

1 INTERV: Your name, and --

2 GERDA BIKALES: All right. I'm Gerda Bikales,  
3 and that's a story in itself. My Yiddish name was Gittel  
4 after my great-grandmother, but I was given a German name,  
5 Gerda, because I was born in Germany, and my parents felt I  
6 should have a name other than my Yiddish name, and so they  
7 named me this very Germanic name, which has remained with  
8 me and I've always wondered why I haven't changed it. I  
9 never liked it and it's really a peculiar name. I did not  
10 end up growing up in Germany. I had to flee and live in a  
11 number of countries, which was always very strange, including  
12 the country that ultimately became my own, the United States.  
13 It's always very restrained, and the first thing people react  
14 to my name. And I never changed it. I always wondered why  
15 and I don't know why, except it seemed there was something  
16 about it I couldn't change. Any format you want to follow?

17 INTERV: No, I mean I could -- I think basically  
18 we've been asking people --

19 GERDA: Yes.

20 INTERV: I mean, the basic thing is sort of what  
21 happened, if there's something in particular that you --  
22 you were orphaned during war?

23 GERDA: Okay. As I mentioned to you, I think I

1 was among the luckier ones, really, because after the war  
2 was ended, I had both my parents. I had both my parents,  
3 I was 14 years old, and I think it's very important being  
4 young enough not to understand, it was very important.  
5 And it only worked up to a point because, for example, if  
6 you're very young, you learn the languages faster. And so  
7 I knew those languages, and my mother didn't know. My  
8 father had managed to come to the United States in 1938,  
9 and so he was alive, but I was with my mother, and because  
10 I knew those languages, she did not, she became my warden,  
11 I had to take care of her, she could not open her mouth.  
12 And to some extent, I had responsibility, so far I was the  
13 adult very often. But, in other ways, I just did not have  
14 the maturity to understand just how bad it was.

15 INTERV: Where were you living?

16 GERDA: Everywhere. Where was I living. I was  
17 born in Germany. My parents came from Poland. And so they  
18 never really were at home, and they never spoke good German,  
19 they spoke Yiddish. So even in Germany, when I was born in  
20 1931, they were strangers there. I may not have realized  
21 it at the time, but, of course, I was a stranger, too. And  
22 my father left in 1938, he was lucky. He was stateless, he  
23 had been deprived of his Polish citizenship, and he managed

1 somehow to get to the United States, but my mother and I  
2 remained behind. There was some sort of illusion, that my  
3 mother, being a Polish citizen, if you can believe that,  
4 that this would be some protection and that, therefore,  
5 she -- it was not as urgent that she get out. We tried,  
6 of course, we tried all the time. We felt that my father  
7 was the most urgent case, and we did not get out. Ultimately,  
8 and I think this is maybe what I ought to talk about, is some  
9 of the people who -- I guess whoever is here today owes their  
10 life to many other people. Some of these people are totally  
11 unknown to me, totally unseen to me. They operated behind  
12 the scenes, I don't know who they were. Others I know.  
13 And the first person, I think, to whom I really owe a  
14 tremendous debt of gratitude, is a man by the last name of  
15 Stein. I doubt that he's still alive. He was a Jew who  
16 was a citizen of Chile in South America. And he had a little  
17 girl and he had a wife. And in the late 1930's, 1938-39,  
18 he understood that this was going to be the last chapter of  
19 the German Jews, and so he traveled to Germany and looked  
20 for women with children of approximately -- a child approxi-  
21 mately the age of his daughter. And he used his family  
22 passport, a Chilean family passport, to bring people out of  
23 Germany. And I do recall, there was an exchange of money,

1 but I believe that the exchange of money is simply because  
2 he needed to support his family in Chile. I don't believe  
3 that this man made any money on us. I think it was, you  
4 know, just a necessity that he have some money to support  
5 his own family. And what he did is, he came, he said where  
6 do you want to go, I have a passport, a Chilean passport,  
7 that will take us anywhere. And my mother decided to go to  
8 Belgium. She thought we would wait there until my father  
9 can somehow send for us. And so we came in grand style,  
10 I dare say, first class, on this Chilean passport, and the  
11 man brought us to Antwerp.

