

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW FOR THE ETHNIC STUDIES INSTITUTE

with Dr. Irene Shur, Professor of History
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

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Ms. Obadia: This is an oral history interview with Dr. Irene Shur, Professor of History and founder of the Holocaust Program at West Chester University. Dr. Shur was formerly the Director of the Ethnic Studies Institute at the University and is also the founder of the National Association for Holocaust Educators. The aim of this interview is to trace the beginnings of the Holocaust Program at West Chester University as well as to explore Dr. Shur's early life, her later contributions to academia and her published works.

A second theme of this interview is to explore Dr. Shur's early life growing up in a Jewish household and what influences being Jewish had on her intellectual, cultural and academic development.

This interview is being conducted by Mary Sachs Obadia, a graduate student pursuing a Master's Degree in History and a Certificate in the Ethnic Studies Institute in Jewish American Studies.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, as historians, we are taught to start at the beginning. And because of this, I would like you to start from the beginning. What was it like growing up Jewish? What motivated you? What influences were there in your life which helped you to develop into the person you are today, not only a professor and author, a community leader and founder of several organizations, as well as the founder of the Holocaust Program here at West Chester University, and, of course, a person of international reknown?

Dr. Shur: You ask me to go back to my roots. And that, of course, is Cleveland, Ohio. You ask me about my Jewish background. Well, it's not difficult to understand because people of my age, my vintage, first generation Americans, are people having come over -- our parents having come over -- from Russia or Poland because most American Jews are of that descent. And the reason they came over before World War I is because of the terrible pogroms in Russia and Poland, the murder of the Jews. They escaped, they came to America and, as a little girl growing up in Cleveland, I don't even remember ever having the word "Russia" or "Poland" talked about in my home -- it was "United States." They were citizens, they had gone to night school, we had a flag in our home, they loved this country, and we knew that we were American citizens. I had an inkling that, you know, when my mother would talk Polish to her brothers and sisters so we youngsters wouldn't understand. That's when I knew that there was a Polish background because I would ask, "What language is that?" But, otherwise, all I knew was that we were Jewish -- period. My grandfather was a Rabbi and the community lived close to each other. My grandfather and my family

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

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were very well known in Cleveland. We didn't have the large Jewish community that you have in Philadelphia or New York. I think we had 100,000 Jews in Cleveland. But they lived in two basic areas in Cleveland -- on Kinsman Avenue and 105th. We lived on Kinsman. And we had a music store. My uncles and aunts were all musicians and it seems quite unusual for a Rabbi to have 5 children who were musicians and have a music store. And, of course, I grew up with my father playing the violin -- giving violin lessons -- my uncle playing the trumpet and piano and giving lessons, and my whole life was concerned with learning music, studying music, going to Hebrew school after public school.

So I started my life in a very disciplined background. It was academic, it was musical, it was Jewish. That was my life. I knew no other life. I grew up in the day where you didn't say, "No", to your parents. Whether you agreed with them or not, you're parents ...are.... talked.... they were the ones supporting you and you obeyed. I lived in an area, our little enclave there were Jews, but I went to a high school later where there were Jews and there were Italians and there were Blacks, there were other groups -- a heterogenous group. And that was good -- that was very, very good.

Ms. Obadia: Did you ever experience any type of prejudice while growing up in reference to being a Jew?

Dr. Shur: You see, when you live with so many Jews and you live with other minorities, too...No. I did not. No, I can never remember having any kind of prejudice. When I went to college later, I still don't remember. I really can't remember having any kind of prejudice. In Cleveland, I just don't remember. The only time that I, after I graduated Ohio State, I went there because it was so cheap. We were all poor together -- it was Depression years. It was in 1930's. I went to Ohio State in 1940.

Ms. Obadia: You did, however, have a scholarship to another university, didn't you?

Dr. Shur: Yes. I had a scholarship to Transylvania University for music -- I was a bass player -- and I had been playing with the Cleveland Women's Symphony ever since I was 16 years of age. But I got as far as Columbus, Ohio, and I didn't have the fare to go on to Kentucky. As I say, we were all poor together, but my sister was at Ohio State and she said, "Come. I'll share my bed with you, I'll share my food with you, and you'll go to school here." And I did. I went to school and I became a music teacher and, of course, I played with the Columbus Philharmonic and I did a lot of dance band work.

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you can do to pay your tuition, to buy your food and, of course, my mother went to work to send the two girls to college. She wanted both of us to be teachers.

And, again, you ask about my Jewish background. While I was at Ohio State, I became the choir director for the Hillel, and, of course, Hillel then was 2,000 Jewish youngsters. I was one of those youngsters at one time. I also sang at synagogues and I sang in churches. So my musical career extended not only to my Jewishness, I sang in the non-Jewish churches. And that, of course, was very exciting for me because I had never been in a church. Growing up as a Jew, I think that the fear of the pogroms in Russia and Poland kept my parents away from churches, kept them in their own little enclaves, afraid of getting too close to non-Jews, afraid that they would be hurt again.

And so, going to Ohio State brought me, in many ways, especially in my recognition that there were other people besides Jews.

Ms. Obadia: What did your grandfather, the Rabbi, think of you going to the university and the way that your life went...the direction?

Dr. Shur: All my grandfather knew was that I was studying music, that I was singing in synagogues, that I was directing a choir of Jews, and that's all he knew. I never told him that I sang in a church.

Ms. Obadia: But did he approve of the fact that you were singing in synagogues and majoring in music?

Dr. Shur: Yes. Yes. Yes. He was very liberal for a Rabbi. He was, indeed, very liberal.

Ms. Obadia: But he was very supportive of your education?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Among the Jews, I don't know any Jew who isn't supportive of education, because that's the one way they want their children to go. Of course, as far as my father was concerned, he felt every girl should get out of high school, if she goes that far, and get married, period. But my mother had different aspirations for my sister and myself, thank God. And we followed her directions that education was the most essential thing for a woman.

Ms. Obadia: So you graduated from Ohio State University in...was it 1946?

Dr. Shur: '43.

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Ms. Obadia: 1943. What did you do then?

Dr. Shur: I went to Cleveland, went back home to Cleveland, and I was told by some Jewish teachers -- again, you ask about did I ever encounter any anti-Semitism -- I was told by some Jewish teachers who lived in the neighborhood, that I would never get a job teaching in Cleveland as long as they knew I was a Jew. And I said, "I never heard of that." I mean, if there was any kind of anti-Semitism, it was very latent. I just didn't know about it. I just didn't feel it.

And it was the first day of school -- school opened -- and I had applied for a job -- I hadn't been called. So I simply went downtown by trolley, it was 1943, remember? There were no cars made since 1941. Most of us were taking trollies all over the place. And I went right to the Superintendent's office and I lied to his secretary. I said to her, "I have an appointment with the Superintendent," and she couldn't find my name on the list. And I said, "Oh, but of course," you know, very insistent, because I was desperate to be heard. I was sure if I met him I would get a job. I was sure because I had worked very hard at Ohio State and I came out with an excellent record and I knew I was a good teacher and I like to teach. My student teaching verified that. And so, I'm sitting there and she's looking through her roster and I insist that I had an appointment with him. And the door opens behind her and this nice-looking elderly gentleman comes out and he looks at me and he said, "Do we have an appointment?" I said, "No." I think I sort of fumbled around...I don't know...I didn't think I said, "No," yet. I said, "Well, I thought we did." I was double talking. And he knew it. He said, "Come on in."

I went in, he sat me down, was very nice, and he said, "Now tell me, do we have an appointment?" I said, "No." How could I lie to him? He never saw me before in his life. And I told him I was desperate and I said, "Give me a chance and I'll prove to be one of your best teachers in Cleveland." He was very nice, he called the supervisor up to interview me, was very nice, she was very cold, very distant. Well, I went home and the next morning, about 7 o'clock in the morning, I got a call to go out to Sackett School which was the other end of Cleveland, I lived in East Cleveland. There's a lake there and everything is south of the lake. And that took two buses and one trolley. And I stayed there for 3-1/2 years.

Ms. Obadia: Until what year?

Dr. Shur: Until I got married, until December when I got married.

Ms. Obadia: In 194...?

Dr. Shur: ...'46.

Ms. Obadia: ...'46. During your three years of teaching at Sackett School, did you ever feel any type of anti-Semitism while there?

Dr. Shur: Well, I don't know whether to say it's anti-Semitism or not. I was the music teacher at this school and every day, every day, there were parents walking outside looking at me and I thought that, well, I was conducting and I had tremendous talent, Polish youngsters and Ukrainian youngsters and I think they all played accordion or guitar at home with parents. I mean they could sing three- or four-part harmony. I mean, they thought I was a great teacher. I wasn't that great -- they had it. Music is something you have. And so, I thought these parents were coming by to see their children and hear their children.

One day, I went down to the principal's office and I said, "Mrs. Jenkins, I'm very flattered, all these parents coming by. Are they allowed in the school all the time?" And she said, "Well, I have to tell you something, Miss Ginsberg. They're coming by to see you." I said, "That's nice. Why don't they come into my room?" She says, "No. They want to just look at you." I says, "Well"-- you know, I was a handsome woman at one time so I thought, well, maybe they want to see how good-looking I was! I was really flattering myself. And I said, "Well, why?" And she said, "Well," she said, "We've never had a Jew in this school before and frankly," she said, "they probably still think the Jews have horns on. They came to see what you were like 'cause their youngsters are going home and talking about you. But they like you." And she said, "Frankly, you know, the day that you appeared in school for the first time, and the children went home and said, 'We have a music teacher, Miss Ginsberg,' I had a lot of telephone calls about you. So I allowed them to come into school to see you." I said, "Well, what do you know?" And, you know, that really knocked me off my feet. Remember, this is the first time I'm out of my little Jewish community of Kinsman Avenue and, even at Ohio State, I was with my musicians and there it doesn't matter what you are. This is the first time I was ever thrown into a situation like this. I said to myself, "I'm gonna do the best I can."

And I want you to know when it came to the Christmas celebration that first year and there was a big tree in the middle of the hall and there was a little veranda around the second floor -- first floor was flat -- the tree was in the middle and I had my little children.

remember ages 3rd, 4th, 5th grade, 6th grade, standing around and were singing three-part harmony to the Christmas carols. It was in a cappella -- it was beautiful. And I looked upstairs on the balcony and the teachers were standing there and the parents had come in and I looked down around me and people were crying. And I continued and when it was over I said, "Merry Christmas", to my students and they showered me with gifts and the parents came up and they shouted...I couldn't even carry all the gifts they gave me! I said, "I'm the one who had tears in my eyes."

And later, I asked the principal. I said, "Why were these people crying?" She said, "They weren't crying. They were so thrilled with you." I said, "Well, that's the greatest compliment I've ever had."

And just another anecdote: My salary was \$24 a month. And you know what? I made it do. Of course, I was playing also while I was teaching school. I was playing weekends and evenings and so on. But, you know what? I made it through.

