot of fun.

3                 MR. FIXLER: Even today in the Tribune there was  
4     writeup about Israel how the religious people, the fanatics,  
5     they don't believe in Israel. They say we going to get the  
6     country when Messiah is going to come. Did you see it in the  
7     Tribune today? Yes, they still don't believe in to have our  
8     country. The only thing you deserve a country is when the  
9     Messiah is going to come. This is the fanatic. They didn't  
10    have enough.

11                Q: HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?

12                MRS. FIXLER: We had three. We have two.

13                MR. FIXLER: We had three children. I have two.  
14    I lost one son.

15                Q: DO YOU HAVE GRANDCHILDREN?

16                MRS. FIXLER: Yes.

17                MR. FIXLER: We have four grandchildren.

18                Q: AND WHAT KIND OF UPBRINGING DID THEY HAVE  
19    WOULD YOU SAY?

20                MRS. FIXLER: The children?

21                Q: DID THEY GO TO HEBREW SCHOOL?

22                MRS. FIXLER: Of course.

23                MR. FIXLER: Yeah, the grandchildren they to go  
24    Hebrew School. Oh, yeah, Bat Mitzvahs.

25                MRS. FIXLER: Our son had Bar Mitzvah.

1 MR. FIXLER: Some had a Bar Mitzvah, everything.

2 MRS. FIXLER: My daughters had Bat Mitzvahs.

3 MR. FIXLER: And the grandchildren they go to  
4 Hebrew school.

5 THE INTERVIEWER: WE WILL TAKE A LITTLE BREAK.

6 MRS. FIXLER: You're tired too?

7 THE INTERVIEWER: NO.

8 MRS. FIXLER: Is all of it going to be -- you pick  
9 out certain things?

10 THE INTERVIEWER: LIKE WHEN I'M DRINKING WE'LL  
11 TAKE THAT OUT.

12 MRS. FIXLER: No, no, no, but even though what we  
13 say?

14 THE INTERVIEWER: NOT REALLY BECAUSE --

15 MR. FIXLER: You mean whatever we say the whole  
16 tape is going to be like this?

17 MRS. FIXLER: Is important. Everything --

18 THE INTERVIEWER: OTHERWISE -- I GUESS -- IT HAS  
19 TO BE TRUE.

20 MR. FIXLER: The natural thing.

21 THE INTERVIEWER: IF THEY EDITED THINGS THEN  
22 PEOPLE WOULD SAY, OH WELL IT WAS -- THEN IT BECOMES MORE LIKE  
23 A -- SORT OF A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE.

24 MRS. FIXLER: I wish you would see a picture when  
25 he survived.

1                   MR. FIXLER: I should have brought my picture when  
2 I survived. I must have weighed about 65 to 70 pounds.

3                   MRS. FIXLER: You're not Jewish I assume?

4                   THE INTERVIEWER: NO, I'M NOT.

5                   MRS. FIXLER: Tell me, how do you feel hearing all  
6 these stories?

7                   THE INTERVIEWER: OH, I'M OVERWHELMED. IT'S GOING  
8 TO TAKE ME A WHILE TO DIGEST ALL OF THIS MATERIAL AND COME TO  
9 SOME UNDERSTANDING. IT'S JUST OVERWHELMING.

10                  MRS. FIXLER: I can't believe myself that I went  
11 through all of that. Can you believe it? Many times I think of  
12 it and I just -- I think how could I possibly have made all  
13 the -- lived through all that and be alive now. I just --

14                  MR. FIXLER: It's unbelievable.

15                  MRS. FIXLER: It's unbelievable.

16                  MR. FIXLER: A person is stronger than a horse. A  
17 human being is stronger than a horse.

18                  MRS. FIXLER: God forbid if this would happen to  
19 generation now. None of them would make it.

20                  MR. FIXLER: I remember they used to come with us  
21 when we were in labor camp in Budapest, I used to come boys from  
22 the real nice homes, rich homes, you know, and they looked  
23 healthy. Four, five days they were gone completely. They were  
24 not used to that living.

25                  Q: YOU MEAN THE JEWISH BOYS?

1 MR. FIXLER: Yeah. Oh, sure.

2 MRS. FIXLER: How many rich Jews did you know?

3 MR. FIXLER: I mean from Budapest I'm talking  
4 about. From Budapest, you see, from the better homes. They  
5 were not used to that life and boy they were going so fast.

6 Q: SO AFTER FOUR OR FIVE DAYS THEY DIED?

7 MR. FIXLER: Oh sure, they dropped dead. Oh sure.

8 It was hard labour. We used to work very hard.  
9 We used to build -- we used to build those -- in mountains, we  
10 used to cut into the mountains, you know, and make like for  
11 gasoline tanks down there, you know, containers, and we worked  
12 very hard down there.

