

For the charoises, I believe that's bitter herbs, right?

Yes. Should I say bitter herbs charoises?

It's up to you. It's up to you. But I'm just curious to know why-- do you think that had any significance, her choice to bring that dish?

He can come in for a second, yeah.

OK. I'm on the way.

You're leaving already? [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah, it's 5:00.

Yeah, so maybe you could tell us about that a little bit.

Well, this little dish was, I believe, very meaningful to my mother because it has a special significance because we used it during the Seder for charoises, and one of the reasons I feel that she-- one of the main reasons-- one of the reasons I think she might have decided on taking that is that it was small enough for her to either carry it in her pocket and put it in her little case. And of course, I think it had a very special religious and holiday significance for her remembrance, and she just wanted to take it along with her.

Was she very sentimental?

Very sentimental mother, very sentimental. And I think she raised us to be that way, too.

What's the significance of that bag?

Well, this is a silver evening bag that she had. I don't know if-- since my father owned a jewelry shop, maybe they were selling it, at least they sell it, or maybe it was her own. But she had it. I remember her having it, and I guess it also may have had a special sentimental value to her because there were not many places that they used such dress-up silver evening bags in our little town, but maybe mother used it when she was first married or maybe during her early years with her husband, with my father. I never recall seeing her using it.

Did she take any of your father's mementos?

Yes, she has a silver little brush-- I believe, since he had a mustache, it was a mustache brush-- and a little silver pencil.

How about this clock?

That is a gold-plated clock that was made in France. It has Russian-- it was made for a family in Russia because it has Russian inscription in it, and it also has the name of the manufacturer that manufactured that clock. I also believe that that clock was in the family. It was my maybe my grandparents' clock, and I know I remember it always in the house. We used it.

It's a seven-day clock, and it has a chime. It chimes on every half-hour and the hour, and it was used all the time. And it comes in a special leather carry case, and she was able to carry it. How on Earth they let her go through with it, I don't know because they used to confiscate a lot of things.

It obviously had some big sentimental value.

Very sentimental value, I'm sure.

And now we're on to pictures. What's going on here? Can you describe that?

This picture was taken on August 12, 1940, the day that my sister and I received a Sugihara visa. We were waiting after we got the visa, and we quiet down. And we had a couple of hours before our train was leaving for Vilna. And there was a little park nearby, and we walked around and sat there. A photographer came over to us and asked us if he could take our picture if we pay him.

We had a few dollars or whatever the money was there, and we said, we don't live in Kovno. We live in Vilna. He said, oh, I'll send it to you. And we never thought he would, but he did. He sent us this picture, and it's a very memorable one.

So are you going to need this on the camera, the picture, at all for reference? Or are you going to know which picture she's talking about? Do you want to get a quick shot of it or anything?

Oh, no.

OK, just checking. But that's actually not a good-- that's a good idea.

Hold it in the light.

That's the one.

There's one of us us standig up too.

Let's go to this one. That was the one previous. OK. Tell me who's in the picture and when and where it was taken.

Yeah, just one sec. and that was taken in Vilna. Yes. This picture was taken in Vilna during the time we were there, and these are friends of ours. And we were one day in a park-- I don't remember exactly-- and we had taken that picture. But these are very good friends of my sister and myself, but they did not survive.

Did that happen-- did you have many friends that didn't survive in Vilna?

None of our friends survived in Vilna.

You were the only ones that got out?

My sister and I were the only ones that got out. That were our friends, some were our friends.

Well, then how come they didn't get out?

Well, I guess I should have-- yeah. I'm really thinking in terms of a girl friends. Yes, well, I'll qualify that. Do you want me to qualify that?

Did you-- were these friends that you made in Vilna?

Because I want to-- yes. No, one of them is from Volozhin, this one here.

And the other was--

The other that we made in Vilna.

So did many of your friends not make it out of Vilna? Were you one of the lucky ones to escape, or did most of the people you were associated with escape?

Most of the people that we associated with did not escape. They have no place where to go to or how to go, and they were caught by the Germans. And they were put into the ghetto, and they were just eliminated.