12 INTERV: How old were you then?

13 GERDA: 1939, I was 8, I was just 8. And then  
14 he left and he went back to Germany and found some other  
15 lady with another daughter. It could only be daughters  
16 because, you know, that's what he had. And it sort of had to  
17 to match as best we could. And he left us in Antwerp. And  
18 my mother thought she had a distant relative in Antwerp.  
19 And that's one of the less glorious chapters. She would  
20 not take us in. And so we were standing on the street in  
21 Antwerp, newly arrived, not knowing the language, nothing.  
22 And a Jewish family took us in and helped us. Anyway, as  
23 you probably know, by May 1940, this was late '39, just

1 before the war erupted in September, and by June -- by May  
2 1940, the Germans invaded Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg,  
3 and we were on the run again, because we already knew the  
4 Germans. Some of the Belgian Jews were not so prompt to  
5 leave, but we knew them, and so we left. And that's another  
6 insanity. We ended up in Dunkirk, if you believe that,  
7 during the Battle of Dunkirk. And there were various mis-  
8 calculations about this. It wasn't supposed to be there,  
9 but I was in Dunkirk at the Battle of Dunkirk, and I would  
10 say probably the most incredible thing is that I survived  
11 the Battle of Dunkirk, as a civilian. Because the firepower  
12 that was used there was just incredible. We then -- the  
13 Germans came. They landed in France and came into Belgium  
14 from there, and we went back to Antwerp. And I spent some  
15 time in the camp. It was called -- it was not an extermi-  
16 nation camp. It was a holding camp. It was called  
17 INTERNEOMSCHLOGGER. It was in a town called SCHROUTSBERG  
18 in Belgium. And we stayed there, and somehow they dissolved  
19 it. You know, that's another <sup>I guess</sup> interesting point. The Germans  
20 didn't always know what they were doing. They had a grand  
21 plan, of course, but things went wrong with it. And it was  
22 very clear that what they wanted was to assemble these Jews  
23 in these coal-mining towns, and have them work the coal mines

1 because the Belgian guys had been taken to work in forced  
2 labor in Germany in the factories. So there was no one  
3 to work the coal mines of Belgium. They wanted the Jews  
4 to come and work the coal mines. And somehow that was not  
5 a very good plan, somehow. There weren't all that many  
6 working in the coal mines. And after a while they gave up  
7 on that, and they sort of let people go back, or ship them  
8 back to where they came from, from Antwerp. I ended up  
9 later on in France, and I'll spare you the details. But  
10 again, I think, the second person I really want to pay  
11 homage to, is someone who -- whom we met. I had no father.  
12 My father was in America. We did not communicate, could  
13 not communicate. There was a man. His name was Israel  
14 Mandelman, he now lives in Israel. And he was, oh, I would  
15 say a man in his thirties perhaps, approximately, my  
16 father's age, maybe a little bit younger, and he took an  
17 interest in me as a child alone. I had my mother. And he --  
18 I couldn't go to school. He taught me. He was not a terribly  
19 well-educated man, you know. We think of PhD's. He had  
20 nothing of the sort. But he was a man who was fairly  
21 literate, and he knew about music, and he knew about opera,  
22 and he was interested in history, and he was interested in  
23 geography, very much interested in geography. We followed