13 Q: WHY WERE THEY PUTTING THEM DOWN THERE?

14 MR. FIXLER: They were hiding in the mountains the  
15 gasoline that the Americans had there. The British wouldn't  
16 find that thing and bomb it. They were cutting it into the  
17 mountains.

18 MRS. FIXLER: I hope it is Zelikovitz (phonetic)  
19 that you're going to interview. You know, they did certain  
20 things to women so eventually they cannot have children.

21 MR. FIXLER: She was together with my two sisters  
22 in Bergen-Belsen. She knows the whole thing.

23 You see, when you find people like who were at  
24 Auschwitz, they will be able to tell more because they started  
25 down there. They had a miserable thing down there. Auschwitz

1 was the worst. Of course Bergen-Belsen was very bad too, but  
2 Mauthausen was very bad.

3 MRS. FIXLER: It is cold here. You know that?  
4 Now it is cold. You would have enjoyed coming more to my house  
5 than here.

6 MR. FIXLER: Mauthausen was very bad.

7 THE INTERVIEWER: DO YOU WANT A JACKET?

8 MRS. FIXLER: No, it's okay. I'm okay.

9 MR. FIXLER: She's okay.

10 Mauthausen was very bad too. Heavy canvass was no  
11 good.

12 Q: DURING THE CONSTRUCTION AND THE PROJECTS THAT  
13 YOU WORKED ON, WERE THERE ANY ACTS OF RESISTANCE OR SABOTAGE?

14 MR. FIXLER: There was sabotage. There was  
15 Yugoslavians working with us and, you know, the Yugoslavians  
16 were against the Germans too. And when it was almost completed  
17 they plugged up the holes, and when they put in the gasoline the  
18 gasoline run out and they said that we did it. So they took out  
19 from every 10 person, they counted 10, every 10 went out and was  
20 shot. And they did it. Yugoslavians did it. Not we did it.

21 Q: WAS THERE ANY OTHER RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS?

22 MR. FIXLER: No. Oh no. You couldn't do nothing  
23 that time.

24 MRS. FIXLER: I wish we could -- I wish they would  
25 have done it. I think if this would have happened, you know --



1 But you couldn't resist.

2 MR. FIXLER: With what?

3 MRS. FIXLER: With what? You had nothing.

4 MR. FIXLER: You see when an age when everybody's  
5 against you with who you going to talk even?

6 MRS. FIXLER: It's not only that. A Jew is born  
7 that way that you shouldn't fight, you shouldn't resist, you  
8 know. This was the custom of the Jews in Europe, you know,  
9 years ago. You're not suppose to -- no matter what you're not  
10 supposed to fight back. You're not supposed to talk back. This  
11 was the upbringing of a Jew.

12 MR. FIXLER: But not anymore.

13 MRS. FIXLER: Not anymore, I hope.

14 MR. FIXLER: They say never again.

15 Q: I DON'T KNOW IF I ASKED YOU, BUT DID YOU COME  
16 ACROSS ANY RESISTANCE PEOPLE IN THE WOODS, SAY NON-JEWS OR --

17 MRS. FIXLER: Yes. As a matter of fact when I was  
18 in the woods there were Russians too, Partisans, but they were  
19 all killed. They were all killed.

20 Q: DID YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THEM?

21 MRS. FIXLER: Not in a way. I knew they were  
22 there and they were fighting the Germans and they were escaping  
23 the Germans just like we did, but not really.

24 Q: SINCE YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES SAY,  
25 I GUESS IN OAKLAND -- YOU BOTH CAME FROM CANADA TO OAKLAND?

1 MR. FIXLER: Yes.

2 MRS. FIXLER: Yes.

3 Q: HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED ANY INSTANCES OF  
4 ANTI-SEMITISM HERE?

5 MR. FIXLER: No, I wouldn't say that. No, I  
6 don't --

7 MRS. FIXLER: Do you recall of anything?

8 MR. FIXLER: No.

9 MRS. FIXLER: Do you recall?

10 MR. FIXLER: No, no, no.

11 MRS. FIXLER: I'm just thinking whether I did.

12 MR. FIXLER: No.

13 MRS. FIXLER: I don't remember.

14 MR. FIXLER: Of course you're always busy. You  
15 know what I mean. Like I go in in the morning in the store and  
16 come home in the evening. You don't associate with people that  
17 they're anti-semitic.

