

SABINA PELTA

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HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

OCTOBER 31, 1991

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Today is October 31st, 1991. And I'm here with Sabina Pelta, part two of her interview. I'm Sandra Bendayan. We have here a second interviewer, Vince Iacopino. And John Angel Grant is doing the camera work and he's the producer.

We're doing this interview for the oral history project, San Francisco, the Holocaust Oral --

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Oral History Project of San Francisco.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

I'd like to start, Sabina, with going back a little to help clarify some of the movements of your family and connect them up with the proper names. So maybe you would start right out by telling me the names of your brothers and sisters, and I presume by this time the late thirties is the time I'm talking about, several of them were married. Please give me their married names and their husbands' and wives' names.

A Four sisters of mine were married. We were five sisters. I'm the youngest of the five. And my oldest sister could have been saved. I gave this information, if she would have followed my advice when she brought me the money that I needed, the two hundred rubles to the station, I mean, we were going to be shipped away to Siberia.

So her name is -- I think I gave it to you but I will start with the oldest one. It will be the best this way. It will be, you know, numerical. She is Shinafreida. And in Polish we called it different but this is the way she was listed, born like this. And we always called them both names, Shinafreida and only one "A" with a single name.

Q She's Shinafreida?

A Shina means beautiful and Freida means happy. My parents named her with two of the nicest names. She was born Lukowice and she remained Lukowice because she married a first cousin and both of our fathers were brothers. So she is the only one that never changed her name, plus my brothers never changed their names, of course.

So the second one -- by the way, she was with me in Baranowice. The whole story that we -- where they took us from to Siberia, they picked us up from Baranowice. She was with us. You want me to tell her now her husband's name. That's Joseph. We called him Yosic. My brother's the same, the same as my brother's name because they were

all named after the same grandfather. That's Lifchalaya.

Oh, excuse me, I was going to give my brother-in-law's name, not my sister's. I'm starting with a mistake.

Q But wasn't that Yosic?

A No, it's what I -- this is my second sister, the second to the oldest. But I wanted to give you my brother-in-law's name, who also perished together with my sister. Yosic, Joseph Lukowice.

Q Was married to --?

A To my oldest sister, yes. You want me to give--?

Q The second sister, what's her name?

A What?

Q The second sister?

A I shouldn't mention the child?

Q Yes. Go ahead. Sure.

A She had one child when we were crossing, when we left home. She was seven years old, maybe eight, eight years old, probably seven, but maybe eight. And her name was Tishka, also Yukovich. She had a second baby while we were in Siberia. When she came to the train station she told me that she is expecting a second baby, unfortunate. And they all perished. And so the second baby was named -- she made from a man's name, my father's name, to a little

girl's name, Barcha. So that's takes care of my older sister.

Then the second one is Lifchalaya, L-A-Y-A. And she was married to a Russian named Garbich. Her maiden name was Yukovich. But she was married to a man by the name Garbich.

I hate to interrupt because every word, every name has some stir back, because he was -- wouldn't listen to me. And my husband, my late husband, was my fiancee. They were already in Warsaw. I pushed them to go back to Russia. He ran away from Russia. He was eleven years old with Yeshiva HABATCHA. The YABAT is very famous now. And his name was Nasoni Garbich.

Q Nasoni?

A Nasoni, it's a very -- you know, for the Torah, from the Bible, very rich Bible name, hear very rarely mentioned, but it comes from the Bible. He had living parents, living family in Russia. He left Russia when he was eleven years old with the Yeshiva YABOBICH because they forbid to practice religion. So they came to Poland. That's how he married my sister. He ran away as an eleven year old child.

And then when the war broke out they had this only one little baby. And her name was Hira, like Helen, and in English. There's one surviving Helen, but this is

after my grandmother, from my mother's side. And, you know, he was already in Warsaw.

I persuaded them. They got married two years before the war in 1937. I persuaded him to go with my late husband to on the Russian side because, you know, the whole stories about Krakow, you remember. And I had so much experience, I gained so much, that I am as the youngest sister, had more experience than all my four sisters together.

Q By "more experience," do you mean the experience of getting your brother out?

A Yeah, you know. I told -- I gained so much experience. I was for ten days -- and I finally got him out. I will have to repeat a little story.

Q That's fine.

A Because I see you don't remember. That the thing is, that this brother-in-law went already with my late husband to -- they had to go, everybody had to go, had to go to Warsaw. And they stopped him there and they made him clean, the Germans, made him clean something, do some work at the train station. And he returned. My husband followed further.

He met my brother-in-law Yaska on the way. But my brother-in-law, this brother-in-law, the son of Garbich, who was from Sonsteniv, Russia, the city was Sonsteniviko.

It's still called that way. I thought they didn't use it because Leningrad was changed, the name.

The thing is that he came back and he was afraid to come into the house because of me. He was married already to my sister. They had a little baby. By then she was one year old. And he said that he is afraid to come into the house because I plainly forced him.

I asked him, everybody's sleeping, people go on the Russian side, they just to be safer, to run away from the Germans, from Hitler, from the Nazis. And I said, people sleep in schools and Synagogs and street, whatever, just to be away from Poland. And he came back.

And I said, "You don't have to be afraid. I cannot force you." I'm trying to save his life. I forced her. I -- my vision was so far that I saw the danger. A lot of people didn't see the danger. Still I didn't believe that this war will drag on more than two, maybe three months. We only thought everything is just temporary. We couldn't visualize this. But I had a far vision, otherwise, I wouldn't insist on my sisters leaving Poland. I actually myself were left for three days only.

I left my mother, you remember, with a maid. And I left my engagement ring on her neck in a little bag, because I wanted to assure her that I'm coming back. I wanted to find a place. There wasn't something available to

rent because everybody was there. Many -- I wish everybody could be, everybody. There weren't even half. I wish more would be there, some more would have survived.

So I couldn't return you remember, the borders were stopped. And I couldn't return. And that's why I lost the money, because we changed our Russian rubles to Polish slotyzlotty. We thought we were going to go home to Hitler, to the shark's mouth to swallow us, too, because he swallowed everybody. And so I exchanged the Russian rubles to Polish slotyzlotty.

When I went back from Brestlitovsk to Baranowice we were left with the Polish slotyzlotty. Then they took us from the beds. We had no Russian rubles, Russian money. That's why my older sister had to come to the train, to that -- what you call this? -- not the loading. You know, where they ship all kinds of things but not passenger trains?

Q A depo?

A No.

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Cargo?

A Just like, well, anyway, it's for not for live people. We were considered like animals.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q For freight?



A For freight, right, freight train. So she came and I insisted on her coming with us. But she wasn't registered and she said, her neighbor -- and I knew her because she was my very dear friend, Mrs. Yakin, advised her not to volunteer if they uncovered take her, she shouldn't go. It meant for her husband and the little girl. And I knew that we're supposed to be together. I said now she came, she said, my both brothers were arrested in Brestlitovsk.

My mother is there in Poland with two married sisters, with two husbands. And now it's the last group. We are here. Because the two brothers were arrested. They were sent away. So I said, "Let's keep together." My heart told me we should keep together. I wish she would have listened, because this sister -- this is what I said.

Q Is this Shayna?

A Yeah. This other sister who is surviving, she is next oldest from me, she said, look, she doesn't know where they're taking us. She is inviting the other sister. I said, yes, I know that she should, they should come with us. My heart told me, what I saw Krakow.

You know what I told you, that I had to do something. It came just lately to my mind, that Stalin sent us away to Siberia never to see the freedom. They told us every day, his people that worked there in that lager, we

were sent very far from Stydlesk. And they said forget about Warsaw, polscy-panowie, that means like Polish princess. You'll never see Warsaw again.

But we have a good God and Stalin lost his mind. But he did the right thing for us. He hid us between the heaven and water and the jungles. So Hitler I think would never have been able to find us there. So I said, as much as he wanted to get rid of us, like Hitler, he protected us. And he was our best saviour. He saved our lives by sending us away, shipping us to Siberia.

I came to the conclusion, you know, sometimes I have sleepless nights. And, you know, this whole war is always in my mind. And I said, oh, after all, he was our best friend, because when the Polish army was established, you know, an asylum in the Russian territory, they freed us after fourteen months. But he said we would never see the freedom. We will never see Poland again.

Q It wasn't his intention, but nonetheless --

A That's what I said. And I have to believe in God. I always believed, anyway. And I said, you see, I missed my sister, my oldest. And I always kept on saying, she was the cause for not having my sister here. She would have been saved and her two little children would grow up. You know that Hitler killed -- wiped out one and a half million children, which would be at least six million people

in the future, one generation after the other.

Q But to go back a little bit, in Tomaszow, did you have any ghetto there?

A Oh, definitely. But when I left I escaped the ghetto. I didn't run away from the ghetto. There was no ghetto yet established. I left the last day of 1939, the 31st, like today's 31st of October, that was 31st of December. And in our city we didn't have yet ghettos. Maybe other cities already had established.

It was bad enough without the ghettos, believe you me. But we didn't have the established ghetto. I have to wear that I am jude, the Jewish, and this.

Q Arm band?

A Arm band. I don't know where I lost it, but I had it in Sweden. And I had a little cake of soap that was made from the Jewish fat. I even had buttons that were made from the bones from the Jews.

Q Where did you get them?

A Pardon?

Q How did you get those?

A I got them in Lodz after we returned from Russia. I got it in Lodz because there was a big comitet, they took care of all the repatriation. And they all over the whole walls were covered with names, if somebody was looking for somebody and it was a very ongoing activity.

And I was trying to also to find out maybe somebody survived. My -- not a single sole was, did survive. I told you whoever I left behind, only we what we brought ourselves, and my baby and my husband. He had the same fate. All his family was. He didn't -- his parents passed away before the war, very close from the war. But all the sisters, he had three sisters, and one brother that perished. One came, his older brother came on account of me to Baranowice.

Q Your husband's brother?

A Yeah, my husband's older brother. I had two younger brothers. I was the youngest from the five sisters. My two brothers were the youngest in the family. But this older brother from my late husband came with his wife on this side to Baranowice and they were with us in the same camp. In Syberia we all went, we were thirty-three people from the same city.

But, yes, you asked me about the ghetto?

Q And the buttons, how did you find them?

A I got it because in the comitet.

Q In the what?

A In the comitet, that office that I'm telling you, the repatriation office, they had all kinds of things there. I got it -- I think I got it from this office, all this, you know. I went there every day. I was hoping maybe

somebody will turn out, you know, from my closest ones.

