

**INTERVIEW OF SARA SALLY BEDZOW**

**November 11, 1999**

**Family history and war experiences  
described for Harry (Herschel) Hollander and Josef Golcman**

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## INTERVIEW OF SARA SALLY BEDZOW

**INT:** This is an interview with Sara Sally Bedzow, a survivor. It's November 11, 1999. What I'm going to do is begin with who you are and your family and your life in the present. I'd like you to say your name even though I just said it. I'd like you to spell your last name and to tell me how old you are.

**SARA SALLY:** I'm a housewife. My name is Sara Sally Bedzow. My family name is B-E-D-Z-O-W. I live in Montreal, Canada. I'm seventy-three years old and I look like forty.

**INT:** That's true. You're as young as thirty.

**SARA:** Thank you.

**INT:** And you're married.

**SARA:** I'm married. I have three children, all three married with spouses. I have two daughters. My older one is Frances.

**INT:** How old is she?

**SARA:** She's fifty-one. I have a son Michael what is forty-eight, married. I have a younger daughter Esther. She's forty-two.

**INT:** I'm going to ask you about your children but before I do let me ask you about your husband. What's his name and how old is he?

**SARA:** My husband, his name is Chanon, in English it's Charles. He just turned, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, seventy-five years, "biz a hundred un tvantzig" (he should live to be 120).

**INT:** And what kind of work does he do?

**SARA:** He's in real estate.

**INT:** And he has been in that work since-

**SARA:** When we came from Europe, he started as a customer peddler in Montreal. Then, a year after, he went into furniture and jewelry business. After a few years he got quite successful and worked very hard, seven days a week, and he went into real estate. Since then he's in real estate. We are, thank G-d, all right.

**INT:** So how long have you been married?

**SARA:** I was married fifty-three, it's going to be fifty-four years in March 2000.

**INT:** So you married after the war?

**SARA:** We married in 1946, after the war, in Torino, Italy, in a DP camp.

**INT:** I'll ask you more about that when we talk about the war. So I'm wondering if you could just describe yourself as a person with a few adjectives, and describe your husband Charles with a few adjectives.

**SARA:** I'm very happily married. We were very much in love when we started and thank G-d until now. We are very close to each other and very caring. There is always different obstacles. I'm not a yes woman and he's not a yes man, but when it comes to the finality, both agree for the same thing.

**INT:** How do you get to that point? How do you get to the point where you agree?

**SARA:** We discuss it.

**INT:** So you talk a lot to each other?

**SARA:** We talk a lot to each other. Everything is discussed. It's not me, I want this or you want this. We discuss why you want and then I discuss and we come to an agreement.

**INT:** Have you always been that way in your marriage or did you learn-

**SARA:** Always. I was very young. I had no parents and I had nobody. And he was very young. We had to turn to each other. We had to discuss, and I always used to say to him, "I want to be a part of your life." He was constantly working and I was with the children. When he came home, in every moment when we had together, we talked about it. I never told him you do this or do that or this, and I always gave my opinion. I had his mother living with us, but before I got married to him, and we were agreeing to get married, he said his mother has to live with us as long as she wants, and if not he cannot marry me. At that point, I didn't think of anything, just to be married to him, we were so much in love. I agreed. She lived with me for forty-eight years and I was never sorry about that. She was very smart, very dear. It was not easy. It was sometimes very difficult.

**INT:** Two women under one roof.

**SARA:** Not two women. Two women what they loved the same men, and it was different love. I learned one thing, the love for a wife is different than the love for the mother. I had a friend, she was an elderly, and when I got married and I used to turn to her and I used to cry. She said, "Listen," and she told me a very interesting thing. She said, "What's the nicest thing in flowers? It's a rose. You look at the rose and it's beautiful, until you come to the rose. You prick your fingers. This is life. The prickles mean much? No. The rose. You love each other, you will overcome. And remember, he loves his mother and he loves you. Don't pester him to make a choice." And since then, I never tried.

**INT:** So you really trusted this woman's words.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Why did you trust it so much?

**SARA:** It was wisdom. I realized, when I left her and I was thinking about it, it's true. When he walked in and he wanted to kiss his mother, the kiss for me was embrace, a different kiss. He kissed his mother for respect. I come from a European family what we respected mothers and fathers and aunts and uncles with such a respect. And I didn't have a mother. I lost my mother so young. And I said it's very nice to see this. She was a very wise woman, very bright. She understood that when she has to be around, she was around. When she had to be out to give us privacy, she did.

**INT:** What was her name?

**SARA:** Chasie Bedzow.

**INT:** Spell Chasie.

**SARA:** C-H-A-S-I-E. He loved his mother very, very dearly. The biggest respect, and I think it was very nice. He taught our children to respect elders and to give respect to me, what a mother needs. My children were not allowed to sit down at the table if the, they called the Bubba, if his mother was not at the table. To ask if didn't she feel like eating or she wanted to go to her other son, she had another son, fine. But she has to be asked.

**INT:** How did your children cope with that? Did they adapt to that or was that hard for them?

**SARA:** Very much they adapted. I think so. They respected and they loved her to the last moment what she died, and she loved them too. They saw this in the house. Maybe they were thinking that this is the way of life.

**INT:** When did she pass away?

**SARA:** She passed away four years ago. This is in 1995.

**INT:** And how old was she?

**SARA:** Ninety-three.

**INT:** So she lived with you?

**SARA:** For forty-eight years.

**INT:** From the time you got married until the time of her death.

**SARA:** Yes. She died in the house. When she was very ill everybody said give her away in a home, a caring home, a hospital and everything. I couldn't do it. I couldn't. I couldn't live with myself. All the good years we were together. Now in the old age, that she needs somebody, I don't know if she knew or she didn't know, somebody should abuse her? I couldn't. I hired help, thank G-d I could afford help, and we kept her home in cleanliness,

in the love, in affection and everything, and this is the way she passed away. She passed away on the hand of my elder daughter. I was in Montreal and I got a phone call and I arrived, and when I arrived she passed away.

**INT:** Now you're talking about two different places, so that's confusing. Where did she die?

**SARA:** She died in Florida. We have a second home in Florida, and my husband has businesses. We used to commute. When I used to go away to Montreal, she had a daughter, Leah. Leah used to come in and I had for her a nurse and I had a woman what she took care of her.

**INT:** This is when you lived in Montreal?

**SARA:** In Florida. After, when she got very ill, she couldn't travel. She couldn't travel, and here the climate was warmer and she stayed here most of the time.

**INT:** So she lived with you in your first home. Your visa took you to Montreal.

**SARA:** Always in Montreal.

**INT:** And then later, in the later years, you went back and forth.

**SARA:** We are not residents in the United States. We're not citizens. We just commute back and forth.

**INT:** Let me go back, because we'll talk about this again as your post-war experience. Would you describe yourself as a person? How do you see yourself? What kind of person are you?

**SARA:** What kind of person I am? I think I try to be a good person. I try to be a good mother, good friend, do a lot of charity work all my life. Help out elderly. Every time when I did something for charity, I used to work with elderly people, maybe on account I missed my parents or whatever reason.

**INT:** So you're talking about face-to-face support work was with elderly people.

**SARA:** Elderly people. Always wanted to work. And if I made a commitment and sometimes I couldn't come for that day, I tried to have somebody should take my place. This is a very responsible commitment. When I used to be sick, my older daughter Frances used to take and go for me. And I'm still very, very active in the Hadassah, in cancer research, in B'nai B'rith, in the synagogues, in all kinds of things what I can do for community. I feel that I had so much benefits from the community when I came and I was young, I want to give something back. It makes me fulfill my feelings. It makes me a happier person when I give.

**INT:** So you feel that when you emigrated to Canada, the community was helpful and supportive to you?

**SARA:** Yes. Yes. I tried to be right away in the community. I didn't try to be an outsider. I right away went into the synagogue. We moved into a neighborhood where they were building a synagogue. They needed fund-raising, so I used to make in my house all kind of sandwiches and things. I got involved. I went to work for bazaars, for different charities, in smaller scales.

**INT:** Have you always been that way, involved and a joiner?

**SARA:** Always.

**INT:** So in childhood you would say you had the same characteristics.

**SARA:** Even in ghetto. Even when I was a little girl and I had a brother. His name was Harry. He was two years older than I am, and he passed away. I remember when we had to do shalach manos, he used to go and I used to go, the two of us together. Thursday night...there were a lot of poor people in our city. It was a small city. My mother knew that they don't have for Shabbas challah or a case like this, and we were comfortable people. She always used to say Herschel to this one to have some challah for Shabbas, this one should...when she made, for instance...Thursday was in Europe a market day. From all the countryside they brought in chickens and all kinds of vegetables and everything. My mother used to take all these things and bring to the shochet and everything. She always used to put away for the poor people, I think a chicken, fish I think, and things, and we used to bring. I was always the one in the house. I have two older sisters, two younger ones. She always said I should go.

**INT:** You should go to the market?

**SARA:** No. To bring.

**INT:** To bring to the people.

**SARA:** To the market, there were some people what they used to...my mother didn't have time to go to the market.

**INT:** Why you? Why did you bring?

**SARA:** She knew that she could rely on me, that I wanted to go. I didn't look for excuses. And I felt good to bring this, and in time when I came after the war and we were in Italy, before even I got married, we were in the transit camp. There was a baby born. All the young couples got married and right away they had babies. The mothers were from concentration camp and weak and everything. I got involved in the children. I used to help out. I used to take them in the house and calm them and wash them and this, and said to the mothers, "You just take it easy. Have a rest a few hours." My mother-in-law, my husband's mother, was...she said, "What are you doing? Why are you doing this, to be involved constantly?" I said, "I like it." I felt good to help out. Then we need something like for children, clothes and everything, and I took a course in Italy of designing and sewing. And I saw the children didn't have what to wear. They used to distribute clothes, the Joint. I used to go in and I used to pick out all kinds of clothes and I

used to make little pajamas, little pants, little things. I took this course so we could make it, and I used to give to the children. So I always wanted to give of myself. I don't know. Some people told me that I'm not smart. Some people were laughing from me. Some people just...but to me it was this satisfaction. I enjoyed it.

**INT:** What did your husband say?

**SARA:** He liked it.

**INT:** He liked you doing this?

**SARA:** Yes. Until this day, always. Both of us, very charitable. Very. We are now in Montreal. Our kids are grown up, out of school and everything. When there is for Hillel or there is Talmud Torah, we always sponsor the children. Nobody knows. Yeshivas. They know. Everything. There is no such a thing...but this I was taught at home. Whoever comes in the house can never go out from the house without anything. This was taught in our house. Doesn't matter how much or what.