How did she hear about that? How did she-- yeah, how did you hear about-- how do you know [INAUDIBLE]? And were those Betar members?

Yes, yes. How did you hear-- well, the Vilna Ghetto was destroyed. Everyone in the Vilna Ghetto was destroyed. Very few survived. Very few survived the Vilna Ghetto. And they never arrived in Israel. They had no-- we never heard of anybody.

It was just like they disappeared from this Earth. These were girls who left their families, who tried to rescue themselves, just like we did, but we were the lucky ones that had family who were concerned and who tried so hard. And also, we were lucky that we had the affidavit. It was all-- and we were lucky we got this Sugihara visa. We were just lucky.

[WHISPERING].

OK. This picture was taken of the Tarbut Hebrew School in Volozhin, and my sister and I-- I was in kindergarten then, and that was like the graduating picture. Out of this whole group, I could say maybe there are about 10 or a dozen people who survived, not my sister and myself, and some people who left for Israel in the earlier years, like in the 1933 or 1934, who went through the illegal immigration to Israel. I could say I don't think more than a dozen people are alive out of that whole group.

OK.

[WHISPERING].

Do you need it closer--

No, that's fine.

--or just for reference?

This is just for reference. This is what we were just talking about, this picture. And I skipped this one.

Yes, I can see that. That's me, the one--

This one?

Yes, somebody put a checkmark right on my chest, and I tried to have it erased, but it wouldn't come off.

So this really refers to you being in a cafe in Vilna?

No, it's not a cafe. It was at the [? internat, ?] where we are-- And at that, I believe, the Joint Distribution or one of the relief organization were taking pictures, I guess to show what they're doing. And this was the during one of our meals.

They came, and they took a picture of that. I remember that day. It was, I think, breakfast. They came, and they took some pictures of the whole place. It was taken. I don't remember during what time.

So could you describe, though, not necessarily the-- when you were in Vilna, you were--

And any time.

This picture was taken during a-- as I recall, it was breakfast time, and the relief organizations came. The Joint

Distribution people came to take some pictures to show some of the work-- to go back to the United States and show the people some of the work they were doing and how they helping, and that was during the time-- that was taken during one of our communal meals we used to have. I believe this was breakfast time. They did a wonderful job.

Can you just told me that-- I'm just asking this question. How did you survive? How did you eat? Where did you get food from?

Well, when we were at the communal pla--, the [? internat, ?] that was supplied by the relief organizations.

What was supplied by the--

The food was supplied by the relief organizations.

So start "when we were."

When we were at the [? internat, ?] all meals and food were supplied by the relief organizations. What they did was they actually-- they created kitchens right on the premises where some of the members used to do their own cooking, and each took turns. Some of the meals are better than others.

But there was enough food-- let's put it that way-- and didn't go hungry. And they did a wonderful job. They also even created sewing factories where they used to make clothes for the people, and they used to give you a dress, a suit, a pair of pants because some people were there for a longer time.

Did you and your sister run out of clothes at one point and have to share clothing?

Yes, we did. Actually, the clothes got a little bit raggedy and all that. But they supplied-- you got a dress like once in three months or something like that. And on the pictures-- I have pictures that were taken on the boat. When we left for the United States, my sister and I both had a dress and a skirt and blouse. Those were our clothes each.

And well, we traveled first class, and they used to dress very fancy. And my sister and I used to take turns. One night we would wear a dress, and the next night we would wear a skirt and blouse. And those were the clothes that were given to us by the relief organizations. Actually, what happened was they used to have people sewing there. You went, and they measured you. And they tried on, and it was pretty good. It was not hand-me-down. It was new.

Oh, gosh. Are you ready?

Yeah.

This picture is of two little girls. Their name is Shoshanale and Chaja. And they were the children of this friend of ours, the principal of this school and kindergarten teacher who was so close to us and helped us, helped my mother make the decision to send us off. Those two little girls and their father were killed during the Holocaust.

