

1 INTERVIEW WITH: Felicia Bryn. Tape No. 103.
2 INTERVIEWER:
3 DATE:
4 PLACE:
5 TRANSCRIBER: Marilyn A. Kerben
6
7 Q Your name is?
8 A My name is Felicia Bryn, B-R-Y-N, and I live in
9 North Miami Beach in Florida.
10 Q And where were you born?
11 A I was born Warsaw, Poland.
12 Q And when were you born?
13 A I was born 1937.
14 Q And what date?
15 A August 22.
16 Q And what town?
17 A I was born Warsaw, Warsaw.
18 Q And were you Jewish?
19 A Yes.
20 Q And what was your family?
21 A My, my daddy's name was David Brown (ph). He come from
22 also a city in Poland, Kalisz. And he was physician.
23 And he, during the--he live in Warsaw for a short time.
24 And he--from the beginning already he was outside on the
25 I-RISH (ph) side of Warsaw. And the family, my brother,

1 which was two-years-old at the time and my mother and I,
2 we was in ghetto.

3 Q What was the name of the ghetto?

4 A Warsaw Ghetto.

5 Q It was the Warsaw Ghetto?

6 A Yes.

7 Q And then what happened? You were, let's see--

8 A 1942, when I was five-years-old. This is disturbing me.

9 1942, my mother was already dead in Warsaw Ghetto. She
10 passed away on typhus. And there was little brother
11 which was born 1939. We live in one small room in
12 terrible condition. And I--in the beginning I did not
13 realize what going on. Only the everyday words was like
14 new vocabulary, deportation and different things where the
15 child knew what danger is. And one particular day some-
16 body run to our apartment screaming, this will be depor-
17 tation. My aunt, which was at that time 18-years-old,
18 she was my mother's sister, put me in coal box with my
19 brother. And on the top of the coal box she put a water
20 basket, bucket of water. And she run away, left us. My
21 little brother, which was that time three-years-old,
22 started screaming and crying. And I hold him and I put my
23 fist in his mouth to not scream. And from being so tired
24 from crying he fell asleep. And that moment the Germans
25 knocked the door and they run like vicious animals

1 through the apartment and opened the curtain where this
2 basket was standing. This was like a kitchen divider
3 between the room. And stamp, put a stamp on the door,
4 UNEN-REICH (ph), there is nobody there. Everybody is--
5 nobody is there. And we were sitting in this box and few
6 minutes--and few minutes later, maybe, I don't know how
7 long this was, I not realizing how long, she opened door,
8 screaming and crying, assuming we are already dead. And
9 she took the water, the basket of the water from the box
10 and I scream, I am alive. I cheat on the Germans. And
11 I say, please buy URICK (ph), which was my brother, buy
12 him a bagel because he was the good boy who save us. And
13 all this time in the box, before this happened, before the
14 Germans, I was screaming, I say, I hate you. I hate you.
15 You wanted me to get killed. You are so mean. You just--
16 I want to hit him. I want to do something. And he fall
17 asleep and I hold him. And later on--we stay in the same
18 apartment and I don't know how many days later, my aunt
19 put beautiful dress on me and she say we going to birth-
20 day party. And I say, where is the present? And she
21 said no, we not have a present. And my brother wanted
22 go with us and she say--she say only I going. I say
23 yes, because I am big. You are little boy. You cannot
24 go to party. She left him with a neighbor. And we was
25 walking in Warsaw in the street coming to the place where

1 was the gates from the ghetto. And I--all this time I
2 was asking where I going. And she say, you going to
3 grandma. And I say, grandma? Where does grandma live?
4 And she was repeating me address, SUS-KA-KAMPA (ph) Five.
5 And she try always to remember. And I don't know what she
6 is trying to do. I say, we going to birthday party? She
7 say, yes, only you must know this address. And next,
8 maybe 10 yards from the gate, she put--tear from my
9 dress the yellow star. And she said to me, from now on
10 your name is Felicia GAR-BA-CHICK (ph). And you go
11 through the gates. Somebody would wait on the other side.
12 You don't know this man. When he stand up, you follow
13 him. And don't put your head right nor to the left. And
14 she tear the star. I start walking through the gate.
15 The German probably was bribed to allow me.
16 Q To look the other way?
17 A Look the other way. And I was going on one feet like a
18 child going on the one like, like this, like little child,
19 facing this, not looking in either direction, I pass.
20 And I say to myself, from now on--no, she said to me, you
21 must be smart little girl. From now on you must lie.
22 That's where I get this book, "Never Forget to Lie". I
23 just wrote a book. And it so happen the man was sitting
24 there on the bench. He did not speak to me. I stood up
25 and I follow him. And he went to the bus stop. I went