**INT:** Who taught you this?

**SARA:** My mother and father. This is what we saw in the house.

**INT:** So who makes those decisions? Do you make it together with your husband or do you decide to support something and he says okay?

**SARA:** No, we both together.

**INT:** You decide together.

**SARA:** Not decide. Like somebody comes in and asks for something.

**INT:** But if you're home alone, you also give.

**SARA:** I give it. Sure. It doesn't matter. And I say, "This and this rabbi was or this and this yeshiva came or this and this..." I gave. He said, "Fine." And when it comes to big amounts and everything, the rabbi calls up and everything, I said, "Fine. Call me up, I have to discuss with my husband," and we both decide.

**INT:** Give me some other adjectives to describe you. Charitable, social. Outgoing?

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** Friendly?

**SARA:** Friendly. Outgoing, friendly, love people. I love people and I love my family. I'm crazy for my family. There is nothing too hard for my family, for my grandchildren, my children. Anything. Even for my friends. My friends need me, there is not a question that I shouldn't go to help.

**INT:** What are your strengths as a person?

**SARA:** I don't know. I think I'm strong and I think I'm weak.

**INT:** In what way are you strong and in what way are you weak?

**SARA:** When it comes to certain situations, sickness or G-d forbid tragedies or anything, something like this, I can handle it. And after this I get so weak. I fall apart by myself. And I'm never a depressed person. People tell, "Oy, I have a bad day and I'm so depressed." I don't know what means depressed. I wake up in the morning, I have what to do and I will sit down...I love music. Love music.

**INT:** What kind of music?

**SARA:** All kind of music. Rock-and-roll, opera, concerts. We have season tickets. And I love sports and I learned how to play golf and I played golf with my husband. We have a lot of things in common. We do most of our things together.

**INT:** So when you say that after you're strong to face whatever it is you need to face, then after you fall apart, and it's always in private.

**SARA:** Always in private.

**INT:** How do you do that? How do you fall apart? What do you do?

**SARA:** I cry. And I think...then I sit down and I think to myself what would my mother do in situations like this? Always I talk to her. What would she do? Would she make an issue? Would she cry? Would she put on the children a nebech or something like this? She wouldn't. This is the way it is. And I have a very big belief in G-d. I believe in Him that He always helps me out.

**INT:** Could you say more about that? How does that help?

**SARA:** When it came to sicknesses, my husband had an operation, a back operation, I knew in my heart, I was talking to Him.

**INT:** Him is?

**SARA:** Hashem. And when it came to me, when my grandchildren were sick, or it came to my own children growing up and I was going through hard times in the 60's and everything, I always knew that it will work out. I never doubted. Hard, yes.

**INT:** Because of what you put into your children or because you trusted G-d?

**SARA:** What I put into the children. What I put into my children, and I knew that G-d has always guided me. From the time of the war, I had something in me that I will survive. Never dawned on me that I will get killed or something. I knew. I knew I will survive.



**INT:** Do you know why?

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** You just knew it.

**SARA:** Knew it in me. And since then, since then, I always have this belief.

**INT:** Has there ever been a hard time in your life where you began to wonder if this time G-d would help or not?

**SARA:** I didn't allow myself to think this way. Never. I had two brothers. They were very, very close to me. My husband had family. Most of my life I relied on my husband and myself and G-d. I'm not a person what I can go and confide to strangers or talk, things like this. I would always wait for the right time and we sit down and we talk over, the two of us, even encourage each other and we'll say "Gutt vet helfen." (G-d will help)

**INT:** So you didn't have best friends.

**SARA:** I had best friends.

**INT:** But you didn't talk about these personal things.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** That was always with your husband.

**SARA:** Always with my husband. I couldn't.

**INT:** Why?

**SARA:** I don't know why. Not that I didn't trust them. Not I didn't this, but somehow I felt more comfortable to talk to my spouse.

**INT:** And was that comforting for both of you?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You felt stronger from that?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** How did that conversation help you feel stronger, if you can describe that?

**SARA:** I will describe it. The two of us sat down. We are very close, very close. And I used to tell him how I feel. He used to tell me how he feels, and then we used to see all these obstacles and all these things. And by the end, when it was finished all these things, we would say, "Gutt vet helfen." I don't know how he felt 100% and I didn't know how I felt 100%. Always this word gave me a lot of strength in me.

**INT:** What word?

**SARA:** Gutt vet helfen.

**INT:** Which means?

**SARA:** G-d will help us.

**INT:** So how did the two of you...You said you are not a yes woman, he is not a yes man. And yet, you describe an acceptance between the two of you. He might disagree with you, but he didn't fight you about it. You might not agree with him but you didn't fight him. You somehow accepted each other.

**SARA:** We discussed it. We discussed all these things. It's final. We're not going to do it, we cannot do it. He said, "It's not right. Why should we do it?" I said, "Listen. This is the way the situation is and everything. Let's look what it's all about." And the more we discuss about it the more we saw.

**INT:** You worked it out.

**SARA:** Yes. And this gives me the inner strength in my life.

**INT:** So your husband is a tremendous support to you and source of strength for you.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And you would say you are for him as well.

**SARA:** As well.

**INT:** In the same way or is it different?

**SARA:** I don't know if it's in the same way that I know I am. When he walks in the house, after so many years and everything, he will call me from the garage he walks in. Even now. "Where are you?" Sometimes I cannot hear, I'm upstairs and this. "Why didn't you answer?" And if I'm not home when he comes home, he will stay in the office. He won't come home. To this day, if we sit down to eat or we sit down with...this is from the day what we got married, we share. I taste this. We order two different things, but we'll share. You taste mine, I will taste yours. Taste this. In this, somehow, we have such a bond, and this helps me through a lot.

**INT:** Why do you think, and I know some of these questions are hard, but why do you think that you and your husband developed this kind of bond? Certainly you know that many couples wouldn't talk about their marriage in this way. What about you and what about him connects in this way that has lasted all these years?

**SARA:** I will tell you why. I was very young.

**INT:** How old were you?

**SARA:** I was eighteen when I met him. I had two brothers I left behind. They come from a different environment and I come from a different.

**INT:** Who's the "they"?

**SARA:** My husband's family. He had a mother and this. Different. Very strong people. I come from an Orthodox family. They come more Conservative. They call themselves the Litvaks, more cultured in different ways and everything. When we got married, we were very young and very much in love. At that time, I didn't think of this, that it will work out this way. But we worked on it. Everything we worked. It was not easy. It was not easy but we worked on it and we tried one thing. In our home, in my home, I never heard shouting.

**INT:** Your home means your parents'?

**SARA:** My parents' home. Never heard shouting. Never heard destructive things. My mother and father used to say like this in Jewish, "A vort iz an azuz panim."

**INT:** Translate.

**SARA:** A word is a very destructive thing. If it comes out, it's very painful. You could never take it back. I remember my father, in our house, my parents' house...we were a big family. We used to sit around the table and talk about everything. We were very Orthodox. Somehow my father used to encourage us to read Polish and to listen to all kinds of things and everything. I remember this, and this I told my children always when they were very young. My father used to say to us like this: measure ten times and cut once. When I was young I didn't think of it what this means. Before you say something and before you do something...don't jump to insult or to hurt. Think about it. When I'm very upset, I don't say anything. I wait. I have dinner. We don't talk about it. When the situation is better and we are calm, I come back to the subject and I discuss it. Now that I'm older and I compare, I think I come from a very wise family. I read and I see by friends and by this, to compare to my life, for me it works. Maybe for somebody else it wouldn't.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** So this is what you brought to the marriage.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** What do you think your husband brought to the marriage that worked so well that the two of you are so close?

**SARA:** He always reassured me that I shouldn't worry for survival. He said, "I cannot promise you wealth or whatever, but I can only promise you to provide for you and the children the best I could," and I always had a lot of confidence in this.

**INT:** But did he have the same philosophy, a think...measure ten times and don't say a bad word?

**SARA:** Maybe he saw that I acted this way, that he was like this too.

**INT:** So he learned that from you?

**SARA:** I think so. But he's more maybe aggressive. Maybe more stronger to say right away...even when he said, I never answered and I never made an issue, especially when it was in front of the children.

**INT:** So the way you are helped you cope with the way he was.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So even if he did make you angry, you waited.

**SARA:** I waited.

**INT:** Until things were calm.

**SARA:** And then I told him he should never do this. A marriage, and this I could say to all the young marriages, is a two-way. They never could measure it, I give 50-50, 60-40 and everything. It doesn't work this way. When you want the marriage to work, you have to give and receive no matter how much more and less and you will overcome everything. And I think it strengthened our marriage that I was so good to his mother.

**INT:** And he appreciated that.

**SARA:** Appreciated that. Always. All his life he appreciated and he told me in so many ways and so many times.

**INT:** So it was another bonding experience.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So you described your strength and your weakness, that you're strong when you face life's difficulties in the face, and later when you're alone sometimes you say you fall apart and you think of your mother to guide you, and you use your husband.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And then you described sort of rebuilding from there to come out again and cope. Are there other things about you that you've had to sort of struggle with that you're not always so happy with?

**SARA:** I have other things what I went through. I think a lot about my family. A lot. I dream a lot.

**INT:** What do you dream?

**SARA:** I dream about my family. I dream about home.

**INT:** These are experiences that you've had that you relive in a dream or they are different things?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Like memories.

**SARA:** Memories in dreams. Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad. Even when I had bad dreams, I remember at home they used to say don't tell dreams to stupid people. The way they interpret is the way it's going to be. I don't tell my dreams to nobody. The only person I tell is my husband. Everybody can interpret differently.

**INT:** So you've never talked about your dreams just with the family around dinner?

**SARA:** No. They cannot understand this. They were not there. My husband went through a similar situation, maybe a different situation, but the same thing, ghettos and war and destruction and all these things. He more or less knows. I try to forget. I get involved in so many different things not to think about it but you cannot take this away.

**INT:** It's always there.

**SARA:** Always there. Always there. And somehow it bothers me, I don't remember the names of my nieces and nephews. I see the faces and I never remember the names.

**INT:** And that bothers you.

**SARA:** It bothers me. And I ask my brother Josef when I want desperately to know. He tells me. And I relive a lot what my brother passed away. It was a very hard time for me. It still is.

**INT:** So you bear these feelings and thoughts and dreams while you have the philosophy of a full and active life, of being charitable and believing that G-d will help you.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And the sad and difficult feelings coexist with your stronger, more active and hopeful feelings, like side-by-side.