18 MRS. FIXLER: I don't recall really. I mean --

19 MR. FIXLER: No, I wouldn't say that.

20 MRS. FIXLER: -- I work in an office. They're  
21 very nice. They know I'm Jewish. And I take different classes.  
22 A few years ago I decided to become a travel agent. Of course I  
23 had to go to school and learn computer and everything, which I'm  
24 very proud at my age, you know, and I went -- I remember I went  
25 last year to a United Airlines, to the computer class. They

1 knew I was Jewish and all of them were Gentile, but they were  
2 very nice to me. Very nice to me. In fact the teacher, she  
3 even brought me a note. She was so proud of me. She thought I  
4 was the best student.

5 MR. FIXLER: Yeah, we're very happy here in  
6 Oakland. Thank God we have a nice family.

7 MRS. FIXLER: Of course we lost a son.

8 MR. FIXLER: I lost a son.

9 MRS. FIXLER: This puts us back in, you know,  
10 more -- this is the only thing that we are unhappy here about  
11 this.

12 MR. FIXLER: So when are you going to interview  
13 some more people? Every day somebody else?

14 THE INTERVIEWER: YEAH, IT'S A PRETTY FULL  
15 SCHEDULE.

16 MRS. FIXLER: I hope maybe the other people give  
17 you better stories than we do.

18 MR. FIXLER: Well, I'll tell you something. Some  
19 people, that Green, what's his name, that you interviewed?

20 THE INTERVIEWER: SAM GREEN?

21 MR. FIXLER: Sam Green. That man started 1940,  
22 '41, you know. That guy can tell you a lot of things.

23 MRS. FIXLER: I am the type of the person beside  
24 that -- I get along with people and I cannot look fault of  
25 people. To me everybody's nice and everybody's good to me.

1 Maybe other people see more some things, you know. This is the  
2 way I am.

3 THE INTERVIEWER: WELL, YOUR STORIES -- EVERYONE'S  
4 STORY --

5 MR. FIXLER: Is different.

6 THE INTERVIEWER: -- IS DIFFERENT AND EQUALLY  
7 IMPORTANT.

8 MR. FIXLER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

9 MRS. FIXLER: All I can say in Europe what my  
10 experience, of course. I cannot say anything good, but in this  
11 country or Canada I've never experienced anything bad with  
12 people. Whether it's Jewish people or Gentile people most --  
13 most of the time I find nice people. I get along with them and  
14 become friends, and caring people. So I don't see any fault,  
15 but maybe other people do.

16 Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE  
17 POSSIBILITY, GOD FORBID, THAT SOMETHING LIKE THE HOLOCAUST COULD  
18 HAPPEN AGAIN?

19 MR. FIXLER: I don't think so. The children  
20 now -- they prepare the children and as soon as they understand  
21 what happened, you know, every parent will tell their children  
22 what happened. I don't think so they can do the same time thing  
23 what they did with us. It will never do that. I don't think so  
24 because it's --

25 MRS. FIXLER: I don't think there is a nation in

1 the world that could do something like that.

2 MR. FIXLER: A barbaric nation what they did.

3 MRS. FIXLER: I don't think there's any nation  
4 that would or any person in the world that can do something like  
5 that. No matter how unhuman or how bad, I don't think  
6 anybody -- I don't know. I don't believe there is anybody --

7 MR. FIXLER: You see when you were not there I  
8 cannot explain to you how they treated us. You treat an animal  
9 much better than they treated us.

10 Sometimes even at the death camp when we walked in  
11 the snow 'til the waist and you see how they put a sack on the  
12 horse. They feed the horse from the potato box, you know, and  
13 you look at it and say I wish I would have that thing. I wish  
14 they would give it to me, you know. You couldn't compare  
15 yourself to a human being that time the way they treated us.

16 MRS. FIXLER: I remember I used to cry a lot  
17 because I was young, a child, and I was at that time with my  
18 father and I used to cry and I used to tell him, 'Gee, I wish  
19 somebody would come and kill me already. I can't take it  
20 anymore. All I wish is the enemy should shoot me in the back or  
21 whatever. I don't want to see the enemy in front of me,' and he  
22 used to comfort me, comfort me, in my child way. Everything --  
23 we'll make it and -- you know.

24 MR. FIXLER: That day when we were liberated, we  
25 looked up at the sky. It was a beautiful evening. We couldn't

1 believe it that we are free people. But many, many people, many  
2 thousands and thousands of people died after the liberation,  
3 because you see they give us food that we were not supposed to  
4 eat and we ate fat things and right away was the typhus. That  
5 happened to me and to my brother.

