United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Firstname Lastname
June 25, 1999
RG-50.549.02*0049

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Frida Wallenstein, conducted by Arwin Donohue on June 25, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Interview with Frida Wallenstein
June 25, 1999

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: Oh. It's pretty nice there.

Answer: Yeah, I know. I looked into using their pool one time.

Q: A test, so --

A: Yeah, okay.

Q: Just as -- Hear you say -- You mentioned that you're a swimmer, or that you -- do you do swimming, too?

A: Yeah, yeah, I swim three times a week. And I -- The -- The alternate days, I walk. Try to walk outside, and if it's -- the weather is bad, I go on the treadmill, here in the spa.

Q: Yeah. That's good. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Frida Wallenstein, conducted by Arwin Donohue, on June 25th, 1999. This is a follow up interview, post-Holocaust interview, following up a videotaped interview that was conducted with Ms. Wallenstein, by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is tape number one, side A. Let's start with, y -- would you tell me your name a-as it was at birth?

A: Frida Adler.

Q: Frida Adler. And y -- where were you born?

A: I was born in Salatvina, which was at the time Czechoslovakia, Sep-September 14, 1926.

Q: Okay. What -- You mentioned in your first interview that you moved to Belgium --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- up -- a couple of years after you were born. Why did you family move from Czechoslovakia to Belgium?

A: I really don't know. Children were not informed. I -- I -- Lot of -- There were a lot of immigration into Belgium to work the coal mines and the -- I think my father must have ended up in a steel factory. Why, exactly, I think -- I really don't know, I mean, we never ask, we were never told, so I really don't know what the reason was. But instead of coming to the States, we just -- we moved to Belgium, I guess. We went to Belgium on -- we arrived in Liège, Belgium, on May eight, 1929. I came to the States, landed in New York, on May eight, 1946.

Q: Do you -- Do you do anything special on that date, or do you always remember when May eighth rolls around?

A: I remember May eight, because the war started about that day. The Germans invaded Belgium. Yes, I remember May eight, because that's when I lan -- I always remember May eight, when I landed in the State ands can't forget it.

Q: Do you do anything to memoriali -- anything kind of -- do you have any kind of ritual that you do to memorialize that, or is it just something that you remember and keep [indecipherable]

A: That just something I remember. No, I don't do anything special, no.

Q: Okay. Had your family had a long history in Czechoslovakia, in Salatven-vena, before you left?

A: My grandparents came from Salitva, on both sides. Both my parents came from that city and all the f -- so far as I know, from both sides, mother and father, they both were from that town. I don't know where they came from before, my son is trying to find ancestry and so far, on my father's side, he can't -- on the Adler, he cannot find anything. There are only four of us left on my father's side. Two cousins in Belgium, one male, one female. One in Israel, he was born there, on my father's youngest brother, and me in the States. On my mother's side, there are quite a few cousins all over. One of them was in Equador, died about a year ago. Canada, the United States. They're all over and I -- I didn't know most of them, until I came to the States and then they came later than I did, but some in Israel, they're about all over, on my mother's side. But no one seems to be able to tell me where we went back further. I tried to find out what my grandparents died of, but by the time it dawned on my to find out, all the people from that age -- from that era, were gone, so I have no idea. I think I was told my mother's father, after World War One, develops wa -- wa -- I don't know what kind of disease, diphtheria, whatever went around. I understand he worked for the railroad, that's all I know. But we di -- we don't know.

Q: What were your -- your parents names, and -- and what did they do for a living?

A: My mother's maiden name was Esaacovic, and she learned man's tailoring when she was a young girl, that much I know. My father -- they were orphaned, they were both

orphans when they were married. My father, I understand, came from a very poor family. There were seven children left, and they did the best they could, I guess, to support the children. Once you were poor, you were poor, I guess, there. And maybe that's what brought them to -- you know, what -- that's what made them -- wha -- to go to Belgium, and I -- he -- I know he lost his -- his job and I think he was in a stee -- in a -- a steel factory, because Belgium had that coal mines and steel factories. And then my -- what my mother did, she picked up the tailoring, but they -- she did it at home, and she did -- she worked for several tailors and made the pants. They cut and then we used to roll it up and bring it to the house, and -- and then eventually, she brought in somebody to help with the sewing, is the way -- and my father slowly did -- you know, yo-you iron with a -- with an iron that was heat -- that was heated. And he did the heavy work for her. And he eventually went into that, because after the war, that's what he did. My father's brother, one of the younger brother, also went to Belgium, and he was a tailor. And I guess he went into business after the war, to manufacture, instead of individual suits, that they went into manu -- quote, manufacturing, not to the -- to the extent that it was in the States, but that's what they did is, they went into manufacturing men's clothing, is what they did.

Q: So, your family was somewhat struggling financially, in those early years, is that right?

A: As far back as I can remember. We didn't feel it. I had wonderful parents, I -- they worked very hard, my mother worked very long hours and I remember wor -- I guess,

during the -- what you call season, she worked very, very long hours, is -- is what I remember. We -- If w -- If they struggled financially, we didn't get the brunt of it. I mean, I can't place myself missing anything or -- or -- or being in need of anything. My father had a sister who did men's shirts, you know, individual. All our clothes were made by dressmakers. The suits were made by my uncle, and she -- I remember my aunt did nightgowns for us. So, we were very well dressed, I don't remember ever hav -- going hungry, so whatever they did, they provided for the children, we didn't feel any need, or any loss, or -- or -- I don't recall anything like that.

Q: You mentioned the importance of their lo -- of your parents love and support for you, in helping you get through, after the war. What were their wishes for you, or what were their -- what do you think their goals were for you as --

A: Yeah, I didn't want to -- I didn't want to go to school. We didn't have to go to high school, and I wanted dressmaking and dress designing, and they insisted that I get a high school diploma. So I was forced in going into high school. And in -- when the Germans invaded in 1940, they -- in Liège, I found out in -- I talked to someone who was from Antwerp they started sooner. But in Liège, where we were, they -- I continued going to school until 1942, and I -- just before I was to graduate, get my diploma, that's when they start -- they didn't allow Jews to go to school, and -- but when the war started, my parents kind -- bent, and I stayed in the same school that I went -- wha -- what do you call it? Instead of going at -- academically, I went into a school where I was taking pattern making and dressmaking. They said --

Q: Vocational s --

A: The vocational school, they said it's all right, as long as I get a high school dipo -- diploma, is -- is what happened. And I remember, couldn't get fabrics, because it was war, and I remember distinctly, my si -- my middle sister had entered high school, and I took a coat that I had, took it completely apart, pressed, laid it flat, and learn -- and I made a -- cut the coat to fit her, to learn to make it. So I did not get my high school diploma, but I was just before graduation, so I was able to go to school. And then -- We spoke Yiddish at home, of course, until my parents learned French and even after that. We had a private tutor that came and taught us Yiddish, and I used to write the letters to the rest of the family, I guess, in Czechoslovakia, but I don't remember how to read, or how to write Yiddish. I speak it, I understand it, but I can't -- no longer read or write it.

Q: So when you lived in Liège, did you speak just Yiddish and French, or did you speak any other languages?

A: No, no, f -- Yiddi -- We -- We spoke Yiddish and French. My parents spoke Hungarian when they didn't want us to understand something. Otherwise, they -- Otherwise they -- what we -- we spoke Yiddish, I mean my -- my parents came from Orthodox background, and in Salitva, I guess the way of life was the -- th-the way of Jewish life in the calendar and everything.

Q: Will you tell the names of your -- your two sisters, and -- and tell us something about each of them?

A: Okay, my middle sister is Berta, she was -- we were two and a half years apart. She was -- loved dancing and whatever, but my parents didn't go for the arts, for some reason or other. They felt education, that did not include it. And my little sister, Nellie, I don't know what was wrong with her, I know she was very fragile at first, and of course, being the youngest, she was spoiled. That's how I remember, I used to get angry at her, because everything I did, she wanted to do. I didn't like chicken soup, so if I didn't eat it, she didn't want to eat it, and I was told that I would get it for both of us, because she did everything I did. I was a very finicky person, even in those days. For instance, I had a bicycle, and Berta had a bicycle, and then she outgrew that bicycle, it went to Nellie, so she -- Berta and I had to share a bicycle and if it rained on it, I would wipe it and take care of it and she was ma -- much more li -- much more relaxed about it. She was a very warm, very outgoing person. That's -- That's about all I can tell you.

Q: Okay, I'm just going to ask some questions about -- about the chronology of your wartime experiences. Okay, we know that the Germans invaded in '40, and that from -- that -- that there were restrictions and so forth, and -- instituted sometime after the Germans started -- after the Germans occupied Belgium and Liège. And then, in 1942, you just mentioned that you -- you stopped high school. And then at some point, you mentioned in your first interview that your father was called to Dunkirk, to -- to build --

A: Well, we do -- that's -- that's was the rumor.

Q: Okay.

A: The first thing they did is call young people. I looked at -- at -- in an encyclopedia in the library and they did not mention the -- the -- the f -- the young people, because the two very close friends I had were called. And then later, they called men between certain ages, I -- I don't remember. And the rumor was, I don't know how true it was, that there -- we're going to build fortifications in Dunkirk. Whether that was true or not I don't know. And my father was called, and I'll never forget him because it was a Saturday and I can see my father coming up the stairway, we lived on a -- above a -- a business, and he had his hair shaved, and my mother said -- asked him where he was going, and he said, "I'm going to report, because they say if the men go, they won't touch the rest of the family." And my mother said, "I don't believe them, I don't trust them." And that's when they decided -- it was a matter that I remember, of either trying to go across to France, which was very serious, because my cousin -- I -- my father's sister's boy, who was eight at the time, his mother had died, the father had remarried, and his wife ha -- his -- th-the woman he had remarried brought -- sh -- he'll -- he left the woman with two children and she brought my cousin to us, so there were six of us to cross a border. You had to pay somebody to get you across. You didn't know if you would make it. And then they turned to this Catholic family and that's how we got the house where we went into hiding.

Q: Okay. So, your father just did not -- he evaded the call to go?

A: Right.

Q: You wanted to --

A: Yeah. [inaudible]. Yeah, that, see? According to my notes, it star -- it started -- th-they called it a labor draft. I didn't know at the time that's what it was called, and it was in July, 1942.

Q: Okay.

A: And d -- as a matter of fact, the couple who came in to join us in hiding afterwards, he was a friend of the family, he was the same age as my father's brother, who had also moved to Belgium, and she had worked for my parents in, you know, helping with the sewing. He had gone on the train.

Q: And what was his name?

A: Shlumalvit -- shl -- sh -- his name was Yankel Shlumavitch, Jacques. And they had a little boy, a b -- a baby, I don't even think he was a year old. She was five years older than I, and -- and he went on the train and then this is how we knew -- I guess I don't know to -- at which point we -- we went into hiding and I guess the -- the conductors, the people who worked on the train -- don't forget these were Belgian citizens, opened the doors and said, "You're going into," -- I think Germany, or Poland, it was before they entered Germany -- "whoever wants to run, run." And a lot of the young man who had gone, got off the train and went into hiding, but my father hadn't gone.

Q: Okay. So, Yankel Shmulavits --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- was married to Rasha?

A: Rachelle --

Q: Rachelle.

A: Y -- That's right, you are right.

Q: Okay. And -- And yo-you all went into hiding at -- in this --

A: They joined -- Rachelle and Jacques and the baby joined us to -- i-i-in hiding. They were in the same house, we were in hiding.

Q: Okay. And do you -- the -- the Catholic family to whom the home you -- you were staying in belonged, do you know their names?

A: No, it -- the person who got -- who got us the house, okay -- we lived across the street from a church. Now, that part of Belgium is very, very Catholic, and there was a family -- it's a long story -- one part -- one member of the family lived upstairs of us, and they were very close with the church. I mean, there's Catholic, and, you know, no matter which religion, and wa -- one of the -- one of the sons was a Trappist. One of them had gone i -- was in the service, but came back and had gone to the country, and my parents turned to these people, and the one who had gone to the country knew about the house. The house belonged -- The house belonged to a -- was a guard house for the castle. And we -- I don't know if these people knew we -- we occupied, you know, if the owner's knew, that I don't know. I know -- I remember, somehow or other f -- I knew that we paid the rent for six months. And after that, I don't know what happened, I don't know if we didn't pay or anything, because I-I really -- I really cannot tell you, it was not brought up, so -- I did -- we did not know who -- we never met, we never knew who the people who owned the land, because it was on land that belonged -- is it a -- was it a count or a

duke? I really -- I really can't remember, because we never met him, didn't even know he -- I don't even remember their name. I don't even know if they knew, at first, if it was a Jewish family. I don't know how we got the house, I don't know what information they gave us. The farmers around us, in no time at all, they knew we were Jewish. I mean, there was no -- no way of -- of hiding it, but as far as the owners, I have no idea, no idea.

Q: Was there a name of -- of the town where you were staying?

A: Yeah, Gomzayodomon, yeah, Gomzayodomon.

Q: How far was it from Liège?

A: You know, that's a good question, I don't know. We used to ride it by bicycle, my sister and I used to go into Liège by bicycle, and when I went later on and became a maid in the city, that's how -- that's why I went -- did not go out with my family. I used to go home by bicycle. It -- It was hard because it was hilly, but otherwise, I don't know. I really, really -- I never looked into it, never asked. You know, we didn't ask questions, I never -- even when I went back, I never asked how far it was. I did go -- I think I wen -- I don't remember if I went by bus, or if my uncle had a car and took me there. I don't even remember. But, you know, Belgium is a small country, so -- at the -- at the time it seemed big, but it's a small country, next to this one.

Q: And you were staying at this place for 22 months, is that right?

A: Well, I was not there the whole time, because I eventually went to Liège, some -- into the home of -- this woman was a widow to a coal mining engineering -- engineer. And she had a son who was an Ob/Gyn, and he was about 40 years old, and you know, they

used to receive patients in their home, and they needed a maid. So, they knew I was Jewish and I went to Liège, and walked around with a false ID, went home, traveled by bicycle and I was there when the Gestapo came --

Q: Okay.

A: -- to arrest the family.

Q: And do you know -- remember their names, the name of the -- of the woman and the son

A: [indecipherable] Dr. Bastin, B-a-s-t-i-n, I think, yeah.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Yeah.

Q: All right. And so that was the son, and then --

A: And -- And the mother, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. So, somehow I'd seen the figure of 22 months --

A: Well, we were in hiding 22 months from the time we went -- that -- that the -- the Germans started deporting the Jews from Liège until -- until liberation in September, so you count 22 months, is the way they counted it.

Q: So, it was around July '42, til around May --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- May '44?

A: No, the allied troops came into Brussels, in September 1944. I remember it was just before my birthday, yeah. So I think the -- I think that whoever -- whoever counted the hiding, they figured 22 months. That's all -- That's all I know, yeah.

Q: So, do you have a sense of the approximate time when you started to work as a maid for the -- for the doctor?