Ms. Obadia: You mentioned earlier in a prior conversation that you, in essence, entertained the troops.

Dr. Shur: Yeah. In the summertime, of course, still the war was on, 1943. And so I'd go up to Chicago -- we were in limited service -- with the girls' band. And we'd play there at the Hotel Stevens for three months at a time. And it was a happy and a sad time. It was happy because I loved my music and I loved to see the bell-bottom trousers, the sailors dancing with the girls, the USO girls and so on. But it was very sad because I knew this was a port of embarkation and some of these guys were never coming back. It was very exhausting for me. It was very exhausting for me because all I could ask myself was, "Why? Why do we have to we have to be killing each other? Why?"

Ms. Obadia: Well, my next question is somewhat of a personal nature. Did you meet your husband in Cleveland? Was he someone you knew before or can you relate to me about your husband?

Dr. Shur: It was the summer that the war was over in 1946. And I was playing with a boys band, Bobby Ayers. I was the only girl and there were four boys.

Ms. Obadia: Did you sing or play an instrument?

Dr. Shur: Both. I was singing and playing the bass. And we decided that we wanted to get to Atlantic City. I had never been to Atlantic City. I'd never seen the Atlantic

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Ocean. For me, that was a great opportunity. So I said, "OK." They sent me ahead of time to look the place over, get a place for them to stay 'cause these fellas were my buddies. We played a lot of weddings in Cleveland and a lot of jobs. And I went ahead -- of course, with my sister. Girls didn't travel alone in those days. And I got to Atlantic City with my sister. And soon I was able to get a booking -- showed my Cleveland 482 Union card and showed some of the credentials of the band -- and the band came.

We started playing at the Mayflower Hotel and my mother wanted to know where we were, but as long as I was with my sister, it was OK. And then I met the man who was to become my husband. But he spoke Italian. And he was out of the service and in the service he was head of the officers' club at Indiantown Gap. And he was a natural linguist. And he came up to me on the beach and he talked to me in Italian. He thought I was Italian. And I didn't say a word to him because I was never allowed to go with anyone who wasn't Jewish. Never, because they wanted us to marry Jews. And I turned to my sister -- and he was with a boyfriend -- and I said to my sister in Jewish...

Ms. Obadia: ...in Yiddish...

Dr. Shur: ...in Yiddish. I said, "Let's get out of here because if Dad finds me anywhere near someone or going out with someone." -- 'cause he was asking me to go out -- I said, "he'll kill me." And my sister said, "But he's so far away." I says, "Knowing my father, he'll be here tomorrow. I'm not starting." But I'm saving all of this in Jewish, not knowing that my husband was Jewish. I said to my sister, "You go first up to the boardwalk and I will follow you." And he knew everything we were going to do. So he said good-bye to me -- I didn't know he was going to follow us -- and he found out where we lived and then he brought a boyfriend to take my sister out. But I still wouldn't go out with him. And he knew why. And then, when he finally told me he was Jewish, I still wouldn't go out with him because he had lied to me. But he made friends with the man who owned the hotel where I lived. He'd come every night -- my husband was a singer -- and he came every night and he sang for the man and the man would say to me, "What a nice young man that is! Why don't you go out with him?" I would say, "Mr. Kitmus, you go out with him." Well, the long and the short of the story is he kept after me until I married him. And three months later we were married.

Ms. Obadia: Did you get married in Cleveland?

Dr. Shur: Yes, we got married in Cleveland.

Ms. Obadia: Did you have a Jewish wedding?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. I was teaching already at Rabbi Berkowitz's temple, which was the second largest temple. I had been teaching for Rabbi Silber, but then I went over to Berkowitz and I was Music Director there. And the Rabbi and I were always kidding each other. And then I wanted him to marry me. Now, at my wedding, because my husband was so tall, I wore very high heels. And going down the aisle, I said to the Rabbi -- whispered -- "Make it short". And he said, "I owe you something." He kept that going for about a half hour! He expounded on how wonderful I was and so on, and my feet were getting bow-legged. He saw that and he purposely did this to me. And when it was over, he said to me, "Congratulations, Irene." I said, "Rabbi, I owe you one." Now, I never repaid him, but I still owe him one. But it was the friendly comraderie. Yes, we got married....

Ms. Obadia: Did you get married under a chuppa?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Ms. Obadia: Did you smash the glass also?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. My husband did. You know, that breaks off all the ties, the old tradition. Yes. It was a typical Jewish wedding.

Ms. Obadia: Were your grandparents still alive to see that?

Dr. Shur: My grandmother, my grandmother on my father's side was still alive. And many of my uncles and aunts were still alive and many friends here. You know, when I go through my old albums and I see, I see the people who came to my wedding. So many are gone now. You know, you sit there and you look at these albums and you say, what's happening all around us? What's happening?

Ms. Obadia: After you married your husband, did you remain in Cleveland?

Dr. Shur: No. We came to West Chester immediately because I discussed this with my Rabbi...

Ms. Obadia: West Chester, New York?

Dr. Shur: West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Obadia: Ah, hah.

Dr. Shur: I discussed this with my Rabbi. My husband would have done whatever I wanted to. And I had a

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teaching position there. I was playing with the Cleveland Women's Symphony, I was doing radio work, WHK. I was doing a lot of things there. And he was just out of the army. And I discussed this with my Rabbi. My Rabbi said that it is written out of the Talmud, or where it's written, he says, "The woman goes with the man for the man makes his living. Not the other way around." He told me I was well established and it wouldn't have been easy for a man right out of the service, 5 years out of his life, to try to keep up with me, but I should go away and begin together.

The Rabbi was absolutely correct. I gave up everything there and came here to West Chester.

Ms. Obadia: Now, did he have family here?

Dr. Shur: His entire family, largest Jewish family in West Chester... When I came here, there were about 80 Jewish families in West Chester.

Ms. Obadia: And what year was that -- 1946?

Dr. Shur: We were married December 29, 1946 and I came here right after that. I would say the end of '46.

Ms. Obadia: How large was the Shur family at that point in your life?

Dr. Shur: There were his father and two uncles and they all had a lot of children. So there were a lot of cousins and the cousins were having children. Shurs were all over the place.

Ms. Obadia: Then you lived right in the midst of them?

Dr. Shur: I lived right in the midst of them. Um-hmm.

Ms. Obadia: Was there a Jewish quarter or a Jewish area of West Chester at that time?

Dr. Shur: Yes. I have just finished a film on the history of the Jew in West Chester. And this is for the synagogue. The synagogue just had its 75th, or its Diamond, Anniversary. And I did a little booklet on the history of the Jews for that. There were two enclaves for the Jews. One was Matlack and Market. And the other one was Gay Street and Darlington.

Ms. Obadia: And where did you live?

Dr. Shur: I lived in...By the time I came, this is the enclaves around the time of World War I when they came and settled. By the time I came, they began to move away a

little bit. The next generation was moving away because the quarters were too small. The older people remained there. And so, I lived on West Miner Street in a bigger house. But I didn't have a house -- we had to take an attic of one of his friends and make an apartment out of it. So many boys came home after World War II and got married. There was just not enough room for anybody!

Ms. Obadia: Well, what did you do -- your husband obviously embarked on...was he a business man?

Dr. Shur: Yes...Yes. He went into the fruit business immediately.

Ms. Obadia: And what did you do?

Dr. Shur: It was a little difficult acclimating here to West Chester. After all, I left everything there and it was a different, a lovely, Jewish community. So immediately, the Rabbi gave me a job teaching Sunday School.

Ms. Obadia: What was the Rabbi's name?

Dr. Shur: Rabbi Joseph Spizer, a new Rabbi and a very delightful person who now has a pulpit in Florida. He gave me a job teaching Sunday School, knowing my background. And then I also taught Hebrew School...

Ms. Obadia: What about your music? Did you pursue that?

Dr. Shur: Yes, I joined the Wilmington Symphony almost immediately...and...

Ms. Obadia: Obviously, they accepted you.

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes they did. Well, you know, I think music is a talent and I am very grateful to God that I have this talent. And I worked hard. Besides talent, you know, ...

Ms. Obadia: You practiced.

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I used to practice about 10-11 hours a day and that's a lot of hours as a youngster to give up to practice. But, then I did some dance band work, but I felt it wasn't fair for my husband although he really never complained. It took a lot to play with a band and come back about 1 or 2 in the morning. It wasn't right. I knew it in my heart. And so, I gave that up almost immediately. I tried....

Ms. Obadia: But the Symphony you kept?

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Dr. Shur: The Symphony I kept. Yes. That was Sunday afternoon rehearsals, Wednesday night concerts at the Playhouse in Wilmington. That continued.

Ms. Obadia: How long did that continue?

Dr. Shur: Seven years.

Ms. Obadia: seven years....

Dr. Shur: Seven years. And I remember something strange once. I had a Sunday afternoon concert once and my husband was a very delightful, easy going man. But one Sunday, I don't know, it was football or something -- he didn't want to take care of the children. And I said, "I have a concert to play." He said, "I'm not taking care of the children," because he was always taking care of the children. And one was a year and a half and the other one was three. I put my bass in the car. I put my two children in the car. We got to the concert hall, the DuPont Hotel in Wilmington. I put two of them in one seat right in the front where I was going to play under me. People came, you know, the people who sit in the front row, the people who pay all the money for their seats. And they sat next to my two children who looked like two little orphans. The little girl was hanging onto the little boy and I'm standing there playing and looking at them at the same time. And every time the little one made a sound, I'd look at him very cross. And my three year old daughter was taking care of the 1-1/2 year old son! And the woman next to him, thank heavens, you know, was very nice and so on. In very short order, they knew it was my children. And they stayed there and during the intermission, I came down, was with them, took them to where they had to go and came back again. And that was one of those afternoons I shall never forget. And I think I only took my children because I was so angry at my husband. I said, "OK. I'll take my children." Of course, when I came back, he was very reticent. I guess the football game was over, whatever it was. And I never did that again. But you know what? Those are the days you remember. Those are the days you remember.

Ms. Obadia: Now during that 7 years playing with the Symphony, were you pursuing -- I know you had a Bachelor's Degree -- were you pursuing a higher degree at that point?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. I think I've always gone to school one way or another. When I came here, I knew that I was going to be very limited. Although it sounds so easy, Philadelphia's an hour away, Wilmington's a half hour away, and after a few years, we did have a car -- we bought a used car. We were putting our pennies together to buy a house. But it's easier said than done when you

have 2 children to run. So I knew I was going to be here in West Chester. And so, for relaxation, I would go to the Chester County Historical Society because there were the new people here that I had never met before called "The Quakers" or "The Friends." And I became completely enamored with them. I knew that this was the largest congregation of Friends anywhere in the world was in the radius of 50 miles of Philadelphia. And Coatesville, Downingtown, West Chester, Bucks County and so on, we had plenty of Friends. And I went to the Friends meeting houses, I went to the Chester County Historical Society, and I realized we had the finest library in the world on Friends right here.