What can I say? Not any relatives.

That was in Lodz we stayed in one year in Lodz after we came back from Russia, then we went to Sweden. And during this year I had lots of family in Lodz. I bought especially a ghetto book in San Diego. There was this -- they brought from Czechoslovakia, you know, the Jews' belongings from the Synagogs, the artifacts, you know. There were the museums in San Diego, and, you know, thousands of people were lined up. So I bought there a ghetto book from the Lodz ghetto.

I was hoping to find some names because my mother had a very, very large family, very sophisticated family in Lodz. My father had, also one brother there with a large family. Nobody survived. But they weren't rich. I'm not talking about richness, but they were very big educated people. They were doctors and attorneys and they were bankers.

One was a first cousin of my mother was owned a bank, his own bank under his name. My maiden name was Hirshberg. That was the house of Hirshberg. Most principal street is which was called Proczkwo. During the war time it was Hitler's Strausa. Strausa means street.

The city, the name was Litmenstaat instead of Lodz, also in Germany. Now it's back to the same original

name. But the thing is that they -- that's why I have this book I bought. I still didn't look. It's so heavy.

Q You haven't looked everybody up yet?

A (Shaking head.)

Q I was going to ask you, back in your hometown it was smallish, Tomaszow?

A Yeah, we had forty-five thousand people at this time.

Q Did you ever experience anti-Semitism there before the war?

A (Nodding head.) Close to the war it was very dangerous.

Q Before the war, as well?

A So normally there was always anti-Semitism. But, you know, since Hitler came to the power, he came in 1933, of course, it was very bad, very bad.

Q What kind of anti-Semitism do you remember before the war?

A It's a hard thing for me to concentrate. I know we had our own family, we had some kind of Gentile competitor who was a drunk, a very simple man. He was trying to compete with us. But he caused us a lot of troubles.

The fact is that when the Germans came, how did everybody know where to bring the Germans to our doors? We

had two entrances. We didn't live in a private home. We had rented a nice large apartment. We were never lucky to own our own, because I think I told you, we bought a lot. We were going to build. Because we were selling building material.

But we weren't lucky. We bought it from some heirs and they were involved in a war between themselves. And the minute we put up a new fence, it was a heavy snow, very hard, you know. It was very heavy winter. And the head of the police department knocked on our door in the middle of the night, that somebody knocked down the new fence.

We had already had an agreement with the builder we were going to build an apartment for every child in that building. But we had all the potentials but we weren't wealthy tenants, let's put it this way. But we could never -- it's in a way I'm happier this way, so nothing was left. We had lots of warehouses in a few places. And it all was left.

Q But you were saying that, how did the Germans know to come to your door?

A Yeah, when they came to bang on our door, I told you the story last time, that my -- it was on a holiday, Rosh Hashana. That was just a Saturday. It was closed from Rosh Hashana. And my brother, the one that was

in Krakow, the one that I brought back -- he's not alive -- but he was arrested during Rosh Hashana from our house. And they all came with -- there was guns. They were banging it.

We had two entrances, one was through the kitchen and the other one was through the front entrance. And we had the double doors for protection. And they were banging. I thought the building will collapse. Until we opened, we knew, we expected, we saw, we understood who was there. We didn't --

Q You were saying the Polish neighbors?

A We didn't -- we were in big business so a lot of people knew us. We were in big business. So they brought and they were the ones when my mother, when she didn't want to go out she said, "today's a holiday or Sabbath, and we're not supposed to be out there in the store," but we had to go out on their order. And they opened the doors and they started throwing out everything from our shelves on the street. And the Poles were grabbing everything, you know.

Q Well, that was certainly anti-Semitism. But --

A Don't ask. It was long enough. And our city was not as bad because we were one-third of Jews, one-third of Poles, one-third of Germans. We had lots of German customers, very prominent. They even promised to help us with my other brother who was arrested, that they will work



it out for a release. We could never do it.

I managed to grab my other brother away from them, the younger one, that one that I have here.

Q Tell me, though, those brothers' names and back to finishing with the sisters' names.

A I have to go along with the sisters because the brothers are the youngest.

Q Okay.

A Liftyalaya I gave you.

Q Yes, you did.

A And I told you her husband's name, Nasoni, and their little girl.

Q Helen?

A Helen. Then Rusha. She had two -- like Rose, Rifka, you know, Rifkarusha, and her name, married name was Bidderman. She had no children. She was the last one to get married. And they -- my brother-in-law, her husband, and her husband used to write to Siberia because I told them they knew that I had already had a baby.

"During the war we don't have babies." That's what he said. And that's happened to me, anyway. And --

Q What was his first name?

A Pardon?

Q What was his first name?

A Jacob, like my son's name. And he had a big

family. He was the youngest in the family. And he is the oldest brother is still surviving in Canada. We went to once for a wedding to Toronto. You know what he said? His brother, his oldest one, because of my sister his brother perished because his brother wouldn't -- they didn't come to take him. They came to take my sister, because he was a Taylor, and they very prominent, you know, very popular in our city. And they were all immune from -- they wouldn't have taken him. He went as a volunteer for the love of my sister.

Q They had a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship?

A My sister was married to Jacob Peterman.

Q Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were talking about Jacob's older brother?

A Oh, no, that one he's survived. He was just lucky to survive.

Q Oh.

A But he was working with his brother in the same place, but when they came to take my sister, he went, volunteered with my sister. He perished just because of love of my sister. He said, "Whatever will happen to you it will happen with me." She was very beautiful. I told you last time, she was like Elizabeth Taylor.

And then I had a sister that is here.

Q Her name --?

A Her name is Shawna Talber. And her maiden name, well, and the married name was Bermisk.

Q Bermisk?

A Yeah. And she had a son who was still alive. He is fifty-seven years old now or fifty-eight. And he shortened his name from Bermisk. He's called Berman, Ben Berman.

Q And what was Hana's husband's first name?

A Shawna. But he went -- he was crossing with me the border. Then for some reason he was turned back to Tomaszow. I don't know how he wound up. And all I told you that I was left alone in the field very close from the train. It was already, but from tall shack what I witnessed by the crossing of the border, I couldn't make one step.

Q You were paralyzed?

A I was, my whole blood has disappeared. I couldn't make a single step.

Q Can you talk about what it was that you saw? Can you talk to any details?

A At that time?

Q Yes.

A Well, when we were crossing, my sisters, my oldest sister, Franya, Shinafreida and Tasha, they had each one a child. My oldest sister had this little girl and this sister had a boy, Ben. So he was called Benny.

And they put us all the women like in a little jail, you know. It was the Russians. We were crossing nine hundred sixty people, all lined up like an army, in four. And I was lined up with my brother-in-law. I don't remember why my oldest one wasn't here, Yosic. He was already over. He was in Baranowice already.

And that summer came to pick up my sister because him and my oldest brother-in-law, Yosic, Shanafreida's husband, they ran away on bicycles during the bombardment. And they wound up first in Warsaw where they were held back because Warsaw didn't fall right away. They had to fight a little, maybe a month or so. Then they went further on the bicycles, to Baranowice, then that summer came back to Tomaszow and picked up his wife with the little boy, and my older sister came also with Tishka.

And they were put together with me, you know. I was the most minor there. And the police let out first the mothers with the child. The Russians, those were the Russians.

I didn't finish the crossing of the border was very, very tragic, very noisy, very stormy. The Germans were shooting there. The Russians were shooting. And from all this what I witnessed, that I was so shocked, that that's when I was left alone in the field. All of a sudden everybody's --

(A break in the tape.)

MR. GRANT: We need a few seconds here for the tape to stop. Okay. Anytime.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Okay. Your brothers --?

A My brother's name, my older brother was Yosic. My younger was -- I'm now confused -- Ishmal and -- Yosef Ilyasa, in Jewish we called him Lusa. And he perished. I sent him -- I took him out from Krakow. You remember that story, trip of mine. That's the most sensational trip. That takes up a lot from the first beginning of this report. And he -- I sent him with my brother, with my younger brother and my oldest brother-in-law. That's when they went with my oldest brother, Yosic.

But my sister couldn't leave right away with him because she had to take some things. You know, you leave a home, the whole family goes away and you close up the door. So they probably, that's why he went back with my brothers, my two brothers, when I sent him. When I came back from Krakow I sent away my two brothers on the Russian side.

Q Right.

A I didn't trust them with the Germans.

Q Okay.

A I just wanted my mother and my rest of the

family, my sister and whoever was left, the two sisters with the husbands to see that I brought -- that I saved my brother, that he is alive, because nobody believed that he was alive. He was in Berlin. He was sent back to Krakow. And I brought him out. I bailed him out. But the money didn't help. Something else helped. You remember what I told you?

Somebody came over. She saw me throwing sandwiches every day through over the fence. And she saw me for ten days like this. That was some angel of a lady. I always wound up with angels, because the two Polish men, they saved me from when I was stunned to the ground.

Q Yes.

A And they saved me. They put me at their hands. They carried me just plainly to the house, to some -- you remember, I told you?

Q Yes. That was when you were crossing the border?

A Before and they -- one of them bought even a ticket for me, a train ticket to take me to Baranowice, too, because the first city we approached was Bialystok went -- we went from. He delivered me to my older sister's house. This was a miracle. I thought that I'm going to be killed or raped, or what have you.

Those were the stories that people suffered. A

lot of people didn't make it through. So but I was lucky because God knew that I'm going to be very, very badly needed here to do a lot of mitzvah, a charity, to help a lot of people, to help a lot of people. That's what I'm doing right now. The thing is -- I always attach something else.

Q That's okay. You were talking about you got your brother back. You wanted to be sure that your mother saw that he was alive?

A I could have --

Q Then you sent your two brothers over the border?

A Yeah.

Q And did you say that your elder brother-in-law Yosic went with them also?

A Yeah, I think they went together with him.

Q And all your sisters are still back with your mother?

A Two other, only two were left with my mother.

Q The two?

A Liftyalaya and Rose, her husband that was just married. Bidderman, Garbich And Bidderman were left to perish.

Q Where was Shantoba at this time?

A She came with us. I told you that she and her son Ben Berman and my sister Shinafreida with Shishka, they

were released.

Q Right.

A To go to Baranowice.

Q They went to Baranowice?

A Right. And I was left with my brother-in-law Semic and the two men he -- I had one man who carried things for my brother. I hired Bidderman, my brother-in-law's cousin, I hired him to carry things for my brothers. I didn't intend to stay there. I had two knapsacks and most of my knapsacks were my brothers' things. I had very little things, very few things, because I intended to go back.