A: I -- I was 16 years old, I remember, because three days before my 17th birthday, which is September 14, I was allowed to go home every other weekend, meaning Saturday to Sunday, that was my time off. And I -- of course, I traveled by bicycle, and I don't know what the trucks ran on, but not on gasoline and they were very slow going up the hills, it was a butane -- whatever comes -- smoke comes out of there, and it was -- we all did this, we hooked onto the truck. You know, it was an open ta -- panel truck. I'll never forget it, I had a -- a skirt and blouse on, the -- the skirt, we used to call it jepaison, it was gathered, something like a trundle skirt and it had a bib, you know. And I -- There were two -- was it one or two guys on the back of the truck, and it had like a pole, and I hooked on with my left hand, to the pole, to go up the hill. And the wind was blowing, and my skirt caught on to the truck, and I guess I lost -- I got panicky, I didn't want to tear the skirt, don't forget you -- you couldn't -- you couldn't replace clothing, and I fell to my right side and broke my right collarbone. And they put me on the truck and I remember saying very distinctly in French, for some reason or other, this sticks very clear in my mind, I said, "Don't let me die three days before my birthday." So I knew I fell September 11, that's how I remember. And they brought me home and I had to stay home and all they

did is take gauze bandage and put my arm -- you know, no sling, no anything, and I have picture, I think they took it when they did the --

Q: Mm-hm, yeah --

A: -- yeah --

Q: -- it was on your video --

A: -- yeah, and --

Q: -- yeah.

A: -- that -- that -- that wa -- that was in September, yeah.

Q: 1942, it would have been, right? That was going to be your 16th birthday?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no. That must have been '43, because you know, I didn't keep track of wh -- of when we went, I -- I never knew that these things were going to come up, but no, I was in the house at first, for quite a long time.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: And I was 16 -- between my 16th and 17th birthday that we were in there.

Q: Okay. So that, when you broke your col-collarbone a few days before your 17th -- 17th birthday?

A: Three days before, I say, "Don't let me die three days before my birthday." That I remember distinctly.

Q: And you didn't get any medical treatment at all?

A: Yeah, there isn't anything they can know, I ma -- my bone -- my bone is still not set right. I don't feel it, I have no pain. I was told that I would suffer the rest of my life with

arthritis. I don't even know that it's broken. I don't feel it, I don't know. I think it's not until year -- not that many years ago that they came up with something to set collarbones, there isn't much they could do.

Q: Okay, that -- that makes it clearer, and then -- let me just pause for a second. As far a -- d-- so you mentioned that you had false identification papers?

A: Yes.

Q: So did you have extensive contact with the underground while you were there?

A: I? No. I think my father did, from what came up afterwards, but we were not told. I -- I don't know. I don't know, everything was done to protect the children and I guess they didn't tell us too much. All I -- I -- I really don't know, because you know, it's not like today where the kids know everything, and -- but we didn't know, I don't know. I -- I have a feeling that my father, I-I -- I don't know, he either went to the farmers to get food for the underground -- I really couldn't tell you, I have no idea of what my fa-father might have done or not done, as far as the underground. I have no idea.

Q: Okay. You got word at some point, that your mother and your sisters had been --

A: Arrested.

Q: -- deported -- arrested. You -- At that time, I assume you were working as a maid, still?

A: Yes, I was -- I was in Liège, I was with Madam Bastin, the do -- and Dr. Bastin, and that was the weekend I was to go home. And I got a call, and it was code -- a coded, so they didn't say the Gestapo arrest your family, cause you had to be careful what you

talked on the phone. And I did understand when they told me not to go home. And my father was in the hospital, that's why my father was not deported. And I'm trying to think. I have to remember in French. Hopital de Labarvare, I think it's called, and he had entered the hospital on Friday. He had either an ear infection, an eye infection, I don't know, and the doctor felt he should go in the hospital. And my sister Berta was supposed to bring in shaving cream and soap, you know, they didn't provide them. And I got ahold of Dr. Bastin, of course, and he had my father released from the hospital, and we got on a bus to go home, to go back to that -- to the house, and that's when we found out exactly what happened, they came at five o'clock in the morning. And the farmers tried to save the children, my mother tried to save the children. From one of the farmers we -- we were told that one of the Gestapo asked my little sister -- and they didn't ask -- he asked -- they ask where my father was, and my little sister answered, "He's in the hospital." I understand he slapped her because she was lying, which was the truth. That's what we got from the farmers who were there.

Q: Was it a farmer who had called to -- to give you in code, the information?

A: No, no, I -- you know, I cannot -- it sounds terrible, I cannot remember who called me. It might have been the same man who helped us with the papers. I really don't know, I cannot remember who called me, cannot remember.

Q: Okay. Going to flip the tape over.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is tape two, side B, of an interview with Frida Wallenstein. And -- And then you mentioned in your video interview, it's -- le -- correct me if I'm wrong, but it sounded as if the Bastin -- Dr. Bastin, and -- and Madam Bastin, thought that it was too dangerous for you to stay with them any more.

A: [inaudible]

Q: And then you went -- yo -- did you -- where did you go from there?

A: I went -- I went, very temporarily with Monsieur, Madame Libare. They ha -- They were the ones we communicated with w-while my -- my -- you know, while they were all in the citadel, on the outskirts of Liège. There were packages that went and notes slipped in. Don't forget the -- the civilians worked and went back and forth and they were very anti-German. And I went there, but at that ti -- I don't know, I must have stayed a very, very short time, maybe a couple days. Monsieur Libare had been called to go to work to Germany, because they were losing on the Russian front at the time, and they called -- we're talking Gentiles, Catholic where I was, to go to work the factories. They needed manpower while their man went on the front. And what happened is these -- these men -- my father was also called on his false ID with it, and the -- I guess, quote, the mayor, from the village, who had -- where -- we had ID's where we were registered in the register, so in case they took the ID's, they could check we were there. He notified them that they made a mistake on my father's age and made -- they made him 10 years older, so he didn't go. But, what happened with the other people, and in -- like with Monsieur Libare, the -- the man would go on the train, hand in their papers, a-an-and get off the

other side of the train and go home. So you had a lot of the Gentiles, who were, quote, hiding, th -- i -- were not legitimate -- were -- were hiding at home, so when I went there, they were afraid they would come for him and find me, or they'd come for -- for me, and f-f -- and -- and you know, find him, so I stayed there, and then --

Q: Were they in Lie-Liège?

A: Liège, yeah, that was in Liège, and then Madame Bastin had a daughter, very, very nice, who was married t-to a lawyer and they had a little boy called Jacques, I remember he used to come in the kitchen and I used to help him with my homework -- with his -- my home -- with his homework. And I guess it's through them, that they found a lawyer, it was a woman lawyer, and I went to her house and stayed with her for a very short time, because then they took the Jews from the citadel and shipped them to Marlene, where they gathered the Jews from Belgium, to ship them out. And that's when I went to Brussels.

Q: Okay. How did you get word that the Jews -- that -- that --

A: That they went with -- from --

Q: -- finch -- that you -- that they were deported?

A: How did I get --

Q: That your -- That your mother and sisters were deported?

A: Well, we knew, somehow, that they were sending them to Marlene. As a matter of fact, they kept it from my father, because my father just wanted to go out with his wife and the children. My father just never was the same afterwards. And who it was, I don't

know, but somebody knew that -- well, it's li -- you know, like the -- the man who got on the train and somebody said, you know, "You're -- You're being deported, whoever wants to run, run." I have no idea who -- you -- words got around. It's like, when there was sabotage, it was -- word spread like wildfire that -- that the people were being stopped, there was a sabotage and people were arrested. I don't know, we -- all I know, that we knew they were going out t-to Marlene and that's when I went to Brussels, and stayed the last three months of the war.

Q: Wh -- And how did you know where to go? How did you make arrangements of where to stay in Brussels?

A: I stayed in Brussels with a couple by the name of -- his name was David Friedman. As a matter of fact, his family, same family, owned a Buick agency here. I mean, I'm going back to the original owner in Cleveland. And, as a matter of fact, he was a brother to Jacques Slomovitch. Why they had different names, I never understood, but they were brothers. And he was in bru -- in Brussels, and his home was never touched, because he had married a German woman who was not Jewish, and he -- they had a son, yo -- yo -- yo -- Hakeem, I don't know how to pronounce it in English. And I went there because I wanted to send packages to -- to -- to my family in -- in -- in Marlene. But they didn't stay long enough for me to send any packages. And I don't know, it was Madame Friedman, I don't know how she knew, she said, "No," she said, "they're -- they've been de -- they're -- they were deported." And I never sent packages into ma -- into Marlene, because Marlene was close to Brussels, and who would have taken the package. You

know, the -- all this was kept quiet, so I re -- I have no names, I have -- I have no idea how she found out, I have no idea. I remember, because she forced me to go to the show at the time. I don't -- You know, we didn't know about the concentration camps the way they were, with the gas chambers. I remember crying like crazy and she forced me to go to the show with, I think y-yo -- Hakeem, with her son. That's how I remember.

Q: But you had -- you had no -- it sounded like you weren't sure about what deportation meant at the time.

A: Right. We didn't know -- We didn't know the gas chambers, we didn't know the torture. I didn't know anyway. There were Germans who had es -- Jews, and who had escaped from Germany, into Belgium, but the -- the concentration camps as far as the gas chambers, not th -- in -- if my parents knew, they didn't tell us. I didn't know. I didn't know.

Q: And during the time that you were in Brussels, th -- I -- I -- you se -- mentioned in your testimony that your father was arrested at some point --

A: Point.

Q: When did that happen?

A: It happened right after my mother and sisters were arrested. I understand he went to the police and he said -- I don't know the details, that he had stolen -- I guess what they -- what -- what the underground did -- is -- you know, farmers had to turn in their quotas whether it was wheat, eggs, butter. And what they -- what the underground would do is go to the farmers and get loads of stuff, that found it's way on the Black Market, found

it's way -- you know, you had -- I remember the two amer -- th-the plane that fell, and I know they never caught whoever was in -- in the plane and we were told there was an American plane. Then you had the underground, it had to be [indecipherable] and things, and then the -- the farmers would call and say they were robbed, and I don't know if that's what my father participated in, but they arrested him and they put him in jail. And he would come up for trial and I -- he hired a lawyer and I went and I told the lawyer, I'll never forget it, "Get my father liberated, or freed, whatever," and I said, "I'll kill you." Because I knew that he would have arrested him and deported him. So, he would come up for trial, they would postpone his trial. And then when war was over, I had to get a lawyer, because we were foreign citizen, we were not Belgian citizen, and because he had committed a crime, I guess, they were going to deport him. So it took a lawyer. I turned -- I think I went to -- to -- to Madame Bastin's son-in-law, yeah, to have him -- whatever he did, he did. I -- He never took a fee or anything, and -- and my father was let go and stayed in Belgium.

Q: Let me make sure that I understand why you told the lawyer, "You free my father or I'll kill you."

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Is the -- because --

A: Be-Becau-Because, he was going around, and I guess he wanted to -- to -- to be with -- with -- with my mother and with the children and I guess that's what it was. I don't know what else, he was trying every which way to -- to -- to -- to free them. As a matter

of fact, there was somebody -- I think it's pretty true that he paid to have my mother and the children out of -- out of the citadel and then it never worked out because I think it was true that there were -- we're talking German soldiers, we're not talking Nazi, we're talking German soldiers, who would take money and be bribed and let -- you know, help people escape from there. I don't know deta -- you know, this was all -- all hush hush and I left right after the war, so I never found out a lot of things. But you have to realize that he -- in the citadel, you had people who were accused of -- of sabotage and things, and they went into the citadel, not just Jews. So, I know when I saw Rachelle years later in Israel, she told me that a -- a German soldier pa -- brought her milk and passed it through the bar to give to the baby. So, there was something going on that the detail -- you know, nothing was talked about and I left shortly -- a year after the war, when it was still war torn and people were coming back, so I never got details. And I guess I never went into any details. I didn't ask.

Q: So it was your concern that if your father was freed, he would just get himself deported?

A: Yeah, you got it, that's right. Whatever that meant, I don't know if I realized the f -- the full meaning of it, I don't know. I -- I really don't know. I have no idea.

Q: But you had the -- the --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- impression that your father was not s-stable.

A: Oh, that's right. He didn't care what happened to him. He didn't care -- for -- after that, he -- he didn't care. As a matter of fact, when he died 10 years later -- he had remarried, and I did see his widow, and she told me he never -- he never overcame the loss of my mother and the si -- and my sisters, he never. He didn't care, because he had a -- a blood clot, a thrombophlebitis, thrombophlebosis, whatever it is, and he was told to, you know, flat in bed, you know, to -- until the -- all the clot dissolved, and he didn't care, and that's why -- my understanding was that's why he died, the -- that the blood clot traveled and killed him.

Q: When was that, that he died?

A: 19 -- November 18, 19 -- whata -- '55.

Q: Okay, all right.

A: Yes.

Q: Not -- Not so long after the war ended.

A: Well, 10 years.

Q: 10 years.

A: 10 years, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: 10 years.

Q: So, it sound -- my impression is that you were -- you had been, as a girl, fairly sheltered by your parents, and they had protected you, and -- and you -- and you had not -- you hadn't been rich, but you had been well taken care of --

A: Yeah.

Q: And now, all of a sudden, towards the end of the war, after your mother and sister were deported, you were -- you were like the head of the family, and the kids --

A: I was left alone, I had to battle for myself. I had money; we each had 200 dollars sewn into our coat, and my aunts address in Cleveland. And I found myself completely -- I guess completely grown up. I mean, I was left alone, I mean I was -- I don't know. I -- Well, actually, we matured -- we call it matured, when we went into hiding, and when I was a maid in -- in the Bastin's house. She was not a very nice person. He was. He was -- I -- He married, years later, my school friend wrote to me. She -- She was not very nice to work for, she -- first of all, I was a live-in maid and there was a woman who was supposed to come -- I don't remember, two times, or three times a week, and she quit and I was doing the work of two people in a house that was kept immaculate, with -- don't ask. So, I had to fight her off, too, I mean, she was very demanding. You know how i -- I -- I was -- I was a -- I was a kid, I was 16 years old. I look at my grandchildren and I think to myself, oh my God, I were -- what do I -- how was I doing at that age. This is what's happening to me now.

Q: How did you adjust to that roll that had suddenly been thrust on you of just being so responsible? Did you -- Was it -- Were you able to do it?

A: I -- I guess I had no choice and then I went back to live with my father, my aunt and uncle -- my father's brother and his wife, who had managed to go to -- to -- to France,

came back with two children. And I fought, and my father and I fought and that's why I came to the States.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, you talked about that some in your first interview, of that difficulty --

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- with your father.

A: He was not the same any more. I just -- It was his idea to come to the States to my aunt, you know, it was not -- i-it -- it's so hard to go into those details, you know. My cousin, who was deported with my mother, is -- the father came back, made it through Switzerland, because his wife was pregnant and Switzerland allowed, I think that's what I was -- we were told, the pregnant women. And he came back and he blamed my mo -- my mother, my father for the boy going out with my mother. And I was so mad at my father because he let him live with us. And we were very cramped, we had three rooms, my aunt and uncle came and I could tell you stories, but it's not -- it really isn't worth it, it just -- it was not the same life, I mean we had a makeshift apartment, we were bombed, we were -- you couldn't get places to live, and I don't know, whatever. And my cousin, who is now in Paris, was left alone and she came to live with us for awhile and my aunt -- my aunt -- don't want to go into it, in case she listens to it. It was not pleasant, it was very -- it was very, very difficult. It's -- It was not normal life, although my father did get food and we never went hungry, but otherwise, it was no life. It wasn't the same any more.