And one thing led to another and, before I knew it, I was becoming a history major at University of Delaware. I had received a scholarship because I was able to translate some German documents at the Chester County Historical Society. Somebody at the University of Delaware was very appreciative that I had done this translation and found some mistakes. And they offered me a scholarship. And one day I came home and I said to my husband, "Well, I'm going to be a Historian." He said, "And what are you gonna be tomorrow?" Because, by this time, I was also directing the synagogue choir, I was already President of the sisterhood here at the synagogue. You see, my roots were synagogue almost all the way through. And I was already President of Hadassah, which is the international organization. And then he said, "And what are you going to do tomorrow?" And so, I started my Master's Degree.

Ms. Obadia: ...in history?

Dr. Shur: ...in history, yes.

Ms. Obadia: But your undergraduate degree was in music?

Dr. Shur: Yes. Uh-huh.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, when did you start teaching at West Chester University? How did that all come about?

Dr. Shur: The year was 1954. In other words, I got here early in 1947, so this is seven years later. And it all came about -- my entire career of going back to teaching was one of those things I call a "fluke". It started in 1954. I had been to a party at a relative's house, Mott Singer, now deceased, who was football captain years ago of the West Chester football team. There was a party at his home and I met this grey-haired gentleman and we sat and talked religion all night long. He was a Methodist, I was a Jew, we compared our religion all night long. And he was very complimentary. He says, "You know so much about your Judaism" and I smiled. I didn't give him my

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background. Good God, this was my background. And the next day, the phone rang and my husband said, "Dr. Swope wants you." I said, "Who's Dr. Swope?" My husband said, "That's the gentleman you talked to last night." I said, "That nice man?" He said, "Yes." Well, Dr. Swope wanted me to come right over to his office. So my husband took me over. I says, "What in the world would Dr. Swope want with me?" And at that time, I was substituting in the public schools. That's as far...

Ms. Obadia: Had you gotten your Master's yet?

Dr. Shur: No...No...No. I was still just working at it, just going to school. And he said to me that they had a demonstration school and demonstration school years ago were the student teachers, and those who were going to be teachers would come and watch the teachers teach. These had to be outstanding teachers who would be able to teach different techniques, different methodology and so on. And they would come and observe the teachers teach. And he thought that, after speaking to me, and he knew the fact that I had been a teacher in Cleveland and so on, he thought that I could do it, that I could handle the teachers coming in to observe. Well, I was very flattered.

So that semester I taught -- it was the Spring semester of 1954 -- I taught at the demonstration school. When that was over, Dr. Swope said that I should go ahead and finish my degree. He was very interested in me and he wanted me back at the college. Well, in 1955, when I was substituting for the public schools, I got a call one morning from Dr. Stetson, who was a superintendent of the public schools. And he said to me, "Mrs. Shur," which I was called at the time, "I need you desperately." Now, here's a superintendent calling me! I knew him casually. I said, "Well, what is it Dr. Stetson?" He said, "We have at Biddle Street school a 6th grade that doesn't have a teacher." Now, this was 8 o'clock in the morning!

I said, "Well, Dr. Stetson, generally when people call for me to substitute at 7 o'clock or 6:30 or the night before...I have a child that's not in kindergarten yet and the other one's in the first grade..." He said, "but is there anyone who could take care of your children -- I need you desperately." And you must remember, though, the first couple of years, a few years after the war, we had a terrible teacher shortage -- terrible teacher shortage -- because people came back from the war and the teachers just weren't getting paid enough and they went into other areas -- things began to open up for them. And so, I called my mother-in-law, I beseeched upon her to take care of the youngster 'cause I wasn't going to leave youngsters in strange hands and I went over to the school, and this

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was the 6th grade. Little did I know that the average IQ of this 6th grade was about 125 - 130. They had worn out 2 or 3 teachers in the 4th and 5th grade. No teacher would teach them -- they were that bad. Nobody told me.

And when I came into that room, these youngsters were crawling on the floor, barking, you know, one threw a pot out of the window, and I didn't know that right across the street on Church Street, Dr. Stetson had this little house which was his office and he could look from his window right across to what I was doing. And I walked in and I had never seen such behavior! And I know that in Ohio we have parental domain and we also had it in Pennsylvania at the time. You can do to a child what you can do to your own child. Well, I grabbed those youngsters, I knocked two of their heads together, I grabbed the girl with the pot, who was throwing it out the window, and I almost threw her out the window, and one girl -- they used to have the long beads and they waved them around -- I grabbed the beads, I ripped it right off her neck. It took me 1, 2, 3, and there was complete silence...complete silence.

I didn't know he was watching me from across the street. I don't think I would have done this. Well, they sat down and I said, "You know, in every army there is a general. And I'm the general of this class." You know, I don't know why I said that. I think I was scared of these youngsters because I saw they were not the average youngsters. I didn't know if they were very slow or very fast. Well, after 1 week -- I didn't even know where the books were -- nobody knew where anything was -- I kept them busy by telling me what they had learned in the 5th grade, the 4th grade... I just kept them busy, I kept them in their seats. They didn't even know what hit them. I worked it with them so fast.

After the first day, I left and the principal said, "You will be in tomorrow?" I said, "Well, that's not the understanding." He said, "Oh, yes, we need you desperately." I want you to know I stayed 1 year. Dr. Stetson kept saying, "Oh, but they love you." I said, "Dr. Stetson..." But I got to love this class and we did an awful lot of things.

The following year, Dr. Stetson came to me and he says, "You know, Mrs. Shur, I'm having problems because Dr. Swope wants you back at the college." He says, "We stood there at High and Gay and we were arguing over you." And do you know what? I was so happy. No men ever argued over me! And I told my husband, "You know, those two nice men were arguing over me." And my husband says, "They want you, they should have you!"

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But I wound up at the college. And when I came back to the college, Dr. Swope wanted me in the history department because at University of Delaware, I was studying history.

Ms. Obadia: So the year is 1956 and you've just begun teaching at West Chester University. What were some of the first courses that you taught at the University and in what department?

Dr. Shur: I started with the history department immediately and I'm still there. And the first course I taught was World Civilization, called "World History" and "United States History". And in those days, we taught 6 days a week -- we taught on Saturdays also. We taught 18 hours -- I now teach 12 hours and I'm exhausted -- we taught 18 hours. Constant preparation... Here I was still working on my Master's Degree, winding it up, and preparing for new courses. And I very well remember my first classes. One of the classes really frightened me, but, you know, you're like Clyde Beatty when you go into a classroom, you're with the animals and they're looking you over. And if you show that you're scared, you're finished.

And this one class was meeting at 4 o'clock in the afternoon -- Monday, Wednesday, Friday -- and they were the football players. And they were meeting in Room 7 at Anderson, and when the semester began in September, it was still warm. We had the windows open. And right across the street -- there's a building there now, I think for special education -- there was a field there. And we had a football coach, Dr. Killinger. He had a very loud voice. And he was the coach of these boys. But across the street, there were freshmen practicing. And I couldn't teach history with Killinger's voice. They couldn't hear me. They were already conditioned to listening to the coach's voice.

So one afternoon, I went over and slammed the window, pulled the shade down -- thought I was in complete command of the situation. And, by this time, the boys were looking at me. And don't let anybody ever tell you that those football boys don't have it up above the eyes -- they do. They are as bright as can be. That's why they try to get away without working. But they're bright!

Let me tell you what happened because a lot of them got out of my class with A's and I was never an easy one on A's 'cause I know I worked for it and there's work to achieve an excellent grade. Well, anyway, on this one day, the windows are closed, it's very warm inside, I walked over, lecturing. I had a sweater. I had a shirt. I put the sweater off as I am lecturing. You know, good old show business -- gotta keep the show going. I unbuttoned my sweater. Take the sweater off. Put it on the chair and, still very warm. I forgot I took my sweater off. I began to unbutton my blouse thinking it was the sweater and, by this time, I have everybody's attention and I'm thinking subconsciously, "Boy, they're really paying attention -- I'm really lecturing." And I open all the buttons in my blouse, I pull out one of my arms and then suddenly it felt very cool on my arm.

By this time, one of the boys put his head down on his desk. The other boys are eyes open twice as wide and I realized that I was taking off my blouse in front of the football players. I kept on lecturing. I put my hand right back into the blouse. I buttoned it -- now, you gotta hear this. I'm still lecturing and then I take my sweater. By this time, they don't even know what's happening. I put my sweater on, I button the sweater right on down the front. By this time, I'm ready to go into tears because how long can you keep acting? I was so humiliated at what I had done! I kept on lecturing. I looked down. They're not even taking notes. I think some of them had their mouths open and then I said, "Well," -- it was about halfway into the class -- I said, "It's too warm to teach today so we'll just dismiss." I walked out, closed the door and then I heard a howling. They opened the window and they jumped out the window screaming.

I came upstairs and I said to my colleague, who was Cliff Morgan at the time. I said, "Cliff, you know, I just lost my job." I said, "I got undressed in front of the football team." He says, "What did you do?" I said, "I took off my sweater and I got so involved with what I was doing, I began to take off my blouse." I said, "And I had to put it back on again." I said, "I know they're gonna tell everybody on campus and I know I'm gonna be called in and I know I'm going to be fired." And I was in tears by the time I got upstairs. And he didn't even know what to say to me.

Well, I want you to know, 35 years later and nobody ever said a word. They came back to class like nothing had happened. You know what? I think we short schriift our kids all the way down the line. I think they have a lot of what it takes. I always said that about students. They have an awful lot of what it takes. If it were anybody else, if I were in a group of adults, I think

everybody in town would have known it. I was humiliated. Here it is the first time I'm ever telling anybody about this. OK?

Ms. Obadia: Now, Dr. Shur, you pioneered the Holocaust Program here at West Chester University. Could you please relate to us now how that all began and what years it began?

Dr. Shur: Oh, I pioneered other programs for the History Department. I pioneered the teaching of East Asia. That was China, Japan. And as a result of that, I received a Fulbright. And went over, I applied for it...

Ms. Obadia: ...a Fulbright Scholarship?

Dr. Shur: ...a Fulbright Scholarship which is very good. And I went over to China, which was Taiwan -- free China -- in 1964. And then I pioneered teaching of the Middle East courses. And one of them was "The Jew in History." Of course, when I came, we already had the Middle East taught from the Arab perspective. And now the Middle East was going to be taught from the Jewish perspective. And...

Ms. Obadia: What year was that that the first "Jew in History" course was offered?

Dr. Shur: I would say in the 1960's.

Ms. Obadia: ...early 1960's?