6 MRS. FIXLER: Six months in the hospital.

7 MR. FIXLER: In a hospital to spend six months and  
8 how many times the priest came in it was the end already, with  
9 high temperature, burning up, and after, after I got well  
10 already you get such a big appetite that they cannot -- they  
11 used to bring me three dinners at once, it was never enough, and  
12 I was skinny like a toothpick. I remember we used to go in at  
13 night in the kitchen and find butter and ate butter without  
14 anything. After that sickness we got a big appetite.

15 MRS. FIXLER: Really now I'm cold. It's cold in  
16 here. My feet, my feet. Wish I would have worn the boots.

17 (PUTS COAT OVER MRS. FIXLER'S LEGS)

18 MRS. FIXLER: It's cold. Yeah, it's cold. I can  
19 see you're freezing too there.

20 THE INTERVIEWER: I'M OKAY. I'VE GOT A FEW LAYERS  
21 ON HERE. I RADIATE A LOT OF HEAT.

22 Q: WHAT WAS IT WITH THE GERMANS THAT PRODUCE --

23 MR. FIXLER: You know, to tell you, you talk now  
24 to Germans even -- we were last year in Germany or three years  
25 ago?

1 MRS. FIXLER: Three years ago.

2 MR. FIXLER: And they all say we didn't know what  
3 was going on. We talked to them like they're innocent people.  
4 They never knew what was going on.

5 MRS. FIXLER: They knew plenty.

6 MR. FIXLER: Sure they knew. The Austrians were  
7 even worse than the Germans because when we marched through  
8 Austria in 1945, they were yelling in Linz, 'Where do you taking  
9 them. Kill them right here. Kill them right here,' they were  
10 yelling.

11 Q: PEOPLE ALONG THE --

12 MR. FIXLER: Oh sure. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It  
13 was just horrible the way they treated us.

14 Q: NO ONE CAME --

15 MRS. FIXLER: No, no, no, and to tell you the  
16 truth I don't know -- you see we used to carry those when we  
17 came from the forced labor, you know. We used to carry those  
18 yellow ribbons on our arm, you know, those bands, and I remember  
19 the British used to come and bomb -- you know, bomb the --

20 MRS. FIXLER: The camp?

21 MR. FIXLER: Not the camps, the big buildings in  
22 the city and we used to go to work and they were flying so low.  
23 They could see us. You know what I mean, who we are, and here  
24 they say they never knew what was going on down there.

25 Q: THEY COULD SEE --

1 MRS. FIXLER: Oh, sure they could. Why didn't  
2 they shoot at us, you see. They were flying so low that  
3 sometimes they were even waiving at us, and here they say they  
4 never know what was going on down there.

5 Q: DID YOU THINK THAT THE GERMANS, THE CITIZENS  
6 KNEW?

7 MRS. FIXLER: Of course they knew.

8 MR. FIXLER: Listen, what do you mean if they knew  
9 it. We were like in cities, in Linz and Wels all over. They  
10 saw what we were doing. Where they taking us every day to work.  
11 Everybody knew who we are and what we are doing.

12 Q: AND THERE WAS NO --

13 MR. FIXLER: No, no, no, no. Now they're saying  
14 that they didn't know what was going on. Everybody tries to be  
15 nice now.

16 Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE IF YOU HAD GONE BACK TO  
17 GERMANY?

18 MR. FIXLER: When we went to Germany --

19 MRS. FIXLER: I would have never gone -- excuse  
20 me, I would have never gone to Germany because I don't feel like  
21 going there, but my father is buried there so I wanted to go to  
22 go to the cemetery. Otherwise I have no desire to go there.

23 MR. FIXLER: We stayed there a half a day, a few  
24 hours. We visited the cemetery and then we took the train and  
25 we left right away.



1 MRS. FIXLER: And I'd like to go again, but only  
2 because my father is there.

3 MR. FIXLER: But one thing is --

4 MRS. FIXLER: I mean I have nothing, I mean, to  
5 this generation, but still -- I still have -- you know, my heart  
6 is not to go there.

7 MR. FIXLER: Maybe the new generation is  
8 different, you know.

9 MRS. FIXLER: They're not maybe --

10 MR. FIXLER: Maybe they're different now. You  
11 never know. Let's hope.

12 See young people here in America, they don't know  
13 what it was. You know what I mean? Some of them know, you  
14 know, they listen, but some people --

15 MRS. FIXLER: It hurts me when I have to see that  
16 the Nazis here in the United States when they show them in this  
17 --

18 MR. FIXLER: In Chicago.

19 MRS. FIXLER: In Chicago. I mean how can a  
20 country like this allow something like that? It hurts me so  
21 much. It hurts me so much. Every time I see it I get sick.

22 MR. FIXLER: Well, it's not only here. They  
23 showed it yesterday in Johannesburg, in South Africa. Did you  
24 see it? Oh, they show it all over the world.