Q: And this was in bru -- did you stay in Brussels?

A: No, no, in Liège. I went ba -- I c -- I came -- I came back. I wanted to be with my father for my 18th birthday and I got on a train in Brussels, got as far Louvain, couldn't go any further, because I didn't realize they were still fighting, I guess, arou -- in the outskirts of Liège, and we got on a ni -- I don't know how many of us got -- got on a -- on a American jeep and we finished and went into Liège, and I went to Monsieur and Madame Libare, and stayed there until I got to -- my father was freed and I went to live with him.

Q: Where did he live at that time?

A: Who, my father?

Q: Your father.

A: Yo -- Yo -- Well, we got a pla -- we got a quota half a house, or whatever you want to call it, and we got together. I stayed with Monsieur and Madame Libare until then.

Q: Was there any issue of property that you had lost?

A: No, no, no, we -- we didn't own -- we don't -- we didn't own property. We wal -- We always rented. And I don't know who took -- who t -- who emptied the belongings in the house in the country. I have no idea. There's so many -- I -- I -- I didn't inquire, I didn't -- I didn't dig into it. I guess -- I don't know, if I think back, who knows what I was thinking? I really don't know. I really don't know. Didn't ask.

Q: And at that time, was -- were you all -- you and your father still holding out some -- some hope that even though what you knew that you thought maybe your family would come back?

A: People -- People were coming out of the concentration camps. As a matter of fact, Rachelle is the only one who survived. And he would go to fortune tellers, he kept hoping and hoping, and I remember some guy came out of the concentration camp, and I remember him s -- telling my father, “Don’t hope, I took the bodies out myself from the gas chambers.” It was somebody who was from Liège, who knew them. And then Rachelle came back, and I did see her. When I saw her in Israel, many years later, she couldn’t remember that I saw her before I came to the States. And we didn’t talk in the -- they didn’t talk in those days. And I left, but w-what I understood afterwards is my father blamed Rachelle for my mother being exterminated, because when they went into the camps, they didn’t know -- they were separating the women and, you know, with children, and the story I got is somebody told Rachelle to hand the baby to my mother. So my father felt that she went into the gas cham -- because, immediately they went in, because she handed the baby to my mother. The story I got when I went back is, they didn’t know what was happening and she handed the baby to my mother not knowing that that was going to happen. My cousin was then 10 years old, and I was told -- and I can’t remember who said, that came out of the concentration camp, said that my sister Berta was given the option of going with the women or to go with my mother, and she chose to go with my mother. How true, who knows? But that’s what we were told.

Q: And this was Auschwitz, yes?

A: Auschwitz, yeah.

Q: Do you -- So, when Rachelle came back, you -- she didn't talk to you at all about what had happened?

A: Nope. No.

Q: Do you remember seeing her again, and the --

A: Oh --

Q: -- just about that mom -- what that moment was like?

A: She -- I -- I -- I can see her, but I can't think of what we talked about. I know she was sterilized by Mengele. She couldn't have children, or something. And I don't even know if I understood the feel -- full meaning of it. Don't forget, we were -- we didn't have sex education and war, y-you do -- you don't appreciate the full meaning of it. I -- Even when I saw her a year later -- years later, when I went to Israel -- I have a letter from her, too, because I -- that's how I found out the dates and the details and she says this was very hard for her to talk about. That's all I know. I never dug into it, I never faced th-the -- what really happened, until many years later, until I went back to Belgium and my aunt told me, but I -- I didn't want -- I guess now that -- in retrospect, I didn't want to know. I was one of these people who didn't want to know.

Q: Were you having hopes for the future at that point? Were you thinking about that?

A: Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing. I had no thought of future, had no thought of anything, just a ca -- I guess day to day. You're asking me things, you know, and how did

I feel? In those days I just -- nope, absolutely nothing, and was -- my father, or some -- we contacted my aunt in Cleveland and I came to Cleveland, is what I did.

Q: Mm-hm. You di -- Did you have any preference of where you would go?

A: I had no choice, because my -- the only relative we had in the States, was my aunt in Cleveland. And I -- She signed the affidavit for me, so I had no choice, I had to come to Cleveland, I had to come to her.

Q: How long did you stay in Liège before leaving?

A: Well, we were live -- the war was over in September ’44, and I left Belgium, I got on the boat in LeHavre in May one, 1945 -- ’40 si -- wait a minute, I came in ’46 -- ’46, yeah, and that’s when I left. So I stayed in Liège from September 1944, to just -- well, I left Liège, because I stayed overnight in Paris, to the beginning of May. I left -- I left May one from LeHavre and arrived in New York May eight, 1946.

Q: So that year before you left Liège, you -- you’re living with your father and -- and with -- can you tell me the names of the other people you were

A: Well my -- my father’s brother Josef and his wife Hosa, and their two children, William and Mary, who were little tots. And I saw them again as teenagers, I went back a year after my father died. Then I went back once more and then two years ago, I went with Elder Hostel to France and my cousin Miriam, who’s a married woman with two young adult children, came to Paris and we spend the day together. So, that what was left in Liège, and then I -- my fa -- one of my father’s brother, Gesa, we made contact with him, through my cousin from Israel, and he came to the States via his wife, because on

my father's side, there was no one. And I remember before I left Belgium, we heard from him, and he had applied to come to the States and I was going to wait for him, and he says, "No, you go ahead, and I'll join you afterwards." He came about two years later, and he went to New York, and I practically ran to New York. I got on the Empire State train and I went in on a -- I think it was a decoration weekend, or Fourth of July, and boy, that Grand Central Station was mobbed. He recognized me for some ra -- reason or other, because he used to travel and he used to come to Liège -- I mean, my mother, th -- the whole family adored my mother, and he was in New York, and then he had TB of the spine and moved -- was transferred to Denver, to the National Jewish Hospital there. And he -- he was the only one, my uncle in Liège died. He had a heart murmur or something when he was a kid and he died of a heart condition. My uncle, my father's -- I guess -- I don't know if he was the youngest or -- or his sister was the youngest. She died of childbirth [indecipherable] abortion. Th-Th-The brother, Libou, was sent to Israel, he was 11 years old, and we heard from him after the war, and he was killed with a shrapnel in his yard, he was on -- I don't know, he was on the kibbutz, or they had sent money to him already. When they were fighting -- they had the war to become Israel, and I'm in touch with my cousin still yet, who was born you know, in -- in Israel, he lived in Denver, so that's the four of us left, but otherwise there is -- there's no one left on my father's side.

Q: Was there any possibility of staying in Liège, or was that out of the question?

A: I don't know. The papers were made. As a matter of fact, if it would a happened later, this is -- was a f -- cousin of my father, he was the same age as my Uncle Josef and he

came up through Italy with the Jewish Brigade, and somehow or other was -- knew we were in Liège, and he found us in Liège, and as a matter of fact, he stayed with me in Brussels until I got on the train to go to Paris to come to the States. Had it happened later, he probably would have arranged for me to go to -- to what was at the time, Palestine. Th -- Could have very easily ended up in Israel, as well as in pa -- as -- as well in -- as in the States. I mean, it was just timing I guess, because when -- by the time he came to Belgium, I -- the -- the paperwork had already started to come to the States, and I never reversed it. I wasn't thinking, really. I got cold feet. When I got off the boat, I was one of the last one to get off the ship.

Q: [inaudible]

A: Yes, yes. Everybody was off but me.

Q: Just going back for a minute. Did -- Did you have any Zionist feelings at all?

A: Nope. I think as a kid, you know, you remember vaguely, I must have belonged to something that had to do with the Zionism, but I don't remember -- it just something very vague. Vi -- I don't even know the name of the organization, I remember little si -- I'm go -- I remember going to meetings, but it's so vague, I couldn't even tell you.

Q: Okay.

A: I just couldn't even tell you, because the only one who went to -- to, at the time Palestine, was my father's brother.

Q: Mm-hm. You mentioned that -- that your family was -- was religious and -- and --

A: They came -- They came -- My -- Both my [indecipherable] that was life in the -- in the country, were Orthodox, but in Liège, they didn't keep it. They a -- a small Jewish community. My father was not a believer. We went to services and was because of my mother. My father was not into it. I remember he used to talk and they gave him a hard time for Bar Mitzvah, because he couldn't afford a new suit or something like that. My father was not into it, and then my Uncle Gesa, who was a waiter, and travel and used to come to Belgium, I guess he didn't keep kosher and for whatever reason or other, I don't think we kept kosher any more. And then we had the war. But I know my mother, even when -- because we had food on Black Market in Belgium, would not touch, like pork. She could not -- She did not touch it. I don't th --

End of Tape One Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: No, you can never predict who's going to be interested, and who isn't.

A: But see, my son was not -- didn't dig into it either, and then he was going to dig into it with my -- my -- my late uncle in Denver, and my uncle died of a heart attack, so he never got -- he wanted his experiences.

Q: Mm-hm. This is tape number two, side A, of an interview with Frida Wallenstein. Before we go on to talk about your journey, I wanted to ask you about Judaism after the war. We were just talking about how -- what your family's religion was before the war. Did Judaism play a role right after the war ended?

A: Not one bit. I -- The -- We had a synagogue, Orthodox of course, and the rabbi had gone to Russia on a visit and got caught during the war, so we didn't even have a rabbi. I went to the synagogue because I knew I had a male cousin and I had two female cousins, and I thought maybe I would run into their husbands, which I never did. My cousin Louie was in Manila. I don't know where Al was, the one -- I-I-I can't remember. So I never found them, but there was, I guess soldiers, somebody gave money. I had never heard of Hanukkah, not that I remembered giving money for the kids. I never saw anything, I -- the only reason I went to se -- to the synagogue was to see if maybe I could turn up one of my cousins. But there was no contact with the religion, at least on my -- on my part, and on my father's part, I don't remember anything.

Q: Okay, so you left from LeHavre on what boat? And -- And around when?

A: Oh, okay, I left le -- I went from Liège to Brussels, war torn -- first of all, I had trouble getting a passport, because Czech -- where I was born became Russia, and we were told we could remain Czech or become Russian, and we found out my father could not remain Czech because he had not served in the armed forces. So I had to go to Brussels, and I don't remember who suggested I go to the Office of the Foreign Ministry in Brussels, and I had to get papers to prove that I was no longer a Czech citizen. And I didn't get what a passport, they call it a laissez-passe, which means let through, translated literally, good for one year, and so I could put my visa on. I had to go to Antwerp to get my visa, and it was through a school friend, not a Jewish girl, whose father worked downtown, next to the town major's office. He didn't speak French, he didn't -- a-and my -- my friend's father didn't speak English and they wrote a letter to the embassy and I got a visa much sooner than -- than if I would have waited on a regular basis, because after I came to the States, my father told me that I got called to go get my visa. And you couldn't get passage because the GI's were coming back, the war brides were coming. And I can still see the travel agent. I was at a friend's house and he says, "I got passage for you." And I found my father, he had to borrow money to -- to pay for my passage. And I went from Liège to Brussels with my father, and this cousin from Israel, and I remember he told my father, "You go back, I'm a soldier, I'll be able to get transportation." And I think it took me longer to go through the border of Belgium, France, than it took me to travel, because, you know, it was still after the war. France was still war -- we had everything, food, everything, France didn't. Stayed overnight in Paris. I met a woman on the train, and

somebody on the train, a French woman -- there was Black Market going on between Belgium and Germany, Belgium and France, and she picked up the Belgian accent, and wanted to know if we had Belgian money -- and stayed in Paris overnight. And there was a young girl who had married a GI, and this woman was very sophisticated, and we went to LeHavre. War -- Was in ruins, I remember the debris and everything. And I came on a boat, that I used to call a ship, called the SS Uruguay. And we were 10 in a cabin, and we landed in New York on May eight, in 1946.

Q: Why didn't your father go with you?

A: There was no reason for him to come to the States, I mean, he didn't have anybody. It would have had to be my aunt, was my mother's sister, would have signed the papers, he -- he -- I don't know, I never asked.

Q: But he thought it would be better for you to go?

A: It was bet -- It was better, it just -- it just -- I wou -- I -- I was a young woman, he -- he just -- he just didn't know how to handle it. We were fighting, we were arguing, we were -- I remember he didn't allow me to wear lipstick, I was 18 years old. Lots and lots of reasons. I just -- It -- It's very hard to go into it, and very personal, so I -- it just didn't work out. I don't even realize what I was doing by coming to the States, truthfully. I don't know.

Q: What were the thoughts in your head in the time that you were in -- on the ship?

A: What were the thoughts? I think I was blank. I -- I -- I don't think I thought anything, all I -- the -- the only thing I remember, I saw raw celery for the first time in my life,

served on the ship, and I thought, “Who eats raw celery?” And I think maybe I realized what I did, is when I went -- when we landed, when -- you know, when -- when we docked, I should say, and my aunt, my uncle and my cousin Louie had a ca -- my cousin Louie had a car, drove to New York. There were two families who had known my mother back in Czechoslovakia, who had migrated to New York years ago, and they left my mother about the same age I came, and I guess they must have -- th -- th -- my aunt and uncle came -- came to the dock where -- where we -- where we docked there, and my cousin had just borrowed a hat from one of the people on -- on -- on the thi -- because they couldn’t imagine what was happening to me, and I think I was afraid to get off the boat. I really was afraid to get off the boat. I -- I know they were cleaning -- I think maybe the whole boat was cl -- was cleaned by the time I got off. And I think that’s when -- I think that’s when I got scared, but until then, no. First of all, I was a little seasick, not too much, I remember, and you were with te -- you know, nine other people in the cabin and I don’t -- I think my mind didn’t even project into anything at all. I mean, I didn’t even think of language barrier. I didn’t think of anything. I --

Q: Did you speak any English?

A: I did a little bit, because I had studied English six years prior to coming to the States, and maybe I have a knack for languages. I mean, it came out upside down and everything, but I managed -- I -- I-I remember sitting down and writing letters in English, with the dictionary. I don’t know how, because two years is not a lot. But, what saved me with my aunt is I spoke Yiddish. See, she spoke Hungarian, but I was able to

communicate fluently in Yiddish, so that I was able -- I had no problem at home. I had no problem whatsoever. And then -- And then I found myself living -- I di -- I didn't think of anything. I don't remember even being concerned about language barrier, I didn't even think of it.

Q: And so you got off in New York, and then traveled to Cleveland?

A: By car, yeah. We stayed in New York overnight. I remember my -- they took me to a store and they bought me a coat and I thought it was the ugliest thing, but it wasn't -- you know, don't forget, the styles were entirely different. I came with a coat, it used to be a navy blanket, and my uncle was a tailor, you know, he had come back, and he made it for me. I mean, you couldn't get fabrics, you couldn't -- this is how y -- this is war torn, this is -- and I remember it was a fuchsia coat, I'll never forget. I think I have a picture in it, with black lapels and a ba -- a belt. And I wanted bananas, because for money you could get just about everything in Belgium, and the first boat, the banana boats came in just as I was leaving, and I remember my aunt eventually hiding the bananas, cause she was afraid I would get sick. And I remember distinctly, I had a soft boiled egg, and I had never seen this, where they crack the egg, and put it in a little dish. I was used to eat it in the shell, in a -- in an egg holder, and I thought my stomach was going to turn, and I couldn't say anything. But what saved me is, you know, especi -- and with the p -- even the people who knew my parents, it -- to families, is -- is the Yiddish, I was able to communicate in Yiddish.