**SARA:** Like a combination. I get involved in it right away. I get dressed and my friends call and we go to this event and this event and everything. It distracts you.

**INT:** And then you're in touch with the stronger, more hopeful side. And then there are times when you feel more of the sadness and the difficulty.

**SARA:** In the beginning, when I was very young, the worst thing was for me the holidays. Even now, when it comes to a holiday or it comes to a simcha, like at my children's weddings or the grandchildren's bar mitzvahs and everything, I go through a very hard time.

**INT:** Could you describe that? What do you mean?

**SARA:** Sadness.

**INT:** Before and during?

**SARA:** Not during.

**INT:** When does it happen and how does it happen and what do you feel and what do you think?

**SARA:** I feel that my parents didn't live to see this. There was a city full of young children, friends, a lot of friends. In Europe there were neighbors, a lot of neighbors. They were like family. We had a lot of family, uncles and aunties and everybody had ten children, eight children. I think of them. I have eight grandchildren so I had bar mitzvahs and everything. When I go for the festivities, the preparing and everything, I get sick.

**INT:** What kind of sick? What do you mean?

**SARA:** I get very sad. I get sick. I cannot describe the sickness, like mental sick, emotional sick. I'm so strong. I go out and I help out to be a part of it. They include me. I buy clothes and I will do and I will prepare and everything. The minute it's over, it's like it's gone, like a relief for me.

**INT:** The relief of having to do everything, you're saying. To just relax.

**SARA:** No, in me. Not doing. The feeling that my family is not around, that my family is not here, that my parents are not here. These type of things.

**INT:** So it never stops you from doing what you have to do, what you want to do.

**SARA:** I do.

**INT:** And it never stops you from the joy you feel for the simcha.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** But it's there inside of you. So how do you keep it so separate that it doesn't show?

**SARA:** My children help me.

**INT:** How do they help you?

**SARA:** They talk to me. They say, “Ma...” And my husband tells me...I say, “Maybe I should go to the doctor, maybe I should take pills, maybe I should do this.” He said, “No. You go on. You’re not sick. You enjoy the good things. You participate. You have a lot to be grateful. Forget it. Don’t think of it.” My children call me up and they say, “Ma, how do you feel?” I have a son Michael. I want to take pills, he will call up to the doctor and say, “Don’t give her any pills.”

**INT:** Pills to help you not feel so sad?

**SARA:** Sad. “Don’t. You’re strong, you can do it.” Frances, Esther, “You can do it.” The grandchildren. I have a tremendous love from them and this helps you. It’s like a support, a family support.

**INT:** I know this is a very hard question that I’m going to ask you, and I’m going to ask you to try and put words on the sadness. Some words are how sad it is that they were not here to have nachas from this simcha, to see their grandchildren, to have a life where they could see this. Are there any other words that you would put on this sadness that describes what you’re feeling?

**SARA:** What other words can I say?

**INT:** Maybe there aren’t any, but if you could think of some words, that would help.

**SARA:** Sad. Sad. Just sad. Not only for my parents. For the neighbors, for my children. It made such an impact on me the war, the things. We were happy. It was a happy home, a Yiddishe home. All of a sudden, gone. It’s very hard to understand this. And I was very young and I had a very happy childhood.

**INT:** Does your sadness about that life being gone and the people gone ever interfere with the joy that you have in the moment with your children or grandchildren?

**SARA:** No, never.

**INT:** So that joy is full.

**SARA:** That joy is full. I take that with full force.

**INT:** So you never feel that perhaps you shouldn’t have so much joy because there was so much pain.

**SARA:** I say no matter how much joy...I always say to myself no matter how much joy I have, it’s not enough for the pain what we went through.

**INT:** So you don’t deny yourself any measure of feeling the full joy.

**SARA:** No. Never. Never, never, never. I want to take in as much as I can.

**INT:** For you and them.

**SARA:** Yes. And I don't want anything should be taken away from them. It's enough that I suffered.

**INT:** Taken away from your family?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You said before that when you feel weak you do it in private, and you've just described how your family helps you when you feel sad. Is that a problem for you, that you share the sadness with your children, that they see that you're sad, that they know that you're sad, or is that okay?

**SARA:** It's okay. They have to know that there is suffering too. There is not always joy. You cannot forget what I went through and I don't want to forget. I don't want to sit constantly and dwell on this sadness but I don't want to forget this.

**INT:** So there always has to be a part of you that remembers.

**SARA:** Yes. And I tell my children and I tell my grandchildren, always, about their grandparents and what kind of life I had, from what kind of family I come and what the Jewish people went through, and there was a shtet (city) and there was everything. They should know. One thing has nothing to do with the other. (Pause)

**INT:** We're talking about how you balance the joy in your life and yet the sadness that's part of your life for the life that was gone, but also your sense that you must remember it and that your children must know it, and that it's always, always a part of your life.

**SARA:** Always. I cannot...this was my life, my family. No matter for how long I had it, I had it and this gives me strength. This is my roots.

**INT:** How would you say your husband handles his experiences? Does he carry them the same way you do? Does he have the same kind of sadness, or does he handle it differently?

**SARA:** My husband went through the war. I wasn't there. I was not part of it. He survived with his mother. His father died, the Russians came into them in 1939. To us, the Germans came in 1939. We had already the Germans when they had the Russians.

**INT:** Because that's where he was in Poland.

**SARA:** They took away all the wealth and everything. His father was a very wealthy man, they had business and everything. (?) took over and they threw him out. It was Socialist. He was a sick man. He had kidney problems, and he died two days before the Germans came in, in 1941. He survived. He ran away from the ghetto when they liquidated the ghetto, this is what I was told, with his mother, a sister, two sisters and a younger brother.



**INT:** I want to go over that again with the war years. You're saying that when he deals with what happened in the war, he has his family. He has people who went through with him.

**SARA:** That's right.

**INT:** So for him it's not the same sense of...

**SARA:** Not the same. And after he survived with a group of partisans where there were 1000-1200, 1200 people together. When I was in the ghetto, I was with my family. When they liquidated the ghetto in 1942, I only survived with my two brothers and my younger sister. I lost already. It was a different feeling.

**INT:** So it's different for him because his mother...

**SARA:** Yes. He was never an orphan. I was an orphan. When the mother died at ninety-three, he said to me, "I'm now an orphan." Before, you always have a mother. It's a different, completely different experience.

**INT:** So the pain was never the same as it was for you.

**SARA:** I'm sure after he lost a sister, his father died...I think it's not the same. We never compared. He understands why he went through the war and he saw what happened, and he saw killing and all these type of things. He had family, a mother, and it was a different experience.

**INT:** And he could listen to your sadness.

**SARA:** Oh yes.

**INT:** And support you in your sadness.

**SARA:** Always.

**INT:** He never couldn't handle it. He would always listen to you.

**SARA:** Oh yes. We don't dwell on it. We don't talk about it, to sit down and talk about it. It comes out in a conversation or when we get together with friends we bring out the shtetl. We bring out the families. We bring out friends. The two of us never sit and talk about sad things. We always enjoy the happy things. I try to make the atmosphere good in the house when he comes in. Always we go and come and Yiddish theaters, all kind of things like this. We try. Even when the children were small, we used to travel a lot. In the winter we used to take the children with. In the summer we used to go ourselves. And never sit down and dwell on negative things. It's past. You can't erase it, you cannot bring it back.

**INT:** So that's how the two of you have coped with this as a couple.

**SARA:** That's right.

**INT:** To focus on the positive and not dwell on the negative.

**SARA:** Yes, and to show the children, when they were growing up, a healthy life. This is a new country for me. For them, this is the country. They have to integrate with this life, but in a positive way, in a Yiddishe way. This is what we tried, in a Yiddishe way.

**INT:** So your greatest difficulties has really been coping with the losses of what happened in the war.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And other than that you really hold on to the positives and move forward is what you're saying.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Okay. Describe your husband.

**SARA:** I can describe my husband how I feel about him.

**INT:** Right.

**SARA:** Not what somebody else feels about him.

**INT:** Right.

**SARA:** He's the best husband what a wife can say.

**INT:** What makes him the best?

**SARA:** He's understanding. He's caring. He's loving. He's supporting. I don't mean supporting financially, but supporting in different situations. He has bad things, he's angry, he's this, he doesn't agree how I bring up the children when they were young, how I spoiled them, how I give them things. I cover up for them, and after he finds out, "Why didn't you tell me?" "I wanted to spare you." It's not so, I didn't want to spare him but I didn't want to make a big issue of nonsense. To me, I deal every day with it. To him, when he comes home from work and you tell him, he gets aggravated, so why bring it up? After, what is important now, tomorrow is history. This is the way I saw. Even now, when he comes home and everything...there is a song in Annie, "Tomorrow." It says he knew tomorrow he starts to laugh.

**INT:** So you know how to distract him from his moods?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You're very wise.

**SARA:** This is the only way. This is the way I can describe him. And we are very, very close to each other.

**INT:** What kind of person is he? Is he shy or outgoing? Aggressive or laid back? Just some attributes, characteristics.

**SARA:** He's very aggressive. He's very smart, very smart. He's very giving. He's very charitable in a way that nobody should know. He's an excellent father, this is what I think. Maybe the children don't think so.

**INT:** We'll find out.

**SARA:** Okay. Excellent. He loves his children. He loves his grandchildren. He loves the family. He has a lot of friends. The two of us have a lot of the same interests.

**INT:** And those are music, you said. Golf.

**SARA:** Music, sports, all kinds of sports. Hockey, things like this. Whatever we do. Exercise, walk, swim, everything together.

**INT:** And that's very natural between the two of you. It's not like, "Come on, come on..."

**SARA:** No, no. Natural.

**INT:** You just know you're going to do it together.

**SARA:** That's right. We go out and this is what we do.

**INT:** Let me ask you about your children. I want to ask about each child and who they are as people and what their lives are like now. Your oldest is Frances, you said?

**SARA:** Yes, Frances.

**INT:** She's how old?

**SARA:** She's fifty-one. She's married to a wonderful guy, Howard Shapiro. They have two children: Jason, what is in medical school, and Marnie. She's taking her Master's in Creative Arts, what I don't understand. To me, art is art and creative arts I don't know. Very nice children. Very loving.