25 MRS. FIXLER: Something like that I mean --

1 Q. YOU THINK THAT JEWISH PARENTS ARE TELLING  
2 THEIR CHILDREN THEIR STORIES?

3 MR. FIXLER: I think so. Most of the Jewish  
4 people tell their children what happened about the Holocaust.  
5 Most of the kids -- especially when they start going to Hebrew  
6 school, you know what I mean, and they start to understand a  
7 little bit, you know, about Jewish history. They tell the  
8 children what happened.

9 MRS. FIXLER: Of course. Of course, you know.  
10 They don't like to talk about it a lot but they know.

11 MR. FIXLER: When I saw in the paper last week it  
12 was in the Jewish -- not in the Jewish, in the -- where you  
13 belong. What do you call that magazine?

14 MRS. FIXLER: Hadassah.

15 MR. FIXLER: Hadassah. That they're making knew  
16 Hagadahs in Israel from the Holocaust. Did you see it? It cost  
17 \$40 a new Hagadah. See they're trying to make a new Hagadah.

18 MRS. FIXLER: I think it's proper to do it.

19 MR. FIXLER: I think it's proper to do it. It's a  
20 new history what happened. See that time, all right, they were  
21 in slavery, but at least we fed them and they let them go. But  
22 they didn't with us.

23 Well, how long is it going to be the tape?

24 THE INTERVIEWER: AS LONG AS YOU WANT. WOULD YOU  
25 LIKE TO SAY ANYTHING ELSE?

1 MR. FIXLER: That's about all.

2 MRS. FIXLER: Of course we hope and pray to God it  
3 should never happen again.

4 MR. FIXLER: That's exactly right.

5 MRS. FIXLER: It never happen not only to Jews, to  
6 anybody.

7 MR. FIXLER: To any --

8 MRS. FIXLER: Any human being.

9 MR. FIXLER: -- nation in the world.

10 MRS. FIXLER: Any nation.

11 MR. FIXLER: Should never happen what happened to  
12 us.

13 MRS. FIXLER: And this should be remembered.

14 MR. FIXLER: People should live together as  
15 friends, as families. They should never know what happened.

16 MRS. FIXLER: They should know, but it should  
17 never happen again.

18 MR. FIXLER: It should never happen again what  
19 happened.

20 I think that's all. Okay?

21 THE INTERVIEWER: Yes. Thank you.

22 MR. FIXLER: Sure.

23 MRS. FIXLER: I hope we did justice for you.

24 MR. FIXLER: Well, listen, times you pick up some  
25 people.

1 MRS. FIXLER: Maybe they'll do better.

2 MR. FIXLER: They'll do better than we did, you  
3 know.

4 To tell you the truth --

5 MRS. FIXLER: I am very nervous today. You  
6 probably have seen me.

7 MR. FIXLER: Not only this, I came home from work  
8 about -- usually I close a quarter to 6:00, you know, the store,  
9 and a quarter to 6:00 came in a customer and he says, 'Leonard,  
10 I need clothing for tonight.' He don't know I had to meet you  
11 at 7:00 o'clock, and I call up my wife, I says, 'Helen, I'll be  
12 late tonight.' She says, 'No, we have to go,' you know. So I  
13 finished up fast, I came home, what time was it, 20 after 6:00?

14 MRS. FIXLER: Yeah. He ate fast.

15 MR. FIXLER: And it was raining like cats and  
16 dogs.

17 MRS. FIXLER: He felt so bad to go out.

18 MR. FIXLER: I felt so bad I says, "Let's go. We  
19 promised. Let's go."

20 MRS. FIXLER: I wish you would have come to the  
21 house. I could have served you hot coffee and it would have  
22 been nice and warm.

23 MR. FIXLER: It would have been warm in the house  
24 and we can talk and talk and talk.

25 MRS. FIXLER: It would have been easier than here

1 to take in all the equipment.

2 MR. FIXLER: Why don't you try to whoever you want  
3 to interview in the house?

4 MRS. FIXLER: Well, listen.

5 MR. FIXLER: Most of the people don't work. They  
6 don't -- like the Samuels don't do nothing, the Zelikovitzes  
7 don't do nothing.

8 MRS. FIXLER: Well it's easier. The person is  
9 more relaxed. It would have been much better.

10 MR. FIXLER: In the house you're more relaxed down  
11 there.

12 MRS. FIXLER: No, no, the person's more relaxed  
13 then getting ready, coming out here and it's so cold. I'm  
14 sitting and shivering. You probably seen me, you know.

15 MRS. FIXLER: Well, let's go.

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