Q: What was your aunt's name?

A: Lana Bern, she -- yeah, Lana Bern. She had three children, one daughter in California, one daughter who was married already, in Cleveland. She lived a -- wait a minute, Edna li -- no, Edna lived upstairs, yeah. She had a two family with a third floor, and my cousin Louie wasn't married and was still living with her.

Q: Ah, just backtracking for a moment, what -- do you remember what your first impressions were of New York?

A: Of New York itself? No. The im -- what a -- what really impressed me is, you know, we drove back from new -- we drove from New York to Cleveland, so we're through Pennsylvania, and I just looked at the vastness of this country, I just -- I think I was awed, I was numb. That im -- New York, I don't remember anything from New York, I mean, as far as the city, I mean, we didn't -- we didn't sightsee, I mean, these people were anxious to see me and to learn and -- and things like that. What awed me was the country, and my cousin Louie was teasing me, something about the mountains and going through it, or anything like that. I mean, the ten -- there was the Pennsylvania Turnpike, but not the Ohio Turnpike, and then it turned dark and he continued driving, but during daylight, I just looked at all that Pennsylvania country and I just -- I wa -- just awed. But New York? No, I didn't remember New York, I didn't -- I didn't go -- I don't even remember which store we went to go shopping for my coat.

Q: Did -- Did you talk to your near relatives at all about where you had come from, what had hap -- just happened to you, what you were going through?

A: What -- What happened when I came to my aunt, okay, is there is a -- a -- quite a community from Solotvona in Cleveland, and people came to see me, I was -- there was one guy, I don't know how he got here before me, because he was a DP, he had been in the concentration camp, and he came to see me also. And people came to get information, news, and I kept saying -- I guess I must have been quote boatlag, I don't know, is there such a thing? And I kept saying, I don't know anything, because I was in Belgium, so I could not bring them any news or anything from before the war from Solotvona, because I was two and a half years old when my f -- you know, when we left to Belgium. I had distant cousins who came, I mean people came because they wanted -- they wanted news from Solotvona, and I -- and I remember k -- kept -- in Yiddish kept -- that I remember distinctly, I kept saying, "I don't know anything, I wasn't there," and you know, and -- and what saved me again was the Yiddish because these people, from that generation came and -- and spoke Yiddish, and I couldn't give them any information, but nobody asked me information about Belgium because they came -- they came from -- from -- from Czechoslo -- fr -- Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, whatever it was when they came.

Q: Did you feel that you had anyone who was really interested in -- in you and what you had been through?

A: No, no. As a matter of fact, what I had is I found myself, for the first time, in a Jewish environment. Grew up in a Catholic environment. And I remember distinctly that even with my aunt, that I had to defend the Catholics. I had to tell them that Catholics saved

my life. Catholic risked their lives to save my life. Catholics were tormented, especially in Liège. I don't know -- I don't know about the other part, I just met somebody from Antwerp. The -- The walone, th-th-the -- the French ones were very, very anti-Germans. I didn't know from -- I didn't know any anti-Semitism, unt-until Hitler started in '42. And I don't think they -- they -- they comprehended that. That is something I really -- th-that's what came up, is Catholic helped me, Catholic risked their lives. Catholic were persecu -- not to the extent the Jews were. You know, they didn't -- they couldn't take the whole country and send them to the concentration camps. That's what I had -- What happened to me? I -- I ha -- trying to remember my -- my aunt knew by then that my mother was gone, but I don't think they brought up too much at that time, of -- you know, America was getting over, I guess, depression, the war, the bo -- the boys were coming back from the service. And it's someth -- it's not something that was talked about that much. I remember, I don't know if I was setting the table, clearing up the table or what. My mother -- My aunt, excuse me, my aunt said something about milladec, faishadec, you know, dairy made, and I said, "What's that?" And my aunt said, "What do you mean, you -- what's milladec and faishadec, didn't your mother keep it?" Oh, sure, my mother kept it, four years of war, two years in hiding, how are you going to keep the -- the -- the kosher laws, she didn't even keep them before -- before the war. That I remember, and it's interesting, because I -- my aunt lit candles on the Sabbath, on Friday, and it came -- I had forgotten about that, it -- it's interesting what you remember distinctly, what you remember vaguely. I had completely forgotten about candles and blessing the candles,

and then I remembered when I saw her doing it, and then when girlfriend of mine did it, and it just -- I can see my mother lighting this -- you know, and -- and blessing this -- the Sabbath candles, but I had completely forgotten about it. And I never kept anything, to this day I don't.

Q: Did you start going to services?

A: Nope. I don't -- I'm not practicing, I'm not a believer. I keep -- I -- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is something that is very vivid in my mind. I don't remember Hanukkah, I remember one seder. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I will not -- you know, I -- I -- what I do at home is my business. I didn't go to work. I go for the holidays because I have very close friends who are traditional and I go for breaking the fast and I go for this, but I am not -- I -- Passover, I don't observe. I respect, but I don't observe. What I do at home is my business. I'm not -- I'm not into it. I -- What happened to my mother shouldn't have happened if religion was supposed to be what it's wa -- that's the way I feel.

Q: Was it -- It sounds to me like an interesting kind of role reversal. I think people would assume that having lived in Europe during the Nazi era, that you would be especially aware of anti-Semitism, and that the people in America, would be oh, you know, we -- we don't live in an anti-Semitic country, but it sounds like it was kind of opposite of that and that you came into a community that was -- that was very aware of their Judaism, and -- and very aware of -- of anti-Semitism. Was it difficult for you to maintain your identity of not -- not being oriented towards Judaism? Was that a conflict at all?

A: No, it wasn't. I mean, I remember -- you know, I made friends right away, all -- they were all American girls, they felt sorry for me. I still see them to this day, they had a sorority from high school. We just had a reunion because somebody came in from out of town. And I remember going on the high holy days with a girlfriend, and we went from one synagogue to the other, but as far as religion, religion for me to keep, that's not what directed me, I did what everybody else did. I will -- do remember distinctly, when came Yom Kippur, and my aunt wanted me to go to synagogue to say yisker for my mother, and I refused. I said, "That means I'll bury my mother." That I remember distinctly. In retrospect, I think I did not accept for -- what really happened. First of all, I didn't know the details. People didn't talk in those days, right off, and re -- you have to realize I -- I -- I didn't associate with the Europeans, with the DP's who came. Cousins came -- I had made American friends, and I went with them, and these were 18 year old girls who -- who I don't think talked about -- who talked about the Holocaust, outside maybe of the DP's who came, I have no idea because I had no contact with them. I worked the sewing factory and they came there, but nobody talked about it, so religion-wise, no, I had to fight and say again with the Catholics, I had -- I had to tell them that I did not face anti-Semitism, and I think -- I think that was something that was hard for them to accept until I left my aunt, and then inna -- it wa -- it was never talked about. I worked in the sewing factory, there were all American girl -- girls, until the DP's came, and we had, I think, a Hungarian forewoman, and I don't speak Hungarian. I just found myself more in common with the American girls. Maybe I was anxious to become Americanized, or

whatever, whatever, and all the people that affiliated with even the factory, were not Jewish. Fa -- The friends that I made were Jewish, but the environment where I worked was not Jewish. And even when I changed factories, I think I was the only Jewish girl working there, when I went to Prinz beeterman. I never felt out of place working among -- among non-Jews. I would never -- never felt out of place, never felt different or anything.

Q: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitism in this country?

A: No, no, no, because I worked in the sewing industry, which was Jewish owned, but I had heard at -- over the years, as the girls went out for jobs, I heard about discrimination in hiring Jews, some of the companies. But I personally, no, no, never. I was very good friends with -- when I was at Prinz beeterman, pe-people of Catholic-Polish extract, I mean di -- didn't talk religion, religion didn't come into it. I -- I -- I -- I -- I never experienced it personally, no, nowhere.

Q: What were y -- What were your -- your -- you're starting to get settled in the Cleveland area, you're starting to get familiar with -- with this new country. What --

A: Very difficult. I said I was a dressmaker. I have what they call golden hands, meaning I'm very, very good with my hands. And Cleveland was a center for the manufacturing of clothing. To -- My aunt took me to Lampoles, and of course I was grabbed off, and I was in shock, because they had rows of sewing machines. I was not used to it. And I tried to tell them that I had gone to school, that I wa -- I was eight -- I was almost -- just about 20. And I told them I was a high school graduate. I was -- I wasn't graduated the high s -- it

was easier to say that I was educated. Looked like kid, didn't speak English but very little. And for some reason or other -- the only thing years later I could think of is, the environment I found myself, I could take my aunt -- even my parents, how much schooling did they have? And I think they put us all in the same package. Now, the DP's who came, also didn't have the education, because Germany invited -- invaded, you know, much earlier, and they looked at me, and I guess they thought we were stupid, and they just put us in the same pot of the people who ga -- don't forget, during World War Two, there was no immigration, and they put me to put piecework. And -- And I was raised with clothes handmade, hand finished. And I wanted to go back, but I couldn't because my laissez-passe was good for one year and it was hard. It was very had to -- t-to adjust to the way of life. I had trouble with some of the foods a little bit. I didn't have the best facilities living with my aunt, because my cousin was still living at home, he wasn't married and I slept on the couch. I lived with my aunt for three months. And then I moved in with a couple, she was British, he was a soldier in England, and he had married a British girl. I eventually no -- moved with them. In those days, girls didn't rent apartments. And he was the brother of a very close friend of mine, to this day, I'm very, very close, it's like family with me. And I lived with them, but the facilities, don't want to go into detail, couldn't -- i-it just -- just for a short time. And I had been introduced to a -- a girl two year -- Esther, Esther Berkowitch, two years older than I was. And she knew of this couple who had a two family off Kinsmen, 154 in Kinsmen, and they had two rooms that they rented. Like I say, they didn't have apartments, we rented rooms, and

they were -- oh, I think they were about 80, even in those days, and they were ru -- Russian immigrants, spoke very little English and they hesitated in taking in a girl in the room, because, you know, werl washes her hair, puts bobby pins, in those days. But I did move in with them, and I found a family, really. I got very close with one of their daughter-in-law, and I lived there. I was dating very heavy and it worked out very nicely, because I spoke Yiddish fluently. And I went to work on the streetcar, and lived with them until I got married, really. Until I got married in 1948, in November 1948, and I lived with them. And I adjusted. First of all, I did try to go back to visit my father, but after the real hard adjustment was over, couldn't get a passport, cause I was not a Czech res -- citizen, I was not a Russian citizen, and I was not an American citizen. So I couldn't -- I couldn't get a passport, I couldn't travel.

Q: How did -- So you had this pass to stay for a year, what happened after the years was up?

A: Oh no, no, it was good for one year, it couldn't be renewed, it couldn't be renewed. I -- I mean, there was no way -- there was no way I could renew it, and -- and it was a te -- a t -- a temporary, quote, passport. I mean, only cer -- because I was migrating to the States, so I couldn't get a passport.

Q: Okay. So -- So the idea was you were to stay in the States until a certain amount of time, when you would get -- be -- you said [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable] become an American citizen, which I couldn't wait, and I -- because I married an American citizen, if you were in the States one year, and married to an

American citizen one year at that time, you could become a citizen sooner than the five year wait. So I got -- I became an American citizen in four years, as opposed to five years, is what I did. But I was -- I came, what they call in French Sol nationalite determinet, which means I had no nationality. And I -- That was it. So I couldn't get a passport to go back and then I adjusted, and I made friends. I went to sorority meetings, didn't understand a word, and concentrated on trying to understand. And I remember my girlfriends used to burst out laughing every so often because of my French -- very, very French pronunciation. I -- Whatever it came out -- I found out years, years later, I met a young woman here in the complex who was from France, and she came for a short time, and for the -- bud -- my -- a few years ago, I was already speaking English fluently, even lost my French accent, and I heard her, with her pronunciation, and I says, "No wonder my girlfriends used to burst out laughing." I learned -- I remember when I learned -- I used the word douche the first time. In French, a shower was a douche, so I took a douche, and they were laughing, and I --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

A: I think she'd go into my life and after the [indecipherable] because I went to school, and became a secretary.

Q: Oh, okay. When did you do that?

A: I married in '48. When my son was born in '51, we moved to Sandusky, Ohio, which is not far from here, Aceder Point, and we lived there for seven years. My husband

became ill. I was working in the factory until shortly before my son was born. I had female trouble, he was born early, I had a difficult pregnancy. We moved to Sandusky, and we struggled. Financially, emotionally, but we made very good friends. I made some very, very good friends in Sandusky. It's much developed since then. And there was no pla -- we didn't have money, so we made friends, we babysat for each other. Spend -- We had friends, we went for Christmas dinner, Easter dinner. There was a small Jewish community, we were not active with it. We were turned down to go to services because we didn't have money. That was also a slap in the face. And my hus became quite ill, was hospitalized, and I moved back to Cleveland. Tried to get back into the sewing industry, went to Prinz beeterman, but the place had changed, ended up doing alterations in small stores. My son was young, went to Jewish Family Service, got no help. I very hurt feelings and very -- not bitter any more, but -- and I went to work in small stores with alterations, which paid very, very little. My husband came out of the hospital, went into practice. I went to work for him, then he was hospitalized again for a very, very long time. And I worked with a Social Worker, to cope with his illness, to cope with my child. I was very, very concerned about my child, and I worked with a Social Worker, and then eventually with the child psychi -- my son was alright, but it was to help me cope, and to try to keep him as even as can be. And it was through the help of a Social Worker, at the VA, that I had the guts to go to school, and take classes to become a secretary. I saw the writing on the wall, I didn't know how long my husband would be ill, and I couldn't stay in the sewing industry, I worked for a small store, there were long layoffs, there were

short hours. And they didn't have the Social Security laws where you get Social Security for -- for an ill person, it came later. And I went -- I went to Dyke first, and then I went to Tri-C, because Dyke was expensive, and I finished off there. And I was working half a day, going to school, borrowed a tape machine, and I'm talking an old tape, to -- to do my shorthand, which I never used eventually, anyway. Was very nervous, was very self-conscious, and it was through the help of a Social Worker that gave me enough confidence to say -- you know, I was a foreign background, my accent was much heavier. I spoke English fluently, but I had never had real formal English. I went to Tri-C, took an English class. Got me more confused than anything. And I ended up applying at University Hospitals, couldn't pass the typing test, I was so nervous. I did pass the spelling test, but in those days I used to go -- in French they spell it this way, in English it's this way, I was still, because I hadn't worked with the English language. And I -- You have to be at the right place at the right time, and they had someone who took care of secretaries. I was coming out of school, I mean, I -- I had -- I had the certificates for passing the typing and everything, and I guess I made -- not I guess, I made an impression on the head of personnel at the time. I was a foreign background, I was in the sewing industry, and in those days, adults didn't go back to school, very, very few, and I went to Tri-C, I think I met one or two adults who went to school. And the doctor who hired me, he -- they told me later they felt sorry for me, because I guess I was very scared, I was very self-conscious. I was self-conscious of my English, and I thought I would go to work. Even though I didn't pass the typing test, they sent me to three

interviews. I never made the third one, and I took this one. And I went -- I worked for him for 10 years, because he left University Hospitals, and I was going to work three years and better myself financially, but the work was so interesting, because there was research, because of the affiliation with Case West -- well, it was Western Reserve then, Case Western Reserve. And he left, and I stayed on for three years, and I julo -- just loved my work, the best thing I did was leaving the sewing industry. I was way down financially when my husband got sick. I -- His brother saved me with a few dollars. I didn't have money to feed my kid at the time. I -- The sewing industry, I struggled -- I did get some money, was it Social Security at the time, a little bit, and I managed to survive. And once I went into become a secretary, my su -- I was divorced, my husband wanted to -- the divorce, and my son went to live with him, and I got on my feet. And the best thing I did was to leave the sewing industry. My mother used to say, "It's much easier to work with your brain, than to work with your back," which I couldn't see at the time. And I worked in an environment that was intellectual, even though I was not much of an intellect, but I learned a lot. We had a lot of people coming and going and I just loved my work, because those were the days of the typewriters, we typed and we typed and we typed. And it so happened that everybody was foreign. The director was foreign, the associate director was -- he was f -- grew up in Austria, the associate director was from Yugoslavia. We had a technician from India, with -- one time there was -- the supervising technician was the only one who was an American person. And I ended up, for some reason or other, my English was very, very good, and I started slowly editing

the manuscript. We're talking technical manuscript research. And first with the commas, and with the this, and slowly but surely, over the years, I edited from one paragraph to the other, from one part to the other, and I didn't allow him to put my name on as whatever he produced, and produ -- the only place I allowed him to acknowledge me, he wrote a book on babies born with birth defects in the brain, because I was secretary to the Division of Neuropathology. And that's the only place my -- that I allowed him to recognize m -- I used to tease him, I says, "I don't want to be affiliated with this." And the work was very, very interesting. He left --

Q: What was his name?