Q Right. But you got stuck there?

A I got stuck and I never returned.

Q At the time you got stuck, which of your relatives were stuck with you?

A Well, Shinafreida, she wanted to go back.

Q But she was stuck on the border with you?

A No, no, that was later. It all happened when we were arrested from our sleep, you know, from home on Friday, June the 30th, 1940. We were arrested from the beds. Well, they came in. They had an excuse to. They were searching for you -- they knew they wouldn't find in the mattresses. It was straw, you know, mattresses from straw, you know, just it was in some bed. And they said -- got us out from the beds and they were searching for



ammunition. Just to take out us from bed they had to come with an excuse.

Q I see.

A And then they said, "March with us. Take whatever you can in a hurry." It took five minutes. We had to be -- follow them, me and my husband. So this was June the 30th. I got married in February to my husband the same year, and in Baranowice. There is a lot of details in the beginning of my story. You remember something?

Q Yes, I know you told a lot of this before. But it's fine by me if you want to include some of these details again. It's okay with me. Don't worry about it.

A Unwillingly it comes out, because you're asking me for the names of the families. Every name has some connection with a story. You understand?

Q Yes.

A Because every person has his own life story. So my sister -- when I was marched through the border with the whole group, with the nine hundred sixty people, it was an army. It wasn't a group. I call it an army. And they started shooting. That's when we separated ourselves. And I was left alone. I was already in the jail. And they let me out.

Q Right.

A This happened after I was free from that little

jail. And I lost my brother-in-law Semic Bermyski, my sister's first husband.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I lost my man who carried things for my brothers. I hired him, Bidderman's cousin. My brother-in-law had a cousin.

Q Were these people lost or were they killed in the action?

A They went back to Tomaszow, I heard. They all wound up for some reason, Semic Bermyski, he was killed in Tomaszow. Not in the, you know, in the chamber, gas chamber, but on the street. I heard they killed him, the Nazis. He didn't survive.

Q That was later, that was after this crossing of the army?

A Right. They -- I don't know how it happened. I never found out the truth because you couldn't even ask. He wasn't very nice to my family because we knew that we have those warehouses with so much valuables, you know. So he wanted not to have to tell the Nazis about what we have hidden. It wasn't him. It was regular.

Q Are you talking about Semic?

A Yeah, he demanded some, my mother, my sister, Siberia, that they had to pay him some wages to keep his mouth shut. So that was the story. And he --

Q What was the time that you were in Siberia? It was fourteen months?

A Fourteen months.

Q What were the dates between those times, please?

A Well, we were taken from Baranowice June the 30th, 1940. And we arrived there maybe in a week. They were dragging us. We stopped in many stations on the way, along the way, you know. And they kept us there for fourteen months after the Polish government.

The ex-Polish government formed an army in the Russian territory. My youngest brother Isiac who is here, he was dragged into the army. My late husband wanted to get him because we knew we were getting out from Russia this way. But he wasn't accepted, my husband. His brother, the older brother was accepted because he served in the army before the war. My late husband didn't. But my brother was sixteen years old and they took him in the Polish army.

Q In the Russian army?

A In the Polish army.

Q In the Polish army?

A They formed the Polish army in exile and in the Russian territory to fight Hitler. So they arranged -- they got a lot of people. They had already a big army. They went to Persia and Africa and worked, Tonganesia, he was

even in Israel, my little brother. I have a little picture he sent it to me after the war when he wound up in England finally with the Polish government.

So my brother Yosic was taken together with Isiac, my youngest brother's name is Isiac, Isiac Small. They were arrested in Brestlitovsk. I told this last time. And they -- my sister tried to release them with some money. And she couldn't do anything. So my husband even said, oh, the oldest sister, they could have been like your brother's children because they were young children. And she says, Well, they took him and she couldn't get him back. So they sent them away to Komisarza in Russia in a lager. It's called Komisarza, initial A, and they separated them by both brothers, one from another.

Q You say a lager, as in a prison camp?

A Yeah, that's where we were. It wasn't the same. But they were lager, yeah. Those were the Logers, like concentration camp.

Q Yes.

A So my older brother perished. I happened to have that announcement from my city and he was present when -- that's what he said, he was killed here by a car accident in San Francisco, same man. He said that he saw my brother die. And this one got out with the Polish army. So that's how he was saved.

Q How did your mother get on while you were gone there in Siberia? You must have got out of Siberia in '41?

A Yeah, '41. It was deep summer when we went, left.

Q What happened to your mother?

A My mother was left behind in Tomaszow with my two sisters, Liftya with her husband, with little girl, moved in together with my mother. Because she lived in a neighborhood that was very dangerous at that time. So we got her in like this, my mother got her in. The other sister was with her husband. They were in a ghetto. They had a ghetto.

Q That is Shawna?

A No, Livka's Rifka Rowcha and Livya, Garbich and Bidderman. I will talk name by the last name. It will be maybe easier for you.

Q Okay. Thank you. I want --

A I want to make it easier for you.

Q Whatever.

A It's much easier I believe to remember the last name Bidderman and Garbich.

Q True.

A They were stuck with my mother in Tomaszow. They lived through the ghetto. They moved them out from our residence, you know. It was a lot of tragedy.

Q Did you know about the conditions in the ghetto? Were they able to let you know what the conditions were like?

A We were cut off by them, because they attacked Russia at the same time while they were murdering all those Jews, they attacked Russia. In 1941 when that's how far we got out from the lager, from SERABOSHKAVA. It was called PRASILACHUR, that little place where the camp was, that was the name. Over there it was the name Komi. With us it was PRASILACHUR. Stydleskion, and the TRION you know was like maybe half America, very gigantic.

Q I was asking if you knew how the ghetto was.

A No, we were cut off. They sent us packages. My sister in Baranowice got money somehow. They made an exchange. People were in Tomaszow and in Baronowice and the people in Tomaszow needed money so there was an exchange. And they gave my sister, and my mother paid them over there, my sister to send for me and my sister, you know, food, packages, whatever was needed. That was the greatest thing. I helped a lot of people with my packages, believe you me.

Q Your packages came through all right?

A Yeah, that was still, because it was before Hitler attacked Stalin, you know, Germany attacked Russia. At that time it was a lot of hardship but they managed to send even clothing, you know, because for my little baby

that I got, she was born in that lager.

And she -- I was worrying. That's why I jumped from the train, to lose the baby. But she was born and my family sent me a lot of beautiful things for her. Because I was worrying I don't have things for myself. What will I do with the baby? I won't have no clothing for her. But they did send me beautiful things. They sent some things for my husband, which they were stolen before, from underneath. Everything isn't -- I have a feeling that we didn't have to make another video.

Q I realize now that we've gone through part of this period or a lot of the details in this period. But how about -- and I know you've talked about coming back from Siberia -- but let's talk now about after you got back from Siberia. How long did it take you to get back from Siberia?

A You heard the story about the Jews from Egypt, how they got out from Egypt, that boat, that the waters, the sea split and the people passed through. That is the kind of venture that I witnessed in my leaving that lager, that PRASILACHUR.

My husband broke his leg. I told the story in the first. If he wouldn't have just turned away a second his head, he would have been fallen dead. But this way he only broke a leg and he was suffering. And he was on the crutches when we were out, when we got out from there. And

that's the reason why I don't want to talk about my sister.

Q Okay. Let's not.

A Because she talked away my late husband's older brother Ishak Pelta, who went with them instead of us. He went with her and her son because she talked him away from us. Anyway, we hired, rented a horse and wagon. The horse was such a dead, very thin, very weak horse.

And I had a baby. And my husband was on crutches. So who belonged on the wagon? It wasn't a highway from California, from the United States. It was a very wild road. That's the reason why I'm comparing myself that I went through a venture almost like the Jews leaving Egypt, when the water, the sea separated.

Q Parted?

A Parted, yes.

A And I walked, I ran after the horse and wagon. But I wasn't at this age as I am now, but still, no matter what, it was a terrible journey.

Q And it was just you, your daughter and your husband?

A Yeah, everybody left in a different way. Maybe some people consolidated. I don't even remember. It was such a big decision. They wanted us to stay. "Where are you running? It's now had a big war raging." That's what they said. But we wanted to be out from there, of course.



But we -- the wisest thing was to stay in Siberia away from that in Stydlesk or near Stydlesk or any little place. We stopped later eventually. When we came to the first place where we already saw house and some people. It was a terrible journey. My husband didn't want, he wanted to walk, but I didn't allow him because with -- because of the crutches. So anyway --

Q Did you have supplies, like food?

A Whatever we could, we had. I don't know. We passed maybe some -- what do you call? -- the peasants where they live, what do they call the country? A dorfin, you know what it means, a dorfin in German?

Q No.

A The country, well, where they --

Q Farms?

A Farms, yeah, we passed maybe those, a little here, a little there. We finally stopped somewhere where my husband could do it, to send something because he was an artist taylor. And they wanted to grab us. They didn't let us away. They gave him food, and we all had food.

They wanted to keep us there. That was the wisest thing to do. But we didn't really. They said we have to go to middle Asia, from there we will go to America. The said from there people go to America. It wasn't true, but it was in one way good.

But the baby would have survived if we wouldn't have gone further. It was such a terrific contrast between the climate. And I didn't have the milk. And the baby didn't -- I couldn't nurse her. And she got the disease from the other babies on the wagon where we were traveling in our evacuation. So I wound up with her in the hospital and she died.

And my husband was on the street, and the train station, and he was laying sleeping. And all our possessions in the middle of the night somebody -- some thieves, Romanian thieves, pulled out everything from underneath of him and we were left without anything. Here I come out from the hospital. My husband says, "Everything was stolen."

Q With all these terrible, terrible losses how did you keep your spirits going at that time?

A Well, God gave us the spirit. We lost all our mood after the baby. I can tell you this. He didn't have a list to work. On the way he was working. He paid for food. He always could, always make more than for food because he was terrific. Later, you know, when we came to middle Asia, my husband had customers Stalin's, the biggest officers from Moscow came to us for his work. He had to sew for them, the suits, the uniforms. He was a master in this.

But until it came to that, we went through --

then we also went through the Russian, the life in Russia. It was also, you have to remember, there was a big war raging at this time, when we got out. It was the heaviest war raging in the Russian territory.

Q How about you, how did you keep your personal spirits up or did you?

A Well, we met with other people, and were young. We went through a lot of hardship. It looked like I was born for it, you know, to be able to fight it. I don't know. I cannot tell you. It just God wanted to save us a few remnants, like you might call.