1 after him. And I don't want to give you so many details.

2 Q I want every detail. I want every detail.

3 A I followed this man. We got up for maybe--I had the money
4 in my hand because she gave me to my little pocketbook
5 money, and she say, if you see a lady, you give--if the
6 man would not be there, you go to the bus stop. And you
7 give to some older lady and say you going to your grandma,
8 give her the money to buy you ticket. And really I give
9 to the lady, some lady, I just follow some. In one hour
10 I follow an older lady which I give her the money. The
11 other I follow this man who was my guide. And we--this
12 was maybe two or three stops and I follow him to the
13 building. And like dog he beckon to me to follow him on
14 the steps, open the door to apartment and he say, lay
15 down and don't move. Don't breathe. On the other side
16 somebody can hear your voice. And I lay down. This was
17 hot summer in July. I did not breathe. Children were
18 playing around. I heard voices. And I say to myself,
19 how come they can play and I am not permitted. And in the
20 evening the door opened and my daddy came. And my daddy
21 was on the other side, as a Christian. And he give me
22 something to eat and we left this apartment, following
23 to next hiding place. And I wanted--there's many, many
24 hiding places which I was with one family and I was
25 given away. I cannot give you every detail because they

1 are part of my book. I want to give you overview.

2 Q Ya, okay.

3 A And I live with this foster family, this second family
4 which I stayed, third one, I live for many years.

5 Q Are they Gentiles?

6 A They was Gentiles and I lived up to 1957. I was communion.

7 I lived as a Catholic. Even deep down in my heart I

8 knew I am Jew. I never want to be a Jew. I try

9 to suppress my memory that this was not true. I never

10 want to think about it. I fully believed that I was

11 Christian. And I did learn to hate Jews, very hard way.

12 I never wanted to see any Jews. And the worse memory I

13 did have, on the day of my communion, because this was

14 such a religious experience for me, and when I saw so

15 many people with the children, fixing the bows, the

16 dresses and so on, and I was only scared maybe somebody

17 would recognize me. This was very bad experience and I

18 was frightened, frightened experience. And later on I

19 was Catholic leader of movement in the city of Poznan in

20 Poland. Because I had a papers of other child who was

21 older than me, and I was always the smallest in the class

22 and so on, never realizing I am not two years older. Two

23 years older in a girl's life is--

24 Q Is a lot.

25 A Yes, is a lot. And 1957, no, 1956, we were in Poland

1 uprising in Poznan. Somebody walk to my house. I was
2 in jail before for activities against the government as a
3 student. And I saw big car with a Warsaw plate and I was
4 very frightened who came. And it was a man, strong, with
5 moustache. And he walking to me and he say, I like to
6 speak to you in privacy. And I say, what is it? I never
7 do anything. And he say, no, this is something very
8 private. And he said to me, you name is not Felicia
9 GAR-BAR-CHICK (ph) Brown. I am the ambassador of Israel
10 and I want to tell you this is not your parents. You are
11 Jewish and I want you to go to Israel. This is your
12 place to live. And I got like nervous breakdown. I
13 scream, I say, you, you miserable man. Go away. His son
14 is here today, the ambassador's son is here, SHAR-ME-
15 BAR-MORE (ph), from the AD-VA-SHAM (ph). And I was in
16 shock, crying. I say, I never want to be Jew. I am not
17 Jew. Only you trying to say I am Jew. You trying--you
18 bad Jewish people and so on. And leaving this house of
19 mine, he left me a little paper. And it say like this,
20 Israeli Consulate in Warsaw. And he say, maybe once in
21 your life maybe you be older and you realize--you know
22 you have home and this is Israel. Nevertheless, the next
23 morning I got up and I was thinking I got discover.
24 Everybody know I am Jew. And I could not face going to
25 the street. I took my little suitcase. I did not say