A: Reinhart Friede. It was very interesting, because my name is Frida, but his was F-r-i-e-d-e, and only twice was there a mi-mix up, because I didn't hear the doctor in front of Friede, otherwise -- and I spell mine F-r-i-d-a. But, we -- only twice it happened that the names were confused. And he was a very straight faced, he looked very stern, but oh, did we have fun. I mean, we had technicians who were a lot of fun. I never lost a day's pay. I learned to get on my feet, I learned to invest money, in a small way. And I ret -- And then, they had a new director who came, who was a complete opposite, Dr. Gambetti. P. Luigi Gambetti, with such different personality, I thought I would never make it, and for three years, it just didn't work, and his wife wa -- he's an MD, his wife is a Ph.D., and she came, she's from South America, and it took three years to adjust, and to this day, I go and I visit with them, I invite them for dinner. Their daughters came in from out of town, I went. And I was able to say, "Dr. Gambetti, I don't understand Italian." And I

was able to close the door and say, “You have to hear me,” because his mind was someplace else, and I was handling a lot, a lot of money on grants. And I retired from there just in time, before -- as the health industry is changing, there’s no more Division of Neuropathology, as far as the hospital is concerned. I had hospital work, and bulk of my work was Case Western Reserve University, because of the research, and they eventually hired another secretary, she took my place as a matter of fact. And I ended up handling grants, and I kept screaming, “I trained to be a secretary, not a bookkeeper.” Finally got the stuff on the computer, and it was double work, because the computer did not communicate with the accounting department of Case Western Reserve University. So I was projecting on the computer, and multiplying, but then I still had statements every month. And I just didn’t like my work any more, because I didn’t do the manuscripts. You know, the word processors came out. I didn’t read them over and over. Today they are all type, they are all manuscripts more or less, change them, you know, on the word processors. So it just wasn’t the same and the set up with the administrators who are changing, and I got out just in time. I don’t think I could have survived it. But I learned a lot, my mind was working and he gave me a party when I retired, Dr. Gambetti. No secretary had what I had. He -- Dr. Russman, the ass-associate director, had a daughter who was doing, on the side or second job, or whate -- she did catering on her own, and we went to the conference room in one of the -- in the Bowwell Center. And he gave me a going away party with beef tenderloin, white wine, flowers, you name it. And I know what displeased me is I had to invite everybody in the -- in the Institute of Pathology,

even the people I didn't care. I had to think of people from Case Western Reserve that I had a lot of contact, from the hospital. I think I had about 100 - 110 people. And we had a storm that day. My girlfriend from Beria never made it, they were iced in. And they presented me with a gift certificate that just about covered a cruise, because I told -- I was so tired, I was trying to wind up everything, not to leave loose ends, be -- by the time I left, and it didn't work out. Everything changed afterwards, anyway. And that's the going away he gave me. I went shortly after, with a tray of candy and was able to write a note, "I know it's because of you that I had this." Today they couldn't do it, because the money isn't there, but that's -- that's what I got as a going away for retiring. It was such a different environment than the sewing industry, especially in the small shops. I worked in -- in the sewing industry I worked with, at the time, many Polish immigr -- DP's actually, who had gone through anti-Semitism, the camps. And when you sew, your mind is not occupied, so they would tr -- you know, they would talk about different things. And they -- I was raised whatever I do is good enough, and I was not afraid of anything. I mean, tar -- I was a shy girl and everything, I mean, talk about what was left, after that I just blossomed out until I wasn't afraid of anything, and I wasn't afraid to speak back. And it -- the store I worked in, it was the couple who owned it. He was low key, she was -- I don't know why these people were afraid of her, she used to come down and I don't know. The bookkeeper was an American born American, and she thought she was something better than anybody else.

Q: You're talking about the alteration store?

A: The alterations, and the store, she -- I mean, I faced her -- I -- I was not -- I was not concern, I mean I just put her straight. And I used -- I remember one time, I say, “What are you afraid of?” I says, “We all leave, they can’t keep the store going, they need us.” You know, there was six or seven of us working there. So, when I left there, my biggest pleasure was, as I was going to school and working there, and I decided I had to give up the working, ya -- because I couldn’t practice my typing. I did well in shorthand, but not in typing, and I just couldn’t keep up. My husband was hospitalized out of town, and I was driving back and forth on the weekend. And my biggest pleasure was when I went in and I was hired, through University Hospitals, I bought a used car, and I went in, because I had befriended -- her name is -- was Litta Ridman, she was 80 years old at the time. And I came in with the keys, and I said -- not knowing what I was walking into, I said, “I’m secretary to the professor of neuropathology at Western Reserve University,” and was it Fran, the bookkeeper or was it the owner Mr. Philips, who say, “What’s neuropathology?” And as a foreigner, it made me feel so gra, because I don’t know why, in the small stores, they just -- they try to -- to make you look down. And the head fitter was a German woman, Jewish woman, who knew less than I did in alterations, I guess, for some reason or other, she had learned, and really was -- at times she was alright. She had a husband who had MS or something. She had problems, but I just put my foot down, because I said, “She has problems, so do I.” And I remember a couple times, I took a gown and I threw it at her, because I knew more than she did as far -- nobody could take away the sewing from me. Took me a hard time struggling to become a secretary because

I was confident in sewing, but not as a secretary. B-Yet after working there, it worked out all right. I mean, I was confident, I was comfortable, I was respected and I worked in an environment that, you know, the hospi -- it wasn't even the hospital, it really is pathology, neuropathol -- you know, you get cornered in one small division -- where I was respected, and there -- there -- there ca -- there th -- you had MD's, Ph.D.'s, and very play -- you know, nobody put on the air, you were accepted, on -- on -- on -- on a same level. So I -- I worked myself out, and I started, quote, living. It's not a full life. My son went off to Kent, married. I have three beautiful granddaughters. One just graduated from high school. She is off to college in va -- in Virginia, she's off to college. Alicia just turned 18, Whitney will be 16 in September, and Erica, the little one, just was Bats Mitzvahed in May. And I hoped to go back and forth to Virginia, really. Besides, I've been traveling on a trip, a big trip once a year. And it's hard to see my grandchildren grow up, because I look at them and think to myself, "Oh my God, that's the age I was that Germans walked in on that time." And things are surfacing, I guess, that maybe I pushed back, that I didn't want to face. I have guilt feelings, when things are very, very bad for me. Not lately, so much. When I've gone through difficult times, I have felt that I was being punished, that I deserved it, because I didn't suffer the same as my family did. And it -- it just happens every so often, and I think what I'm going to do now is try to call it quote, finalize. I'm going to look into a trip to go [indecipherable] feeling -- and I know there's nothing there, to go to yadva -- to -- not to Yad Vashem, to Auschwitz, just to get it out of my system. And for many years, I thought, oh maybe my sister is floating around

someplace, and doesn't know where she is. And I think, as I get older, I realize how alone I am. I have no sisters, I have no nieces. My husband comes from a ra -- broken family, and I have no nieces and nephews. The fe -- cousins that I have -- I have one that I'm pretty close with. But he's quite ill now, is -- as it is, their children live in the same area where my son lives, all three of them. But I have, as far as family, family, but I ha -- I have no close ties. But I have -- still have friends from -- I met when I came to the States. My girlfriend Esther, with whom I'm very, very close, died many, many years ago, of breast cancer. Many years ago. And I have two of the -- the girls that I met from the sorority that I consider family. I go there -- I -- I'm not invited, I'm expected. But what happens, we're all getting older, so now the children are doing the holidays and it so happen they're out of town. So, my life is changing a little bit, you know, as far as that's concerned. But they're -- they're two friends -- I have other ones too, that I can depend on, and I consider family, but you realize, I don't know why, it scares me sometimes, because I don't want to get depressed, I don't want to run into -- to the elderly lev -- you know, left alone or something like that. And -- And to feel, you know, I do -- I do get down, but everybody does at one time or other. I seem to overcome it, and I'm very thankful for what I have, really. I'm comfortable financially. I take one big trip, at least once a year. Went to the -- a national parts la -- parks last year with a friend. The year before, I was in France. I have plans to go to Iceland in September. I've gone with Elder Hostel, and I go for short trips to an Elder Hostel with a friend, or I've gone by myself. I went to Equador by myself, had a strange room mate, the same thing to France, and that's

about it, really. But the guilt -- the guilt -- the guilt is there, the guilt is. Although I don't face real hard times, like when my husband was ill, and things came up, and it's a terrible, terrible feeling. I used to also shudder when I used to hear the airplanes, when they had the propellers, but now they have the jets. But I -- When the airplanes used to go, I just -- just absolutely shuddered, but now with the prope -- with the jets, you don't get it, so I -- I don't feel it any more. I don't quite have the nightmares I used to -- to have. I guess I'm settling, I guess. Trying to enjoy my grandchildren. Not one of them belongs to me, they all take after the father's side of the family, their grandfather, and the middle one takes after her mother's side of the family, because one is strawberry blonde, two redheads. And the eyes and the shapes, there isn't one that belongs to my side of the family, nothing's come out. But, make the best of it. So, I'm not unhappy, it's maybe not a full life, but I'm contented, make the best of it, you know.

Q: I have few questions. One is, if you're -- just talking about your idea of going to Auschwitz to get -- to get it out of your system --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and I -- and I -- it reminded me of what you said about after you arrived in the U.S., and -- and your aunt had wanted you go and say yisker for your mother --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and you weren't ready, because you didn't want to bury her.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Is this kind of like saying I'm ready to -- to bury her, or did that ever happen?

A: I -- I'm -- You know, first of all, when I went back to Belgium, 10 years after I came -- a year after my father died, my aunt brought up some of the ho-horrors, which I didn't want to listen to. And then people started talking about the Holocaust. I never -- When I talked about it, I talked about my years in hiding, things like that. I did not talk about what happened in the concentration camps. When it really, really surfaced is when I was interviewed for the museum, and I had to bring all that up. I had to dig in on -- oh, and I saw -- I saw Rachelle in Israel, spent a -- a night -- a day with her. I dug into a lot of things, and then I worked with a young man, I can't think -- I have his name written down, and he sent me -- I have the papers that show the number of th -- their records that were kept in Liège, of the numbers of the transport. And I guess -- No, I think I've accepted it, I just -- I just -- there's some -- I don't know if I'll go, but I'm going to look into it, just to -- I don't know what good it'll do just to -- I don't know why, I mean it's not going to do any good. There's very little left, I'm aware of it. And maybe go and see eastern Europe, I don't know. I don't know why I have to do it. But I've accepted a long time ago, if you can accept some -- something like that, there's still -- I don't know, some feelings or something. And now, with the grandchildren sometimes asking questions, it -- it has -- it has to -- it has to be accepted. I mean, there's no two ways about it.

Q: What do your grandchildren ask you?

A: That's interesting. Not much, not much, not much.

Q: You were mentioning earlier that -- that one of them is particularly interested.

A: The little one has asked me -- excuse me -- more questions. Sh -- I had her in the car with me, by myself, and she said, “Your mother died,” or something like that, and she started asking me -- when she just did a -- a project on immigration, and I gave her all the papers, and she did ask me why I left my father, which was very hard for me to explain. You know, there’s -- there were such hard feelings, there’s no -- no need to bring it up any more, it’s in -- in the past, and I just told her my father thought it was better for me to be with my aunt. She’s asked me more questions. Alicia, I guess through projects in school, I remember I had to tell her something, and I can’t remember what. Whitney, the middle one, has never asked me any questions, but that doesn’t mean anything. My son never asked questions either. I did hide the pictures, because everybody had died, and yet, when he le -- heard about -- that’s how I found out about the museum, and he told me about it, he apparently was very well aware of it, and what’s interesting is he named -- Whitney, the middle one -- I don’t know how you -- they ended up with Whitney after my mother, he said that it should always be remembered. And even when the girls have the Bats Mitzvah, he does bring up that my family perished in the Holocaust. It’s interesting, because I was never very traditional. He was not Bar Mitzahed, but he became very close with the temple, and the -- the girls are very -- course, well, he became involved somehow or other, even though I never pushed it. And I did all this for my children, so lot of things surfaced when I did the interviews, and things. As a matter of fact, my son, when he was in Kent -- I didn’t mention it, when he went to Kent, they had the Yom Kippur war, and he raised money for i -- for i -- for Israel. He and his room

mate, they lived in the Hillel House, the Hi-Hillel had rented a house and he -- and he's still friends with this guy, occupied the third floor, the upstairs. And they raised money for Israel. They made the national news as a matter of fact, because they raised money for -- he had -- it was a ham operator and when he told me was president of Hillel, I almost flipped because, I mean, you know, so I guess even though I was not traditional in keeping the holidays, so to speak, and things like that, there's some Jewishness in him and the girls are -- went through Bats Mitzvah and everything like that, so something is projected on him. And it's hard to tell with Alicia how much she feels or how much she does or -- you never know, and first of all, they live long distance. Maybe if they lived in town, it would be different, I don't know. Whitney's the only one who never asked, but she's the quiet one. I don't know.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is tape number three, side A, of an interview with Frida Wallenstein.

A: -- and so, you know.

Q: You're doing very well, but I know it's hard. I appreciate you doing it. I wanted to ask you about -- about speaking, too, because you were mentioning about your -- the testimony that you did for the Holocaust Museum. I believe that was in 1990.

A: I think so. [inaudible]

Q: And -- And you mentioned that it was -- that it was difficult to talk about it. Was that the first time that you had sat down and -- and tried to tell your story, through, of what had happened?