Because there is nothing in the Russian territory were not they're not our people that fell either from a disease or from hunger or from, you know, the sickness. It was terrible. Everywhere people were laying on the streets you could find. Even without a gun, even without fire. Because people lost -- I could say that my husband saved me also a lot because with his hands.

And I also wasn't paralyzed. And thank God I knew what to do. I jumped trains. And we were like speculating. They called us speculators. But the minute they caught you, you perished. They put you to jail. And in my case I was so lucky that always the money saved me. They took away what I had and the money saved me.

Q How did you do the speculating?

A Well, we were -- oh, actually, I'm mixing up.

Q It's okay. Let's just go on.

A You have it in that previous.

Q That's okay.

A Between Baranowice and LINBURG Lwow.

Q Between those two places you were doing the speculating?

A Yes, here we also, we paid for it. They had train, like my sister went on with the horses. We went with the wagon that they shipped raisins, you know, the raisins, we had our own. We brought on this wagon. You know, I'm telling you. I forgot now.

Q That's okay. We can move on to something else. Maybe it will come back to you later. Anyway, you are in this --

A People call me a champion. I don't know what I remember. I still remember my songs from babyhood, I'm telling you. I sing in seven languages. I speak seven languages and I sing in every language. And I memorize them from my youngest childhood till now.

Q Well, that must be a lot after all these years. It's okay to forget a few things along the way. But anyway.

A Whenever we go on a trip to Reno I been put under the microphone to sing, to entertain. But now my voice is changed, you know, I have a hoarse voice lately.

Q Now that we're here, what are the seven languages you speak?

A Jewish, Polish, German, Russian, Swedish -- wait a second, please.

Q Sorry.

A Swedish, English, Hebrew. I missed one language. Did I figure out? Polish, Jewish, German, Russian is four, Swedish is five, English is six and Hebrew is seven. I knew that I have to do it on my fingers.

Q That's marvelous. Okay. Well, so you were talking about, we were talking about you traveling this terrible, terrible traveling over Russia after your baby has died. How old was your baby?

A How old my baby was? When she died she was eleven months old, not full eleven. In November, she perished in November.

Q Huh-uh.

A And under such circumstances. I really kept her in that lager, she was kept so clean. I was worrying so much. But my sister protected me with soap. I kept the baby immaculate, like it would be the normal time. And, well, anyway, I had to go to work after I had the baby.

And I had the sister-in-law, I had one sister, my late husband's older brother, the one that ran after us to Russia from Poland. And she was working in the nursery.

And she watched my baby.

She -- they didn't have no children. And this baby was like a doll. And all of a sudden we leave this lager and that was the end of the baby with the disease. When this happened on the train between Stydlesk and middle Asia, we went to WORTISHKIN, because the other places were all taken in for the time being. There was war, heavy war raging. We couldn't go east. We had to go south.

Q I know you've talked about this on the other tape, but what was the disease she was suffering from?

A My little baby? She had the measles. And then it was spread, you know, lungs -- what is it called? Pneumonia, she died of pneumonia. It was the terrific unusual contrast of the two climates from Siberia to middle Asia. The baby was too weak to withstand this. And there were many children in the wagon, and so one got it from the other.

Q What was the climate in middle Asia?

A Middle East, it's just called Middle East.

Q What was the climate? You said "the contrast."

A I was very hot. There was malaria. I had malaria in Samarkand. I went through malaria sickness. I was very much affected. It was a terrible sickness. But from the not clean water, you know, with lime, dead yellow water. It was very unsanitary.

Q Did you have any medicine for that?

A I was using -- well, I finally got out but I think there's always something left behind. It was a terrible disease.

Q So there you are, you and your husband. He has a broken leg. And you're traveling. You kept on going?

A Yeah, we went -- we wound up in a Kolkhoz. It is like a commune where the farmers all work. And I had to drag on my shoulder the mud. They put in the bags the mud because they use it. It was also for some fertilizer or something.

I couldn't take this. We didn't stay there very long. I can tell you I saw that this is our -- this will be the end of us. I couldn't take this. I started smuggling a little bit, and between that Kolkhoz and Rejon, the Kolkhoz was like a farm, you know, where the farmers live. What do you call it?

Q Well, a commune?

A Yeah, but I always forget.

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Collective farm?

A Yeah, collective farm. But they are farmers like, what do you call in United States?

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Where the farmers live?

A It's not a town. Village. I'm always missing that word.

Q I'm going to write it down.

A You couldn't guess it. I had to get it on my own. But anyway, there were the villages. And the farmers, they couldn't produce because they didn't want to produce. But we -- there was -- they had the cotton like now we're short of cotton. There was grown cotton in the fields. We had to pick cotton. We had to do this, and all kinds of dirty things, which were very unknown to me, very, very. I never saw it in my life.

So we were trying to get away. I was smuggling. I even have a little Kiddish cup, a Kiddish wine cup, silver, that somebody gave me. She -- we met in that smuggling on the road. I was walking for many miles. And she said if I will sleep with her in the mountains, because she was going the one way, and I don't know where I was going to go then, she awarded me with that little silver cup. I really didn't want to take it. But she forced it into me.

I still have it. My son even once bit it. He bit on it in Sweden. And it was like, flattened. And then we got it. It's more than a hundred years old.

Q What kind of things were you smuggling?

A Salt, whatever the city needed. I don't



remember things. My husband also made uniforms. It was a lot of things involved. It's so much. It's impossible, many things to really put it on the agenda because it's so many years, you know. And lately, especially we should never have interrupted this first video. It was maybe my fault.

Q No blame.

A Yeah.

Q Not to worry.

A You asked me. Salt, there were various things or something. It's started whistling in my ear. I didn't hear it for a long time. That's all for good news.

Q Was that dangerous? If you were caught smuggling what was the punishment?

A They would arrest me. One was arrested, a friend, we had a friend, we got acquainted. He was from Russia. And they warned him and he stayed away from the bazaar. We had to go and attend the bazaar. And he came to my house. We held him like under the home and the house arrest, because he wasn't supposed to be seen by those, by those militia. And the minute he didn't listen to us -- he came to my house. And I had everything, you know, I don't know, you know, what it means, krplach --

Q Filled?

A Yeah, with meat. It's in Italian, what is it

called?

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q There are several pastas with meat.

A What?

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Ravioli?

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Tortellini, Ravioli?

A Ravioli, exactly, ravioli. And I gave this and he had -- we had turkey. We had everything. We had rice. We had everything in the house, my husband and him. And we both did it, accomplished this. For a long time we couldn't do anything. That's why we went, we dropped into that village, to that village. That was the worst thing in my life. That was really something.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Why was it the worst?

A It was -- well, we were far away from the war. The other people were in under the Germans, under the Germans. This was our lager. This was our ghetto, and what have you, whatever. I take it for granted now much more than we did then. We didn't realize what my loved ones had to go through.

Q Do you remember what the living conditions were when you were there in that village? Where were you

sleeping?

A We slept on the floor. There were -- this was like, you know, the Arabs or the Turks. It was close from the Turkish border. You heard about the Tashkent. Tashkent was a large city. It was nothing like you can see it now. I don't know how it is now. But it was the worst conditions. People were hungry. People were sick. And, you know, the hunger brings a lot of things with it.

So we were in Samarkand at the very end. Because it's a lot -- everything has a lot of stories. And I hate to say this because I have to involve somebody's name. And I hate to do it. Because somebody was talking too much and they were looking for us to arrest us. So we had to run away from Kirgiza to Uzbekistan, which meant from Jalabad to Samarkand where my son was born. From that city we left for Poland.

Q Were you pregnant then when you were running from one to the other?

A He was born in Samar -- no, not then. I didn't believe that I will ever be able to have a baby. Because, you know, it was everything went away from me. I wasn't alone.

Q You stopped menstruation?

A (Nodding head.)

Q This happens when your nutrition is terrible.

A For five, four years, four and a half years.  
So anyway, it was.

Q So you must have been a little bit healthier?

A Yes, because we were in the city and under different circumstances and my husband was working in the most wealthiest homes. They had the machines. We had the machine, nothing. They fed him the best. And he brought home for me also.

And the minute I said -- there was local lady who her husband was the boss of the whole town, almost. And they had everything under the sky. And I came there to visit my husband. There was white trash with the others, you know, the people from -- what they called? There were white trash. I'm -- now it's very hard I'm telling you. I'm very confused now.

Q Okay.

A Well, you know, they helped the Nazis very much to slaughter the Jews.

Q Ukranians?

A Ukranians. Thank you very much. You helped me. Her husband was also a friend with that big shot. And she started asking me who I am. I said, for me, I was Jewish. I didn't hide it. And that I spoiled my husband's career at that moment. He said I should never have said this. And I saw that I made a mistake, that wherever we

were, I didn't realize that this would hurt.

So I didn't go any more there to this place. And they started right away, they cut him down with the quality of food. But this was the outcome.

But later we got into Russian Jews who were a lot of big shots, also. They were like the leaders over, you know, farming articles, products. And he was delivered -- he was in charge of all the highest, all the biggest deliveries. So for those people he had a sister, a doctor, a pediatrician. She helped me with my baby.

She brought me those -- what do you call them? -- penicillin, which I threw away in Poland. It was such a valuable thing. This saved peoples' lives. But how could I give away to somebody? They would be afraid that I would poison them or whatever. I wouldn't dare. I just threw it away.

Q This is still in Samarkand?

A Yes, it was in Samarkand. And then we took it on the way.

Q The pediatrician was helping you?

A Oh, yeah. She came in at the very early stage and made me take carrot juice, and she -- I didn't know about those things. And she helped me a lot. She was very--

Q Again, what were your living conditions in

summer?

A I'm telling you, those living conditions were that we were speculating a little. My husband was working in his trade.

Q Living in with the people, living in their or living with you someplace?

A It varied. It varied at the time. I think he already by then had a machine. You know, I will tell you it's --

Q A sewing machine?

A A sewing machine, not, but without -- with the hand you had to turn because there weren't automatic like now. And he didn't have the regular, foot, you know, the base, the base of the machine.

Q Yes. Did you have your own room?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Did you have furniture?

A On the floor, were just beds.

Q Furniture?

A Just beds, were lime. The houses were built from lime. When it was rain it was very dangerous because some houses fell apart, lime, you know.

Q Got dissolved in the rain?

A Right.

Q Was it a dirt floor?