1 to my parents anything. I went on train to Warsaw. And
2 here I walk to the Israeli Consulate and I say, here I am.
3 They got me paper to go to Israel. I live in Israel.
4 And my husband was American tourist. Even though he was
5 a survivor, he came from the United States. And we marry
6 in 1959. At present time I have--we have three children.
7 My middle son is becoming LU-BA-VI-CHA (ph) Rabbi.

8 Q Oh.

9 A From Christian so-called girl. And we are Orthodox. And
10 I love my Judaism and I--this is something. Nevertheless,
11 for many years I never told my husband I knew about that
12 I was Jewish. I was thinking today--I was telling him
13 they discover me. And only after movie Holocaust, which
14 was playing on TV, I was able to face. I don't want any
15 more to lie. Even in so many years I could never speak.
16 Like my husband sometimes was speaking to friends about
17 his experience during Holocaust. I say, I don't know
18 anything because, you know, I was little child. They
19 give me away. I never knew anything. And he say, how
20 lucky you are. And I really was not lucky. He is lucky.
21 He is very strong person and--because for him war was
22 finished 1945. For me the war was finished 1980. And
23 I was able to start writing. And so many people helped
24 me to put everything in proper perspective. In Israel in
25 the book ZOCK-IS-HOR (ph) is a part of my book what's

1 translated. Okay. I think I give you whatever I can
2 give you now.

3 Q All right, now, you were sent by your aunt who had made
4 arrangements?

5 A Yes.

6 Q With these people.

7 A No my aunt, my father, who was a physician, who was very
8 capable man was working on the underground. And he
9 befriended this Polish man. A lot of contacts he made.
10 And he tried to--first one contact, second contact and
11 so on.

12 Q To take care of you. What happened to your brother?

13 A I don't know. I just put it on TV search here. I
14 hope someday some foster parents before they die in
15 Poland, maybe they really tell my brother, you are
16 Jewish boy.

17 Q What about your aunt, where is she?

18 A No, nobody survive, nor my daddy nor my mother, nothing,
19 nobody, only my Israeli cousin. And that's one. And my
20 uncle--my mother brother who left for Germany before and
21 so on. Only my daddy--before United States went in the
22 war with Germany, there still was correspondence between
23 Poland and United States. And my father, being so
24 precocious and very smart man, he sent it to his brother-
25 in-law, to Boston, Massachusetts, a list, a letter.

1 I giving my girl away to family by name this and this.
2 Not at first one, my first contact, only the last one.
3 And if I not survive, please claim her or something to
4 this effect. I don't know exactly the words, and without
5 address. He did not put an address of these people. And
6 also he give to the Polish man, because my--my mother side
7 of family was very wealthy people, Hasidic wealthy people,
8 owning 20,000 acre land. And he took it with his signa-
9 ture, say everything belong to you if I not survive. And
10 my stepfather was holding this in his shoes. He went to
11 shoemaker and put the letter in this. And after the war
12 he claimed the land, which belonged to the Communist
13 government, but at the same time he reveal himself that he
14 have me there. Okay, and that's how started the whole
15 thing.

16 My son, even though I never spoke to him before
17 about Holocaust because I was keeping to my self, and my
18 husband was start to despair in his agony. My son, when
19 he went to Boston University, my second son, which
20 becoming next year lawyer, somehow he--one day he call
21 us and he say, daddy, mommy, I want to take you to Elie
22 Wiesel class. His professor Wiesel. And my husband say,
23 no, why you need to know what we went through. And he
24 say, nevertheless because--this is why, because you never
25 told us nothing about it. And Dr. Wiesel was the bridge
between us and what really happen. And we thank to him

1 and he's supposed to write Forward to my book because I
2 feel that he was the one instrument to help us to ease
3 the pain.