They were actually killed during one of the-- when the Germans were fighting the Russians, and they were hiding in a cellar of a home. And one of the Polish people who knew they were there-- what do you call it-- exposed them. And as they got out of their hiding place, they killed them, the father and the two children.

Their mother is still alive in Israel. She's about 91, 92 years old. She was my kindergarten teacher, and we're very close. I always see her.

What was the name of the principal who advised-- can you tell me the story again?

His name was Yakov Lifshitz.

The principal who--

The principal of the Tarbut-- I'm sorry. The principal of the Tarbut school which my sister and I went to, and his name was Yakov Lifshitz, and his wife was Fruma Lifshitz. She was our kindergarten teacher. And they had two little girls, Chaja and Shoshana. As a matter of fact, my sister and I used to babysit for them.

And the father and the little girls were killed during the period. I believe it was in '43. I don't know. I had the date written down somewhere.

Can you tell me again the principal of the school. Give me his name and everything, "advised my mother to send us to Vilna."

Well, my mother had a very difficult time to make the decision, a very hard time making the decision of sending us off to Vilna all by us ourselves. And she tried to get the advice from this friend of ours who was the principal of Tarbut, and he advised her that if it was his two daughters, he would send them away because he thought maybe they would have a chance to get through and be rescued. And that had a big influence on my mother, and she made up her mind to send us away. Is that OK?

Yep.

How about this?

Yes. This picture is of--

Tell me the story behind that photo.

Oh, about Mrs. [? Jund ?]?

Yes, just--

How we met her?

Tell me that you went first class and how you met her and she helped you.

My sister and I went on the President Coolidge, first class. And when we got out on the boat, the people there asked us some questions, and we didn't understand English. And there was a woman sitting nearby, and we did mention the fact that we speak Yiddish and Polish. And there was a woman sitting there, and she happened to overhear the conversation. She said that she speaks Yiddish and if she could be of some help.

And of course, they were delighted and so were we, and they asked if she would-- she translated all the questions that they asked of us, and then they asked her if she would mind sitting with us in the dining room at a table. And she said, of course not.

And they put us at the table, and the picture-- Mrs. [? Jund ?] was her name. She came from San Diego, but she lived in Shanghai. And her husband was an American officer, and she was coming home for a visit.

And she was very helpful to us because in the dining room, she used to-- it was very elegant, and they used to serve crystal, and china, and sterling, and about half a dozen forks on one side, and spoons. And we didn't know which one to take first, and she taught us how to do it. She says, always take the one from the left or from the right, from the outside. And it was a good lesson. I always used to teach that to my grandchildren.

Did you feel guilty that you were living in such luxury when you knew everyone back in Vilna--

You mean on the boat?

Yeah.

Oh, yes, it was-- yes. OK, [INAUDIBLE]. Yes, we did have a lot of guilt feelings, not only on the boat but even when we came here, although we had a hard life here when we first came. It wasn't so easy. But we still had that certain element of guilt. Why us? And of course, there are no answers to that.

Actually, I didn't show you that last picture.

If I may, this is the captain's ball, and we were wearing dresses. Oh, yes. This picture was taken in Volozhin, and it was taken in the Polish school. See, we went to the Hebrew school up to sixth grade, and then there was no more. So we had to transfer to the Polish school.

And that was taken-- that was during a-- what do you call it? Some sort of physical exercise or something. We played ball. I could see here I'm holding a ball. And out of that group, mostly-- well, there are a few Christian people here, but none of the Jewish kids survived, just my sister and I.

What was your sister's name?

Frances, Fejga, which is in Polish, Frances here in the United States. Would you want a picture of my sister included?

Well, we'll--

He said, are we out?

Oh, no, we're not out. No, we're on. I was just pausing because I thought we were [INAUDIBLE].

No, go ahead. Could you tell me-- just "my sister" and her name, "were very, very close."

I'll use her English name. My sister, Frances, and I were unusually close and devoted to each other. We had unconditional-- I was looking for that word-- love, unconditional devotion. It was just-- we were like-- [INAUDIBLE] two bodies and one soul. We were just very, very close.

How about this picture? Do you want to take a drink?