A: Yes, that was the first time. That was the very first time, and I really had to dig, and you know, sh -- I remember her saying, "How did you feel?" I had to stop and think, I mean, how did I feel? I don't know, it's not things that I think about. So you have to dig up all these memories and all these feelings. How did you feel? I -- I don't know how I felt, I had to stop and think. Was I scared? Sure, we were scared at times. What did I feel when my mother -- when I found out about my mother being deported? I remember crying in Brussels, I remember, and Madame Freidman forced me to go to -- I hated her, but she forced me to go to the shul, she thought it would be better for me. You float around, you have no thoughts. Why I came to the States? Who knows? I have no idea -- I really don't know, you -- you do things, you -- you don't think. I -- I didn't have an average teenage life. I mean, I look at my grandchildren and I don't know what I would

have done. Of course, no matter what war, not war, every generation i-is different The kids are so much more aware than we were. There's television, there's e-mail, there's internet. I mean, they're -- we didn't know. We didn't -- We didn't question, we didn't ask. I mean, children were to be seen and not heard, so I don't know, don't remember anything. So, I have to dig in, to really stop and think, and remember things. I know -- I don't even know if we were really cousin, my c -- we refer to her as cousin, her name is also Frida. She lived in Belgium. I came to the States, and I found out years later that she went to Israel. She married -- She married a French Algerian and she lives in Paris, and I've seen her twice, and then we dig into things and some things she remembers and some things I remember. But the first time this came about -- I don't think it did the second time, she -- she had to wake me up during the night because I had nightmares. When I was in Paris two years ago, and my cousin Miriam came in from Brussels, we spend the day together, she had questions about her father and thing. And I had to stop and think, because we grew up as -- we didn't question, you know. Turn it off.

Q: Is th -- Have you -- Did you find, when you did your testimony for the Holocaust Museum in 1990, was it important to you in some way, to have talked about it?

A: I did it originally to -- to -- what made me do it, because my son wanted me to do it. I think until then, I did not appreciate the importance of having testimonies, you know, so that, well, the non-believers will never believe it happened, but that there should be something that -- from survivors, t-to prove that these things really existed. I never thought of it in those terms before, never thought of it until Mark called me. As a matter

of fa -- I didn't think they would take my -- my -- my story, because when he first told them, I says, "Mark, they won't be interested, because I was not in the concentration camps." But apparently it was more than just for -- from people in the concentration camps, so -- but I didn't -- I didn't see the importance of it until -- until then. And -- And now, with the girls getting older, the grandchildren getting older and asking questions, and things like that, I feel it's important that there's testimony, what it -- what will happen years later, I don't know. Look what's happening in Yugosla -- it still goes on, it doesn't stop it, but at least there's proof, whoever wants to believe it, to know that it really happened. And we're slowly dying off, so there isn't -- you know, a lot of people have died since, and cannot testify.

Q: And for yourself, personally, was it important in any way, or is it not?

A: I never -- I never thought of it as being important for me. I only thought of it as being important for my -- for my son, and for my grandchildren, is -- I felt it was important. I, for myself, I mean, no, I didn't -- I didn't think of it that way, anyway, no. And I'm doing this also because of that, because it's very difficult, you have to dig up memories that are very difficult, you have to dig up feelings, you have to expose your feelings. I don't know.

Q: [indecipherable] You were talking a little earlier about your -- your work, in the doctor's office, and I just wanted to know when -- when you started that work, and -- and when you retired?

A: I retired December, 1991, the end of the year. I worked for 27 years. When did I start? 1975 - 1976, is when I started, yeah.

Q: And then -- And then, before that, you were talking about how you had -- you'd worked in the -- in -- in alterations, and that you had had trouble with -- when you were looking for work, is it -- as a seamstress, was it the Jewish Social Services, or -- did you find that -- that, during that time when you were struggling to find work, were y -- did you feel that you were being discriminated against in some way, or not respected, or what was --

A: No, no, y-you mean, the w -- to find work? I had no trouble finding work in alterations. That was wide open. There was no money in it, that's what made me leave. Bec -- I didn't go for the department stores for some reason or other. I went to the small shops, and sewing industry is predominantly Jewish, and I worked with, you know, a -- in -- in those days, DP's. I mean, today it's entirely different. I left because first of all my mind -- your -- y-your mind is not occupied, so you talk, and you bring up things. I was having problems because my husband was ill at the time, and -- and y-you have too much time -- y-your mind is free. In other words, your hands are busy, but not your mind. And I needed a better income than doing alterations. As a matter of fact, I just bought something in one of the department stores, and I had a pair of pants shortened, because I don't have the -- the mach -- my machine is old and it doesn't have some of the stuff that I need. And I -- I don't sew any more, and I did talk to the -- the woman who fitted me. It's -- I asked her -- she's from Greece, I don't know what her background is, and I let her

know that I was a fitter, cause the first one I had was terrible, was somebody new, new in the country and I knew she was not a fitter. And I asked for a real fitter. Anyway, she came and she said she was from Greece, and I let her know the training, and you know, my background. And I said I luckily left it, because they didn't pay. And she did tell me that it pays much better. I says, but not as well, probably, as the tailors, because the tailors supported the families, even if they did alteration, and she said yes, it was on the same par. So I guess things have changed. I don't know which -- at which point in life, but at the time -- at the time I did alterations, I even -- I did well. The dress shop where I had worked before I went to school, I -- they were paying a dollar and a quarter an hour, I got a dollar and a half. I ti -- he asked me to come and help. And I went -- A friend of mine, who was a secretary says, "Frida," she says --I was very nervous, very self-conscious about becoming a secretary, I -- my foreign background, and this and that. And she said, "Go on temporaries, that's a good way to start." And I got a job for one day at -- at a TV station. And I remember -- What did I make? In -- th -- Mr. Philips called me back. Oh, and I said, "Unless you pay me two dollars an," -- oh yeah, they were paying me two dollars an hour, temporary. I didn't know -- I didn't do anything, I di -- and he -- he never -- he never took me, so -- and there were long layoff seasons. They weren't fair in the way they were laying off people. M -- Talking small store, and if I was five minutes late, I lost the five minutes. And I went to work for University Hospitals, for some reason or other, I don't remember what I paid for bread yesterday, but I -- that was two dollars an hour, even at 40 hours, which I didn't put in, it would have been 80

dollars, and I was --what did I earn? Oh, wait a minute. I want -- I wa -- I was earning so much more it was unbelievable. I mean, there's no comparison, and like I say, and a -- I retired with a pension, which I -- I don't know if the stores do it, and the small stores are slowly disappearing. They can't survive with all the -- all this -- chain stores, so that's what made me leave, I knew I had to support myself in a different way and I said, I don't care what I do, I never, never want to face what I faced when my son was seven year old, where I did not have money to go buy food to feed him. And it never happened again, so I -- I -- I had illnesses, I had surgeries, I never lost a day's work which wouldn't have happened in those days in the sewing industry. And the factories, th-the sewing factories, the garment far -- factory had slowly, over the years, moved south for -- for lower wages, and now, of course, they come from overseas, so I had to get out of -- of that environment. And whether the department stores pay better, I don't know. Sometimes I think I should wan -- go back for a little bit part time, just to learn to deal with the new fabrics, and the new things. I still -- I still, I think, have a touch for it. I went through a period where I sewed all my clothes, I'm very had to fit. But you can't get the fabrics in Cleveland any more. There's one fabric shop left, but you da -- can't get the fine wools, and the silks, and the -- I can't even knit, because there are no knit shops. I can't get the yarns, or anything like that. That's what I miss. But I have no regret that I went to -- to where -- to what I did, the environment was entirely different.

Q: What year was your son born?

A: October 14, 1951.

Q: And you were married when?

A: I was married novem -- wait a minute, I was married November nine, 1946.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: A girlfriend went someplace, and my husband was there and I don't know, somehow or other, something came up about my speaking French, and he had studied French, and that's how -- he called me, and that's how I met him. I was going with someone from South Bend, Indiana at the time. I remember going by train to South Bend, Indiana. I had a distant cousin there, where I had spent some time, and I had met somebody. That's how I met my husband, to a girlfriend -- through a girlfriend. And he called me because he had studied French, and he remembered. He has a fantastic memory. And that's how I met him.

Q: What was his profession?

A: He was podiatrist. He was in school at the time. He was in school, he had two mo -- it was supposed to be one year, and the year he was there, he -- they extended the class to two years. And graduated, and he went into podiatry. But in those days they were called chiropodists, and they didn't have -- they were very limited on what they could do, you know. No surgery, they couldn't even prescribe an aspirin or anything like that. And we moved to Sandusky and then just -- no matter how hard he tried it, it never -- it never took off. That's why we came back to Cleveland. His illness, and then whatever. And then I couldn't go to work in Sandusky because I was married to a doctor and I didn't have a profession. And it was through somebody I had befriended there, that she

suggested I do alterations at home, and I says, “Wait a minute, I don’t do alterations, I’m a dressma -- I know how to make a garment, but I don’t know alternations.” And it was through her -- I would make hems and things like that, and I made a little bit of money on the side. And that’s how I went into alterations when I came back to Cleveland, because I tried the sewing factory, but the sewing industry was not the same, I couldn’t earn money or -- or anything like that. And I couldn’t ear-earn enough to support my son. And eventually, the Social Security laws came out, so I was able to earn, and I got Social Secur -- just as I got my job at University Hospitals, I got Social Security for him and for my son, until he reached, you know, age where they didn’t give it. So that helped me, because I couldn’t -- I couldn’t survive on what I was making. I was a -- making 80 -- 80 something dollar -- 80 -- was it 86 dollars a week, or something. 87.50, now I remember, a week. As opposed to a dollar and a quarter, or a dollar and a half an hour. And then I had benefits. I had sick days. And when -- I used to get sick every three weeks, not every month, I needed a day off. I was, you know, in bed. So, a-all together, it worked out very nicely. And it was a different environment. I never thought of going into an intellectual background, but it was marvelous. I mean, it was very enlightening. We had what they call now Research Associate they call them. People who came from different countries for two years, to do research. So you had a very diversified background, and it was very -- it was very good, it was very enlightening, it was not backbreaking, you know. If I had stayed in the sewing industry, I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t be even living here, even though it’s not high rent or anything. I would -- I would be on subsidi -- I would have to be in

subsidized apartments. Nothing wrong with it, I know a lot of people in it, but at least I'm free to come and go, and -- as I want, and live where I want, and --

Q: [inaudible]

A: Course, yeah, that came out of my tape, I know. I did not feel different at any time for being Jewish while I grew up in Belgium.

Q: Mm-hm, yeah, that did come out.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: That did come out, because that is very true.

Q: Yeah.

A: Go ahead.

Q: Well, I -- we were just talking a little bit off tape about your experience in coming to the -- to the U.S. and I wondered if you would talk a little bit about that again, about the religion question.

A: Oh. Oh, I -- I knew I was coming to a melting spot. I mean, I didn't understand the -- the -- the real details, or anything like that. I knew, even with the -- with the slavery, but didn't understand the full extent of it, until I lived with it and was exposed to it. And when I would go someplace and fill out a -- when I went to Lampole, which is -- was a sewing factory, one of the big ones in Cleveland, and I was shocked that they ask what my nationality was. And when I told -- I don't remember who I told, my family, somebody, I said, "I marked Czechoslovakia." And they said, "You should have said

Jewish." I says, "Jewish is a religion, it's not a nationality." I had to argue wh-why are people so conscious of what religion somebody is. I will discuss the differences if I have a-an -- an intelligent conversation. I worked with an Indian girl, you know, from India. I worked with a Black -- what they call a-an African American girl, and that was the beginning of -- where the -- the Blacks were, you know, being absorbed, and things like that, and talk openly -- I will talk about it. But, people will say to me about somebody, "Are they ja -- is he, or is she Jewish?" I says, "It never entered my mind to ask." Because I take a person the way they are an-an-and I -- and I don't think what are they. I couldn't understand, also, why they went into ethnic backgrounds, but I'm learning, I'm learning. It's interesting to find what is their background, you know, where their parents came from, because those are cultures. That I can understand. We'll discuss the -- I -- I would like to take a class in comparative religion, because I don't know anything about the Islamic religion, and I think it's very interesting, they all have their points. And that is something that really amazed me, w -- and at the time, I did not understand what's the difference what my nationality is, but now I understand. It's just -- I just took a class on immigration, through the elder campus at Tri-C, and the professor was very, very interesting. He happened to be Slov-Slovenian? Yeah. And he had taught at Case Western Reserve and everything. And we reached a point about the bilingual, the Spanish. And I told him he opened my eyes. I always felt, wait a minute, I spoke French, nobody bothered to have things translated in French, explain -- I had to learn English. Everybody who came had to learn English. And he pointed out to -- to us that Spanish,

you take Mexico, Texas, they were the Spanish people, and the British were stronger, so the -- the English wa -- language prevailed, and everything Anglican took over. And I looked at him, and I says -- he said, “Oh, they didn’t emigrate. They were forced into becoming part of the -- you know, of ameri -- part of the United States, and the English language was dumped into them, but that’s taking away what is right for them.” And I said, “Okay, now I understand, now I’m willing to accept that it should be, if necessary, bilingual.” First of all, it wouldn’t hurt, but you think, “Wait a minute, I barely spoke any English, I had to learn English.” But I can see their point, and I knew that the streets were not paved with gold, that much I knew. How hard it was to work, I don’t know, I was never made to [indecipherable] work, the factory flabbergasted me, because there were rows of machines, and it was piecework, and I was used to have one garment at the time, hand finished. I remember going with my girlfriend Elaine shopping for clothes and what I used to do is turn everything inside out to see if it was finished. And she didn’t want to go shopping, because even in those days, everything, you know, was -- was unfinished on the inside. And I learned to -- to do piecework. And then you had the oil that went around constantly around the machine. They also had -- They didn’t have a lunchroom, per se, they had a room where you brought your lunch, and -- and you ate in that back room. But you have to realize in the sewing factories, in the summertime, you worked on winter clothes. Wool, the lint. And we always changed clothes. I had what they call wrap around, they don’t see them any more. And I was just flabbergasted that that were the circumstances. I wanted to take up dressmaking and dress designing again, and the

foreman, Mr. Harris, I remember his name, said to me, “Frida, don’t waste your time in Cleveland, you have to go to New York.” And then I met my husband and I got married, so I never went through with it. But I had learned through somebody about Prinz beeterman. They made suits and coats, and they made a better garment. Some things were still finished by hand. And I had put an application in and I think I had put an application for hand sewing for some reason or other, and they never called me. And somebody -- I ran into somebody who said they were hired. So I re-contacted Prinz beeterman, and I went to work there where the conditions were much, much better. I made a lot more money by the hour. I was making a dollar something at Prinz beeterman, I went -- I mean at Lampoles. Went to Prinz beeterman, and I went up as high as three dollars something an hour piecework. And we had a lunchroom and everything. So the -- the environment was entirely -- entirely different. It was whiter, it was cleaner. And you have to realize, you worked in the sewing factory, sometimes it reached a hundred degrees in the work room. I think one of the -- it was a si -- a knit factory, I can’t think of the name, they were not far from where we were on Euclid, and they moved in the suburbs, and they had air conditioning, but we didn’t. And then I was told at -- how bad it was -- I don’t know what years it was, where they had the fire in New York, in the garment factories, because of the condition and they didn’t care about their people. So these are the things that -- I think that awed me that -- I don’t know. And then I used to think, oh, I reached a point in my life I used to think, wonder what my life would have been if I would have stayed in Belgium? I don’t think I would have struggled as hard as I did after I came to the States.