**INT:** Describe Frances. What kind of person is she?

**SARA:** Frances is my oldest. I think she had the hardest time. When we came...she was born in Europe, in Italy. When we came to Canada she was eight months old. We were like newcomers, without family, without a language, without means. We had to work very hard. Everywhere I used to go, we had business, I used to take her along. I think she was hit hardest. I myself and my husband, we were not yet in the compliance of the new country. I still had the European ways. In living with a mother-in-law what she was the

third generation in the same house, she always used to compare. I didn't do this the right way. I, as a young woman, tried very hard to become...I was thinking to myself if I won't go forward, I will be backwards and I didn't want it. I was young. I started to read English. We used to go to night school. We couldn't afford to take babysitters, so one evening my husband went and one evening I went. We lived in very small quarters, always kept clean, nice. Then I put her to kindergarten, ballet. I used to take the bus, the streetcar, all these type of things, and I gave as much as I could. And then she acquired obligations. There came another child. She had to help out. She had to do. I tried to make it that she shouldn't feel with resentment, that you had to do. We tried our best. We gave her to Hebrew school. We gave her to the other school. She was a very, very good child. As a teenager she loved to have fun. She had a lot of friends and a lot of boyfriends and she made me lie for her. She used to make three, four dates for a Saturday night, and then by Thursday she decided which one she wanted.

**INT:** And you had to lie to the other three?

**SARA:** The other three, that she's not feeling well. She went out, she this, she that. And I felt very bad.

**INT:** But you did it for her.

**SARA:** I did, and I enjoyed seeing her growing up. I didn't have this. I used to grow up with them. I used to enjoy when they used to put on the music downstairs, the record player, dancing and everything. I used to sit on the steps, we had a split-level, and watch them and enjoy with them, and I grew with them. When they used to make homework, I used to learn the spelling. I used to learn English. I used to learn the songs. When they had the stereos blasting and everything, I used to close the doors. My mother-in-law used to say, "Meshugoyim. Who does things like this?" Never denied them.

**INT:** So you stayed the mother of the children even though your mother-in-law was there.

**SARA:** Oh yes. And I never used to let them know what's going on. It was hard times. It was Beatle times. It was long hair times. It was torn jeans times. She couldn't see it and I understood. In Europe, if somebody would go out with torn jeans or long hair and things like this, you would say he's crazy. He's running around...they would run after him. I could understand her. She comes from another generation. I came from a different generation already. I didn't try to bring in an atmosphere to say to the children the Bubbe this, the Bubbe that, or she should feel bad. There is always a way to smooth down things.

**INT:** And that was the way you always went, to smooth it down, to calm it down.

**SARA:** To make it easier for everybody. For everybody. And Frances got married and she had two children and she went through her own things. I always was beside her. Always. And I let her know that I always will be there until the day I could be around, for better or for worse. I love my children. I didn't have a mother to give me this type of love, so I wanted to be for my children.

**INT:** So what kind of person is she as an adult?

**SARA:** A wonderful person.

**INT:** I need more words.

**SARA:** She's a giving person, a very understanding person. For her friends, for her family, they could always rely on her. My whole family. In a daughter you cannot ask for a better one.

**INT:** How is she a good daughter?

**SARA:** She will come before a holiday. I don't have to say to her, "Frances, come help me." She's there. If I don't feel well, she'll call me a million times. If I'm sometimes in a bad mood or don't agree with her, I can tell her how I feel and I know that she will never get angry. She calls me right back. I don't have to apologize. And, you know, I learned one thing in my life. When you love somebody, it's unconditionally. You have to accept it. I have three children, three different people. I only try to see the good things, and the bad things I let them know. They're not perfect and I don't agree with it, but they're adults. I cannot...

**INT:** So you let them go their way and they accept that you have an opinion.

**SARA:** I don't let them, but they don't listen. I tell them.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** I was asking you about what kind of work Frances does.

**SARA:** When the kids were young, she was a mother at home. Now the children are older. They're in university and everything. She is a travel agent and she works. She's involved in a lot of charitable work in Shaarei Tzedek and she's involved in the March of the Living. She was involved in so many different things what I don't even know.

**INT:** So in that way she continues the legacy that you and your husband...

**SARA:** I hope so.

**INT:** Okay, let's talk about number two, your son, Michael. How old is Michael?

**SARA:** Michael is forty-eight. When Michael was born, Frances was two-and-a-half years old and I was home. He was a very good child when he was growing up. When he came to teen years he was a rebel.

**INT:** So that's what you mean by the problems of the 60's that you said before?

**SARA:** Yes. He wanted to...but he was always in school. He was always a good student. He moved out when he was eighteen years old, but he was always close to home. He always came for Friday night dinner. I always used to make all this to bring him. They went to camp, all of them, to Hebrew camp. He always used to work in the summer. He had friends, good, bad, I don't know. Friends. All kind of neighbors, good friends. He went to the university. He went to law school. To me, he's the best son. To me, what I think as a mother. He married a wonderful girl and they have three sons.

**INT:** His wife's name is...

**SARA:** Karen.

**INT:** And the boys?

**SARA:** Alga, Jeremy and Ada. I think he's a good father. In the 90's, to bring up children, there are certain things I don't agree and I let them know, but they have to live their own lives.

**INT:** Do you think it's harder than the 60's?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Harder than the 60's.

**SARA:** Different. I don't say harder, but different. In the 60's they had maybe drugs and they had all kinds of...now they have so much freedom with sex and with computers and e-mails and cars. Too much of everything. And traveling and everything. But he has to deal with it. I brought up mine and he has to bring up his. I let him know how I feel about it.

**INT:** And then he doesn't listen.

**SARA:** If he doesn't listen...

**INT:** And you're still close.

**SARA:** We're still close. He cares a lot about his family, about his sisters. Very much. And about his parents. He's very much, very much involved in charitable work with Israel and the synagogue, with all kind of different organizations. And he shows a good example for his children.

**INT:** What kind of person is he? What characteristics?

**SARA:** I think he's a very good person. Very good person. Smart. He's gentle. He's aidel. He has good feelings for people. He's kind to people. He's nice to people. This is the way I can see as a mother.

**INT:** So how did you cope with the difficult times when he was a rebel?

**SARA:** I tried to be a mother. Love. Love.

**INT:** No matter what.

**SARA:** No matter what. It was very hard times. It was a lot of tears. But my faith, my faith helped me a lot. I wanted he should go on the right track.

**INT:** So you did worry about him.

**SARA:** Oh, a lot. A lot. And thank G-d, it worked out.

**INT:** Did he know how worried you were?

**SARA:** Yes. Now he tells me that he knew. He told me once when he moved out and I was very upset. He came in and I was crying, and he said to me, "Ma, one thing you should know. This what you put in me for eighteen years, don't worry. This will never go away. This is always going to stay with me." And I can see now that it did. Many things what he does I see what we did. The way he handles his family, the way this.

**INT:** So when he moved out it was without your permission.

**SARA:** Without my permission. I couldn't give him the blessings. But I didn't fight it. I knew I won't win. I had to do not to lose him, to be always in contact.

**INT:** So describe that more, because that's an interesting philosophy. Do you know the point at which you felt you had to give in to do what? To keep what?

**SARA:** I knew that I have to give in, that this was the fashion. They wanted to show that they're independent. They are independent. They want to be free, and as long that he comes into the house, as long as he comes home Friday night for dinner, and as long as he goes to school, he makes good grades, and he's in contact with the family, he'll always...something good will come out of it.

**INT:** So you could cope with the rest of it.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** If he had dropped out of school, you would have worried differently.

**SARA:** Yes. If he dropped out of school and he wouldn't come home and he wouldn't have anything to do with the family, I would worry terrible. But like this, I still had the pulse, my finger on the pulse.

**INT:** So you always kept connection.

**SARA:** Always. And this is the only way what I felt that you have to do to keep close. I cannot fight him, do this, do that, do this. You can't. Maybe my thinking was not the right thinking.

**INT:** Did your husband cope in the same way?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** How did he cope with it?

**SARA:** He was always angry at him. He did not approve of what he was doing. He said it's not the right thing what he was doing. But I always told him it cannot be otherwise. It cannot be the way he wanted. It's a different world and the friends are different in a different country. We have to take the middle road. As long as he goes with us in the middle of the road, he will be okay.

**INT:** So that calmed your husband down.

**SARA:** He trusted me. He trusted me. He saw every year that it's not so bad. He goes to school, he makes good grades. He goes to work. He's not a spender. Whatever he made in the summer he used to give me and I used to deposit. He saw that...

**INT:** The important things were good.

**SARA:** Yes. He had values. He used to come home, he used to go to synagogue. He used to go...there was an incident that he came to me. He was in college and it was, I think, Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. I don't remember which holiday. He said, "Ma, I have an exam tomorrow." I said, "What is it? It's Yom Tov. It's our holidays." "The principal, the teacher, said I must come to school." I said, "Listen to me. You go into the principal and you tell him that this is the holiest day in our Jewish religion, and he should try to give you another day." He was fighting, I said, "Try it. If you won't do it, then we'll see what we have to do. Until you won't try it, we won't know." He walked in and he told him, and he said, "Yes. You're going to get your exam another day." When it came after, for the exam, there was half of the students Jewish, maybe two, three didn't come. He said, "You see. Michael came in and he asked me and I understand what religion is." I always try to teach them. I don't know how I would deal if he would say, "I'm going." I don't know. But I always...let's try. Then we'll have options. Then we'll see.

**INT:** So you made sense to him.

**SARA:** It looks like it.

**INT:** And that enabled him to cooperate with you.

**SARA:** Yes. It looks like it. Certain things I was...let's say it, I was choosing my battles. That's it. I was choosing my battles. When it was not important, I didn't even pay attention. Why do I want to lose? And now he's a loving...the best son. The best.

**INT:** What makes him the best son?

**SARA:** He cares. To me, if somebody cares, it's the best.



**INT:** And number three is...

**SARA:** Esther. Esther Malka. She's the youngest. When she was growing up, she had the best from all of the other two.

**INT:** The best what? What do you mean?

**SARA:** The best life. From experience from the other ones, and she was the youngest...the other ones were gone from the house. She was the youngest. She had her own telephone. She had a car. She was this. She was okay. Certain things she was a little rebel too. She was a rebel. She was a very good student. She went to Hebrew school. Then she went to Hebrew high school too. After she wanted to go to a different university what I didn't agree. So I went with Michael, went to the principal, the Hebrew principal, and I said, "I don't want she should go to this school." In America there's a twelfth grade. By us it's eleventh, then you go in for two years. She came out of a wonderful school to go this school. She's going to hang out on the streets? I went with Michael. We enrolled her and she didn't fight it and she went.