Dr. Shur: Right. And then Cliff Harding and I taught the Arabs 'cause he was married to a Persian woman. And he'd visited there so many times that he did a lot of work with that. So one semester, we pioneered a course called the Arab and the Jew. Oh, that was a hot course. And we wound up taking our students down to the Middle East Restaurant so they could taste the Arabic food and see the Arabic belly dancers. We had a lot of fun.

Ms. Obadia: That would be before the Six Day War, right?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And then the Holocaust was an unusual phenomenon. With the other courses we pioneered, we thought there was a need. We felt that the horizons were changing. West Chester could not stay within the little ivy covered walls, the college nor Chester County. It was getting too big. The world was getting closer -- communication, transportation, more foreign students, more foreign people coming in to work. That is why that happened.

But the Holocaust is a different story. There isn't a Jew

in America who wasn't touched by the Holocaust. You did lose people. I lost my entire family in Europe -- from Poland -- because of the Holocaust. And since then, I've been back, I found one in Israel. We found another family in Russia who escaped. But the others were all slaughtered. And so, we've all been touched by it. And for the years, the decades, after the Holocaust, there isn't any Jew really that wanted to talk about it. It was brutal, it was ugly, it was heinous crime and we were still in shock. Those survivors who came over, they didn't want to talk about it. And many of us were ashamed. Many of American Jews were ashamed because what little bit did leak out, we couldn't believe that anybody was being killed, even though some of us were told this was happening. We just didn't believe it.

So for many reasons it wasn't touched at all. Well, one day in 1977, I was getting ready to go to China, back to Taiwan. I was going to do some work there. And this was in April. And I was watching a television show from Channel 12 -- that's the Wilmington Channel. And they had on the head of the KKK and the head of the Nazis on that evening. And here they are telling that they must rid America of the Jews. They must rid America of the Blacks. And I looked at my husband and I said, "Why am I going to China when there is so much work to be done right here in America? Look at the hatred and the bigotry! My own people, my grandchildren, my children are in trouble. Something has to be done to stop this -- to save what is left of the world Jewry 'cause ..."

(Tape #1 Side #2)

Dr. Shur: And so, I told my husband I had to give thought about going to China. Should I do some work in studying something about what happened with the Holocaust? Because we're gonna have another Holocaust here if certain people do not get involved.

And it was the following week and I sort of put that on the "back burner." I didn't know what I was going to do. And it was the following week. I was walking down campus and there was a young campus minister by the name of Reverend Mark Randall, a darling Methodist minister. We had been friends. I was Director of Hillel for 25 years here on campus. Again, my Jewish roots are very deep. And through my work I met him as he was the head of the Christian, mostly the Protestants. And we had a Newman House also. That was for the Catholic students. And he met me on campus and said, "Dr. Shur," -- came up to me -- and he said, "You know, I have a problem." I said, "What is it?" He says, "I've just come back from a very big seminar in Kansas and we're prevailed upon to teach the Holocaust or have Holocaust conference or bring Holocaust

education." He said, "Could you help me?"

And I looked at him and here I was never wanting to touch it, never wanting to go near it because it was such a brutal affair. And here was this young Methodist minister, a Christian, asking me, a Jew to help him! How could I say, "No?" And I said to him, "You know, Reverend Randall, I really don't have enough background." And I said, "You know, the funniest thing happened. A week or two ago I was telling my husband, 'Maybe I should learn a little more about this kind of stuff.'

And I told him about that television program and he had seen it and was very upset about it. And he said, "You know, there's a man in Philadelphia and his name is Dr. Franklin Littell." And I said, "Yes. I went to a conference a couple of years ago. One of my students, one of my Catholic students, took me to a Holocaust conference in Philadelphia and I met him and I heard what was going on and I said it was very upsetting but the student insisted that I go with her. I said, 'You know, let's go in and meet him.' Well, we went in, called, we went in to meet him. And Dr. Littell told me if I want to know more about the Holocaust, I should go to Israel and study under Yehudah Bauer, who is one of the world's great authorities. And then I could come back and teach it or work with him or do something." I came home and I said to my husband, 'I'm going to Israel. I'm going to study the Holocaust.' So my husband said, 'Good luck.' He never tried to stop me. So China was out and Holocaust was in 'cause I felt it it was necessary."

I was shocked that it wasn't being taught -- anywhere. It wasn't even in the books, maybe a word in a history book, the Holocaust. So when I went to Israel for that three weeks...

Ms. Obadia: Was this during the summer?

Dr. Shur: Summertime...yeah. And I worked there and I stayed a little longer and I visited 'cause three-quarters of the people of Israel at that time were survivors. Wherever you turned there were survivors. It was a whole workshop for me. And I came back and I came back the end of August and I told Dr. Carlson who was then the head of the department. This is now 1978. I said, "Dr. Carlson, I think I'll teach the Holocaust." He said, "Good God, girl, school begins in 2 weeks!" He said, "You want to teach a course? Get 15 students." I said, "I'll get 15 students." He says, "If you're gonna get 15 students in 2 weeks..." I said, "I'll get 15 students in 2 weeks." He said, "OK. I want to see it."

Ms. Obadia: Now were you teaching the history of the Jew

at that point? Had you been teaching that?

Dr. Shur: Yes. Yes. I was just beginning. I had just begun to teach the history of the Jew.

Ms. Obadia: Did you teach both those courses that semester?

Dr. Shur: Well, I got into this because I got on the phone and I called my Hillel students. And I said, "If you want to take a course on the Holocaust, now's the time. If you have any Christian friends, now's the time. Give me 15 names and next week I can start teaching the course." Well, I wound up with about 30 names. And most of my students were Christians from the very beginning. Even now, I have a class now of close to 40. I've always had wall-to-wall students as I kiddingly say. And I think I have 2 Jewish students out of the class of 40 now.

And if you ask my students why they are taking the Holocaust...one student I have now, his grandfather was an SS Officer. He wants to know more about it. I had a student last semester whose grandfather was in the SS, whatever position he held. In fact, that student is working for my son now. I have students who are Biblical students and they want to know where all this killing came from -- why. There is many reasons. There is many questions. They take the course because they heard it was a good course. And we do an awful lot. I just don't teach the course, I take them to conferences. Now this Sunday night, I'm taking them to a synagogue in Wilmington where they'll be meeting survivors and survivors' children.

Ms. Obadia: ...an Orthodox synagogue?.

Dr. Shur: ...conservative. And next Wednesday night, I'm speaking in Wilmington on my book, In Answer. It's a book I wrote about an answer to the Revisionists who say it never happened. And some of the students will be coming then. I have a big conference on genocide in January at that college which I helped organize. And even though I'll be finished teaching them, they say they want to go with me. I've taken students to Israel. I've taken three or four different times, students to Israel during the Winter break 'cause it's much cheaper to go. And to Yad Vashem and to some of the kibbutzim to meet some of the survivors. And, of course, the Christian students want to see some of the beautiful remains there of Biblical history. The Jewish students, likewise. We cover many different areas.

So I take my students out of the classroom. And I've always believed that most of my best teaching goes when

I'm outside of the classroom on the road.

Ms. Obadia: So 11 years later, you're still teaching the history of the Jew and the history of the Holocaust and your classes are, as you said, wall-to-wall students.

Dr. Shur: Also, now we give a Certificate. As Director of the Ethnic Institute, we developed a system of ten different Certificates where you major, it's almost like a minor, in Spanish or French, and that would be in history or geography and language and so on. So I also give one on Jewish History and I also give one on the Holocaust. This is the first school in the United States to give a minor in Holocaust studies.

Ms. Obadia: Are there other schools now doing that?

Dr. Shur: No. No. And I have a big conference coming up in Vanderbilt University in March where I'm going to describe what I have been doing. So others -- I hope it whets their appetites so they will be able to do some of the things that happened here. With me, it's been literally a one-woman show and, although I have many professors who work with me closely, yet it's always...I find myself I'm the Secretary, I'm the Director of the National Association for Holocaust Education. And by the time I ask anyone to do anything, -- I have one in Ohio, I have one in Tennessee -- it's so long and laborious, I just do it myself to make sure it gets done. Of course, that is not being a good Director. You're supposed to disperse the work that has to be done.

Ms. Obadia: Now, these students that are in your classes, many of them minor in Holocaust Studies. But, as you said before, many of them gain a Certificate in the Ethnic Studies Institute.

Dr. Shur: The minor and the Certificate are very close.

Ms. Obadia: Do you offer...How many Certificates do you offer?

Dr. Shur: We offer 10 in the Ethnic Institute altogether.

Ms. Obadia: OK. Now in the Jewish Studies Program, do you get a Certificate in Holocaust Studies or a Certificate in Jewish Studies?

Dr. Shur: It depends what you want. You take three courses in whatever you're majoring in and you have to have six together and the other three can be in Anthropology and Sociology. But it has to be in and around with the core that you're taking.

Ms. Obadia: Would you say since 1978, since the beginning of the Ethnic Studies Institute and the beginning of the teaching of the History of the Jew course, that the program has gotten larger?

Dr. Shur: Which program? Ethnic Institute?

Ms. Obadia: Yes.

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes, because, you see, it was not only myself working on it, we always had a committee. And each member of the committee, one was in Oriental Studies, one was in Indian Studies. Of course, they wanted to give Certificates. And it was a working together. We had people who teach German History and so forth. So we have expanded, yes. Yes.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, besides what you've done at West Chester University, could you tell us a little bit more about your other academic activities and developments?

Dr. Shur: I used to sing a song, "Where do I begin?" You know there's a long life there. Many years, a lot of work and, as I said before, I have enjoyed...I have enjoyed it.

Ms. Obadia: You did eventually get your Master's Degree, I take it.

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. And my Doctor's Degree. I got my Bachelor's, as I said before, at Ohio State. I got my Master's at University of Delaware. Then I went out and got my Doctorate at University of Pennsylvania. After that, I went to Ding Hai University in China and received summer work, additional post-graduate work, post-Doctoral work. Then I went to Hebrew University and received post-Doctoral work. In the summertimes, I found myself traveling and working in Pakistan. I was there three summers working for the government of Pakistan in the education field. It seems a far cry from everything else I'd done. But it's tied up with my Oriental studies. I found myself teaching in China. I was at Beijing University in 1980. I was among the first group to go into teach in China.

Besides that, in my academic development, I not only studied at various universities, I found myself doing an awful lot of traveling and photographing -- I use this in my teaching work. I developed films, film strips and developed a film as well.

Ms. Obadia: During this time, were you writing?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. I have a feeling that the pen is mightier than the sword and by that I mean education is so

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very, very important and if you write something down, long after you're dead, it is there. And my first important work was a children's history book here in West Chester. When I left the public schools, -- I told you about that very unusual class that I had -- I was very aghast these bright children. One of the things I was supposed to teach them was the history of West Chester. And here I was from Cleveland. What did I know about West Chester? And one of the teachers in the school said to me, -- there were no books -- there was nothing -- and she said to me, "Oh, go take them for a walk around the block." I said, "This group of 6th graders walk around the block?" I said, "Never. Couldn't be." As a result, I talked to this group. And I said, "I don't know anything about West Chester. You teach me."