A That's what I mean, yeah. Once I left my baby for a minute. And I came in and he was on the floor full covered with all this. Oh, that was such -- I can't forget it until now. He never found out from me this because this was a very terrible thing.

But, you know, he was -- we circumcised him. It was all had to be done in secretly. And he had -- we made a party. And we had some donations. And my husband took to the hospital some, you know, to save -- help out some people, sick people, for this money we bought whatever he could with another man. We helped people right there, you know. In our sorrow we did help people.

Even in -- I still have a large pillow a European large pillow, that somebody just plainly threw at me, because I didn't want to accept a reward. That was a family, two boys from my city. They were poor people. And I helped them. My sister sent me. I couldn't see people starving, so I helped them whatever I could.

Q This was when you were still in Siberia?

A Yeah. I went to the woods. I picked up the raspberries, you know, like you make here the juice, the raspberry juice. Sugar was a million dollars. Sugar was a thing not to get. My sister sent this to me. But you couldn't make the juice without the sugar. So I had to use the sugar. I didn't drink from this juice a drop. I gave

it to aid to sick people. They found out that I have it and I gave it away.

There was a father and a son and the son was very sick. He had temperature. And that helped him. And, you know, the biggest unfortune, the biggest tragedy were the mosquitos in the woods. They were wearing -- my husband was wearing a net, and they came in through the net. My sister was also working there for a short time. And then when he broke his leg he got the -- they freed him from the woods.

Q Did he get malaria, also?

A No, he had typhus for a little while. At beginning my soap saved us. What my sisters sent me I shared with everything but not with the soap. The soap I held for my biggest treasure because I knew that we need soap to keep clean. And that really saved our lives.

Q I presume your sister was getting these things on the black market herself?

A She once slipped while she was still pregnant. She got a little baby at seven months, when she was seven months pregnant, because she slipped. It was slippery, you know, the floors in Baranowice. She went to the post office. And she -- but she did it. We were a very devoted family all one for the other, except this one. But yeah.

Q So anyway, we were talking about your life



still in Samarkand. And I was wondering, can you remember how much food would you get in a day there? Did you eat enough?

A Well, yes, at that time we were satisfied because my husband had very prominent customers always. Because whoever found out about him they couldn't pull themselves away. They only brought more people. And I approached this lady once that my husband finally got this, that he was a big, big shot director from all the surrounding, from the region. And he wouldn't let my husband work for nobody.

They had so much materials and so much furs he could -- he could make furs and leather coats and everything. And he showed them all the covers they had, and everything, the trunks. "You have for the rest of your life, you'll have work."

So we -- I said to my husband to tell him we cannot stay here, because he said the war is still raging. There is nothing left. And the bombs, and everything was bombed. But we wanted to go home. We wanted to leave Russia.

Q I understand.

A The reason why they sent us to Siberia is because we didn't want to take their passports. We didn't want the citizenship. That's why they sent us.

Q But this while you're still in Samarkand, your baby -- your husband has a lot of work. It sounds like you feel that you must have eaten enough?

A At that time we didn't know about hunger. He also when the Polish army was formed and the Russian territory, we could buy their -- they had long coats, very big ones, with big large furs, and my husband made from each coat a suit that they were all dying for. They couldn't see nowhere because the way he made it, it wasn't -- it was very special custom made.

That's the only way. His father was a taylor like this. They called him a professor. He was a professor in his trade. And the same thing here. He had very high class people coming from very far. So they showed off even in magazines. One customer brought the magazine and showed that he is wearing, and this very special.

They took a lot of pride whoever was lucky to wear something that my husband made with his own hands.

Q I believe what you're saying. And yet, well, it sounds like as soon as people found out that you were Jewish--

A Yes.

Q That struct a negative note?

A This was a disaster. My husband couldn't get over. He said, "Oh, you spoiled the whole thing."

Q Was that when you decided to leave?

A No, this was still far away from it.

Q How long were you in Samarkand all together, more or less?

A Well, we ran away from Jalabad because we had to, otherwise they would have caught us. And we -- 1941, like you said earlier, it was in August, maybe.

Q In the end of August you were in Siberia?

A We were fourteen months there.

Q Uh-huh.

A And we were caught on the six month, so we had to add another month. So it's exactly August, yeah, we were freed. And it is a thing that's very hard now.

Q Did it take you a few months maybe to get to Samarkand?

A Yeah, oh, yeah, oh, yeah, more than a few months. As a matter of fact, somebody here recognized me. I was singing at one time. Somebody made a private party, New Years' Eve. My son was born on New Years' Eve, and his little girl was also born New Year's Eve.

Oh, I should really show you. I want to invite you to show the pictures. Maybe I want to give you a picture or something to use.

Q Thank you.

A Really, because it's too hard. I should have.

Q No matter. We might meet again.

A But, we were invited to a Jewish -- a New Years' party to some friend's house, and I was singing as usual. Everytime I was entertainer. So a man was watching, and I felt like somebody's keeping an eye on me. And he came over. He said, "Were you in Jalabad?"

I said, "Yes."

"Oh, I remember you from Jalabad. We met in the bazaar." You know. And, you know, that was such a coincidence. He lives in Oakland, Berkley. He wasn't -- but he is a very well-to-do man with his cousin. They're in building business, you know, builders, you know.

Q Uh-huh?

A But it was such a coincidence. And then we recognize. My husband was taken from Jalabad to the army, the working army, not the, you know, to go on the front but to be behind the front to work on the railroad, or what have you. It was also Siberia. But it wasn't where we were. And I saved -- I brought him out from there. I risked my life with my sister-in-law. She came with me. And I stole him from that place. I'm telling you under what circumstances we left. This was another big experience.

And then we were separated on the way because they found my husband had some -- I think a prayer book or whatever. And they found something, you know, those kind.

And they held him back. And I don't know. We lost each other on the way. But this was already far away. That was already middle Asia.

Q Middle Asia? From Jalabad you went to Samarkand?

A From Jalabad we went to Samarkand.

Q Later in the future?

A No, this was before.

Q Before Jalabad?

A Yeah, before Jalabad, you know, it's --

Q I think you've talked about this on the other tape, too. Why don't you talk about this right now how you saved him from the army?

A Oh, I can't believe till now. It was such an unusual trip. It was so far from where we were. He was taken from Jalabad, yes. There were maybe arrested five hundred men. And I was the only woman to go from Jalabad to Samarkand. Because we had there some people. And I intended to take my husband off from that train. And I was so stupid. I asked people. I found they said they're arresting there, too, men, also. So I thought if they're arresting why should I take him off. I intended to take him off in Samarkand from the train.

Q What do you mean, "to take him off"?

A I mean to take him with me, to -- I wasn't

belonging here. I was as a woman was not supposed to be there. I was the only one on the whole train, the only woman.

Q I see.

A And I intended to get off in Samarkand and take my husband with me.

Q Even though he was supposed to continue on from there?

A Right. But I knew I heard that they're taking their people, too, arresting, sending them to those places. So I said, "It's no use." And then later I felt I made a foolish mistake. And that's why I couldn't forgive myself. And I went back and I brought him out from there, under such circumstances that it's just unbelievable. I cannot believe until now. It's another miracle. It was such a risk, you cannot imagine.

Because it's in Russia to travel in general without any document, proper means, you know, allowance permit, that you can have, you have to write to travel. You couldn't go to your sister's, to your mother's, if had you to travel by train from one city. And this was like from -- you know how far this was? I can compare this. Jalabad -- I don't know how to compare. To New York or more, from here to New York, I think even further. I don't know. Canada is not further. It depends on which border. But the furthest

that you can think of. We traveled so much, so long, and it was so risky. Then we came there. I don't know where I came with got into somebody. It's -- now I can't recall now.

Q Do you remember any of the details of how you recovered him? If you don't, it's okay.

A We went in. We found him. And there were some people that I knew also there with him. My sister's husband, the second husband, he ran away from there alone by himself. And we had to buy a document on the way home, so to change my husband's name so he wouldn't be called Pelta. He was called for a number of years Misner.

Q He became Misner?

A Yeah, we met a man who we knew from Jalabad. And he had something like this. People -- this was the business, the speculation, the most risky that you can think of if you would get caught. So anyway.

Q Documents?

A Oh.

Q False papers?

A People -- it was just one of those things that a person never did in their previous life. We were all young. And we had to get acquainted with those kind of such a dangerous things that, just to save our lives. And that's when they caught him, I think also my husband with the

document was there, that he just got this documents. It was a very crucial step, very major step. But they have so much evidence, so much, and he was questioned so much until they let him out.

Then he had -- he was very mad with me because I didn't know. I couldn't find him. So we separated ourselves from each other. But he came home because he was very far away from already from that place.

Q I see.

A It was called the working army, the labor army, you know.

Q Uh-huh?

A People were dying from hunger. And he sent me some money from there, I think, once.

Q So you continued on to Samarkand?

A Yeah, right.

Q And then obviously some time later on the two of you decided to leave Samarkand?

A We never left Samarkand.

Q You never left Samarkand?

A No. We left Samarkand. From Samarkand we went back to Poland. That's when the war, you know, like they said when my son was born that he brought luck into this world, that the fronts are all taken. And it's almost the war is over.



Q What year was this?

A 1945.

Q So you were actually -- you remained in Russia from '41 to '45?

A Yes. We were in Russia from 1940 -- what are you talking about?

December, what is it called, 31, was the end of the year, yes. That was '39. So '40, '41, '42, '43, '44, '45, it's like six years in Russia.

Q Uh-huh.

A My best years of my life, my youth.

Q How many years were in you in Samarkand?

A As I said, we left after he came back -- shortly we left, after he came back from the army from that--

Q Uh-huh?

A -- from that labor army.

Q Were you in Samarkand for years?

A Pardon?

Q Were you in Samarkand for several years?

A (Nodding head.) My sister-in-law bought a document to go home. She didn't have children. But her husband left with the Polish army. And she bought a document to go home. And she wasn't alone, only. There were many families. And she wanted to go back home to meet

her husband because he was free from the Polish army, so she bought this document.

And sure enough, somebody had a big mouth and they spread the story that a lot of those Polish Jews are going back home. And they were all taken off from the train one by one. And she -- they kept her for one year in jail. And for some reason she got mad at me. I wanted to take some food for her.

Well, I think this was just nothing like any bad -- what I -- the thing is, you know, you get confused.

Q Yes.

A That wasn't my country, but it almost became. I didn't know a word when I came to Russia in Russian. All of a sudden I knew without schooling. I knew how to write and to read and I wrote petitions to Stalin and Kaganovich to let my brothers, to reunite me with my brothers. I wanted them to come. And then I would have saved my brother. My brother Yosic needed me. And I knew that he wasn't feeling well. And if I would be -- if he would be at my side under my direction he would have survived.