On the holidays, like vacation time, one year I sent her to France with a group of girls to learn French. Where we lived, in our province, you had to know French, a second language. She knew Hebrew, she knew English and she had to know French. She went there with the girls. My birthday is in July. I received a telegram, she was young, she didn't realize, from Amsterdam. She's supposed to be in Paris. How come there is a telegram from Amsterdam? I right away called to the school and asked for Esther Bedzow. The girls, nobody wants to tell me what. Her cousin was with her, Chana. I said, "Chana, where is she? I want the truth." She told me she went with another girl what I knew the parents to Amsterdam. She didn't want to stay in Paris and learn. She took off. My husband said, "She must come home immediately." I said, "No way. What's she going to do? She's going to come home. She's going to be angry. She's there already. Let her feel guilty. Let her know."

I called, she spoke to me, and I said, "You know what you did?" She sent a telegram, she thought it was a big thing. I said, "You're supposed to be there." She came home. Every child used to get a car by eighteen. She didn't get a car. This was her punishment. In the morning her father used to take her and at night she used to get a lift or she used to take the bus. Anything we decided, we stick to it. She was crying, she was this, nothing. You didn't deserve your privileges, we took them away. She graduated college. She went for her Master's in psychology. She got her Master's in psychology. She's a wonderful girl. Wonderful girl. She got married.

**INT:** And what does her husband do? What's his name?

**SARA:** Allan Feingold.

**INT:** And his work?

**SARA:** He's a doctor. He's the Chief of Pulmonology in a hospital. She has three children.

**INT:** The names?

**SARA:** Jessica, Lauren and Ryan. She's a very good mother. She's involved in all kinds of different activities. She's involved in the synagogue. She's involved in charity work. She's a good mother and a very good daughter. And this is my three children.

**INT:** How would you describe her personality?

**SARA:** Strong, caring, loving, good daughter, excellent sister, and I think a very good wife. Good mother.

**INT:** You said before your three children are all very different from each other, and yet you described all of them in the same way. So how would you say they're different?

**SARA:** Frances is more kind and soft. Michael is a male. He cannot...you know. He's different. He has different obligations. Esther is very strong. She has a mind of her own. She's not so...if I call up to Frances and I say, "Frances, I need you now," she'll drop everything and she'll come. She doesn't question, this, that, it's important. She asked for it. Esther, if I call up, "Come now," she'll give me a million excuses. "I have to do this." And it's true. She has to do this and she has to do this and car pool and all kind of things. She'll come later. They're different. But they're all good in different ways.

**INT:** So who is most like you and who is most like your husband?

**SARA:** I don't know. I think they're a combination.

**INT:** Who is most plugged into you, you know what I mean. Who understands you best?

**SARA:** I cannot say. I never had an experience what the children should disappoint me. They all discuss between themselves. If I tell one that I don't feel well, right away they call to each other.

**INT:** So they're very close with each other.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And communication is good.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Let me ask you...you had mentioned that you and your husband are very charitable. Certainly that legacy has passed to the children. You mentioned certain charities but I'd like to know more about your charitable work. It seems you're very broad. You give to many things. You've also done direct service to the elderly. Where else do you give charity?

**SARA:** UJA, very much. In Bonds. My husband was honored.

**INT:** By Israel Bonds.

**SARA:** Israel Bonds. He got his honorary degree in Touro College, what he's very much involved.

**INT:** So they gave an honorary doctorate.

**SARA:** Yes. And the whole family came. All the yeshivas, big and small, whatever. I'm involved in the community a lot. The synagogues. Now in Florida in the synagogues. We're involved in a lot of things.

**INT:** And economically your family has been successful.

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** And very comfortable, as you're describing.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Religiously, you said before that you grew up in an Orthodox home and you have a very strong faith in G-d. You joined the synagogue when they were building it. How would you describe your faith and how would you describe your involvement Jewishly and in terms of tradition? And this is you as a family.

**SARA:** I keep kashrus in my house. I observe Shabbas, but I'm not a shomer Shabbas.

**INT:** What label would you put on yourself and what label would you put on the family?

**SARA:** I will put my label I'm a good Jew.

**INT:** I knew you would defy the standard labels.

**SARA:** A good Jew. I observe all the holidays. I try to be a good human being.

**INT:** So the tradition is important to you.

**SARA:** Oh yes. Very much.

**INT:** But it's not the same...when you say you're not shomer Shabbas, it's not the same as your life before the war. It is different.

**SARA:** Different.

**INT:** How did you settle on this different way? What made you decide to live your life Jewishly this way as opposed to another way?

**SARA:** When we got married and we were in Europe and we saw all these type of things, I tried to persuade my husband the way I was brought up. He was brought up differently. He said to me like this. "Listen, it's better to be a good Jew than an ultra-Orthodox Jew." I said, "What do you mean, a good Jew?" He said, "Be involved in everything, with charity. Do what is right." And I'm not the type of a person to go everything. I'm not the

type of this I shouldn't drive Shabbas. I like the tradition, the Friday night, make Kiddush. He just had his seventy-fifth birthday. His bar mitzvah parsha is the second day of Rosh Hashanah. His bar mitzvah was Shabbas Shuva. Every year since I'm married, Shabbas Shuva the two of us go to synagogue. This year, when he had his seventy-fifth birthday, they gave him maftir in our synagogue. He knows. He's very learned. And he does all these things. We have mezuzahs on all the doors. We give tzedakah. There is Yom Tov. There's Chanukah. There's Pesach. Pesach is the chometz arousgenemen (taken out). We change the dishes, things like this. This is not Orthodox.

**INT:** So you're saying that after the war, had you lived life the way you wanted to, you would have returned to a more Orthodox life in the way you grew up.

**SARA:** If I would marry somebody else, an Orthodox person.

**INT:** So you were inclined in that way.

**SARA:** Oh yes.

**INT:** But it was trying to live life with him that made it different. Was that hard for you to adjust to?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** It made sense.

**SARA:** It made sense. It was easier. (Laughter) Let's say it was easier.

**INT:** So it didn't cause conflict.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** You were comfortable with it.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And have been. So how did you identify Jewishly in Montreal? What synagogue did you join?

**SARA:** An Orthodox.

**INT:** Why Orthodox as opposed to Conservative?

**SARA:** I was brought up this way and I felt comfortable. And my friends were over there.

**INT:** And your husband accepted that.

**SARA:** Oh yes.

**INT:** He felt more comfortable there also?

**SARA:** That's right. His father, in Europe, was a gabbai. In Europe, all the shuls were Orthodox.

**INT:** So his background was that also.

**SARA:** Yes. It was no problem to this, and we loved it. I remember when we came the first time to Miami and we had to drive, we felt very uncomfortable.

**INT:** What do you mean you had to drive?

**SARA:** To synagogue.

**INT:** So in Montreal you didn't have to drive.

**SARA:** Never. It was very close.

**INT:** And in Florida...

**SARA:** You have to. It's very far and there is no choice.

**INT:** So even though, as you say, you drove anyway, driving to shul was uncomfortable.

**SARA:** Yes. But you know, you adjust yourself.

**INT:** So you wouldn't put a label on yourself and you lived a Jewish life that's involved. Membership in a synagogue and always going and charitable and traditions. What did you want to give your children and how did you describe it to your children?

**SARA:** You have to be a good Jew, an honest Jew. Tradition is very, very important.

**INT:** So you wanted them to follow traditions in ways that were similar to you?

**SARA:** Yes. To marry in Jewish faith. Very important to me. Very. To know your roots and to be a good person. This is what I wanted them to know and this they should be.

**INT:** What is your belief about the traditions in terms of G-d and Torah and history? For Orthodox people, they might say that we do the traditions because it was given to us from the Torah and this is the way we follow. How would you describe your commitment to tradition?

**SARA:** This is what I describe too. This was our commitments, the tradition from the Torah. And we have to obey that. Everybody makes it lenient a little bit for themselves. The most important thing you should know from Torah...I feel the children learn Torah, they go to Hebrew school, they know what the Torah...when you learn Torah, you know. You're smart. It's law. It's ethics. There is so much ethics in it. Even the kashrut or things like this, cleanliness, you're a finer person. I believe that the children should know

it and they should see it. How can I say to my children don't drive on Shabbas when I do? Everything is by action.

**INT:** Have you succeeded in giving them the desire to be involved Jewishly in the same way that you are?

**SARA:** Yes. I can see. The way they are, they won't miss a Yom Tov to go to shul, come dressed accordingly, with a hat, with baalbatish, with everything. Be together with the family, their spouses and their children and everything.

**INT:** So you feel that you succeeded in passing that?

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** What about faith and G-d?

**SARA:** I don't know. I think they have faith in G-d. I think so. I saw experiences. We had an experience with Esther, that her child was very ill. She prayed and she...even her husband, Allan, wasn't so to G-d. He's more scientific.

**INT:** You said he's a doctor.

**SARA:** Yes. So science and everything. But when it hit the sickness, I saw that he turned to G-d, to faith, to belief.

**INT:** So you've given that also to your children.

**SARA:** I tried. I tried very hard. Now it's up to them. They're all adults and I cannot...

**INT:** So if you were to put a label on yourself and the family, if someone forced you to pick a label, where would you put the family? Not Orthodox. Would you say Conservative or Reform?

**SARA:** Not Reform.

**INT:** Conservative.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So that's the most comfortable place in terms of the current Jewish community where you feel that you fit and the family fits.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** What I'd like to do now is talk about life before the war, and here I'll do the same thing and ask you about all your family members and growing up and your parents and your siblings. First let me ask you what town were you born and where did you grow up?

**SARA:** I grew up in Leopoldow.

**INT:** Could you spell that?

**SARA:** L-E-O-P-O-L-D-O-W.

**INT:** And that's Poland?

**SARA:** Poland.

**INT:** What part of Poland was that?

**SARA:** This is not far from Warsaw.

(END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** You were describing the geography, that it was next to Riky.

**SARA:** Riky was a very big city, a lot of Jewish people. Our older brother and my older sister were married and they lived in Riky.

**INT:** But they were neighboring areas.

**SARA:** Yes, it was neighboring. It was seven miles from one town to the other. After the meal of Shabbas, we used to take a walk and walk there. It was maybe a half an hour walk.

**INT:** And what kind of town was it, Leopoldow?

**SARA:** Leopoldow was a very nice town. A lot of Jewish people. We had quite a few synagogues. We had a cinema. For a small town, it was a lot. There were a lot of cheders. There was a yeshiva. There was a Hebrew school. It was very baalbatish families.

**INT:** Was it an entirely Jewish town or a mixed town?

**SARA:** A mixed town. It was a mixed town. There were Gentile stores. We had a supermarket, one of the biggest, a Gentile. We had a business and we considered ourselves...we had our own home. We had help in the house, what lived a couple next to us. She took care of the house, helped out my mother, but we never went to restaurants. We were very Orthodox.