And we went out with pencil and paper, interviewed in the Fire House, in the Police Station, the usual. When I left to go to the college, I went to Dr. Stetson and I said, "Dr. Stetson, you know, it's just horrible. With all the history that we've had here in West Chester, George Washington and his troops marched through here and if not West Chester, there would not have been a President Lincoln. If not West Chester, we would not have had the tremendous communication between the cities and the towns and the farming community which helped feed England and Europe for so many years during the 18th century. There was so much.....the agricultural community, so much about the history here, about the Civil War here. Buffalo Bill's mother was born here. So much! The children would love to know this. He said, "What are you going to do about it?" I said, "I'm gonna write a book." He said, "I bet." I said, "No, don't challenge me, Dr. Stetson."

Now, really, it took me 7 years of research. All of this is while I'm going to school, getting graduate work. But 7 years of research to get my materials together to write my first history book for children: Mr. Puckle's Hat. And that is the story of West Chester told through the eyes and ears of an old Quaker hat. And that is this hat. It's personified and I'll show you my book and you'll be able to see. In fact, the library has copies and so on. This is personified and now I'm taking this hat to China. Now, this year, this May. And I'm going to do the first sequel of this so many years later: Mr. Puckle Goes to China.

Ms. Obadia: When was Mr. Puckle first published?

Dr. Shur: ...1962.

Ms. Obadia: ...1962. And after that, what other publications did you have?

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Dr. Shur: Well, then I became, well, I did an awful lot of writing as far as periodicals are concerned. And I did work in working for publications, both national and international, on education, on China. And my first book was Mr. Puckle's Hat. My second book was Let School Bells Ring, which I helped my sister co-author, about the schools of New York. And that took an awful lot of investigation. My next one was Reflections On The Teaching Of The Holocaust, which I wrote together with Dr. Littel, my mentor. And this was written for the Annals Of The Association Of Political And Social Science for the University of Pennsylvania, which is a very prestigious book. I collected essays and put them in here of great scholars on the Holocaust. My last book was In Answer. It's an answer to the Revisionists who say the Holocaust didn't happen. And after traveling to seven countries and picking up 21 essays and having these translated and re-writing many of them, I was able to put together a book called In Answer -- to the Revisionists. And it's going over very well, I'm glad to say.

My students through the years have written, and that's when I was teaching the methodology courses, have written over 600 units. And some of them were on the Holocaust. And the Holocaust unit, in fact, is used by all the schools at Chester County, Delaware County and some of the schools of Bucks County.

Ms. Obadia: The unit on the Holocaust was just taught in the public schools?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, your Curriculum Vitae shows so many diversified activities and endeavors. I notice that you go from the Holocaust to the Jews of China. Could you tell us something about what got you interested in the Jews of China?

Dr. Shur: I don't think there's a Jew living in the world that's not interested in the Jews of China. Who are they? What are they? Are they really Jews -- how they existed? They came there so many, many years ago. How is it that the world knew so very little about them? And these are questions we've asked. There aren't too many people who have been able to go into inner China. They live in Kaifeng, along the confluence of the Yellow River. And through the years, it was the geography, it was the history, it was China's innate patriotism of a foreigner. They have no anti-Semitism in China, no anti-Christianity. They just don't like foreigners. So they've had trouble with foreigners. That made it very dangerous.

So through the many, many years...the Jews came in 1163
This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

from India and they brought with them the cotton industry during the Sung Dynasty. But through these many years, they have had very few Jewish visitors. It was very difficult to get there. You had to go up the...over either the Gobi Desert or you had to go over the mountains coming in from the West or you had to go around the confluence of the Yellow River. You never knew when that was going to flood. Believe me, I have been there and it's not easy.

Ms. Obadia: What got you interested in this?

Dr. Shur: Well, I was going over to China. I was asked to teach in China in 1980. I was among the first people to go into China to teach English. And I thought, "Well, as long as I'm going into China, into Peking, let's see if I can get into Kaifeng." And that wasn't too easy. It seems everything that I do is not easy but it somehow gets done.

Ms. Obadia: Where had you heard about these Jews in Kaifeng?

Dr. Shur: Oh, I'd always read about 'em. Always read about them. Who are they? Are they really Jews? Do they have a Temple? Do they have a Rabbi? What really makes them tick? And so, once I was in Peking, I was able to talk the Dean of the Beijing University to let me go because, to get out of the city of Peking, you have to have a special permit. And he sent 2 young men who could speak a little English with me and that was a good 15 hour train ride from Beijing southwest towards the Gobi Desert. It gets drier and drier as you go along. And you may as well say that, from the time we leave Beijing, until you get to the city of Kaifeng, which is where the Jews now live, the handful of Jews, you may as well say you're in the 12th century. The only modern thing is the train. Everything else is exactly as it has been for many, many centuries.

And finally, when I got to Kaifeng, I stayed at the Friendship Hotel, which all the hotels are owned by the government. It's a Communist government. But there was an American woman there who was married to a Chinese man and she'd been teaching there for 30-35 years. We became friends and she was able to help me. I used her as my translator. Together we found the Chinese Jews. I've been there twice now. I'm going back the third time. And altogether, there's 162 left. At one time, there were 10,000.

Ms. Obadia: Did they look any different from the other Chinese around them?

Dr. Shur: No. No. They've intermarried so many times. And what's very interesting about these Chinese Jews is they identify their background not through the mother, but the father. They would introduce me...an older Jew would introduce me to his..., "This is my son, and this is my daughter. My son's a Jew, my daughter's a Jew. This is my wife. She's a Han." A Han means a pure Chinese. But because they're his children, they're Jews. And that's all they know about Jewishness, the fact they're a Jew. Because in 1847, there had been so many floods before this and when that Huang Ho River floods, it really is devastating. And you never know when it's going to change its course because it is so filled with the clay soil coming into the Gobi Desert. And the last big flood was in 1847 and the synagogue, what was left of the synagogue, was wiped away, the Rabbi was drowned, and many people were drowned, not only Jews....

Ms. Obadia: ..and the Torah, if there was a Torah..?

Dr. Shur: The Torah floated away, there were 13 Torahs at one time. And the funniest thing is I went to England last year on a Holocaust conference at Oxford University. I found one of the Torahs there 'cause I had read it was there. That's why I went to the Brody Museum. I went to see it. Gosh, it was big, real big. And the script, Hebrew script, had sort of a Chinese twirl to it. And I said, "I don't believe it." And I was very angry at Oxford University because they wouldn't let me take a picture of it.

Ms. Obadia: These Jews in Kaifeng: did they actually know any Hebrew?

Dr. Shur: No. No. With the dying of the Rabbi, with the going of the Rabbi, you know....and this is the lesson I've.....I do a lot of lecturing all over the country on the Chinese Jews -- When your Rabbi goes, and your schools go, Judaism is finished. And, of course, Christians could say the same thing. If you do not teach the child, it is over. And the story of the Chinese Jews is exactly that.

Ms. Obadia: Well, do you see any hope for Chinese Jews?

Dr. Shur: Not as long as Communism prevails. Not as long as Communism prevails.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, what other Jews have you met in your travels and what other countries have you visited?

Dr. Shur: All right. Going into China, I go to Hong Kong first. And some day I'll sit down and write a little book about some of my adventures. I got to Hong Kong and I decided, with a Hong Kong, a commercial city like that,

English speaking city, there had to be Jews. And so, I got to Hong Kong when I left China in 1980. I was looking for the Torahs, the Torahs that had been washed away in 1847. And I had read somewhere there was one in Hong Kong at the museum in Hong Kong. And I decided, well, who would know better than the Jews living in Hong Kong? And this was all part of the research I was doing on the Chinese Jews and what happened to their synagogue and their Torahs. And so, where do I find Jews? Of course, people in Hong Kong are Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Japanese, and you can't walk up to the person on the street and, as the Caucasians say, "Are you a Jew?." You just can't do that.

So I opened the telephone book, which was in English, and I looked for a name and I found "Cohen." So I called a Mrs. Cohen and I told her who I was and she spoke American English, not English English. And she told me she was from New Jersey. And she'd been there for about a month and she hadn't met any Jews. And if I find any, please let her know because she had a little boy. She wanted to have a Bar-Mitzvah. She didn't know if there was a synagogue there. I said, "Well, have you used a telephone book?" She says, "No. I never thought of it." I said, "Well, I'll call you back." Well, then I began to think. What other Jewish names are there? Goldberg, Ginsberg, Greenberg...and there I went right on down and I found a Goldberg. And I called a Mrs. Goldberg, with a very heavy British accent. She spoke with me and she told me she was second generation Hong Kong from England originally. Father was in business here and so is she. There was definitely a synagogue and there was an Israeli Rabbi and gave me the number. And I called the synagogue and then I called Mrs. Cohen. I said, "I found the synagogue." She says, "How did you do it so fast?" I said, "Well, it's just one of those things." And she was delighted. I went down to meet the Rabbi.

The synagogue was on 70 Robinson Avenue, which was way up on the hill, because it's cooler up on the hill. It's very hot in Hong Kong. You're in the tropics already. And I was so amazed when I came into that synagogue because they had a club house, you know, quite British, you know. And they had a Chinese cook in the club house. And he invited me to come back. His house was right next to the synagogue. And he invited me to come back for Friday evening service. And I did, which was a delight for me because, wherever I have been all over the world, I've gone to synagogues. And the services are always the same. The Hebrew...

Ms. Obadia: ...in Hebrew and Chinese?

Dr. Shur: No, just Hebrew 'cause the Jews in Hong Kong

are either Aszkenazi or Sephardic. They came from Europe. No Chinese Jews in Hong Kong. The few Chinese Jews are there in Kaifeng. That's all that's left. Maybe a few scattered throughout China. But, no, not in Hong Kong. And it was a lovely Friday evening service and then we went into an Oneg Shabbat, which is sort of a social gathering after the services. And there was this Chinese cook serving little sandwiches and drinks, you know. And to me it was really a very exciting adventure. Then I left.

When I got to Japan, I wanted to find a synagogue. And so, how do I find a synagogue? Well, I cannot read Japanese. So downstairs in the hotel I asked the fellow at the reception desk, -- in all the hotels they speak English -- "Is there an Israeli Consul in Tokyo?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Give me the number, please." And I called the Israeli Consul and they speak English very well. I asked if there were any Jews in Tokyo. "Yes." I said, "Where is the synagogue?" He told me the address. And I got a cab and I went to the synagogue. And it was magnificent! They were...It was a Friday night, of all things, that I was there the following week and they had a Japanese cook and he was making blintzes, latkes, which is the best of Friday night food for the Jews. And what amazed me, there were 30 Jewish families there when I came. And how very religious they were. They all came to synagogue. They had their meal together. They prayed together. Now this was the first time I was there in 1964. When I came back in 1980, oh my, how that had expanded. So many more Jews in Tokyo.