1 all the battles on a big map of Europe, and I knew every  
2 town in Russia, and every town in Poland. Wherever there  
3 was a small battle or small river, I knew those. And he just  
4 poured himself into me, and saw to it that even though I was  
5 not going to school that I received what I would consider a  
6 very excellent education. Almost like, you know, Rousseau's  
7 ideal of Emile, of being a tutor, a private tutor. And it  
8 was a very erratic kind of education, but nevertheless it  
9 taught me something, and it taught me a love of learning,  
10 I think. I shall always be grateful. And I survived  
11 mentally, intellectually, through him, very much so. I owe  
12 him an enormous debt. I still write to him. We are still  
13 in touch. I would say that's the longest correspondence  
14 of my lifetime. After the war, he went -- he survived and  
15 he went to Israel. That is another instance. Finally,  
16 maybe there is one other period in my life that I should  
17 mention because, again, we know so much about the cruelty,  
18 but people, some people were magnificent. And I think the  
19 people who were magnificent, ah, they probably didn't know  
20 how magnificent they were, and maybe in other circumstances  
21 they were just very ordinary and maybe not even very pleasant  
22 people. But something set them off under those circumstances  
23 and I owe my life, the last year of my life in the war, I

1 went to Switzerland. I was able to be smuggled over the  
2 mountains into Switzerland.

3 INTERV: This was alone? Or still with your mother?

4 GERDA: Alone. Alone. The Swiss, you know,  
5 had a semi-official policy of accepting children under 15.  
6 I was 12 at the time. It was a terrible decision that my  
7 mother made. It looked as though the Jews in France, and  
8 I was also in Lyons, I mean, this was sort of appropriate  
9 because Barbee has just been caught. Lyons was not a  
10 pleasant place. It looked as though the Jews in France  
11 would not survive. I think throughout the entire war we  
12 never had any doubt that Germany would be defeated. That  
13 was a given. What we were much less sure of is that we  
14 would survive to see the defeat. That was very questionable.  
15 And my mother decided in 1943, late in '43, that it was  
16 hopeless. In the meantime, we had heard that a group of  
17 Jews, Jewish children really, they were<sup>just</sup> 17, 18, 19 years old,  
18 who were part of the resistance movement, were attempting  
19 to take, to save at least a few Jewish children, and try  
20 to get Switzerland to accept them. And we made contact  
21 with one of these underground groups, and they took me and  
22 a few other children to Switzerland. And I made it. Now,  
23 the Swiss were very unscrupulous about sending people back,



1 and being sent back was tantamount to a death sentence.  
2 I mean, you fell into the hands of the Germans, or the  
3 French would hand you over to the Germans immediately.  
4 So it was very, very risky. And it was a wrenching thing,  
5 it was an act of despair, her decision to send -- to  
6 attempt to send me to Switzerland, was an act of despair.  
7 And yet I did make it. The people who brought me to the  
8 border did not come with me, they were ineligible, they  
9 were over 15, they couldn't have saved themselves even if  
10 they wanted to, but I think they thought of themselves as  
11 having a mission, and the mission was to rescue a few  
12 Jewish children, to have a future, even if it's just that  
13 little group that went.

14 INTERV: What were you thinking about then, as  
15 a 12 year old? What --

16 GERDA: Oh, I was, of course, I was very  
17 intuitive. I mean, we were all extremely intuitive. One  
18 of the things that made people -- it was a survival skill  
19 was intuition. I mean, luck obviously played the primary  
20 part, but intuition. Somehow people knew when to run.  
21 They, you know, at least those of us who are here to tell  
22 about it. Or to go to the left and not to the right, or  
23 to go today rather than tomorrow, or to hide here rather

1 than there. There's a certain intuition about this, and I  
2 think I was very intuitive, and I knew what the decision  
3 meant. I think I knew, even though I was 12 years old, I  
4 knew that it meant that my mother had decided she was not  
5 going to make it, that this was -- the adults around me had  
6 made a decision that it was the end of European Jewry,  
7 and 12 years old though I was, it was a very heavy burden  
8 to carry. And, of course, I didn't know whether they would  
9 accept me. I did not know whether we would be arrested  
10 going there. There were many uncertainties, and I think  
11 what I felt was fear, fear and the idea that I probably  
12 would not see either of my parents again. As it happens,  
13 I was wrong, and my mother survived; my mother survived  
14 and had her own amazing stories to tell. She was injured  
15 once during this entire period, rather serious. And  
16 strangely enough it was by our people. It was by the  
17 French Resistance Movement. They blew up the gasworks  
18 in the town where she was hiding, and the wall collapsed,  
19 and she was sleeping, or lying in bed, and the wall collapsed  
20 on top of her, and she was injured on the head by our  
21 people. This kind of thing happened also. The other thing  
22 is towards the very end, she was taken by the Gestapo towards  
23 the very, very end of the war. And stopped on a bus, she