**INT:** Were all the Jews in the town Orthodox or was it also mixed?

**SARA:** Mostly. I would say 90%. 90%. We had next to us, to our house, when my father built the house, he built like a little synagogue, a shtiebel. A sochershte shtiebel, all the businesslite. The business people used to come.

**INT:** That would be from the word socher, meaning merchant.

**SARA:** Merchant.

**INT:** So it was called the merchant's shtiebel. Why did it have that name?

**SARA:** All the people what they used to come to daven were like considered...in the big synagogue, everybody went. Here were just some people, like tzvei (two) minyans, drei (three) minyans.

**INT:** But it wasn't a Hasidishe group.

**SARA:** No. Everyone was Hasidishe.

**INT:** Every Jew in the town was Hasidishe.

**SARA:** It was Orthodox.

**INT:** So there were no Misnagdim.

**SARA:** No. There was no driving on Shabbas. All the stores were closed.

**INT:** But when you say Hasidishe, that usually means the followers of a rebbe. Were there followers of a rebbe or Misnagdim, or you didn't make that differentiation?

**SARA:** I don't think so. I didn't understand. I don't know that.

**INT:** But what you call your family, Hasidishe, is there a name for the kind of Hasidim that they were?

**SARA:** I don't know. I remember...maybe Yossel knows better. Everything what happened, before Yom Tov, everything, the Tatty hut gufuren tzum rebbe (the father traveled to the rebbe).

**INT:** So he went. And the rebbe was in the town?

**SARA:** Not in our town.

**INT:** Where did the rebbe live?

**SARA:** The rebbe lived in another town. We had a rebbe too, but it was not a famous rebbe.

**INT:** So your father would go to the famous rebbe.

**SARA:** I think the Kotzker Rebbe.

**INT:** The Kotzker Rebbe.



**SARA:** I think so. I'm not sure. This you have to speak to Yossel. I don't know. He went to the rebbe. When the boys have to go to the army or mir daf machen a shidduch (you have to arrange a marriage), especially before Rosh Hashanah and a Yom Tov, Pesach, everything, the Tatty hut gufuren tzum rebbe.

**INT:** So why did he go to the rebbe?

**SARA:** To discuss, to give charity for the yeshiva, and talk everything.

**INT:** To talk about everything. To go over everything. And what do you mean for a chassunah (wedding)?

**SARA:** For instance, my sister was going out with a boy, so he went to rebbe to ask him if the shidduch is good, when they should make the chassunah.

**INT:** So the important things in life.

**SARA:** Yes. I was very young. I asked the Mama, "Where is the Tatty?" "He went to the rebbe." (Salka says this in Yiddish) We knew that something is going on.

**INT:** So would your father spend holidays with the family or he'd spend holidays with the rebbe?

**SARA:** Always with the family. He used to go the rebbe before or for a Shabbas. Usually he used to go in middle of the week and sometimes for Shabbas, but very seldom. I don't remember my father not being home for Shabbas. Always for Shabbas...

**INT:** So you're saying in the town it was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, and the Jews were all Hasidic, 90%.

**SARA:** Yes. They didn't ride on Shabbas (said in Yiddish). There were no cars. There were two cars in the city. There were no cars. The market, when Shabbas came, Friday night, to bench candles, I remember the chazan would go and bang on the window, "Shabbas, licht tzinen (light candles)." I remember. For Selichos. These types of things. This I remember. There were a lot of poor Jews. A lot of poor Jews. And there were like shoemakers, tailors, things like this. Teachers and merchants. Merchants. We considered ourselves upper-class. We had a store, we had our own home. The children went private. It was a different lifestyle, a different lifestyle. I remember that we had a nickname. Everybody in the city had a nickname. We had the name "Intelligentsa Family."

**INT:** Meaning?

**SARA:** The intelligent family. The family of intelligentsa.

**INT:** Was that only about your family?

**SARA:** Just our family. Every family had a nickname.

**INT:** Give me some other nicknames.

**SARA:** The other nicknames...the Schlusser Family.

**INT:** Which means?

**SARA:** They made keys. The Shoemaker Family. The Hasidishe Family, with the peyos.

**INT:** So why did your family have that nickname?

**SARA:** You know, my father believed that...like Friday, for instance. We came from school. He said, "Girls," or to the boys, "You have to go to the library and take books." The library was not Jewish books. He believed to take Polish books to read, not only be...I remember we were sitting at the table once and one of the siblings asked him, I don't remember which one, "Daddy, why are you making us go?" He said, "I remember in the First World War, I was not allowed to learn Polish." At that time was the Kaiser or something, and it was forbidden. And he said, "I learned in a cellar my Polish. I was an Orthodox boy. I learned in a cellar with my Gentile friends. I felt it's important to know the language what you live in." That's why probably they called us the name. We always had three, four papers, Jewish, came in the house.

**INT:** What I want to do before you go on is I want to find out who's in the family, everybody's name, how you spell everybody's name, and then as you talk about them...

**SARA:** Yossel spelled the names, no?

**INT:** Well, we will know who's who. I know it's a large family and we'll be talking about many people. So let's talk about...let me ask you about your mother first. What was her name?

**SARA:** Faiga. Faiga Rosa.

**INT:** How would you spell that in English?

**SARA:** F-E-I-G-E.

**INT:** Or G-A? Faiga?

**FRANCES:** It's F-A-I-G-A.

**SARA:** Rosa. R-O-S-A.

**INT:** And her maiden name?

**SARA:** Gedanken.

**INT:** Could you spell that?

**SARA:** G-E-D-A-N-K-E-N.

**INT:** And your father's name?

**SARA:** Jacob.

**INT:** Or Yaakov.

**SARA:** They called him Yankev.

**INT:** And your maiden name?

**SARA:** Golcman. G-O-L-C-M-A-N.

**INT:** And did any grandparents live near you?

**SARA:** Yes. My father's mother. She lived on the same...like you have a neighbor. How do you call it? The same lane. Like we had a house, and they had next to us a house.

**INT:** This was your father's mother. And her name?

**SARA:** I don't remember.

**INT:** What did you call her?

**SARA:** Bubbe. I don't remember.

**INT:** But she was alone. She was widowed.

**SARA:** She was widowed and she lived with a daughter. The daughter had a store from material and her husband was a Hasid and always was sitting and learning. Never went into the store. Never did anything, just learned.

**INT:** So this is your father's sister. And her name?

**SARA:** Her name...I don't remember.

**INT:** Nor her husband's name.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** So your father's mother lived next door. With her lived a daughter and a son-in-law.

**SARA:** And children. A lot of children. And my Bubbe used to come in every Friday to us for the Friday night supper.

**INT:** She ate with you.

**SARA:** Always. Always. Friday before benching licht, my father used to walk over and bring her in.

**INT:** Were you close with her?

**SARA:** Yes. Very close.

**INT:** So what do you remember of her?

**SARA:** She was a very kind, nice lady. I remember when it came Chanukah she had a jar of pennies and she used to make latkes. Every grandchild got five pennies. And Friday when she used to come in to our table she always said...my mother was sitting not facing my father. It was a very big family. When my Bubbe came, she always sat like I'm sitting, facing.

**INT:** At the head of the table.

**SARA:** No, my father was sitting at the head of the table, and she was facing him.

**INT:** At the other end.

**SARA:** The other end. Always. And when she wasn't there and we were eating mostly in the dining room, it was a very big family and our kitchen was not big enough, the chair was standing.

**INT:** So that was her chair.

**SARA:** This was her chair. My mother was sitting always on the right hand. She had to dish out. My mother used to serve the meal...take big platters to the table and everybody...we had plates stacked up and she dished out, gave a plate. My father first and everybody. And two girls, myself and Pearl or Raizel before she got married, helped, stayed there and we were serving around. And I remember one thing, and I told this to my children always. When she served everybody, there was always not enough left for her in the big platter. Nobody was allowed to start to eat before my mother finished. Nobody. My father used to sit and you know, you give your husband a big portion and everything, and when he saw that she took from the big platter to her plate was not enough, always cut off a piece and put it to her. This I will never forget.

**INT:** Why is it so important to you? Why do you think it's...

**SARA:** I think it was so nice. I felt it so considerate and so nice. We were eight children and the parents, the Bubbe, eleven people. When you dish you, you don't realize. There was always very little left, and she put everything on her plate and we took away the platter. This stays in my mind forever. I think it's a very nice thing. I think so.

**INT:** Any other memories of your father's mother, Bubbe?

**SARA:** I don't remember. Yes, she had sons what they lived not far from her, but they got killed by the anti-Semites in 1938 with an ax.

**INT:** Before the war.

**SARA:** An ax. I remember. I will never forget this. It was on a Friday. It was a stormy day. I think he went to the mikvah or someplace. I don't remember. It was such a tragedy. She had other sons. I don't...I remember we had a big family.

**INT:** So you remember hearing the news.

**SARA:** Not the news. In the house, screaming. We went into my aunt and everything. The brother made it to the house and he died. This I remember. The first time I saw that.

**INT:** And how old were you?

**SARA:** Maybe ten, eleven.

**INT:** What do you remember about how you handled that?

**SARA:** I remember it was Shabbas and we couldn't do anything, and after I remember Saturday night we went in there and there was candles, a lot of candles, around him and Jews were praying. My mother used to say we should go to the other children and everything. It was very sad. I remember a lot of sadness, the way he died. And we were afraid from the goyim, from the anti-Semites.

**INT:** Was that the only time that happened or were there other problems in your town?

**SARA:** A lot of problems, when they got drunk, especially on a Sunday. They were breaking the windows. They were breaking the this. In Europe we had houses what had roofs from tin. They used to throw stones and everything. This was an incident what had to do with that.

**INT:** So would you say before the war that you had to be careful, that there was concern about the townspeople and anti-Semitic incidents?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And how did that affect your family? What did your family do because of this problem?

**SARA:** We lived with it. The police. My father used to give big presents for Christmas to the police and to the, here you call it the commissioner.

**INT:** The town government.

**SARA:** To protect us. You live with it. You try to avoid. When we used to put out candles or a Yom Tov or things like this, we used to close the shutters. You live with it. Like here you have incidents. You live.

**INT:** Were you afraid to walk around alone?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Afraid to walk to synagogue?

**SARA:** No, no. We didn't come to this. It started already before the war, in 1938...

**INT:** More serious.

**SARA:** More serious. I think it started in 1936, I would say, when in Germany the Jews start to escape. I remember came a lot of Jews from Germany, and each family had to take in a family.