Q How did he perish?

A Pardon?

Q How did he perish?

A He wasn't -- just he was too delicate. And they made him work hard from too hard heavy labor. I wasn't

there and he was sick. He needed -- you know, he needed a doctor, possibly. I was -- one year before the war I was with him in Warsaw. My mother had cousins, doctors, we had to recommend to some specialist.

But I went through -- I was youngest. When I was left all four sisters were already married, you understand. My youngest sister that she's jumped over two older sisters. She got married before the two older sisters.

Q I know that wasn't done in those days.

A But what I started before, where did I cut off now?

Q Well, we were talking a little bit about how your brother perished.

A Yeah, he was taken I told you from Brestlitovsk with my other brother, arrested. My older sister was there. But he perished there from probably hunger. We found out the rest because I was searching so much, and where he is. So we made my sister, my older sister, to send him some food. And I'm not so sure he got it. But he perished. We found out through this.

Q Could you be in touch with your family in Poland, anybody during the period that you were in Samarkand?

A No, because at this time maybe when we were in

Samarkand I believe they were not alive anymore.

Q They were not?

A When they had attacked, what I mean, they, the Germans, the Nazis, attacked Russia, that cut off every correspondence, every connection, you know, every means of connection.

Q Uh-huh.

A Unless somebody was in the army and he ran away from the army and came back and said something, which also probably happened. I wouldn't be surprised. But that's how some people knew what was going on.

Because that was secret to us. They didn't know that they were burning people there.

Q You knew nothing about the concentration camps incident?

A No. That was our luck. We lived through the war under very, very heavy hard circumstances, but we survived. I told you I had malaria and God knows what I went through more. Who can remember? I went through many, many things.

Q Yes.

A But I learned, you see, I didn't know for a whole year how to sign my name in Russian. Then all of a sudden I saw we were still there. I started signing my name maiden name in Russian and I wrote petitions. The first

petitions somebody helped me out. Then I did it on my own. So in Sweden I also was a DOLMICHER for a lot of very educated people. Never went to Swedish school.

Q You learned quickly?

A I couldn't believe. You know who does it now for my oldest grandson. He is now nineteen years old. He told me last night that he's taking piano lessons, piano. But he is playing now. He goes to the same teacher that I used to send him when they used to live here.

Q Sounds nice.

A At nineteen he is a lover of music. My son's the same thing. I told them last night that because he is staying with the mother -- the mother remarried. It's very tragic. He's very, very beautiful boy. But my son sees him now, you know, when he comes here and he goes sometimes there, but it's not the same as living together, you know.

Q I know it's not.

A And we had this little girl. And she married to a Gentile. And the boys are going to attending Catholic school. And my children were brought up, my grandchildren, Orthodox. My son has adapted but he's very Orthodox.

Q Yes, I remember you talking about that before. Anyway, let's maybe go back to your life.

A To where?

Q To your life in those days. You decided to

leave Samarkand as soon as the war was over?

A        Yeah, we already heard some news that the Polish, whoever is a Polish citizen, can go back to their country. But we also heard that whereas the time developed, we also heard that they sent some shalom. I mean, a lot of, you know, train wagons with people. And they were Polish Nazis, also. They blew up some trains and a lot of people were killed. So that's why my sister-in-law went out.

I didn't tell you. She was jailed for one year. She was -- and then it came the -- what is it called where they free?

Q        Amnesty?

A        Amnesty.

Q        This sister-in-law is whom?

A        She is my sister-in-law, both of our husbands were brothers. She left Tomaszow on account of me with her husband because they left, lived in Tomaszow. My late husband's home town was Koncik. I didn't even finish until now my family names. My last brother who was alive here, you don't have his name.

Q        You told me he was Isiac?

A        But I didn't say everything.

Q        No?

A        He has one daughter, yeah. He has a wife who is from Wilno. And they married in Stockholm. They got

married in Stockholm.

Q What's her name?

A Sheila.

Q They had a child?

A They have a daughter who became a very young widow. Her husband passed away in the seventies. But she is now thirty-seven.

Q And what's her name?

A Beverly. She was born in San Francisco.

Q Okay. But anyway, you were talking about this other sister-in-law?

A Yeah, she is living in -- she lives in Tel Aviv, in Israel.

Q At the time she was put in jail and then was in amnesty?

A Yeah, that's when they let her out. And at that time you could go legally home with those trains, but we were afraid to. When what we heard, the news about the trains being blown up, so we wouldn't risk our baby and our lives, also, we lived through such a hard life, a war. We wanted to come home and present my baby to my mother, to my family. That's what I thought.

And when we came there --

Q You decided -- how did you go? You didn't go by train?

A We went by regular passenger train. I bought a document. I think I gave this in the last report. We bought a document very illegally. If they would have caught us we have been wound up in jail, too. But we were traveling with the baby. And we had another couple with two children that they kept together with us. And this I remember their name was Traggers. They had two boys. And we had this little baby boy, our Jacob.

And we bought a permit. And we didn't want to go directly home until we visit Baranowice where we were caught from, sent away, because my dear sister was very dear to me. And I wanted to know what happened to her or where she is. We stopped in Baranowice. Also on the way from Siberia my husband works his way little by little so we always had something to eat.

And here in Baranowice were left just a few houses from the whole city. Everything was burned. But the lady where we lived for a short time after we got married, her house survived. And they gave me the news that my sister was shot on the street.

And then from there my husband got cheeses. That was famous city, like we get now the cheese from Sweden or from Denmark or from, you know, they call it our language Swiss cheese. And he worked for a few days and they paid him, paid us with this. For this we got an apartment for



those cheeses. We didn't have money. We gave away our last money for a little document for the paper just to go home. We had considered it safe.

Q You got an apartment in that town?

A No, we bought, you know, it was called this cheese money. You had to pay a lot of money because apartments were very scarce, I mean.

And what, did you ask me a question?

Q I was wondering, were you saying you got an apartment in Baranowice?

A In Lodz.

Q This is well after you got back in Poland?

A (Nodding head.)

Q I see. You left Baranowice quickly?

A Oh, we just wanted to be able to make something so we can get a ticket to go further to continue. Maybe if we wouldn't have stopped in Baranowice maybe we could have gone without an extra ticket. But for me it was more important just to find out what happened to my sister. So I got the very sad news. Then in Lodz I got even more bad news.

Actually I had to go to Tomshav first to find out the reality. And I right away got some problem with my heart. I got not special heart problems but I had the nerves. I had to have three shots every week. I carried

with me, and I went three times a week to the doctor to get the shots for my heart to get rid of the nerves.

Q What do you mean "nerves"?

A Well, I suffered a lot of tragedy.

Q Yes.

A And I didn't believe that I will even survive.

You ask me what it means about nerves. We had so much tragedy that it was too much to believe, and too much to survive after this. We were worn out from everything.

Q So it took a toll on your heart?

A Oh, at that time when I found out that this sister is coming in. So --

Q Did you have any other health problems that you remember?

A I don't think so.

Q Did you have other kinds of things, like, were you ever having nightmares or anything or really, really depressed?

A Well, nightmares, and things, I know I dream sometimes. I can't even remember later what I dreamt. But those things -- sometimes, you know, when we talk too much about it, it comes. I hate to do it now, what I am doing.

I will take a little water, may I, please?

Q Yes.

A I have a lot of responsibilities on my head. I

carry a lot. We have -- you know, I don't have to work now, actually, but we have properties. And I have my children living in Los Angeles and I live here. So it's everything under my responsibility. Although, I have people that manage for us. But still I feel I am very, very deep involved.

Q Yes, you are.

A Very deep. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing with becoming founders all over.

Q So let's just go ahead and finish. You were talking about --?

A My uncle, I found his address. And he sent us two hundred dollars. Actually he sent us to Jalabad. I was the one always to uncover. My sister was busy with something else. And that was my duty. I felt the responsible one. She will -- the thing is that I didn't want to accept the two hundred dollars because you couldn't buy no more than eat a twenty kilo potatoes or two pounds of sugar, I'm sorry, I mean, butter, at that time we -- at this time we were still using butter. Now I'm staying away from butter along time. I don't even use margerine. I'm trying because I gained a lot of weight.

And I didn't want to accept the money. So we were traveling, you know, so illegal and this and that. And then all of a sudden they tried to force us. We got an

order if we wouldn't accept this two hundred dollars I would have wound up in jail. They have to accept. The dollars in Russia were a fortune. But according to the government they were nothing worth. But on the black market they were worth a lot of money. But this came through the government. He didn't know.

He had here somebody who represented him, a cousin, you know, he was a big shot in the city, always running for a mayor of the city. Was a little Jew but he was also involved in as a fan. This was like being, you know, he didn't have his children anytime. So he was involved with horse races. He didn't race the horses. He had a jockey. He had a horse called Bolera. Bolera was costing him two hundred twenty-five thousand at that time. That was many years ago when we were in Sweden.

I received a picture. My cousin who came here before from us, because he was Hirshberg. But he was in Israel. From Israel you were able to bring people, but not from Russia. We received the papers. The papers, our affidavits to come to America arrived first to Samarkand when we were already on the way to Poland.

Q When you got to Lodz how long did you stay in Lodz?

A One year. My late husband didn't want to go to Germany. He said we already had enough lagers. So he had

chosen Sweden.

Q You decided to immigrate permanently to Sweden?

A No, no, this was a transit.

Q Just a transit?

A Yeah. We had to find a city where we want to, you know, outside of the communists. I was even going to go to Belgium. I have one cousin who survived in Belgium. But we couldn't do anything then. So we did it to Sweden. That's where my daughter was born, in Stockholm.

Q In Stockholm?

A Yeah, she was born Kowinski Hospital, you know, the Queen's hospital.

Q You left Sweden around 1946?

A Yes, 1946. And we left '51.

Q You stayed there quite a while?

A We came here in '51.

Q Was that because you had to wait all that time for your --

A Because Sweden didn't suffer war, so we couldn't. But my uncle was acquainted with the consul, with the American consul. He was a big shot. He was a very big shot in the city and politician. And he was -- I have newspapers, you know, after he passed away they called him the tycoon. And I don't know. But that's what he was called. And he didn't help us very much when we came here.

From far away he sent us the two hundred dollars.

Q Uh-huh?