Ms. Obadia: Were they Japanese Jews?

Dr. Shur: Nope, no, these were the Aszkenazi. These were Jews who had escaped from China, from Shanghai. And so, when the Communists came in, the Jews ran because Jews and Communism don't get along too well because Communism will take your religion away from you. And the Jews weren't about to leave after fighting for it for 4,000 years to retain it.

But when I came back in 1980, their synagogue had expanded, they had a club house, they had a swimming pool, they had a magnificent library. I found a tremendous burst of energy here in Japan.

Ms. Obadia: What was the architectural motif of that synagogue in Japan?

Dr. Shur: Very simple. Not ostentatious and they do this with great thought. If you're a stranger in a strange land, you do not "stick out" and say, "Here I am." You try to fit into their motif, in fact, and take a step

backward.

Ms. Obadia: And does the synagogue look almost Oriental in its...?

Dr. Shur: No. No, just a very simple front, a nice driveway, nice plants, but not ostentatious at all.

Ms. Obadia: Now, Dr. Shur, where else have you traveled to to research the Jews in those particular countries?

Dr. Shur: In Pakistan. When I came to Karachi, in Pakistan, in 1974, again, I was very anxious to see if there were any Jews left. And I had a feeling that they were pretty well gone because a Muslim had taken over... what was once Karachi, India, was now Karachi, Pakistan. And where the Muslim is, of course, the Jews have not been favored too well because, even you go back to the 8th and 9th century with the Muslim, people who were not believers in Islaam had to pay extra taxes and so on. So Jews were being taxed right out of Karachi purposely. And many of them had fled to Australia and to England.

And so, I came there and how did I come to that place? I got in a cab in Karachi and the cab drivers all speak English quite well because England was in control of what was India for over a century. And the cab driver spoke English adequately. He didn't know what a synagogue was so I took a pencil and paper. I drew a picture of a synagogue with a Jewish Star. And I put \$5 bill on top of it. And you know how fast we got there?! And when I got there, I laughed. It was on a little street. The street was called "Synagogue Street". And I thought, good God, if I'd only known it was Synagogue Street... But the cab driver was very delightful.

And when I got there it was very heart-breaking. There was a big wooden fence around what had once been a magnificent marble synagogue. A huge synagogue! And I talked to the man who was the caretaker. He said, "All the Jews are gone." But if I would come Friday night for services, sometimes there's traveling salesmen and they come in to pray. And I came there that Friday evening and there were 8 men there and you have to have 10 for, really, prayer service. And the Rabbi...there was no Rabbi...and a man who knew the Bible spoke and they were trying to say that...but how could 8 people save the synagogue? And you see the names on the walls going back to the 1800's and so on. It was very pathetic.

I had this experience also when I went to Egypt -- when I went to Cairo. And I went to visit their synagogue. It was the same story. It was a handful of people who were the traveling salesmen through there because the Egyptian

Jew had been driven out by the Muslim as well, especially when Israel became a nation in 1948. And there'd been hardship. And then as I stood in front of that synagogue on a Friday night, one of the little Jewish men came out and he pointed to a big store across the street -- big department store. And he says, "You see the name?" I couldn't, of course. It was in Egyptian. He says, "They're all Sephardic Jews." And Sephardic are the ones who emanated from Spain. And he said to me, "You see? Those names have remained the same. They were all Jewish stores, but we were all driven out. One of those stores was mine." He was now visiting here. And it's a lot of heartbreak.

In Cairo, also, I was taken down to where Moses is supposed to have been laid in the Nile River. There I was where the princess found him. And the oldest synagogue in the world is now --and I have pictures of that -- is that little synagogue in Cairo.

I also traveled to Greece and to Rome. In Greece, again, pathetic. You know, if it weren't the Muslim ridding themselves of the Jews, then it was the Nazis ridding themselves of the Jews. And Greece has been trying to recuperate. Greece was hit very, very badly by the Nazis. First it was the Italians and it was the Nazis. And they're tough people, those Greeks. And they fought. And I went and asked them to the synagogue and I found a handful of Greek Jews and I found a Turkish Jew, a gentleman there. And they're trying to restore a museum there of ancient wedding dresses and costumes of the old Greek Jews and...what wasn't destroyed by the Nazis. It was very pathetic.

And how did I find the Greek Synagogue? I can't quite remember. I think, again, you ask at the hotel and they tell you. They have little traveling books. They probably have a lot of Jews coming through Athens.

I did the same thing in Rome. At the hotel, I asked where the old Jewish quarter was. And where the old Jewish quarter was was where the ghetto was. The ghetto was the area where Jews lived. And when I went to the synagogue in Rome, I was not admitted into the synagogue. It was a big synagogue. It was during the middle of the terrorist invasions. And they were afraid. Somebody had left bombs on the front door of the synagogue in Rome. And it was a big old synagogue. Very few people even attended it...but they were afraid to allow anyone into the synagogue because of terrorism. And this was 197...No, no, no...this was 1983.

Then I went to the ghetto of Rome. And that was near the synagogue where the old Jews had been confined to years

ago. And there's just a handful of people living there now. And it's right around the river, right around the...it was a poor section today.

So wherever I have traveled, whether it has been in Pakistan, where the Jews are no more, whether it has been in Greece or in Rome or in China, I find...I find very heartbreaking. And why have the Jews been so persecuted? For only one reason: because they're Jews...because they're Jews...because they're different. Because they're stubborn, they continue to adhere to the belief in the one God and this is difficult for the world to understand.

I think I'll conclude my discussion of synagogues around the world -- 'cause there's so many more -- in Poland. I visited Poland in 1979 with a delegation of 16 professors who were involved in Holocaust education. And in my visit to there, at Poland, I visited the various camps, Auschwitz, Treblinka, Madajnek, and just all of them. That is only once in my lifetime -- I shan't repeat it.

But something even more pathetic was not the dead, was the living Jews of Poland. And I went out to the cemetery and the only synagogue left in Warsaw is a little synagogue out in the cemetery that they're trying to put back together again. And I looked around the handful of Jews who were in there praying. There were a few who had come from overseas, who were able to escape, and now they came back. And I saw one little old Jewish man and I said to him, and I speak Yiddish fluently, "Why are you still here in Warsaw?" And he looked at me, he said, "Who's going to take care of my family?" And I said, "Where is your family?" He says, "They're all buried in the cemetery. I must take care of them." In other words, there's no Jews left to take care of this cemetery. And he felt that was his duty.

Then when I left there, within a few days, I went... 'cause my family... 'cause my mother's from Poland... I went to visit the old homestead. I had a map and I knew where I was going. I had a young man, a cab driver, who spoke a little English, took me there. And as we approached Kolno, which is just south of Rudnik, which is just south of Lublin, in Europe it's gotta be south, east, north or west to get your directions. As we approached Kulnow, which was my mother's place of birth and where she lived, we stopped. And there's very few cars on the roads of Poland. If you saw "Fiddler on the Roof" and Tevya, that's what most of Poland is like. And a car drove by and I looked at the car and, looking out of the back window of the car were 2 men with beards and they were Hassidim with the big, black hats. Our eyes met and, here I'm standing in the road and here they're driving away, and probably we were the only Jews in all that area of

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Poland. And they, no doubt, had come back because those kind of Jews won't ever live in Poland again. Because they were the first ones that were slaughtered. They had come back to look and I had come back to look and that's about the story of the Jews.

Now, I understand that in Poland today, there's about 5,000 Jews. And most of them are underground. They don't want to know they're Jews and so on. It is very pitiful. I also asked one old man, "Why do you still stay here?" He says, "We get a...some relief from the government. But if we go any place else, we won't get this relief."

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, you also founded the National Association of Holocaust Education. Could you please tell us when you did this and what brought this about?

Dr. Shur: Well, I became involved in Holocaust education, as I told you, in 1978. And I think there must have been about 5 or 10 of us in America at that time. Dr. Littel was among the first. And I soon followed. And what I found was that there began to be an interest in what happened in the Holocaust by the 1970's...late 1970's. When the film called "The Holocaust" came out, a 9 or 10 hour film on the Holocaust, young people became very interested. They were shocked because they were born after the fact. They didn't know these things happened. And the film was expertly done. And there was a need to teach the Holocaust. And I found many teachers jumping into this because they were here looking for classes, they were looking for some excitement. But I found they didn't know what they were teaching.

And so I founded the National Association for Holocaust Education which really began with a Pennsylvania group. I had a consortium of Pennsylvania professors. And I called a meeting in Harrisburg. And the state gave me \$500 to call this meeting. And I called the meeting in Harrisburg of one representative from each university on how we could teach the Holocaust in a professional way: in a way of scholarship, not emotional, not sensational, which is the undergirding influence anyway, but in a professional way.

And it "caught fire". Soon I had requests from Delaware. Some of their professors wanted to get into the organization. Then I had requests from New Jersey. And, before you knew it, I was having meetings, I would have meetings, every year in conjunction with Dr. Littel's organizations in Philadelphia. And we became a National Association. Today, in my association, I have about 200 professors. We meet. This year we'll be meeting at Vanderbilt University in March of 1990 in conjunction with the Christian Scholars Conference on the Holocaust. We generally meet in conjunction with other big conferences.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

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And we give a panel. And our panel, I'm glad to say, is always one of the most exciting 'cause a lot of teachers come for the Holocaust Conferences. And we tell on our panel how we're teaching it. And that is extremely important. To be a good teacher, you have to know what you're teaching and you have to know how you're teaching. And my entire philosophy in this organization is: You have to be a scholar and yet you have to be a teacher. You cannot be one without the other. If you do not teach the Holocaust with a sensitivity, then you should not teach it at all. In fact, the very thing you're trying to do is to bring an academic viewpoint of the Holocaust. You can turn it around to make it emotional...and sometimes a subversive type of education. You maybe giving tools into the hands of youngsters who may be slightly disturbed. You must teach it rationally, factually, historically.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, what have you done in your community, in West Chester and in Chester County, in reference to teaching the Holocaust?

Dr. Shur: Well, I do a lot of speaking at churches and organizations. I charge a fee when I go out of town because...I purposely do that, I shouldn't be asked so much, because, you know, the woman driving home 10, 11, 12 o'clock at night out of town is not exactly appetitive to me. But churches -- I will never charge any money. No. And I'm very happy to go to churches to speak to them. And so, one of the things I have done is speak to churches, to communal organizations, like Rotary, Lions, and so on without a fee. And a lot of them want to know about the Holocaust. It is amazing. What I have done as far as community is concerned also: I am a member of the School Board -- I've been for 10 years. I was President for 2 years. I've held Executive positions in all the posts. And, for a long time, I realized that teachers in the West Chester public schools wanted to know something about the Holocaust. And this past year, we have a new thing going between the West Chester Public Schools and the college. It's called "The Partnership." We're cooperating with each other. And so, in this cooperation, the college asked me to teach the Holocaust to the teachers of West Chester. And they would give graduate credit.