**INT:** What do you mean had to?

**SARA:** They had to. The community.

**INT:** How did that work?

**SARA:** The community said each one of Jewish came in, you have to share. You have to take in. Where are they going to go?

**INT:** So there was like a Jewish Community Council?

**SARA:** It was not a council.

**INT:** Just people knew.

**SARA:** People knew. I remember when they came in to us, we took in a family, a couple with two children. He used to say that he was a jeweler, and the Germans came in and they told him, "You must leave right away," and they didn't give a chance they should take anything. They came in when we were sitting in the dining room and eating and everything, they were eating always with us. I remember when they were telling us everything I walked out and I said to my mother, "Ma, do you believe it? They probably were very poor. They're making up stories." I couldn't understand that things like this could happen.

**INT:** Things like what?

**SARA:** Like you come into the house and say, "You have to get out in five minutes."

**INT:** You couldn't believe that the Germans were doing this.

**SARA:** Exactly. I didn't know Germans, that people can do this. To come into our house and tell this to my father and mother, take and go? I didn't realize this. My mother said, "Yes," and she explained us and we should be kind and we should share and we should be with them and we should make them feel comfortable. Everybody in the town had to do things like this.

**INT:** So this is before 1939.

**SARA:** Yes, before.

**INT:** And you were helping the German Jews who were escaping from Germany.

**SARA:** From Germany. Only from Germany. Then in 1938, Josef was in the army, my older brother.

**INT:** Wait, because I want to get the names. Let me just ask. So your father's mother lived next door. Anybody from your mother's parents nearby?

**SARA:** Nobody nearby.

**INT:** Because they had passed away or...

**SARA:** No. They were far away. They were in different towns.

**INT:** Where were they?

**SARA:** In Adamow.

**INT:** Could you spell it?

**SARA:** I don't remember. A-D-A-M-O-W.

**INT:** So your mother, Faiga Rosa, was from the town of Adamow, and her parents were there.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Did you visit them?

**SARA:** Oh yes.

**INT:** So what was the relationship like with your mother's parents?

**SARA:** I don't remember her mother, only her father.

**INT:** And his name, do you remember?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** You called him...

**SARA:** Zayde. I don't remember his name. He was a red head. I think there were only three kids, my mother, a sister and a brother. They were very wealthy people. They were in lumber. They used to buy wood what you "atartack," I don't know how you say this in English. When you take the lumber and you make like plywood or wood like this. This was their business. They lived beautiful. We used to go sometimes on the holidays. My mother always used to go there before Rosh Hashanah with my father. The mother was there buried and she used to go to her grave, then she used to visit.

**INT:** What's her mother's name?

**SARA:** I don't know. I don't know. (Whispers)

**INT:** Is that right?

**SARA:** Greena. Richtig (right). Greena.

**FRANCES:** I thought that was also a sister's name of yours, Grenya.

**SARA:** No, no.

**INT:** So Greena had passed away, so she went to visit the grave and to visit her father.

**SARA:** Her father before Yom Tov. And he lived with his son.

**INT:** But they would go without the children.

**SARA:** Without the children. But in the summer we used to go by train. When she used to go to visit her father and to the grave, she always used to go with a driver, with a horse and buggy. I remember the last time she went, she left on Saturday night to drive a whole night, to be there for Sunday and to come back on a Monday.

**INT:** So it was that far.

**SARA:** Yes, very far.

**INT:** Many hours.

**SARA:** Oh yes. Many hours.

**INT:** So it was not easy to visit.

**SARA:** No, no. Very far.

**INT:** So the other brother and sister cared for your grandfather.

**SARA:** Yes. He lived with his son, and the daughter lived not far.

**INT:** So who was in the family? Go from oldest down. Names, and please spell, your best guess in English.

**SARA:** Butche. Boruch.

**INT:** Boruch would be Hebrew. Butche.

**SARA:** Butche.

**INT:** Butche is the Polish name?



**SARA:** Yes. He was short. They nicknamed him Butch, and they called him Butche.

**INT:** How do you spell that?

**SARA:** B-U-T-C-H-E maybe?

**INT:** So that would be the guess. His Hebrew name...

**SARA:** Was Boruch.

**INT:** He's the oldest.

**SARA:** He's the oldest. He was married. He had a wife, gorgeous. Oh.

**INT:** A gorgeous wife?

**SARA:** Gorgeous. She came from a family...I will never forget this. I must tell you.

**INT:** What's her name? Do you remember?

**SARA:** No. Yossel knows.

**INT:** Toba.

**SARA:** Toba. They lived near Demblin.

**INT:** Which was near you?

**SARA:** It was not far from us. They were, I think, money lenders.

**INT:** You're talking about Butche's wife's family.

**SARA:** Family, before he married. I remember when he was going out with her, my father was very proud. He sat down and he took all of us, this is an example to us. He was so wise, my father, I must say. He took us all around.

**INT:** You are how old at Butche's engagement?

**SARA:** Maybe seven, eight.

**INT:** Okay. You're seven years old.

**SARA:** And he sat us down and he said like this, "Listen Butche. You're going out with a girl what I'm very proud." He didn't go out, they "red" the shidduch.

**INT:** It was a shidduch.

**SARA:** And he said, "You're setting the example for the whole family. You have five sisters and two brothers. The way you're going to conduct your life and the way you're

going to be, this everybody will follow. Don't ever do things you should be ashamed to bring to your wife or to come into my house with your wife and children. Always you should be proud of it."

**INT:** And you remember this.

**SARA:** I remember where I was sitting there. Isn't it wise? Think of it. I'm thinking of it now. And I remember before the wedding, the parents came. There was something going on and they lost a lot of money. They were money lenders and something happened, and they were sitting. And I was like a girl what I wanted to know everything. I was there, between the legs going in, going out, just to hear.

**INT:** There's a word for that. It's called yenta.

**SARA:** A yenta. That's what I looked like to myself. I said I look like a yenta. (Laughter) And I remember they were sitting in our dining room and my mother prepared and they were eating, and the mother starts to cry and they said they cannot give a dowry like they promised. In Europe you have to give a "naden," and they cannot make a chassunah. My mother stood up and said, "There is no discussion. For money you don't lose a shidduch. Don't worry." And my father said, "I have eight children. Every child, the girls and the boys, will get the same thing, 5,000 zlotys." 5,000 zlotys at that time maybe as \$10,000. But he said to them, "My boys and my girls are getting the same thing." And I remember when we went to their wedding. We went on horse and buggies, all dressed up in the finest. They were in a different city. When we arrived it was dark like now, and everybody was outside with the lights, the candles. The chuppah was this. We arrived and the wedding...this I will never forget. This stands out in my mind.

**INT:** So you have a very wonderful memory and it's full of vivid pictures.

**SARA:** Yes. I wanted to remember this. I don't remember names. I see the faces. And they moved to Riky and they were very, very successful. My father gave them the money. He rented a store and he was very successful.

**INT:** So he became a businessman.

**SARA:** A businessman, very successful. As a matter of fact, he wanted to buy your uncle's house across the street. The war broke out. I used to go there...every Thursday was a market day. When I came from school...in Europe everything was in big sacks. There was a store, packed people. My mother made me and Herschel go to them and to help to watch, to be in the store, that people shouldn't take out.

**INT:** So the family was expected to help each other.

**SARA:** Yes. My mother and father said, we didn't even ask questions, "Put away the schoolbags," and we went.

**INT:** And Butche had children.

**SARA:** Two children.

**INT:** Do you remember?

**SARA:** I remember the children. I don't know their names.

**INT:** What were they, boys or girls?

**SARA:** I think a boy and a girl, or two boys. I don't know.

**INT:** You don't remember. Who comes next?

**SARA:** Next comes Yossel, I think.

**INT:** Yeshaya.

**SARA:** Oh, Yeshaya. He was a baby when he died.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** This is a continuation of the interview with Sara Sally Bedzow. It's Wednesday, November 10th, 1999. When we stopped, we were talking about who is in your family, and we started to talk about your siblings. First you were talking about Butche, Boruch Yehuda, being the oldest. He was married and had two children and had a store, and how you and your other brother would help them on market day. So before we move on to the other children, could you describe Butche's personality, what kind of person he was?

**SARA:** He was...as I remember him, he was a very loving son and a wonderful brother. I remember an incident in 1939. It was just a day after Pesach. Here they call them the skinheads. By us it was the anti-Semites. They made a fire. We lived in a court, like one house near the other. There were six houses. It was Saturday night. We all went to sleep. All of a sudden, I didn't feel well and I had to go to the bathroom, and in Europe, when you had to go to the bathroom you had to go outside, and I was afraid to go outside myself. So I woke up my mother, and she heard noise. She looks, the house is on fire.

**INT:** Your house?

**SARA:** Our house. The other houses were already completely to the ground burned, and the people tried to wake us up, and banging on the shutters, but we didn't hear. She started to scream to my father. His name was Yankel. "We are on fire." He ran in, and he grabbed the Sefer Torah from the house, and he grabbed my younger sister. She was a baby. My mother woke up the rest of my sisters. Josef was in the army, he wasn't home. I ran in with Harry, with my brother what is deceased, in the store. Thursday was a market day, and we always had like the money and everything, and Friday was the delivery of merchandise. My father in the war, the First World War, he lost a finger. He had a concession that we were allowed to sell, for this you have to have a special permission,

cigarettes, and all kind of different things, I don't remember, whatever. Harry said to me, "Everything is in the store." Monday we used to bring the money to the bank to pay. We ran in to the store. To our store we could run in from my parent's bedroom to the store. There was a door. We run in to the store. He grabbed the...it was in a tin box, all the money, and there were two bags with cigarettes, with tea, with pepper, all the expensive things, and the store was closed from inside with a, I don't know how you call this.

**INT:** A bar, a latch?

**SARA:** A bar, yes. A bar. He opened the door, he opened the bar, and my mother with my father and everybody was outside. Just the two of us were inside. And they were screaming. The house was on fire and we were still inside. We opened the door and we were both schlepping the two bags and he was carrying the money. The minute we stepped out from the door, the ceiling, the roof, everything fell in. And my mother and father saw us and they started to scream and cry and everything. They put in a call to Riky, to the city, and my sister and brother lived there. Nobody had telephones in the houses. When you put in a call to the post office, then they came. I don't know who put it in, probably the aunties or somebody. All of a sudden, an hour or two later, my brother came, Butche, and he walked over to us. I will never forget. We were all sitting outside, and just the two bags with the merchandise and my mother was holding this, the money. Nothing. We didn't have anything. And he said to us like this, "Don't worry. You have insurance and I have money." My sister, the older one, she was pregnant and she came maybe an hour later. I don't know how she came.