1 needed provisions. She was getting on a bus to go to some  
2 other town because they had no food. She was searching for  
3 food, and she was stopped, and her bad French betrayed her.  
4 All you had to do was ask a question, somebody who answered  
5 with a Yiddish, German, Polish kind of accent, your goose  
6 was cooked. They removed her from the bus, they took her  
7 on the truck, and that truck amazingly enough, someone had  
8 seen her in the French Resistance Movement, who at the very,  
9 very end became concerned about the Jews. I can't say it  
10 was universal. I can't say it was early. But late in the  
11 game, they were trying to be helpful, at least in that part  
12 of France, and the truck was stopped, ambushed by French  
13 Resistance people in that part, and my mother was freed.  
14 And I am not sure what happened to the Germans. I don't  
15 know whether they shot them or whether they let them go  
16 without my mother. My mother was taken off the truck,  
17 and she survived. She survived. And these were heroes,  
18 I mean incredible heroes, incredible heroes, and some of  
19 them were Jewish, like the man who befriended me in Belgium.

20 INTERV: Can we go back to Switzerland for a  
21 little bit when you got to the border --

22 GERDA: Yes.

23 INTERV: And you were separated from your mother  
then.

1                   GERDA: Oh, yes, yes. She was left behind.  
2                   But I, when I came to Switzerland, they let -- they cut the  
3                   wires, I mean it was the border, a very distinct demarcation,  
4                   and there was barbed wire, and they cut the wires, and I  
5                   cut myself on that wire, and I still have the scar. It's  
6                   some 40-odd years now. I still have it. I was bleeding  
7                   from the scar, and there were five other children, and we  
8                   were told to walk, told to walk. Another thing we were told  
9                   is don't tell them anything about us, who we are, what we  
10                  look like. Because, obviously, they were going back for  
11                  the next load of children, they wanted to get the next three,  
12                  five, seven children out. And we walked, they told us to just  
13                  keep on walking and sooner or later they will stop you.  
14                  And sure enough they did. We may have walked an hour,  
15                  maybe, and it was in the middle of the night. And we were  
16                  stopped, and we were taken to what looked like a police  
17                  station. And we were interrogated all night. And the  
18                  point -- I was asked questions about the others. They  
19                  were asked questions about me. The point was somehow to  
20                  prove that we were over 15, so that the Swiss could ship  
21                  you back. It was really the attempt.

22                  INTERV: That you were over 15?

23                  GERDA: That's right. Because somehow the law

1 that had developed. After all, it was the headquarters  
2 of the International Red Cross that had had the first --  
3 the precursor of the United Nations, they considered them-  
4 selves great humanitarians. And unofficially they had  
5 at some point accepted the date, that cut-off point, 15  
6 years of age. What they were trying to find out is, are  
7 we under 15 or over 15. Actually, all of us were sort of,  
8 I would say, underdeveloped, not having eaten very well for  
9 the last few years. Nevertheless, they were trying to trip  
10 us up. I would say for the Swiss, they -- it was certainly  
11 better to be in Switzerland. God, it's a horrible place.  
12 It was awful, it was absolutely horrible, absolutely  
13 horrible. They interrogated us children. We hadn't slept  
14 for days. We'd not had something, anything warm for days,  
15 for hours in the cold. This was November, late November,  
16 in Switzerland, in the mountains. It was freezing. They  
17 did not, personally, you know, a warm drink, a warm look.  
18 Later on, we were -- after that I went to four camps. Now  
19 these were not concentration camps. They were not -- they  
20 were sort of processing camps, holding camps, whatever they  
21 were. One worst than the next. People were terribly,  
22 terribly cold. Terribly unfeeling. I think, it's true,  
23 they were overwhelmed; it's true they were, perhaps even