A I have to finish this. We finally had to sign it and they paid us out so we could buy the two kilogram butter or twenty kilogram potatoes.

Q For two hundred dollars?

A For two hundred dollars. Well, it was better to accept this than the jail. We had to -- I didn't know English at the time, so my husband was marching to the post office and found somebody can send the telegram for us in English. And we warned him not to send any money. It was a little afraid, you know. It was very illegal to do this. But how we did it, I don't know. It went through.

But he can either suits, all sorts and he sent us suits but already to Lodz, but not to -- we didn't get them to Russia. In Russia we have got a lot of money, and Lodz, too, because this was -- I mean, anyway, I want to cut it a little bit short because it's too much. And --

Q Did you ever return to Poland in all these years to your town?

A No, no.

Q What did you find when you got back to Tomaszow in the first place? How did you find out about your family?

A Well, there were a few people from whom I knew. One was a girlfriend of mine. And she passed away three

years ago in Chicago. But she was there and her husband. She was his second wife. She wasn't married before the war. He lost his family.

And another bunch of people, and I got even pictures from my mother, how she looked, I still have it, before she was sent away to the concentration camp, I mean, to the gas chambers.

Q What camp was she sent to?

A Pardon?

Q What camp was she sent to? Did you find out?

A I didn't know. Believe it or not for many years I kept on asking whoever I met. We attended weddings because my son went to medical school in New York, so I traveled constantly to New York. And he got married there. But now he's divorced.

But I could never find out which camp my mother wound up. And so my husband, he reads the Jewish journal newspaper. It's called Ale Mentschen Yiddish. And there was an article, somebody, Lodz man from my city. He is a printer. He works for this newspaper. He lives in New York. And he on Memorial Day he always gives some little article.

And that was a beautiful writeup, beautiful writeup that only fifty thousand Jews were shipped away the same time and what happened on the way. And he said that

she was sent to Treblinka. From then on, maybe two years all together that I know. I didn't know before.

Q All that time you didn't know?

A Yeah, I didn't know. Maybe it's three years. I just through this article, writeup in the newspaper, I found out. I don't know. People like to keep to themselves, you know. They don't want you to be too much advanced. Maybe they are jealous that you became more advanced than them. Why should I know where my mother perished.

Q There weren't any of those lists included?

A (Shaking head.) I found out just like this. We were such a tragic situation. When we were in Tomaszow, and we were in Konsk, finding out that everybody perished. And we couldn't even go through to the house where we lived. Everything was closed with boards, closed up. I thought maybe I can get in, maybe I'll find some pictures. It was luck. Not luck to me, they boarded up the buildings. Nobody lived in it for the time being, at the time when we were in Tomaszow. So we got away as fast as we could from Poland.

Q Yes?

A For one year. It was -- there was a fact that the train came -- no, that we lived in BARZAGAGON. Jalabad had such little -- it was called BARSAGAN Taczkend. We



lived with a man whose last name was Dim. They were in from Galicia. He was with a sister. Such a strong man, handsome. And he was killed on the train in Poland while he was traveling from one city to the next because he was Jewish. The Poles --

Q So after the war?

A After the war. He was already, you know, rescued and everything. He came through all the hardship and he came to -- I don't remember. He was going to go to the Germans' towns. He was on the train. I know he was killed by Polish people.

I just heard last week when my house was a man from Israel, from Haifa. And he is connected -- I gave him a donation two years ago. And somebody brought him to my house. And he said last time he said, last year he was here, I wasn't around. So he was traveling in Poland with his mother. He is not a young man but he's not an old one either. He takes care of some orphanage in Haifa, childrens' homes, anyway, and some educational, you know, they have schools.

He said, well, while he was traveling with his mother in Poland there were in some town they met the Polish man. He was half drunk. When a person is half drunk he talks what he has in mind when he was sober. He said we can build up Treblinka, and Majdanek, and what have you. And

what is it?

Q Auschwitz?

A Auschwitz, we can build up again, he said.  
Three names he mentioned.

Q Which brings me to, do you think it could happen again?

A Let's hope not. What Sadaam is doing now, this morning I heard what Sadaam has accomplished, that he is not preparing only for Israel but this is for the whole world. If America is not going to stop him it will be too bad. It will be too late. It should have already been stopped.

He started and he leaves. Now he starts out. Our President starts himself with the Jews. What are you talking about? He is forcing them to commit suicide. The Jews can only commit suicide by giving up the land. The Russians are coming, the Russian Jews. Where will they be? Where can we keep them? Israel has got such a small territory. But to hear and nowadays that we can build up Treblinka with those things, it's very scary.

Q Yes. I'd like to just stop for a minute to see if other people would like to ask you some questions?

A Please.

Q Yes, Vince, do you have something?

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Well, I am interested in to know if after

hearing all the suffering and loss that you've experienced, if you would share with us as a survivor of the Holocaust, lessons that you've learned about humanity, that you might share with future generations, since this is a recording that would be viewed by future generations?

A       What do you mean by "the future"? What do you want me to tell you? What my suggestion is about the future generations?

Q       What have you learned about humanity that future generations can benefit from, since you are a survivor and have been through a hard time in human history?

A       The only thing now, everything is so scary with those bombs with -- what do you call? -- the Jews destroyed them in Sadaam Hussein 1981, Israel, you remember?

Q       I don't. But do you mean like hydrogen bombs?

A       Yes, and he is building them now. The German people have to be stopped, although, now maybe the German people have to be stopped from helping to build up those things, because they helped him to build up. Even America did this, all the biggest countries. And we live in a very dangerous time.

I don't know what the future can bring for the young, the future generation. We have to first get away with Sadaam Hussein. He is a very dangerous man. And I understand that the Syrian leader is the same, the way I

hear. He only wants to get for under no circumstances. He doesn't want to hear that the Roland Heights is way up and the Jewish settlement --

(End of Tape One.)

I can't repeat this, that Sadaam, the leader of Iraq, Sadaam Hussein and the leader of Syria, Assaad, are the two most dangerous people in the world, that they have to be stopped. He is asking from Israel to give them back Roland Heights, down in the bottom, they killed hundreds and thousands of children and grownups just from the top. You know how easy it is. You throw a rock, throw a rock and you can kill a person. They were shooting and bombing, and what have you. Whole schools perished, entire schools, they bombed to death, you know, the children.

So that's one thing that I'm talking about Israel. And that's the same thing. And the bombs are not only turned towards Israel, the bombs are turned towards our whole world. And President Bush knows about it. And all the big leaders are aware about it. But they have to get together and wipe out those people, I mean, to do the best they can to make a secure world to live. Because otherwise nobody's sure what the next day will bring. That's my opinion.

Q I'm also curious to know how your sense of your experience, the meaning of your experience may have changed

you for over time. For example, soon after the war, what was the meaning of your suffering after the war? How might it have changed with time? Did you get it in a different way at a different time in your life? Has it changed over time in your life?

A Of course, we are here. January's going to be forty-one years that we came to this country. And our lives have improved, of course. It's just bad thing that we're getting older. I cannot benefit what, you know, if I would have all those conditions in my younger years. We worked here very hard, very hard. I still do.

And I have raised two nice children. My daughter is married to an attorney. My son is a doctor. And I have beautiful five grandchildren. The one that is now in Jerusalem just finished eighteen years, his birthday was in August. And we gave him a nice party in Los Angeles on the 11th. And he went to Israel. And people said, "You have two movie stars." And my daughter's children are also beautiful. And my son's little girl, they all look like queens, little princesses. It's just a little bit too spoiled, maybe. We do very well as far as if you look considering other people, you know. They're very much under control, very respectable. We have respectable children. And our children, their children are, also.

Q I think what I was asking was, has your opinion

of the Germans or your perspective of the Holocaust changed over time, or has it been pretty much the same?

A It cannot change. If they can still do what they're doing, if they can supply so much poison to poison the whole world, nothing has changed, very little. They're trying to cover up the crimes they did. But very little has changed, my dear. I don't have -- do you agree with me if still if they supply all those Arab worlds with the poison material, you know, that's demolishing the whole world? What do you think?

Q I think a number of countries have been involved in arming.

A You're right, absolutely. I said even the United States, I read about this too late. I read about this much later. I didn't realize before. But when it happened with the Sadaam Hussein I got to read a lot of literature about it. And I discovered that the United Nations -- I'm sorry -- the United States at the very last moment helped him. As a matter of fact, the United States has such a -- they can only catch a Jew Polack to save the whole world. Polack who is in prison, he saved Israel and at the time and he saved the whole world because otherwise the whole world would be wiped out. If Israel wouldn't destroy -- what is it?

Q Hydrogen bomb?

A Bomb, in 1981. You want to know? Am I right? You agree with me? Because he was ready to do it. They just interrupted him very much. And now he's hiding. And our world, the big -- I mean, the greatest government should be after him and to destroy him, to destroy him all the way. Assaad has the same thing, as far as I heard.

Q I have.

A Assaad is the leader from Syria.

Q I was curious about the singing that you mentioned?

A About what?

Q Your singing, that you have made singing a part of your life. I was wondering if you --

A That was my habit from childhood.

Q I was wondering if those songs helped you in surviving through your difficulties?

A I had a friend who will recommend in Sweden, in Stockholm. She was from Wilno. My sister lives in Wilno. She recommended -- no, my sister-in-law recommended to my brother this girl, and she used to come to me. Whatever I did as long as she was -- I was going around singing all day. She says, "You know, this will keep you young forever." She said, "You have something very valuable. Keep it up." Because I liked to dance and sing. And there's a lot of people here in VACHAMA know about it. That

that's my habit.

I used to belong to an organization, a zionist organization, which the Arabs considered that -- what do you call it? What do they say? That zionism is racist.

Q Uh-huh.

A We are racist? Very far from it. Very far from it. The Jews are not racist and Israel is not racist. They do a lot of things. They help the whole world. That little Israel is saving even big Russia with farming.

They have so many discoveries. They have the biggest heads over there, the biggest, the smartest professors. You have Whitesman Institute. You have Hebrew University in Jerusalem. You have Ben Guron University. You have Haifa. In Haifa is the Techno.

It's my son even was accepted to one hospital in Haifa. He wanted to practice, to specialize in ophthalmology, but his ex-wife didn't want to go to Israel. He was accepted enough in ophthalmology.

What was the biggest Jewish name, the richest Jewish name in the world?

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Rockfeller?

A No. What?

Q Rowchow?