The hardest part, financially, was when my husband was ill and hospitalized, first for six months, then he was all right for three years, went back into practice. I worked for him. An -- B-But the first time with no money -- I mean, no money. Two months behind in the rent, utilities, you name it. And I had no one to turn to. I must say that the small Jewish community in Sandusky rallied, and somebody came to my -- to the house and ask me if I needed anything. As it is, I didn't need it, because my husband's brother gave us 500 dollars, we -- which helped me overcome the worst of it, and then I sold the house. I didn't make any money on it, but I salvaged some money and moved to Cleveland, which a -- I figured, I wonder -- the rent was 90 - 96 dollars, and then they raised it 10 dollars. And I figured, as long as the money lasts, I'll stay there. And it turned out all right. My husband came out of the hospital, went into practice and we got on our feet, quote, financially, and managed to survive. And then -- I wasn't wealthy, but I was -- I had my head above water. And my concern was always, I left an eight year old child at home alone while I went to work. He had no way of reaching me at the factory. And luckily, it was through some friends who lived in the same complex, that I knew they kept an eye on Mark. Like, he came home for lunch, and I would prepare his lunch, and I had a little TV tray -- table so he could have it, and years, years later, I -- some people would made comment because he went to Kent State University, and when he'd come home, I would have a glass of milk, and I would have a sandwich wrapped, and people used to make comments about it, and I said, "You didn't have what I had, where I had to leave a child to come home to an empty house." I hate when -- I -- I like when people have comments,

and my daughter-in-law teased for the longest time, because Mark was terrible in the morning, I couldn't get him out of bed. And the only way I could get him to sit up wa -- I used to squeeze fresh orange juice, and I would go and say, "Mark," and I would hand him a glass of orange juice. And that got -- that got him sitting up in bed. But the -- the financial difficulties were really, really bad. I don't think I thought of that time of even going back or anything. I also -- There were some hard feeling that I n -- that I never, never cleared my mind, is my father adored children. He never came to see his grandson. I did want to go back, and they offered me the fare for a boat or something, but I never told my father that I didn't have any money and how badly I was struggling financially. When I went back a year after he died, my uncle -- my father's brother Josef was still living, and she said, "Why didn't you ever tell your father?" And I guess I had too much pride. I never told him, I never -- and I understand he died, he had established his business. My father died a well-to-do man, but I never -- I never asked for anything. I guess we were raised --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: Did you -- This is tape number three, side B. Did you ever see your father again then, after you left?

A: No, I didn't. It was a Friday, early in the morning, we lived in Sandusky, and I got a phone call, it was the telegram office. Didn't speak French. My uncle was sending me a telegram, and they said in French, "Ton pere decee," and that's when I screamed, because

they were saying my father was deceased, and I screamed, and my husband came to the phone. I had no money, I had no passport, and I never went, I never saw him again, never. And I went back a year later. And I went -- I saw his widow. I found out that my father was very unhappily married. He had imported a woman from Czechoslovakia. You know, must say this, when I came to the States, the Americans thought Europeans were not discriminating because, well, we had a couple African from Belgium Congo, but you didn't have the discrimination against the Black population, like here. But you wonder why there is a war going on in Yugoslavia? My father wouldn't have touched a Polish woman. The -- The Czechs didn't like the Polish, the -- the Polish didn't like the Lithuanian, I mean the -- i-i-it's th-the ethnic background, it's amazing, it does exist. And she told me he never wa -- came. He walked around with my mother's pictures and my sister's pictures. And I went in to see her because my father had a ring from my mother, and I wanted it. And I thought, if she's wearing it, I was going to take it. She wasn't wearing it. And they had a couple things that were salvaged from -- I guess when my mother was taken away. I don't even know who stored them, never found out, never asked. And I guess everything came, and I took the train back to Brussels because my Uncle Josef had moved to Brussels, and the only family I had was in Brussels. But I had gone to Liège because my father, very shortly, maybe two weeks before he died, had made out a will leaving everything to his wife. And I found out that in Belgium you cannot disinherit a child. S -- Thr-Through a school friend in Liège, I -- with whom I was still corresponding, she got me a lawyer. I got a few dollars, not much. I did go back to

Belgium, but I had to go to Brussels, because my uncle was there, but the lawyer was in Liège. And of course, I walked in on my father's widow, and she did not know I was coming. And I guess walking and seeing just a -- a couple personal belongings -- she did give me the linens my mother had made by hand, I still have them, as her trousseau when she was a young girl. And I'll never forget I went back to Belgium and it was dusk, and I was sitting in the living room, and I was crying. And my aunt came in, and she says, "What are you crying like an imbecile?" And I just could not -- I could not relate to her. She's -- I don't know, she raves about her -- she's crazy about her son, her daughter, I don't know. And th -- She doesn't have the warmth. And she went through -- after they started picking up the Jews, they ended up in southern France. They did have a hard time, they didn't go out to camps, because -- I remember they said in one camp they deported the Hungarians, so they said they were Czech, and then the other camp they said deported the Czech, so they said they were Hungarian. So they managed to survive. They had two children. And I don't know what kind of camps they were, because I never asked. Her -- My aunt's family, she had a mother, a father, two sisters and a brother. When the Germans invaded Belgium, they got on a train -- see, we tried to go to -- to France, we didn't know they were going to invade France, her family got on a train, and the whole family was killed from the bombing, from the Germans. But yet, when I fell apart at the seams and came back to Brussels, and I was crying. I just couldn't -- I couldn't explain to her, I was exposed to -- t-t-to -- to -- to my war years, to -- to -- to -- you know, living in the States, I put everything in the back. I -- I -- I guess maybe I did it intentionally, I

didn't think of those things. You push something out of your way, push things out of your mind, didn't face what really happened in the camps. And here I was, and I went back and all this faced me, and everything surfaced, and she just couldn't -- I don't think she could appreciate it. So that's the hard time I went through. And I did tell her -- she wanted to know why I didn't come as soon as my father died, because we had a business, and his widow emptied th-th-the stocks and things, so she didn't pay the taxes the way it should, and I -- who even thought of it? As difficult a time as I had with my father after the war, he was a fantastic father as children. During the war he -- he -- we -- we had everything. My father did Black Market. We never went hungry. He -- When he used to -- to go to the farmers and bring eggs and butter and salt on his bicycle, and -- and sell it. We never -- We never went hungry. So, what happened after, was the effect of whatever happened to him that maybe didn't appreciate at the time. Now that I have th -- what I know is guilt feelings, because you survived, I think maybe he had guilt feelings of having survived untouched. Maybe it would have been different if he had gone out to the camps and survived, I don't know. But as I matured and got older and faced the truth what happened, maybe he had guilt feelings. I don't know, he never talked about it. And then, when my Uncle Gesa came, and I used to visit him quite often, I used to go to Denver about twice a year. Went with Mark, then went by myself. After surgery I went there. And I used to say to him, "Why didn't he come to the States to see his grandchild?" And he just raised his shoulders and never answered, so I don't know -- I don't know why he came. As a matter of fact, my cousin Miriam told me in Paris that he was very

good to her. He was very good to her, and what happened, I don't know. As children, I mean, we were provided for, we had caring parents. I don't wish any more on any other child. Financially, we didn't have much. I didn't know what a doll was, I don't think they ever bought me a doll. I think the dolls I got was from the schools. The schools, at Christmastime used to give -- I remember I had a doll. You have to remember they were the breakable dolls. And I remember I put it on the window sill, and there were some lu -- leftovers from the sewing my mother did, and the thing pushed the doll away and the doll broke, but they never replaced it. Bicycles we had, because we needed it for transportation. And after my accident -- I had an accident before we went into hiding. I went out to the country with my sister Berta and another friend, and I don't know what happened, we went ou -- I remember going uphill, and we had to walk and it was a hot day, and I wanted to sit down, and I -- I can't place it this time if my sister said it, or the other girl said it, they say, "Oh, Frida, now the hill goes down." And I got on the bicycle, and I remember as if yesterday -- I don't remember if it's my sister or the other girl, yelled, "Frida, you're losing your pedals." I fainted and I went down the hill in a fainted state. I guess th-the power of rolling down. And I went into -- I don't know if it was -- it was a building, I don't know if it was a castle. And it was somebody of aristocracy, and they brought me back with their chauffeurs, to the house. And I remember they gave my mother smelling salts, because one side of my face was damaged, and I must have had a slight brain concussion, because if somebody moved a chair or something, I couldn't take the noise. And my mother didn't wanted me to ride a bicycle. My father went -- somehow

or other found a second hand bicycle, so, you know, things were not produced, and I got another bicycle. So I had that accident, and then I had an accident three days before my birthday, my 17th birthday. But whatever could be provided for us, schooling, we had private tutors to help us more, but not the arts, or music or anything. First of all, I was not interested. Berta was, but I guess they felt that it was not important, so we didn't have it. I remember going to an opera with a neighbor. I went to see Faust. But they did not participate in the arts in any way. I never questioned it, never knew.

Q: Is that an interest of yours now? Are -- Are you interested in --

A: Oh, I -- I like classical music and the person who got me into it is my husband, he's very musically oriented. He plays the clarinet. And he would put on classical music. When I went to high school, I went to the extension, because the school was crowded, and behind us was the Conservatory of Music, it's well known in Europe. And then we would hear the students who were just learning. Do you know what it sounds like when they learn? I had no desire, I had no interest, but now I do enjoy classical music, to a certain extent, I don't like chamber music, I never learned to appreciate it. I haven't learned to appreciate opera, although I did go to one at the Institute of Music, with somebody who lived in one of the other buildings here. But I ushered at Severence Hall with -- which is the -- you know, the Cleveland orchestra? And I do enjoy classical music, I go to it. I go to the art museum whenever there is an exhibit, when we had the art shows, I love to walk outside. If you have enough time, you should go see the -- the museums, because Cleveland has a beautiful, beautiful Museum of Art, and Severance

Hall they're just remodeling. I just signed up to volunteer when they reo -- they're -- they're going to be playing downtown in one of the halls, but i -- they're moving back in January, after the remodeling, and I signed up to volunteer, so I am into classical music. My son played the trumpet, quite musically oriented. He gave it up when he went to Kent, don't ask me why. One granddaughter is interested in dancing and music, and she does play the flute. The other ones, no. But me, I have no desire to play an instrument, and I enjoy certain types of music, but it was not in our education or in our backgrounds or anything like that.

Q: Did you go back to Belgium any other time?

A: Yes. When my uncle died in Denver, and two years later, my aunt died. I didn't know at the time, but I was the executor for both wills. One of the heirs, my aunts nephew, was in Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, who was Communist at the time, managed to manipulate the money so the money didn't go into Czechoslovakia, and I was in correspondence with him. And somehow or other, I decided to go to Europe. Dr. Freide was in Switzerland at th -- at the time, in a -- in Zurich. And I was in correspondence with him because there were still some strands left behind, and so on. And I wrote to him I was going to go to Czechoslovakia, and he said, "If you go to Czechoslovakia, stop in Zurich, we'll show you the mountains." So what I did, I traveled on my own. I went to Zurich. He did offer for me to stay with them and I said no. They got me a little hotel you don't get through the travel agencies here, and Switzerland is very clean, so I got a room, and you could tell

the shower was added on. And I had breakfast and I took a couple trips. So I stayed in Zurich for two days, took some trips, went to Bratislava.

Q: What year was this?

A: When did my uncle die? Let's see, 20 -- [indecipherable] died about 20 -- 22 -- about -- a good 20 years ago. I don't have my passport and I don't remember exactly the year, but it's t -- about 20 years ago, and I went to Bratislava, which is Communist at the time. I had to have 10 dollars per day, couldn't spend it, the stores were empty. And I stayed with my -- with Eugene and Magda, my aunt's nephew and niece. Didn't see much. Spent a week there. Went from Bratislava to Brussels, which was a waste of time. Willy, my cousin, took me to see the city. I had spent three months in Brussels, I had no desire to see it, I didn't do -- oh, I did take a trip into the Flemish part, on my own. It was -- I have no -- I grew up feeling as a Belgian citizen cha -- chain -- sang the national anthem, and then after I came to the States, I realized I really would have never been a citizen, although my father died shortly before becoming a citizen of Belgium. You don't become automatically like in the States. And then I went from Brussels, I went to Paris to see Frida and spend a week with her. And then I -- And then I came back here. And then, let's see, did I go back again? No, I was out, I never went back. I have no desire to go back. I know Miriam said to me, "Why don't you go work for the common market. You're bilingual." By then I was losing my Fre -- when I say losing my French, I excelled in French, but to speak two languages, and translate, are two different things. You need a training and a background, and I have to stop and think, "How do you say

that in French?" I finally met some people, quite by -- was just a freak, I took the Rapid to go downtown and this woman sat next to me and she had a little brochure, and I says, "Oh, I didn't know the Americans were interested in Moliere." And she happens -- I don't know where she learned French, but she introduced me to a group, and they're strictly women, we get -- they get together twice a month, at Beechwood Place, and from 10 to 12, and then on Friday they get together at somebody's home, and everybody brings something, just for the purpose of speaking French. So I've gotten back into speaking French, and it's not a word of English, until you turn to somebody who just came back from France, who has close contact, and you say, "How do you say such and such in French?" Nobody could remember how to say flush a toilet in French. And I read French books. I go down to the library about once a month. Cleveland library downtown, the main library is magnificent. I have -- going to go down next week, I think, because they built a new building, and they re-did the old building, which was closed, and I got to know -- they had a -- the foreign literature library, and she just sent me a book. She knows the authors I like, or if she sees a book on Belgium, she'll send it to me. One of them she sent me was all about the percentages of Catholic -- Cath -- Catholicism. Still have some words with trouble. So I do that, and I do have the opportunity of getting together with people to speak French. And my granddaughters are taking Spanish. But they're long distance, you know, so it doesn't make any difference. As a matter of -- th -- Alicia called me, she said, "I have to take a language, I don't know what to take, maybe German." And I didn't want to tell her don't. I did say, "Oh, [indecipherable] you don't

want German." I said, "[indecipherable] to take French," I said, "but take Spanish, it's much more useful, you know, in the States." So I don't know what she's going -- she's going to do what she wants to do. She said something about taking Japanese, but she's not going into something where it would be required, so I don't know. But I do speak French. I have very little opportunity to speak Yiddish, and I trip on my words, bring in the English words, because the older generation is dying away, so the young people -- I'm sure my little sister probably didn't even speak Yiddish, probably understood it, but the young generations don't speak Yiddish. We have a lot of Russian emigrants, but the Russians are like the Germans, they don't speak Yiddish. Best of all, they couldn't. Every so often I find them, and I'll say, "Do you speak Yiddish?" So I can communicate with them. And maybe I'll break down -- I think Workman's Circle has classes in Yiddish. Maybe I should go back to it, maybe it'll come back. I just remember a couple letters of the alphabet. Don't know what good it is, but I did read articles that in Israel they're te -- teaching Yiddish. In my generation they always said, "A Jew can go anywhere, he's never lost, as long as he speaks Yiddish." But it's not true any more. In my generation, when I was young, yes. It did come in handy. I went to Israel twice, the first time on my own. I was going to take a tour, and some reason or other, I remember my cousin, the one who was in Belgium, as a soldier, I remember his address. They were pioneers on a kibbutz. And I wrote to him, and I said, "I want to come to Israel, I want to take a tour, but I'd like to see you again and meet your family." And he said, "Don't take a tour, come to the kibbutz." So I went on my own to the kibbutz, I arrived on a Friday, before

sundown, and on Saturday, my mother's side of the family came. My mother had a niece in Belgium and she went to Israel. And through the family I got her sister's address and they all invited me, which I didn't accept, but they grabbed me off, and I was taken to -- to visit Israel. I took one tour, that was it. Everybody else took me around, and then I went on the kibbutz and lived on the kibbutz, and got a taste, if you can, on a couple days at the kibbutz. Then I went back a number of years later -- oh, that time I traveled by bus everywhere. It was marvelous, because you meet more people, you learn more. And I took a bus back from ji -- di -- from Jerusalem to the kibbutz, and they dropped me off into the kibbutz, and my uncle had shown -- my cousin had shown me, "See Frida, this is the street I live on." And I said, "Sfee, you want me to remember? It's in Hebrew." So when I got off on the kibbutz, there was a man with a bicycle and he was a-a-an older man, and I looked at him, and I took a chance, and he was one of the Europeans from that generation, who had gone to Israel, and I was able to speak with him in Yiddish. So he took me to my cousin's house. The second time I went, I went as a volunteer for the army. I didn't like the experience, and the thing that saved me is every weekend we were off, so I went to the different -- to the various members of the family. I didn't tour as -- that much, this time.