1 afraid of being invaded by the Germans themselves. After  
2 all, they could have, had the Germans wanted to, I'm sure  
3 they could have. Switzerland was a convenience, I think,  
4 for the Germans, a place to spy, a place to keep money,  
5 and so that I can't say these were good times for the  
6 Swiss either. Ultimately, in Switzerland, I was placed in  
7 a -- it was called a POSIEUNOUR, which at one point had  
8 been sort of a fancy boarding school in the 30's, but had  
9 come upon hard times. And I had no great, fond memories  
10 of that either. I consider that my humanity was given back  
11 to me when the Allies landed, when the town where my mother  
12 was liberated fell into Allied hands, and when I was reunited  
13 with my mother, and ultimately came to America, and perhaps --  
14 so, you know, it's a tale of someone unusually lucky, I mean  
15 to have, my mother was still alive, my father was in America,  
16 the last year I was in Switzerland. I did not go to school  
17 during virtually all of that time. I did learn a million  
18 languages, most of them useless, like Flemish. I can still  
19 speak some of them, French, Yiddish. When the war ended,  
20 I was -- rejoined my mother in the City of GRENOBLE, and I  
21 think my tale is different in that respect. I heard today,  
22 in fact, yesterday, I've heard stories of people who when  
23 they were liberated were so drained that they really could

1 not react. I mean, they were -- they'd been so dehumanized  
2 and they could not spring back for years. It was somewhat  
3 different for me. I was only 14 and my life was just begin-  
4 ning and I discovered school, I discovered books, and I  
5 discovered -- well, these were among, I would say, the year  
6 19 -- from August '45, or so, '44, until I came to the  
7 United States in November 1946, those were undoubtedly the  
8 best years of anyone's life that age. I was 14, 15. We had  
9 nothing, absolutely nothing, and we had everything. We had,  
10 gosh, we had a stomach full of idealism. We had survived  
11 and we were going to change the world. And there was Israel,  
12 it didn't even have a name, it was called Palestine. There  
13 was a great battle to be fought, and we knew we would win  
14 it, we all knew that. Somehow we would win it, and as we --  
15 the realization of what we had lost was slow in coming,  
16 and even though some of us in Europe didn't know, did not  
17 know the full extent of the devastation, and of the loss,  
18 as we became aware of that, we realized that this was going  
19 to be the price of Israel, and it would not be denied. It  
20 could not be denied, a Jewish homeland, that we had paid  
21 with our lives. And it was a very exciting period. Some  
22 people were going to Israel and they were going to Palestine  
23 on the underground way. And where I lived in France, it

1 sort of became, you know, people who, from the camps,  
2 started to come to France as a way-station to Israel, to  
3 other places sometimes. It was marvelously exciting for  
4 a 14-year old girl, to discover books, to discover knowledge,  
5 to discover all these people, and there was this feeling,  
6 we survived, we made it. This great mission. And you know  
7 the war ended in the spring, my birthday's in May, it  
8 ended in May, and it was flourishing, nature, the world  
9 reawakened, awakened. It was so new and everything was  
10 possible, everything. I think a high like that, God, you  
11 just can't ever produce it. It was wonderful, wonderful.  
12 I think we all got caught up in that. It was our 80-yard  
13 run. Ultimately, my personal, I came out of that rather a  
14 strong Zionist, which maybe the influence of the person I  
15 told you about who ended up in Israel, one of the things he  
16 taught me about. And he was my teacher. I had no other.