So we started this semester for the first time and it was great...a real shock to me, because so many teachers wanted to learn about the Holocaust. Whether they were Elementary teachers, whether they were High School teachers, whether they were Middle School teachers, they wanted to learn. I have many administrators in my course. In fact, the course was limited to 25 and we had to keep it that way, but there were about 35 or 40 who wanted to

In fact, I was asked to teach it next semester, but it's too soon. I suggested, if this is going to be Holocaust in the Fall, then allow Black Literature or Black Studies to be taught in the Spring. It sort of balances itself out, because they're two minority groups who the teachers want to know more about. And they've expressed this desire.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, you're very soon to go on sabbatical. What do you intend to concentrate on during your sabbatical?

Dr. Shur: Well, I will be going to China in May and, in China, I will be working on my book, Mr. Puckle Goes To China. But I assure you, when I go over, I will stop in Japan to visit my friends. I've been there several times. ...my Jewish friends in Tokyo... I will stop in Hong Kong to see the new synagogue. I understand they're building a new synagogue. ...and to visit my friends... And then I will be going up to Wenzhou. Just a couple of weeks ago, I entertained a delegation from Wenzhou University who visited us here in West Chester. And from there, I'll be flying up to Beijing and visiting friends there 'cause I did teach there and I made friends there. And from there, I'll be taking my 15-hour train ride into the desert to Kaifeng to visit the Chinese Jews and to visit my university...it's a very big university there. In fact, I developed an exchange program between West Chester University and Hunan University in Kaifeng.

Every time I go back and I spend more time with the Chinese Jews, I get more information. I wrote an article in March of 1987 on the Chinese Jews and the college has a copy of that. And I hope...I'm not doing this to come back and write anything, but I'm going there to be with them. I put them in business. They make yomulkas and I saw them here in America. And the yomulka says inside, "Kaifeng." And I saw an awful lot of them. And I'm putting the money away for them because I want to bring over the Jao daughter to live with me for a while. I'm not trying to proselytize Judaism, but they do want to know more about Judaism.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, you have won many awards and honors and among them being in the Hall of Distinction of the chapel...for chaplains and getting the Hadassah out...

(Tape #2, Side #1)

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, you have won many awards and distinctions and honors among some of them have been you were included in the Encyclopedia of American Scholars, you have an article in Who's Who in the World of Women, you were B'nai B'rith Outstanding Citizen Award in

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Southeastern Pennsylvania in 1980, you have been included in the Hall of Distinction of the "Four Chaplains", Hadassah's Outstanding Jewish Woman award of Eastern Pennsylvania was awarded you in 1983 and you were also included in the Encyclopedia of Outstanding Jewish Scholars in the World. Of course, there are many others. Of all of these honors and awards, what would you say...which award has meant the most to you and why?

Dr. Shur: Wow. You know, every time you tell me about those awards, I get exhausted. But let me say, we're sitting here in my dining room and you see that the only award that I have hanging on my wall here, although I have them piled up downstairs, is this one before me. And, you know, even Mohammed said, "A preacher in his own pew is never appreciated."

The fact that my community of West Chester has recognized me and given me this plaque, which I'm going to read to you, has meant more to me because these are the people I need every day, I see every day and this has meant so much to me.

And it reads: "Dr. Irene G. Shur, In Recognition of a Lifetime of Energy Devoted to Education, Holocaust Studies, Her Family and Her Community With Deep Appreciation, Keshet Israel Synagogue dedicates the Harold Doppelt Scholar in Residence Weekend March 11-13th, 1988.

And that has meant a lot to me because I have given...how long have I been here...31, 32, 33 years...I can't even remember? No, what am I saying? I've been here over 40 years 'cause my son is 39 and I came here before. And I've given so much of myself to my non-Jewish community, to my Jewish community and I did not do it for any praise. I did it because I wanted to do it. But then, one day, to my utter surprise I was honored and that means a lot to me.

Ms. Obadia: Thank you very...Dr. Shur, at this point, I would like to thank you very much for sharing this time and for sharing your life with me. I certainly wish you the continued energy and stamina and drive which you have demonstrated in the past and up to this point. And I have a wish that you will continue this work that you have done for your non-Jewish community as well as the Jewish community. You have definitely left your mark on our society. Thank you, Dr. Shur.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, our last interview was approximately 2 years ago. It is now January 12, 1992. Could you please bring us up to date on your literary and artistic accomplishments as well as your accomplishments in academia? Let's start with 1990 and move forward. OK, let's begin in, let's say...we spoke in November of 1989...let's go ahead forward to January of 1990 and just go ahead and move us forward that way.

Dr. Shur: Thank you, Miriam. So very much happened to me in 1990, both academically and physically. And I've never said that word before because I was always, thank heavens, a very healthy person. In 1990, I did my usual teaching, I did my usual writing in preparation of everything I was doing, always on the move, as you know. I went to Vanderbilt University in March of 1990 and presented a paper there at a Holocaust conference and the following month I went to New Orleans for a school board convention and I had two heart attacks down there. I thought I had indigestion and when I came back, I had literally one foot on a plane ready to go to China because my work with the Chinese Jews certainly is not finished.

And when I had my two heart attacks down in New Orleans, it was misdiagnosed at Tulane University. But I went to my Dr. Kester and I asked him to give me something to breathe, because down at Tulane, they said I had asthma. And he gave me, I guess it's called an EKG and he said, "You don't have asthma, lady -- you've had two heart attacks. And into the hospital I went and had open heart, double bypass, open heart surgery.

Ms. Obadia: What month was that?

Dr. Shur: That was the month of May. And I was very angry because I worked so hard to get everything ready to go to China and it was my third trip to China and I was going to live with the Chinese Jews again. And that part of my work isn't finished either. Well, while I was recuperating -- it took a long time for my recuperation -- I thought, well, I'd have the heart surgery and I'd be out soon because I didn't know how serious it was. But it wasn't as fast as I thought. And that summer, the film...the...C.A.N.D.L.E.S....it was made in conjunction with Kent State, Youngstown University and myself, West Chester University. Three of us worked on the film. We sent a television crew from Kent State over to Poland and to Israel to accompany 45 of what is left of the Mengele Twins and, at that time, our crew did nothing more than take notes and work on the film.

When the film came back, that was the summer of '89, in '90, my friends down at Kent State and Youngstown were working on it and they sent me the script and the film and

I worked on it in my recuperation. And we finally finished it. And did you ever try to work with two men who are so much younger than you are and so much more positive of what they were doing? And the arguments -- "Should we do this? Should we leave this in? Put this out?" Well, I think we finally compromised, but it wasn't an easy compromise.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, could you, first of all, tell us what the abbreviation "C.A.N.D.L.E.S." stands for? And, secondly, Dr. Shur, could you tell us who your friends at Kent State are and how you became involved in this project?

Dr. Shur: "C.A.N.D.L.E.S." stands for "Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiment Survivors". This was not my idea. This was the idea of Eva Kor, one of the Mengele Twins living in Indiana now, who was the organizer. And she's found those who are still alive in Australia and Israel, in England, United States. And it's been a long job for her to find these folks. And she organized this group. There were 1200 twins at one time -- sets of twins -- and there are only 45 alive that we know of. I won't talk about the experiments -- they are too gruesome. The entire Holocaust was too gruesome.

Now you ask me how I got involved with this? Well, Dr. Friedman from Youngstown University and Dr. Hochhauser from Kent State University have worked with me very closely for over 10 years now in various projects on the Holocaust. They are my executives of my organization.

Ms. Obadia: What is your organization?

Dr. Shur: ...The National Association for Holocaust Education. And we have worked very, very closely together. In fact, Dr. Hochhauser now is Director of Holocaust Education for the State of Ohio, where it has been mandated. Dr. Friedman, I think, he's past 10 books written on Jewish history and Holocaust and other concerns. These are first class scholars. And I've been involved with them in other projects as well. How I got involved with this project, I swear, I think they called me and they asked me if I wanted to become involved in it even before the project started out. That's before I became ill.

Ms. Obadia: What is your official title in regards to the film?

Dr. Shur: I'm the...one of the Directors.

Ms. Obadia: Associate Producer or...?

Dr. Shur: Associate Producer and one of the Directors. But I think on the title of the film, I think they said Associate Producer or something like that. I don't know. I didn't even look closely enough. I've seen the film several times.

Ms. Obadia: Did this film win any type of acclaim or award?

Dr. Shur: Oh, yes. It won an Emmy Award. And I begged them, 'cause, well, I was still working on it. There were parts of the film that I felt were very, very raw and they said they were going to submit it for an Emmy. I said, "Don't you dare. If you do, you take my name off of it!" That's one of the arguments we had. And, lo and behold, they submitted it with my name on and, lo and behold, it was not only nominated for an Emmy, it won the Emmy. There was a big celebration in Cleveland on June 8th, 1991, which I attended. When you attend these celebrations, if you've ever seen some of the awards, the Oscar Awards from Hollywood, it's the same thing. You sit around a table -- it's a dinner. And then they have different nominees and then suddenly they call up the winner and there's a drum roll and they put your film on the screen. And believe me, when they put my film on the screen, I almost went through the floor because I didn't think we had a chance. I said, "OK. I'll come to Cleveland ('cause I had been ill for a year)." I said, "OK. I'll come back. It's my home city...visit my relatives. And I'll go to the dinner and I'll see who's there."

And I sat at the table with Robert Clarey's contingent from Hollywood, 'cause Robert Clarey had done a film also -- something on the Holocaust...I can't remember. And I know Robert Clarey. He's a friend of mine. And I thought when I came there and sat down, I said, "Oh, my heavens, with Robert Clarey and his Hollywood gang here, where do I come in?" And, I was busy eating when they called our name and our film and I didn't hear. And my two young friends got up and they started toward the stage. And they didn't even wait for me. And I yelled out, "Did we win?" I couldn't believe it. And finally, it was a shock to me.

What's more shocking is when they finally gave us our Emmys once on stage, my two friends had something to say. I was completely speechless. And the truth is, very honestly, I didn't think it deserved an Emmy! And I still think it has to have work done on it. That's why I didn't say anything. I was speechless. But, be that as it may, it won an Emmy. People think it's good. It will be shown here at West Chester University on April 8th, 1992, this coming Yom Ha Shoal. And the college is featuring it.

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They're going to have a reception afterward and a lot of people will be invited -- gonna get a lot of publicity -- and I am having a man who accompanied the Mengele Twins, who lives in Philadelphia who is a Professor at the community college there. And he will be the speaker who will introduce the film. So we're planning a big program on April 8th.