A Rowchow Medical School, there was a professor



Wiseman. He -- I think I forgot now. I have the telgram still at home. Because he was practicing, he was doing research three years in Methesda, Maryland. He interrupted his residence after his first year of residency because of the fact that he was a geneticist. His professor from the medical school recommended him to him. NIH, you know, NIH is the National Institute of Health and he spent there three years.

And why am I saying this? I don't remember.

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q We were talking about singing.

A Yeah, but I went away, anyway, don't know something.

Q I want to ask you if there was a special song that had some meaning to you that you would like to share with us? Perhaps you could make that part of your oral history and share it with us.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q If you'd like to? Name your song, if you like.

A Pardon?

Q Could you give us the name of the song you like a lot?

A Well, I don't know. I should sing a Hebrew song. You wouldn't know the meaning. I remember my son-in-law came to my house. And I was singing in Polish, I

think it was. But I said, "Oh, you don't understand Polish anyway."

He says, "That doesn't have the value. The melody is the most that I cherish." He liked my melodies. He has one hour of my tape of my songs. And my son only has a half an hour because somebody walked in in the middle while he was taping. So the children, the babies, they went with -- he stopped at half an hour. But my son-in-law taped my songs for one hour.

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q We would love it if you would sing us one song in Hebrew?

A Hebrew?

Q You don't have to.

A Pardon?

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q What about Hatikvah?

A Hatikvah. I can sing Hatikvah, too.

Q Any one you like.

A Should I?

Q Any one you like.

(Ms. Pelta sang on the tape in a foreign language.)

A I know so many songs about Jerusalem, you can't imagine.

Q Well, thank you for doing that one.

(Ms. Pelta sang on the tape in a foreign language.)

A Well, anyway.

Q Thank you for doing that.

A I will sing one more song. It is a little, ARABKIN. There are two songs that are very similar starting, so it confuses me always. Can you imagine? I sing them all the time. But now --

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q We put you on the spot.

A Yeah.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q Do you want to go on to something else?

A Yeah, you know, I can sing the Yiddish song.

Q Okay. Go ahead.

(Ms. Pelta sang on the tape in a foreign language.)

A You should hear those songs, the same taped with my children, you won't recognize my voice. I had a terrific voice. I was singing solo for the KIAMITIT in Tomaszow.

Q I can believe that.

BY MR. IACOPINO:

Q Very rich, a lot of texture in your voice.

BY MS. BENDAYAN:

Q I can still feel that in your voice. So is there anything else you'd like to add? How about you, John?

I'd wanted to ask a couple things that I didn't along the way. Have you discussed your experiences with your children through the years?

A My spirit?

Q Your experiences, the Holocaust experience?

A They know. Whether we discussed it, especially, I wouldn't say exactly. But they know a lot. My daughter came with me to the Holocaust gathering, to the survivors gathering when Loni Silva was in '83 at Washington. And they took -- like she would be one of the staff. She had a very large camera. I was surprised that he trusted her this camera. They all thought she was with the staff. But she was taking pictures all over, wherever something was, the same as the staff.

And then when President Reagan came there it was a very big thing. I don't know, ten or fifteen thousand people fit into that hall. My daughter was there. And she wanted me to be in the front of the stage so we would see Reagan's, both of them, Nancy -- and what's his name?

Q Ronald.

A Ronald. Can you imagine? Ronald and Nancy we saw. But she started screaming. We already sat there, "Mama, I want you here." Somebody started calling me "Sabiny." I almost fell down because they were like amphitheater, the little steps. Somebody called. I turned

around. I almost fell.

We came to the front of the stage and we saw everybody. ELVIA was there and Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan, and a lot of big personalities. I just cannot even name them now. And, well, there was met the one who he is a leader, him and his wife. She is a survivor from the Warsaw ghetto. And I forgot the first name. We are still connected, you know, with the group.

And the children were singing. It's, you know, I almost cried. She was -- it was a ten year old child. And she sang the orphan WASTATED, you know what it means, and the way is standing a tree, and it's tilted and it's bent, and how the mother tries to protect it. It was made from a man to a bird, that the bird is going to fly to the cold country and he has to have something not to catch a cold. The mother was worrying so much.

But she sang it so -- with such a feeling that all the people were, I was stunned. I just, you know, I have never heard a ten year old child to sing like this. I am used to singing, you know. And I was myself a very terrific singer. But the way this child -- maybe because I felt I got older, but she sang it with such a deep feeling. It was, you know, how -- I have the record. We had to buy. We have this. Later we got it, cassette, video cassette. And we have it. It's special.

Q Such a moving time for you.

A But he very specialized. He took it over from his father. I just saw another movie from him. But he terrific. We have it. I forget what his name. Yeah.

Q I was going to ask you, early on you said sometimes when you talk about this whole time it's hard for you or you don't sleep well at night.

A Well, it happens, it happens sometimes, yeah, sometimes. What can I say?

Q Well, I thank you very much, very, very much for doing this interview and reviewing this period twice, because besides everything else I can see it may be hard for you today or tonight.

A Well, you know, I feel embarrassed at forgetting. Even now this song, I was going to sing this with the ARABKIN, -- no, that's not it. I can't imagine. It's a very well known song and it disappeared from me.

Q It's amazing how much you do remember.

A Pardon?

Q It's amazing how much do you remember.

A I don't want to say. People can't believe, they all knew those songs. But I'm reminded every time I go, even if I sing quietly, like I sing here, because I used to sing with the stretching voice, you know, like in a cantor, like a professional singer. They used to ask me, I

went to conservatory or I studied, special song. I never studied, but some of my people who know me from back home they say that I forfeited my voice. My children advised me always to go to Los Angeles, to make a use for my voice.

Because used to be my friend, my brother's friend who perished, we called him our third brother in the family because they were so close. He was in our house more than his parents' house.

He said, "Sabina, you wasted your voice. Why did you?" He wanted -- he expected me to go and do -- make it career from it.

Q It seems you got a lot of pleasure from it, though?

A Yeah.

Q So is there anything else you'd like to add, anything you think of any further message that you'd like for the children or other people?

A I just hope that this never continues, what we went through, that our future generations wouldn't have to witness what we witnessed in our own lives, in our lives in our youth. It destroyed our youth. It destroyed millions of people forever. You know, they perished. At least we survived a hard way but we're alive, and we can still tell a little bit, the sad story.

But we should fight Nazis, Nazis, because it's

building up again, the way I understand. And it shows a little bit.

And the Arabs get away with a lot. The president needs to be a partner with their oil. So the oil is worth more than peoples' lives. That's what it shows. Because Jews are bringing a lot of wisdom to the world. A lot of the top ranks I think I consider are Jewish people. That's why they're so jealous of us. You know what kind of champions are coming out from Whitesman Institute alone, from Rauhaus?

We were two years ago with the Jerusalem in Israel, Mr. and Mrs. Kruger, they were just honored two weeks ago, three weeks ago, my daughters, they invited me on this mission, me and my husband. And my daughter came with us.

And we were taken to a ROHOUIT on the same complex as Whitesman Institute is situated. But they took us to someplace, it looked like a laundry place, a laundromat. We come in. It looked very primitive on the top, on the top of the ground. We walked inside and it looked like a washing machine, a gigantic washing machine.

They turned around -- and did you hear this, about this? It's the first time -- we were very privileged because the institution in Jerusalem is very, very big and they bring out very lovely children for the future, big



generals, big in everything. They discovered so much already, science, the solarium. They brought so many good things.

They took us in. We saw it with our own eyes. But when they took us this place, we went downstairs, maybe three flights downstairs. They're very narrow stairs to walk down. And our stairs were -- was an eye-opener. It was a museum.

And you know what they did? They made the little -- nobody wanted to sell, you know, guns and, you know, ammunition to the Israelis, and they produced downstairs there. You could never tell what went on in a small forum but it helped the army a lot. It's something that the world can't believe unless seeing is believing.

We saw another place, you know, where they go to in Jerusalem, the holy -- you know, where everybody goes to play -- what is it?

Q VELENGRAD?

A Underneath of the war is another world. And private people have an access to it. There is nothing. They let us inside.

And they're building. I think the whole world of governments are helping Israel because this is something for the future. I heard it's been going on for maybe more than twenty years. They're building and building and

building. We couldn't see everything.

Q You mean like an underground city?

A It's an underground. It's a museum. It's something. It's more than a museum. It's something. That's why I say what the Jews are, I mean, producing. It's unbelievable. They're very, very valuable people.

Why did they want to destroy those people?

Q This is a great mystery for all prejudice.

A It's such a thing. Then we went to a museum that was maybe one-fourth or maybe one-sixth of the size. The American government helped. We came next time -- contribute, yes -- I don't know. I'm in the same place. It's a new world. A new whole world. So much to see. If the American government chipped in -- it's outside is a big large sign that this was donated by the American United States government.

But those things I can understand to help because the minute whatever little they help it comes out very big. Because the Jews make a use from it, very big. It's not -- they're not selfish. And they can never be called that they are racist. How could they? They go to all the world, all the world of underdeveloped countries. They help with everything.

I don't -- two years ago I think Israeli government shipped over two hundred cattle to Russia. Where

does this little country take over two hundred pieces of cattle into Russia? They want to help the farmers to teach them how to, because they went out of the system. And Israel, everything is very progressive. And they teach them the new method.

Q Yes. You're very proud?

A I am very proud. I am extremely proud. They do such unusual things. If it wouldn't be for the heat I would have lived and settled in Israel. I can't stand. I'm near my children. I live in San Francisco. I would love to live in Los Angeles but it's too hot for me. I can't take the climate.

Q I'm glad you moved here and came to do this interview. I know it's been really hard for you.

A Well, a little effort. It doesn't matter. It's my pleasure. I would like to do it.

Q Thank you.

(Ms. Pelta sang on the tape in a foreign language.)

A I don't even remember what I'm singing. You know what kind of a song this is?

Q Thank you.

A I attended the movie just before the war started. 1939 was a movie, a Hebrew movie imported from Israel. This was for water. They found water. That's why they say they're so lively.

Q That's what the song is about?

A Lachaim is water. Lachaim is life. Water means life. You know what happened a week ago, a week and a half, almost two weeks now in Oakland, Berkeley, because of the water they couldn't save so much. People were perished in that by water. Water is life. They find water, I don't know how. But they do find it, and underground. They have such a navigation -- not navigation --

Q Irrigation?

A -- irrigation, I'm sorry. They found, you know, the science over there so high that nobody can beat, nobody can beat. And especially now with the Russian Jews, it's even more, much more. They bring a lot of wisdom.

Q Thank you.

(Whereupon the interview was concluded.)