17 INTERV: Did you think of going to Israel?

18 GERDA: Very much so, very much so, that's what  
19 I wanted. I, you know, this burning passion to return to  
20 Zion. And my father was in the United States, and he sent  
21 for us, and I was a kid, <sup>I</sup> pretty much did as I was told.  
22 Besides there was also this burning feeling of being reunited  
23 as a family, and so I came to the United States. If things



1 had been a little different, I might have been there. I  
2 think maybe the only other thing that's worth saying, and  
3 I realize again how lucky I was. I was not among the most  
4 beaten, among the most mistreated, among those who suffered  
5 beyond speaking. I think the last three days have been  
6 extraordinary for me. I was very hesitant about doing this,  
7 about coming here, even though I live in the Washington area,  
8 you know. I was very hesitant to come because I was afraid  
9 it would be commercialized, it would be politicized, it  
10 would be an occasion to -- for all the politicians to do  
11 their acts, for a good game of ethnic politics. I know  
12 the Washington scene, so I know how everything is ultimately  
13 politicized. And I know America, I know it's easy to  
14 commercialize almost everything, and I didn't want that to  
15 happen. And I'm so glad I came. And I have insulated myself  
16 from everything else. I mean, I have an office five blocks  
17 from here, I have a secretary who is waiting for me to call.  
18 I haven't called in three days. I can't get myself to think  
19 about other matters. It's been very, very good that way,  
20 and I think 40 years is just about the time it takes.  
21 You know, the Jews wandered in the desert for 40 years,  
22 and one of the explanations that I often hear is that they  
23 had a slave mentality, and it takes 40 years for them to

1 get rid of it, and to be worthy of entering the Holy Land.  
2 And maybe it's something, a magic about that 40-year span,  
3 that you can -- it takes the time to digest it all, and to  
4 absorb it, internalize it, and be able to retell it and  
5 learn from it. The pain has dulled enough so that now we  
6 can talk about it. I did not talk about this very much.  
7 I have two children, they are eight years apart. The  
8 younger one knows so much more than the older one, because  
9 in those eight years, I, again, the process of growth,  
10 the process of internalizing, and being able to speak.  
11 But they're both here with me today.

12 INTERV: How has it been for them?

13 GERDA: I think for them it has been incredible.  
14 Someone, it was none of my children, I heard one of the  
15 other second generation people say. She said, you know  
16 I came here to a group of strangers, and now I know they  
17 are my family. And I mentioned that to my daughter, and  
18 she said, yes, that's exactly how I feel. For them, it  
19 has been unbelievable. They have discovered a new identity,  
20 a new dimension, their own past, I guess. And I think a  
21 new relationship to Judaism. Because, again, this affected  
22 people in many, many ways, different ways. I was not, I  
23 did not come out of this a particularly believing, religious

1 person at all.

2 INTERV: Gerda, do you mind if I change the tape?

3 (end of tape)

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Q ... I didn't mean to cut you off---

A. Yeah, sure.

Q ---but meeting people here and talking to people obviously makes me think a lot about my experiences, my family, my religion, all of those things. Would you talk a little bit about your relationship with your mother and what happened when you were reunited with her? I mean---

A. Well, being reunited with my mother was a terribly moving experience. I did not know whether she was dead or alive. We were reunited through the Red Cross. They were able to match us. But something else happened at that point. You know, I was nearly fourteen, I was maturing, I was physically maturing, and it was a time when my peers suddenly became more important than my parents, if you will.

Q Um hm.

A. And in that way I think there was a great deal of pain and hurt in the relationship between my mother and me, because especially being this great Zionist. I was very active in the Zionist movement and out to meetings and my mother felt I should be with her all the time. She didn't know whether -- I'm an only child -- she didn't know whether she'd ever see me, she couldn't let go, and it came at a time in my life when I needed to---

Q After she had let you---

A. She would not let go again.

Q Yeah.

A. And I dare say she is alive and well, reasonably well, today. She's in her seventies. She's retired in Miami. She still doesn't let go.