Q: A volunteer for the Israeli army?

A: Y-Yeah, uh-huh. They needed volunteers. That started during the -- one of the wars or something, where all their people were fighting, and they needed people, and things like that. And I ended up working -- I ended up being placed on a ca -- on an army camp that

was -- packed medical supplies for the soldiers. My cousin from Belgium, her granddaughter happened to be in the army, right on the next camp, next to it, where the soldiers were. Teela. She was an officer. And she came and she found me, because I had written to them that I would be there. And we got a ride back to her house and then coming back we took a train and we took a bus. Some experience. So I stayed there for two weeks. I didn't extend my trip, but I did go to my cousin's kibbutz. And I just had -- something came up in Denver, and I was in contact with what I call my sabber cousin, who lived in Denver. And he called me twice. I recognized his voice, they have a definite ang -- you know, they speak English fluently. And he says, "Why don't you come to Israel?" I says, "You know, maybe you make me feel like going, but I want to see areas where I've never visited before." So I decided to go to Iceland in September. I don't know wha -- what I -- I understand is very beautiful terrain. Equador was very enlightening. People say Equador? What's in Equador? Well, it's different cultures. And that's what I like to do. And whether I'll go to eastern Europe, I don't know. One t -- One -- One step at a time. First of all, I have to make sure -- I'm getting older. That's why I walk, to keep my legs active, and make sure --

Q: Very lively.

A: To a certain extent, to a certain extent.

Q: What year was it that you went to Israel, volunteering with the army?

A: You know, you're aski -- I would have -- I think maybe my passport shows it. Let's see, I went to France last year, da --

Q: Ball park figure.

A: Yeah, okay. Maybe five years ago.

Q: And did you -- did you s -- s -- tell me about your visits with Rachelle when you returned.

A: Ah, the first time I went. What happened is, I went to Israel the year after I went back to Belgium again. When I went Switzerland, and that. And my aunt in Belgium was the same age as Rachelle. My aunt didn't like Rachelle either. And she gave me Rachelle's name -- she had remarried, and her address. And I wrote to Rachelle, and some reason or other -- trying to remember if I didn't get an answer, somehow or other, I got the answer three months later. I found the letter after I came back. And everywhere I went, I kept saying, there is somebody I want to see, but I can't read the Hebrew telephone books. And I ended up at a cousin's house that I had not met before. They were brothers and sisters from the one who lived in Belgium, and I didn't know they were brothers and sisters. And I was at Leelee -- Leelee's house, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, as a matter of fact, and I says, "Leelee," I says, "I need -- I want to get in touch with Rachelle, but I can't read the telephone," and she says, "Okay." Somehow or other, I don't know if she called information, she looked in the phone book, I don't remember. And I say, "I can't call on my own, because I don't speak Hebrew, and the Europeans who had gone, did not speak English." Now they all -- all -- all the Israelis speak English. And she got on the phone one evening, and in Hebrew, and she said, "Frida, it's the right Rachelle." And I got on the phone, she was crying. And what I did is I took a bus and I stayed with her. I

did not sightsee, I did not do anything. And I remember, had a dress with a little breast pocket, and I was going to a kibbutz on the outskirts of Jerusalem. These close friends that I have, who live on the west side of Cleveland, had two daughters who were in Israel for several months on kibbutz, and I had told, I says, “Sally,” I said, “I don’t care what, I want to see Cindy and Sharon.” And one lived in a remote kibbutz that was just being established. My cousin Sfee borrowed a car and took me there and just visited for a short time. But Sharon was in a kibbutz where I had access with a bus, and Rachelle put me in a cab, and I remember she gave me money to pay for the cab, and I says, “Rachelle,” I says, “I’m not a child any more, I’m an adult. I have money, I can afford.” She insisted. And she spoke -- I don’t know if she picked up some Arabic, or it was in Hebrew, she put me in cab to Tel Aviv, because all the buses leave from Tel Aviv. And I got to Tel Aviv, it was -- my son had warned me, it was like letting lions out of a cage. Saturday evening, the Sabbath is broken, and all the buses were lined up right behind the other. I mean, the station has been remodeled since, when I went the second time. And I had the name of the kibbutz written down on a piece of paper, until I learned to say kibbutz malach hameeshem, but at the time I couldn’t. And I missed the bus. With all those bus, you know, with the cab driver dropped me off, and I guess I missed my bus. And this soldier approached me, it was very interesting event. The soldier saw me, you know, with a little suitcase, and he approached me, and I told him where I was going. It happened to be he was in the -- once they serve in -- they have to back in the reserve once a year, until they reach a certain age. He was a young Frenchman who as a -- who had survived a war

younger than I wa -- he was younger than -- you know, about my age, I think. And he went to Israel after the war, and it s -- turns out that his wife's name was also Frida, and he stayed with me in Tel Aviv, until I got on the next bus. Told the bus driver where I was going, and what happened, the kibbutz as a business had a -- a motel. Well, the bus went to the motel and they had a cop --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: So, tape four, side A, and you just -- I have a cramp in my knee. [indecipherable]. Do you want to finish that story?

A: All right, I went -- I went to the -- to the American wi -- common because I had told Sharon, I says, “Get me a room at the motel.” She says oh, she went and there was a room available for me. Didn’t have a closet, the shower -- the water was cold. And the next day, I went to take a bus to sightsee Jerusalem, because I only had one day, and I missed the bus to take me into Jerusalem. And there was a man there who was from the outskirts of Detroit, and he had lived at the kibbutz for about seven years, and I got talking to him, waiting for the next bus. And he said he took groups of students o-on -- on -- sightseeing and things like that. And he had an appointment, and I met him -- he says, “I’ll meet you at the bus station at 11 o’clock, and he walked me for three solid hours, in Jerusalem. And the one day I didn’t sightsee was when I spend the day with Rachelle. When I went back the second time, I wrote to her, never got an answer. I told somebody her address, couldn’t find it, and I know the let -- I don’t know what happened to Rachelle. Have no idea, have no idea what happened to her. It breaks my heart, because he husband had died. Her -- You know, the man she -- she married in Israel. So I don’t know what happened, I tried in the worst way. I don’t know if I could have contacted an agency or what. I still -- I still have her address and nodob -- nobody seemed to locate the street or anything. So I’ve lost contact with her. I still have contact with my aunt in Brussels. I send her Jewish New Year’s card. I’m in touch with Frida in Paris. And I do --

I have contact with my mother's side of the family, the daughter of the cousin who lived in Belgium, I send a New Year's card. As a matter of fact, my granddaughter Alicia, the oldest one, went to Israel, and she did spend time -- her name is also Rachelle, my dau -- my cousin from Belgium, her daughter, she spent some time with her. My cousin Ahoud, and Ruth, my sabber cousin, happened to be in England at the time. I wrote to them, and then I got a letter from England that he was stationed there on his job for a couple of years. And I told her I'll never forgive her for not going to see my cousin Sfee, because he's elderly, I'm the only relative he has. But it's not somebody I cou -- have lot of correspondence, and I can't get through to -- now that they have telephones in -- in the kibbutz, I did call one time, and for some reason or other, I don't know what has changed, I can't get -- I can't get ahold of them on the telephone. And my sabber cousin, Ahoud, is the same cousin as I am, and I -- I should ask him for his phone number, I don't know. I have to call him one of these days and see if he can give me a phone number.

Q: What's Sfee's last name?

A: Well, Nishri, N-i-s-h-r-i, and you know, again, we go back ma -- not asking questions now. He is a first cousin to my father. He left at a young age, he married a woman, I think she's of Polish background. I never asked him about my grandparents. I would assume that his last name, European, was Adler. I mean, he's on my father's side of the family, but when I was there, his hearing was going, his eyesight was going. He was still clear minded. I haven't heard anything, his wife was still very active. She was a midwife, and

he -- when I went there, he used to go to -- to the fields, and bring food to the people who worked t-the fields, a-at the kibbutz, and I went with him. They treated me -- I mean, they didn't know what to do with me. If I had a -- a -- you know, they have the main meals in -- in -- in the common dining room, but Ahoud and Ruth came, and she served some soup, and she used to bake. If I as much as picked up the cup to put it to the sink, she would slap my hands, she wouldn't let me do anything. She was so glad that I was in touch -- in touch with them, and that's the only contact I have. And Miriam I don't hear from. She was in the States on business, and she was in New York, but she didn't tell me until the last minute, so I couldn't go to New York, and I did get a letter from her mother, saying she was due to come to the States, I don't know if it was Chicago or what, and I had told her, I says, "Miriam, if you let me know ahead of time, then I'll come, I'll stay in a hotel and I'll spend time with you." Well, I don't know if she didn't come, she didn't contact me. She did contact me when she was in New York. And I had it to -- a hard ta -- she kept changing hotels, so I had a hard time tracking her. My aunt came to the States one time, many years ago, when my son lived in Connecticut, and he and his wife went to New York, they drove and met her, because she went to visit somebody from Belgium, and the woman spoke English, and I guess French, and she was a translator. And then she came -- it was interesting, she came a second time, but she didn't tell me until the last minute. She went to Florida, to somebody. And I say, "Why didn't you tell me? I was going to Florida once a year to visit friends." But I never saw her. It was too late, and I wasn't going to pay the high fare of the last minute fares to go to -- to -- to flori -- she

was in Miami and I was going to Fort Lauderdale. So I have no contact with any of them. I had a cousin in Los Angeles, I vi -- my aunt, the one from Denver's daughter, lived in Los Angeles, I spend time with her. I have a cousin too, that I met after the war, who lived in eng -- in Cleveland, went to Los Angeles, and I do have contact with one of the cousins in Canada. But otherwise -- and one of them here in -- two of them, I -- actually I somehow or other re-made contact with Lana's daughter, to a certain extent. Louie died many years ago, with a -- of a brain tumor, so -- but from my father's generation, from -- you know, from -- there's a -- Sfee's the only one in Israel from that generation, really. There is no one else left, no one else. And on my mother's side -- on my father's side, that generation, everyone was gone. On my mother's side -- oh no, wait a minute, on my mother's side, one uncle had remained, their two girls and my cousin Paul in Cleveland. And I understand he was one of the oldest survivors of the camp, and he stayed in Czechoslovakia, Romania, every time there's a war, and every time they divide the country, it becomes another country. I was Russian after World War Two, now it's Ukraine. And he eventually came to the States, but his mind was not -- he was in his 70's, he had gone through World War Two, he was in a nursing home.

Q: What was his name?

A: Izaquavic. What was it? Oh, all of a sudden I can't think of his name, and I met him, and he -- the only way he could know who I was is by telling him whose daughter I was. You -- Because he remembered my moth -- you know, that's the way they said, they said, so and so's daughter, so and so's son. Oh, all of a sudden --

Q: How -- How was he related?

A: My mother's father.

Q: He -- Oh.

A: My mother's -- excuse me, my mother's brother.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, he was the only sa -- survivor on my mother's side, from that generation.

Q: And when you said he was one of the oldest survivors of the camp --

A: Of the camps, he --

Q: -- which camp -- which camps?

A: Who knows how many camps he was in, I have no idea. I think he ended up in -- I -- he might have been in Auschwitz when he was liberated, I -- I -- I -- I don't know. You know, these are the things we didn't ask.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, this is going back -- oh, I know what his name was. The Jewish name was Moishevolv. Now I remember. And I met him, but he could only relate to me of saying I was Hya's daughter. And he stayed with the su -- with -- with the -- the son, he stayed with the -- with the daughter. I don't know, he died, I think of a heart attack. He was in a -- on a picnic or something like that, so he didn't live very long after he came to the States. And that's about it, I mean, nothing else, really.

Q: Is there anything else that you -- that you want to say in conclusion? I mean, I'm just -- I'm thinking of one statement that you said that sticks in my head, is that you said, you know, that you haven't lived a full life, and I -- I wondered what you mean by that?

A: You mean a full life now? Well I -- You know, my -- my -- my children live out of town, and you know I was raised to -- to -- to be a mu -- to be married, to have a -- a-and be a mother and everything, and so I live alone, so I don't ha -- well, I don't have the male companionship. I dated. I -- I went out a lot, I -- I had male companionship for -- for quite a number of years. You reach my age, and I'm too active for some of them. I'm still fairly active. And I'm thankful that I have the friends that I have, that I can keep busy. I volunteered. I just lost my job volunteering, I have to find another one. I did date entry. I go back to the hospital and talk with Dr. Gambetti. I keep active and I keep busy, what can I tell you? And I started taking classes because I want to keep my mind working, and I have to find a niche for my volunteer work, because the woman I work for is fantastic. I still have contact with her, and I go there for the holidays. As a matter of fact, she called me this morning and I said, "The museum?" I says, "Well," I said, "I wanted the museum, there's an exhibit." And I say I want to go down to the library, because I was not available the day they had the grand opening for the old library, they remodeled the original building. So we're going to the library with her. So I'm thankful for the -- that I'm quote, healthy. That I have the friends that I have and I'm not isolated, and if I don't have to spend 10 years in a nursing home, I'm fi -- I'm fine financially, too, but I'm tha -- can't worry about it. And my son is doing well, and the children are growing up, away

from me. That's the thing, that I missed it. Not now so much, but when they were little, is to see them, you know, grow up, but they were here four times a year, and I went there, so -- and I went when Alicia had -- the oldest one had her tonsils out. But I missed a lot of the little things, you know, affairs in school. Oh, Whitney was acting in some plays, and I went because she had a play, but it's not -- it's not as often as I would have liked. But all that is gone, so have to take it from here.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: No.

Q: All right. Thank you so much. I think we could probably go on all day, but --

A: No.

Q: I'll spare you from that.

A: Yeah, yeah, well you're the one who keeps bringing all these things up. I don't know how you do it. Aren't you tired?

Q: Endlessly curious.

A: You mean, you're going back tonight? You're going --

Q: I don't know. We'll see. Well, this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Frida Wallenstein.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Conclusion of Interview