4 Q Now, how did the Israeli Ambassador find you?

5 A Okay, first of all, there was long search. The search
6 was from 1949 to 1956.

7 Q Started by whom?

8 A By my cousin in Israel and through my uncle and so on.
9 Only--already this person reveal himself because he
10 wanted the land, the signature.

11 Q (Inaudible.)

12 A Yes. Only there was--consulate Israeli have--from 1948
13 when the state was established they had consulate in.
14 Only at that time they saying I am too young and they
15 cannot take me away because according to the law. Only
16 because I have strange paper and on my paper in 1956 was
17 showing I am already a child, not child, only a student,
18 they was able to act.

19 Q And it took them how long to find you?

20 A Not find, only to be able to do something, from 1948 to
21 1956, which is eight years.

22 Q Oh, oh, ya.

23 A Because they could not take a child because the
24 Communist government would say who is--maybe they lying.
25 Maybe the man say this is not true. They cannot do

- 1 anything. And they was waiting for the age 18 because--
- 2 Q Oh, I see. And you as a child growing up with this
- 3 family--
- 4 A Yes.
- 5 Q Just put away that--
- 6 A Yes, I was very smart enough to suppress. My--just put
- 7 it so far away. Any psychologist could understand this.
- 8 Q Yes.
- 9 A Like suppression of--really living second, different
- 10 world. And not believe even, trying to not believe the
- 11 haunting--something was haunting me. Only just not
- 12 want to completely know about it.
- 13 Q So you took on the religion and you--
- 14 A Yes.
- 15 Q And you made your First Communion and you devoted
- 16 yourself--
- 17 A Yes.
- 18 Q So you could become more almost--
- 19 A Yes.
- 20 Q A Christian--
- 21 A Yes.
- 22 Q Than normal?
- 23 A Yes, and I try to justify sometimes what happened to
- 24 Jewish people. I just walking--before Easter when I was
- 25 walking in the church in procession and I saw this

1 (inaudible) laughing from Jesus. And I say, oh, my
2 God, that's probably why this would happen, because I
3 did not realize what was the content and how religion is
4 prejudiced and so on. I want to be even more prejudiced.

5 Q Ya, so you had real turmoil to deal with?

6 A Very turmoil and I--like I said before, my turmoil did not
7 finish after the war, did not finish when I arrive to
8 Israel. It was just more even trouble in Israel because
9 I could not accept that I am Jew. I hate Israel at that
10 time. Today I am active and I love and so on, but I could
11 not accept. Everything was annoying me. And I say to
12 myself, what are you doing here, a Christian. I was
13 walking with cross on the street. And--because I felt
14 that I want to do something, which is to hate, it is to
15 rebel, tremendous. It was Jewish holiday. I was just
16 driving this because I just want to do something very
17 bad.

18 Q Um.

19 A I was very, very frustrated person. And because of my
20 husband's personality, maybe, because he's very mild
21 person, even though during the war--when the war started
22 he was already--my husband is 1927, which is 10 years
23 in age, and he was mature, understood. He went through
24 going through concentration camp and he came out very
25 strong.

- 1 Q Ya, he survived.
- 2 A He survive and become very strong and so on. And because
3 of his experience, he give me strength. Only I was unable
4 to reveal, even to my husband--
- 5 Q Ya.
- 6 A My feelings and so on.
- 7 Q Ya.
- 8 A Now, after I put everything and after Israel part of my
9 book was translated with great success and--
- 10 Q Ya.
- 11 A Then I am able to speak and I am very--
- 12 Q Ya, relieved.
- 13 A Just calmly relieved with myself.
- 14 Q Ya. Now the technique that you used, other people I've
15 talked with say they hate the Germans. They'll never
16 get over it.
- 17 A Oh, absolutely not.
- 18 Q But what you did was not hate the Germans.
- 19 A No.
- 20 Q But you hated the Jews.
- 21 A You see--
- 22 Q You turned it.
- 23 A I turned it. And I want to tell you something.
24 I don't know how to hate, present time.
- 25 Q Right.