Q I think---

A. She's not really -- no, she felt she couldn't, she felt she didn't have the strength, physically as well as emotionally she did not have the strength. But she found it very difficult to let me go at a time when I needed to go and I needed to be with other young people. And I had a very future oriented outlook really. And she was -- that's how it is with many of these people of that age is they became more or less frozen in time and stuck in that period of time that, of course, imprinted itself so enormously. With the younger people or at least those who were well enough psychologically and physically and emotionally well enough, there was this tremendous drive to catch up to do things.

Q Um hm.

A. And I remember I read a million books and I read books on everything.

I didn't discriminate what kind of books I read. There was no such thing as a book I didn't want to read. Whether it was science or philosophy or history or poetry or literature -- I wanted it all, I wanted it all. And I read it all. Did I understand it? I don't know. Some of it. There was also the necessity to catch up. My goodness, I hadn't been in a school, I had no regular education. Which really meant that I could not allow myself to be slowed down by my mother. And so I think that was a source of friction. The understanding of the young that we must catch up. And of course I did catch up and I graduated with honours from high school at the age of seventeen ahead of all the people who'd been in America all these years. But it took that kind of effort and drive and the need to detach oneself, you know, singleminded pursuit of things that I needed to have a future. That created friction. And I think that's an important consideration. These three days are very special to me and I will never forget them. But they're not my life and I know that. And there won't be other days like that, okay? It'll be hard to go back tomorrow to my office and all the things that are waiting, things I must do, and the trip I'm preparing to take. Very hard. But I will do it. I will not forget this and I will do it. And this will just be a very very special three days in my life. I will not allow myself, I did not allow myself, to become stuck in a groove and not go on. And I think the remarkable thing for people in my generation -- at least those who were young enough -- and, as I said, not so demolished, not so devastated, as some of my contemporaries, that we were able to do that, that we were able to mobilize ourselves to catch up with the rest of the world and to achieve and to excel and to lead constructive and creative lives. And most of all to have children. I think to take that step to have children and to have the confidence in the future, to do that. What I'm telling you is very atypical because when you see me tomorrow you will see someone very very different and doing other things,---- things, interesting things. This is not -- I'm not going to allow this experience, exhilarating though it has been, to dominate my life, because there's still a future. And I think that's where I belong.

Q I don't know what else to say.

A. Anyway, I don't know if you want to hear so many stories. You must be totally depleted.

Q It's difficult to hear them but it's also important.

A. Yeah, I think the business about going on, there are some who couldn't go on and people in mental hospitals with physical conditions. Not everybody could go on. I think it hit me at an incredibly fortunate time when you could mobilize yourself anyway, and not only do well but do remarkably well. I want to be part of society. I just read a piece, as a matter of fact, that's going to be next week in the -- what's that paper called -- The Christian Science Monitor --

Q Oh, really?

A.---about my early times.

Q But you haven't really done much, you haven't really talked that much about it or---

A. No.

Q ---teaching about it or sharing it.

A. I had not, as I said, we were not particularly active in religions or synagogues or anything or joining or organizations of survivors. There are degrees of this, you know. I'm not a survivor of Auschwitz and I'm not a survivor of Bergen-Belsen and of Buchenwald. I came out with both my parents. I lost all my aunts, my cousins. If my children had grandparents it would've made a tremendous difference.

Q Yes.

A. At least on my mother's side. My husband lost his parents when he was ten. They were deported and never came back. They had one set of grandparents and it made a difference. So I was among the ones who didn't have a chip on her shoulder and still don't. And as I said, I had enough ego and was sufficiently intact to tackle the business of living. And when I think of all the others who I know in the same position, it strikes me that they've done very well. But I did not find it easy for many many years. I would not organize my life around, you know, becoming active in Holocaust survivors societies and that would be the focus of my life. I would not do that. It is one thing and I think--- and I hope we do.

Q This kind of thing I think is real important. It's good to be able to talk to people who take a little bit of time, you know, for me for people that we don't know. My children and people listening and the radio who are---

A. Is your family from ---

Q Yes.

A. Were they in--- (Inaudible)