Ms. Obadia: Where is your Emmy right now, Dr. Shur?

Dr. Shur: It's right up there next to my children's picture where it belongs because the great happiness of my life has been my family and now this Emmy has been very, very...I've been very happy with it, although I still think I don't deserve it!

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, of course, you have already written many books, but are there any present projects or books you've just completed?

Dr. Shur: I wish in the structure of age I could go backwards because I have miles to go before I sleep and promises to keep. I have so many books that I want to write yet. Right now, I have just completed The Last Bengal Lancer. I don't know if it will have that title, but I knew the last Bengal Lancer from Pakistan. I worked there for three different summers, for the government there in the Educational Department, and Colonel Nesurlah Khan, who was the manager of the hotel, was a former Bengal Lancer and that's how I got to know him. I stayed at the hotel. We would talk and I went up to his apartment, his wife and family...we got to know each other very well. And he would tell me stories about what he did when he was in World War II -- how India was called upon to help the British stop Rommel in Egypt and how he took his Bengal Lancers who were the great horsemen and took them over to Egypt and how when he tried to get them off the horse and into the tanks. They would pull the wheel of the tanks, thinking it was the stirrups. And sometimes they would loosen a wheel -- they would be so excited. And we would laugh about it.

And one day I said to him (I think it was back in 1974 when I first met him, when I first went to work in Pakistan), I kiddingly said to him, "You know, Colonel Khan, you have so many stories to tell. Why don't you write them?" And years later, I got a call from him and said, "I'm just finishing my book, Zara and the Bengal Lancers, and I need your help." Well, I couldn't say no because I felt that I had talked him into it. And so, he sent me the script, which I rewrote two or three times because every time I sent the script back to him, he rewrote it in his way, in a quite British way, a different kind of speaking, a different kind of accent. And

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken words from the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

knowing that it would probably be sold into English speaking countries -- even into New Zealand, Australia, and so on -- and the most accepted kinds of literature today are the sort of "Americana" English. I had to rewrite it to convince him. Again, here I am working with a man and trying to be very nice because I could not argue with him like I argued with my compatriots in Ohio because he was a dignified man and also the greatest polo player in Pakistan. The greatest after the war until very recently.

We finished the book last August and he came to visit me with his wife and we were just thrilled. Now the next job was to get a publisher and I've gone over the book time and time again. And of all things, he had fallen off his horse, he had a stroke. When he recuperated, that's when he came to see me. And he did a marvellous job but maybe he tried to overexercise too much trying to get well again because I received a call about three-four months ago that he had expired and his son was taking up the cudgels of helping me get a publisher. And I have been very, very, very downhearted because we worked so long on this book -- I worked about 3 years with him on this book --

Ms. Obadia: I met him.

Dr. Shur: Yes, I think you did, Miriam -- Colonel Khan and his wife?

Ms. Obadia: Yes.

Dr. Shur: Yes. ...a delightful person. And well, what can I say? But the book is going to be first rate and it definitely is the kind that should be done into a film or into a TV show. So now, every day I just hope I have the strength to do the work I have in school and to promote this book which is a lot of letters I write. They write back. I have a lot of refusal letters, but I have some acceptance letters.

And now when I go back to school next week -- vacation is over -- I have a lot of work to do both on this book and I'm working on another book about my Polish family. Seven of my aunts and uncles, including my mother, came here and seven died under the hands of the Nazis. So I am writing a book about my family here and there. Here, how they worked hard and what a success they made of themselves. There, they worked hard and many of them became professional, although we came from the farm. But Hitler took care of that. And because there are more Jews in America from Polish-Russian descent, I think this book will touch the chord of many who came over and many Jews whose lives were ripped apart by the Holocaust.

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Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, besides your books, I know you've given numerous lectures within the last 2 years. And also, you've written some articles. Could you please tell us something about some of the lectures and the articles that you've written?

Dr. Shur: OK. I'll be happy to. The lectures: March of 1990, I lectured at Vanderbilt University on the Holocaust. I'm constantly lecturing at places like Wallingford, Swarthmore, Wilmington, Beth Shalom, at Swarthmore at the Friends' Meeting. I have two lectures coming up at two churches next month. One is West Chester Lutheran and the other is -- oh, good heavens, I can't remember the name of the place now -- Unitarians. So, it's constant. I've been in church work, I would say, for many years not only on the Holocaust, but on the history of the Jew and certain phases of Judaism.

Ms. Obadia: What do you generally say in reference to the Holocaust and the teaching of the Holocaust to these groups of people when you lecture?

Dr. Shur: Well, the kind of people that are the kind who come to churches and the synagogues to hear this are very receptive. And there's many, many questions. I treat the Holocaust as a..as a part of history. It is history. And it must be taught because there are people who would like to un-teach that history. So, that is how...and I have had very few problems. In fact, they keep calling me and asking me to lecture at other organizations and so on.

You ask me about my lectures, which is continuous.

Ms. Obadia: ..and the articles?

Dr. Shur: ...and the articles I write. I did this year an article for the Pittsburgh Magazine on Poles and their lives with the Jews of Pittsburgh -- how they got along and get along with the Jews of Pittsburgh. And a friend of mine wrote the book and then I did a book report. She'd asked me to do a book review on this. And I examined her book very carefully -- she'd gone to meeting with Poles -- and they told her how much they like the Jews. And in my article, I had to put tongue in cheek because, you know, there are some things that never change. And we know that anti-Semitism has been and will always probably be very flagrant in Poland. And that is because there was an excessive amount of Jews there. The Poles were so poor at different times and they blame the Jews for their poverty. And it wasn't the Jews' fault. They were pushed into the "Pale of Settlement" by Catherine the Great, by Peter the Great. You know, if you want a history lecture, I'll be glad to give it to you. However, time does not permit this.

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So, the Poles have never been friendly toward the Jews. Most of the Poles living in Western Pennsylvania, Northern Pennsylvania, are from the factory workers. They came here, they didn't know the language so they put them to work in the various factories. Perhaps the second generation now is trying to make amends to try to get along with the Jews, but I think that that flavor of anti-Semitism is very much there. There may be some overt overtures, but I don't believe it's going to last too long.

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, do you have any present literary projects and, if so, could you please tell us about them?

Dr. Shur: Yes. At the present time, I am working on the book of my Polish family. I have done a lot of research. I have gone back and forth to Cleveland to interview my cousins so many times. I have some living in California, New York...I'm on the phone constantly begging, cajoling them to send me information -- sending out question sheets. And then, I've done my own personal research. I've gone to Ellis Island. I've gone to the Philadelphia Immigration Department because I know my family did come to Philadelphia. It's very, very, very difficult to trace because Ellis Island, number one, in 1907, it was a wooden, wooden building and it burned down with all the records in it. And most of my family came over before 1907. Today, they have computers there and they're doing a lot of work on it. But if your family came over before 1907, there's a little difficulty. But what they're doing at Ellis Island -- they'll probably have it done in 5 years -- they've gone back to Bremen and other ports in Germany and Denmark that a lot of the boats came from to Ellis Island. So they're going from that end to this end.

In Philadelphia, I had a lot of difficulty. My name was Hoffman -- my mother's family name -- and when I went into the Hoffmans, I went dizzy because that's a good German name. And it was Hochman, also H-o-c-h or Hoffman. And looking through the Hochmans and the Hoffmans, it seems that all of Germantown all the way out West were Hoffmans or Hochmans. But those records stopped in 1900!

So, between 1900, where the records stopped in Philadelphia and 1907 where the records begin at Ellis Island, there is a blank and, somehow, I have to fill that in. But, many times I wake up at four o'clock in the morning and say, "Now, where do I go from here. But I don't give up too easily.

So I'm working on that book and I will put it together with these spaces. I can't wait much longer to fill up these spaces.

I hope to finish my next book, Mr. Puckle goes to China. That's what I was going to do in China -- the book and also visit my Kaifeng friends -- the Kaifeng Jews. And it's a sequel to the book I did years ago, 1963, Mr. Puckel's Hat, which became very, very popular here in Chester County. ...the story of West Chester and Chester County told through the eyes and ears of an old Quaker hat. And I was going to take that hat to China and have it travel from place to place in the schools, on the mountains, up to the wall. I've been to these places and I thought, "Boy, how charming." I even had a hat made and ready to go. But I guess my heart said, "Stop, rest, and I will go another time."

Ms. Obadia: Dr. Shur, do you have any future academic projects or goals or dreams that you hope to accomplish in the future?

Dr. Shur: Indeed, I do. I want to complete my outline on a Holocaust graduate program and I began it about a year ago. And I haven't been able to pull this together yet for various reasons. But now, I have one more week left of vacation and this is the project I am going to do this week. And it's not going to be easy because then it has to go through the dean, it has to go through my department chair and I'm sure they'll be long with it. But then, it has to go through various committees on campus. So that is my big project. And, of course, I know what they're going to ask, "Well, you've reached your maturity. What happens when you cannot teach this course any longer?" And then, I have to convince them that I have people ready to go if I resign -- retire, I should say. I could have retired. Believe me. But I happen to love what I'm doing very, very much. I've been at the college 37 years. Three years I brought back from Ohio. So, that's 40 years. And I could have retired for much more than I'm making now. But I happen to love what I'm doing and not everybody can say that.

And so, I just hope to go on and have this graduate work on the Holocaust. It will be the only one in the country.

Ms. Obadia: Will it be in the History Department?

Dr. Shur: It will be in the History Department, yes.

Ms. Obadia: Will there be any other departments...um...

Dr. Shur: Yes, it's going to be cross sectioned. I'm going to have courses for Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology. And all of those fit very well into the...all of the department chair have gone along with me. They've been very cooperative. So this is the time for me to do it. And I want to do it. And I want to

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stay around long enough to get this show on the road.
I thank you, dear.

Ms. Obadia: My last question to you, Dr. Shur, is now...Two years ago, I asked you what was the most gratifying award or honor that you have received to date. Your reply was that award was an award you received from your synagogue. Does this still apply even after having won an Emmy award?

Dr. Shur: Well, that's a pretty tough question to ask. First of all, everybody likes to be admired by their own..their own peer group. And, of course, the synagogue has been a part of my life here -- I've been here 44 years -- and to be respected for the work I've done. I've taught the Sunday school here, the Hebrew school here, I've been a member. I've been very much involved in lecturing and I can't remember what I've done. It satisfies me.

However, to have won a national award like to the Emmy -- it's not only the award but it's the fact that this film is out. And this film is very poignant as you will see, Miriam, when you come on April 8th. I'm sure your husband and family will be there. This gives me another kind of inner satisfaction that's something I have done or something I've been part of is going out on a national scale. My books, of course, are out on a national scale. That gives me great satisfaction.

Let me say, not altogether jokingly: Perhaps the greatest award I have is simply being alive and continuing the work that I've always wanted. I was always a worker -- not a workaholic -- but a worker. Thank you, dear.