1 A And my children are in mixed culture. Like here in
2 Convention I was speaking in Polish to my husband
3 because this is my native language.

4 Q Right.

5 A Somebody walked to me and say, how could you speak
6 Polish. And I say, language and people. And I can only
7 laugh. I cannot hate. And I don't want it. I never
8 told my children to hate.

9 Q Ya.

10 A And completely I not hate. I only hate myself, that's
11 why I hate Jews, because I hated whole about me.

12 Q Ya.

13 A Only the moment I was released from this, I stop hating.

14 Q Ya.

15 A Because then I was at peace with myself.

16 Q Ya. That's where it all comes from. So, have you met
17 other people who--

18 A With similar experience?

19 Q Ya, had to pass, so to speak, who were adopted by--

20 A I really don't know. I would like to search later on for
21 people who live in Communist country because the people
22 for who war was finished 1945, they have already time to
23 recuperate. Because there was Jewish people that came
24 back to their normal roots. And there were some children
25 coming to Israel in the time when I came and later. I

1 never was in contact. I would like to see them now
2 because when we came to Israel we was very frustrated
3 and hated everything which was given to us.

4 Q Ya.

5 A We wanted everything. We wanted financial stability.
6 We did not want words. We never wanted nothing. We was
7 thinking that somebody supposed to take us and give us
8 everything, the best. Never happen. We was one of many.

9 Q Ya.

10 A Nobody was really open arms to us this way. And I would
11 like to know what happened to these children, so-called
12 children. And I just thinking in different terms what
13 will happen in 20 years from now, if God give me strength,
14 and I would walk to Convention. And I think it would be
15 only very few people.

16 Q Ya, well, it would be 20 years.

17 A Because there's more people who survive that are 10 years
18 older than me, 20 years older--

19 Q Yes, right, right.

20 A And so on. In my age I think there is very, very few.

21 But that's--

22 Q Ya.

23 A I say how that time maybe I would meet some people from
24 this same background what I.

25 Q Well, your age, they took the children and killed the

1 children and the old people.

2 A Yes. Okay, when I was teaching Holocaust, because I was
3 19 years teacher in religious school, and I started
4 my lecture once, say Hitler wanted kill Jewish people,
5 first through children, to kill the children. And I am
6 the testimony to this that this--even though he wanted
7 he not succeeded. And I feel to this I was--this was God
8 blessing that few children survive.

9 Q Ya, well, your father set it up.

10 A Yes. Only I think so that in my case it's not important
11 the things which--what I went through during the war,
12 even though I acted very well. And children know how
13 to act. How I live after, what consequences Holocaust
14 have on children and how to deal with this Holocaust
15 later on in life, the psychology of this--

16 Q Ya.

17 A And stability, and--

18 Q Ya, always being afraid to lose your family, yourself,
19 really.

20 A Yes, only I was not thinking this, afraid of my family
21 or mommy, daddy. This was not--my theme was to lie and
22 how to act in this and survive. That's only one thing, I
23 must survive. I must live and so on. Later on that--this
24 is the consequences, to live like different life. You are
25 different person.

- 1 Q Ya, you become someone else.
- 2 A Yes. Like I still hold my name Ella because this was the
3 Polish name. And my name is Felicia. It is--my parents
4 give me this name and my maiden name was Brown (ph).
- 5 Q Ya.
- 6 A Okay, now my name is Bryn and I really--and I hate this
7 name Felicia. And I never want to hear this name. When
8 I heard ever somebody is called Felicia, I always think
9 she is Jew. In Poland, even, is very rarely given the
10 name Felicia.
- 11 Q Ya.
- 12 A Jewish people have these names and I just never wanted
13 to speak to any Felish.
- 14 Q Ah-ha, ya, so you--in a sense you wiped yourself out?
- 15 A Yes.
- 16 Q When you were six-years-old, which is--
- 17 A Five.
- 18 Q Five, which is a terrible act--
- 19 A Ya.
- 20 Q For a child because they're just discovering themselves.
- 21 A Yes, okay, when they're supposed to. I just read in one,
22 preparing for my--for industrial psychology or something.
23 This was something, what in each stage what personality
24 when child discover love. And this is the age. And
25 in my case I could not think about love of anything.

1 And I never really trusted--believed that somebody can
2 love.

3 Q What about the family you lived with?

4 A I don't think so. On the circumstances, the people did
5 not have their own children and I was only one. And my
6 stepfather was very strong person, never, you know,
7 sensitive. Only if I would say that he was mean only to
8 me, he was very--very strong to his wife and so on. He
9 did not have the softness and so on. Only there was many
10 other children who have fathers like this. I justify this.
11 Only later on when I never see my husband would take the
12 shoe and hit my door, then I see the difference.

13 Q Ya.

14 A Only maybe also this country, this culture and so on
15 is different. Only he was a farmer.

16 Q And what about your foster mother?

17 A She was very, very good to me, extremely good. Only,
18 again, I never saw her like touching me and like go to
19 my door putting her head on the--she was very good. She
20 would give me everything. Only this--this is something
21 difference which I realize this today as a mother. This
22 was not a--and still today my husband is more soft person
23 than I, even though I have tremendous feeling for my three
24 children. Only, God, one thing which the Germans took
25 away, the finest thing, the softness what my husband have

- 1 to my children and to me, which I still not have it
2 because they took away this thing when I was little girl.
- 3 Q Ya, ya.
- 4 A I trying and I am sincere and so on, only I--
- 5 Q Can't.
- 6 A I can't.
- 7 Q Ya, but you had up to that point, you did hug your brother.
- 8 A Oh, yes, I did. And I want to tell you something. And
9 I--many times when somebody was just so good to me and I
10 love the touch of the person who kiss me and hug me and
11 so on, only I was thinking what he wanted from me. And
12 I really, later on in life in Israel, when I was dating
13 boys, I not want to marry them because I was thinking
14 what he really wanted from me.
- 15 Q Ya, ya, you didn't trust anybody.
- 16 A No, because one physician told me, I love you. And I
17 said to myself, today probably, for one night, and that's
18 it, and never wanted just to continue dating and so.
- 19 Q Well, how come you made a change with your husband?
- 20 A My husband, I met him in the wedding in Israel. He was
21 invited to the same wedding and we share (inaudible).
22 He was sitting next to me and piece of meat fall down on
23 his pants and I pick up napkin and I put it, I say, here
24 is a napkin. And we was married two weeks later.
- 25 Q Oh, my.

- 1 A And one word only, on our third date, he said to me, you
2 know I love you. I would like to marry you, and from
3 today I don't want you to have any problems in your life.
4 Of course, we went through plenty. And every marriage
5 is, like we say, made in heaven, only you must work on
6 it too.
- 7 Q Ya.
- 8 A Only I think I was very hard case to deal and live and I
9 think so. All gratitudes are to him, not to me. I
10 only wanted--I have one thing, I not want to lose him
11 because this is one person who I can trust. Only plenty
12 he went through to this day to see us just grow together
13 and we married 23 years.
- 14 Q Oh. Well, there was a girl this morning who the only
15 person she's been able to trust in 40 years is her
16 husband of two, three years, but that's it. She said
17 that. I could never make plans with anybody.
- 18 A Oh, ya, today I can.
- 19 Q Ya.
- 20 A Yes, after this book, after my--I can. I just have many
21 friends.
- 22 Q Yes.
- 23 A I love people and so on.
- 24 Q Yes.
- 25 A I just looking different. I say, because I have this

1 friend who I can trust, which is my husband, and I try
2 to see many other people probably are good too. Good.
3 I not say only maybe I can trust them. I really can
4 trust when people are good.

5 Q Um, ya.

6 A I think you have to.

7 Q Okay, you're--you've got your name on the tape?

8 A You have my picture?

9 Q They have your picture.

10 A Ya.

11 Q Okay.

12 A This is my name, Felicia Bryn. This is my--this is my
13 editor.

14 Q Oh, okay, "Never Forget to Lie" is the name of the book.

15 Okay, thank you very much.

16 A It was my pleasure.

17 Q All right.

18 (End of Interview.)

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