**INT:** This is...

**SARA:** Raizel.

**INT:** Esther Raizel.

**SARA:** Esther Raizel came, and she was holding two hands of sugar. We all asked her, "Why are you holding sugar?" She said when you're pregnant, you're not allowed to touch your body or the baby can have some marks or whatever. If she had something in the hands, then she wouldn't touch. And they came in and everything was gone. Six families were outside without a place.

**INT:** So you're talking about Butche's kindness or willing to say to the family, "I will help you."

**SARA:** And he didn't leave. And there was a Gentile what he had a store in a bakery, and he walked in to him and he said to him, "How much are you making in the store?" So he said, "I'm making so much and so much." He said, "I will give you double what you make. Give it over to my father. Don't sell it, just give it over."

**INT:** For them to sleep.

**SARA:** Not to sleep.

**INT:** To have a business.

**SARA:** Have a business. "How much you make?" I don't know what he said. "I'll give you double whatever you make, and you let them take over." He went in to another house what they were a very big house, Gentiles.

**INT:** Which he?

**SARA:** Butche. He was the oldest. Josef was in the army.

**INT:** So he was taking charge.

**SARA:** He took charge. He was always very kind, very smart. Very smart and very enterprising. Like right away you could see. And he walked in over there. We were a family of children and everything. We had no place where to sleep, where to be. My father's sister had a very big house not far from us, and she wanted we should go to her. My mother said, "No way." My mother said, "No. We are on good terms, I don't want to go in with my family and to stay there. Okay for a day or two or whatever, but not to stay there with them." Butche walked in...he had to go back to his business. He walked in to this Gentile's house, a tremendous house, and he said, "You don't use the whole house. Give me the front from the street." There was like a store and it was...I don't remember, two, three bedrooms and a beautiful, large kitchen. "Rent it." They said "fine." He said, "You have to close the door." I remember like today. He said, "You have to close the door." He was afraid; it was a Gentile. We shouldn't have access to go to his house or he shouldn't have access to our house. And he said, "Okay, we're going to board it up." And he rented for us the house. We moved in right away. Whatever we just had...

**INT:** So you lost everything.

**SARA:** Everything.

**INT:** So did someone say to you and Harry, "Get the money?"

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** You thought of it yourselves.

**SARA:** Ourselves.

**INT:** As children.

**SARA:** Children.

**INT:** How old were you in this story?

**SARA:** In 1939 I was almost thirteen years old.

**INT:** Almost thirteen. This is before...

**SARA:** Six months before the war.

**INT:** But there was beginning to be trouble, and you know that it was an anti-Semitic act.

**SARA:** Sure. Only the Jewish houses were burned, and just this courtyard. We knew. Friday before this...the children used to help to put the money together, and the two little ones, my two younger sisters, never took part in it. Only me and Harry. Pearl, my older sister, probably she was busy with something. Always was me and Harry. Always helped to the parents. And my father Friday was busy, to go to the mikvah. My mother was busy with Shabbas. This was our job and we knew where the money is. We put it away over there in the store.

**INT:** So it shows a lot of foresight to think of that.

**SARA:** This is normal. We had obligations.

**INT:** Right, but the house was on fire. You could have just run out.

**SARA:** No. We knew that if we ran out...

**INT:** You have nothing.

**SARA:** We have nothing. And at that moment, the only thing we were thinking is the money to grab and to go out through this door, but when we saw the two bags...

**INT:** Why not?

**SARA:** Why not at the same time? We grabbed the two bags too.

**INT:** So you were thirteen and he was?

**SARA:** Maybe fifteen.

**INT:** Let me move on through the family. Did Butche survive the war?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** He and his wife and children did not.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Who comes next in the family?

**SARA:** I think a brother what he died.

**INT:** Do you remember his name?

**SARA:** I don't remember his name. Like my brother said, Shaya? I don't remember his name. I remember my mother always talking about him. He was a year old and it was before Pesach and he got pneumonia and he died.

**INT:** And when she talked about him, what was her attitude?

**SARA:** Sadness. She lost a child. He was sick and she lost a child.

**INT:** Next is?

**SARA:** My sister Raizel, Esther Raizel. She was the oldest from the girls. She was beautiful. She was so beautiful, not that she was my sister, everybody in our shtetl admired her.

**INT:** Who did she look like? Did she look like your mother or a different kind of look?

**SARA:** A different kind of look. My mother was short. Maybe she had my mother's personality. She was kind, she was smart, she was with it, but she didn't look like her. She was tall, she was bright. She knew that she was pretty. She knew. She always brought out from herself the best. She had curly hair. In Europe, curly hair was something special. Always wore it long and she was tall and slender. We all looked up to her. She was like the oldest in the house. She was close to the rest of the siblings.

**INT:** Did she help your mother with the younger children or you didn't see her that way?

**SARA:** When I was already a child to understand, she was almost married.

**INT:** You didn't know.

**SARA:** I didn't know if she helped. I'm sure she did. In Europe, especially in our house, one helped the other. It was not you do your own things.

**INT:** So were you close with her?

**SARA:** Very. Very close. I used to go to her like the weekends. Shabbas was no school and Sunday. We used to come to her. She always used to buy us presents. She got married, she did very well. She had a lovely husband, I don't say in looks but in personality. She helped out in business too to him. They had ready-to-wear merchandise.

**INT:** That was new.

**SARA:** Yes, at that time, and especially they were selling it in the market. They had a store, and after they brought the store outside. They did very, very well. I remember when she got married, she wanted...my father furnished her apartment. They rented an apartment. She wanted a white kitchen. They went and there was nothing built-in, like here you build in cabinets and this. And she bought all these things. She took pride in everything. And when she had the first baby, this I will never forget, she got help in the house. She helped always her husband in the business. The girl was a Jewish girl and she

was not so clean. She came to my mother and she said, "I don't know what to do. This girl is not so clean." My mother said, "Listen. Let her do not so good than you should do good. She does, that's it." Things like this, and I was a little girl, stands out in your mind. She was kind to the parents and to us and to my sister. When we had the fire, she was pregnant. I don't remember if this was the first baby or the second. I don't remember. My other sister, Pearl, was supposed to have...she was "geret" a shidduch, like the boy was supposed to come.

**INT:** What's it called?

**SARA:** A shidduch.

**INT:** But you said something else.

**SARA:** "Geret."

**INT:** It means talking.

**SARA:** Talking. The two parents were talking, they made arrangement.

**INT:** And then the young people would meet.

**SARA:** Yes. And this boy was supposed to come to us. The fire was on a Saturday night and the boy is supposed to be on Thursday, come for Shabbas. She didn't have what to wear. My sister said to my mother, "You don't worry. I'll send her my wardrobe." We moved into this house without anything. My mother went out. She right away got dishes. In Europe they had the stores from the dishes and everything. She sent in the clothes, and my sister got dressed in her clothes. She looked gorgeous. My sister felt so uncomfortable to say..."Here we got burned out, here I'm wearing such a gorgeous clothes," but when she got married my mother went to make her wardrobe in Warsaw, and she came back with the nicest clothes, beautiful hats and everything. She had gorgeous clothes. I remember my mother said, "What do you care? You look beautiful. He will fall in love with you. What do you care whose clothes?" And this is the shidduch that happened right away. She was a beautiful person and a loving sister. This is the way I remember things. Maybe it was not the way...maybe other things were there too. I'm sure between children any jealousy or whatever, but I don't remember this.

**INT:** You don't remember jealousy.

**SARA:** I don't. I was too young. I was too young and too busy and too involved in other things. I don't remember this. Every time when she saw us when we came to her...

**INT:** Her is?

**SARA:** Esther Raizel. When we came to her, me, my younger sister with the parents, we didn't go too often. We were in school. Shabbas you didn't drive and things like this. We saw each other maybe once a week or once in two weeks. Every time was very nice.



**INT:** How did you cope with the fire? All your stuff was gone. You were thirteen.

**SARA:** It didn't bother me.

**INT:** How come?

**SARA:** I don't know. I knew that we were all there. All the children, nobody was hurt, and nobody was hurt from the neighbors and nobody was hurt. We knew. Our father said, "It's only material things. Don't worry." He said to us, "I have good insurance." Josef, my brother, was in the army. He right away left to him. He didn't want he should read in the papers or whatever. He went to him and he told him personally.

**INT:** So you felt reassured. You felt secure.

**SARA:** Yes. Secure.

**INT:** And Esther Raizel, did she survive?

**SARA:** No. She had a husband and two girls.

**INT:** They died in the war.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Next comes...who's the next? Was it a boy?

**SARA:** (sighs) I think so, that there was a boy after Raizel.

**INT:** Do you remember his name?

**SARA:** No. I know that he lived until sixteen years.

**INT:** And what happened?

**SARA:** We had a girl to help out my mother, and she was holding him and from our...

**INT:** The sixteen-year-old?

**SARA:** Yes. He was a baby and the girl was holding him and she dropped him and she didn't tell my mother that she dropped him and the baby was crying and crying and crying. My mother took the baby to the doctor. They gave him medicine. When he started to grow, he grew with a hunchback. Probably the back was broken. My mother started taking him to all kind of different doctors and they performed operations. He was exceptional smart. My mother used to tell us that he didn't want to go to school because they were laughing from him. The rebbe used to come in from cheder to teach him in the house and all kind of things. He died when he was sixteen years old.

**INT:** From what? From that injury?

**SARA:** That injury. They performed a certain operation. My mother went to a different country, to Czechoslovakia, I don't remember. I cannot say exactly. They tried to correct this and it didn't work. Whatever. He died.

**INT:** So do you remember the effect of that on your family, on your mother?

**SARA:** I don't remember. I don't remember. I remember when it came to go to the graveyards, my mother always used to go to the two boys. That's what I remember. She always used to talk about him.

**INT:** But the impact of this death was not enough to change her. She still stayed the same way that you knew her or did she change somehow?

**SARA:** No. She had a lot of faith. She used to say, "It's bashert. This is the way He wanted, and if we had to live and suffer..." Maybe she suffered inside.

**INT:** But it was not obvious to you.

**SARA:** Obvious to me as a child. I couldn't see.

**INT:** And the next is...

**SARA:** My sister Pearl.

**INT:** Perel Leah.

**SARA:** Perel Leah. She was a beautiful sister. When Raizel got married, she was the oldest in the house. She took charge in the house, social events, Yom Tov, to help out mother set the tables, to prepare a Seder, a this. My mother always relied on her. Always called Perel this, Perel that. She did all the things. I think she was very close to her older sister, to Esther Raizel.

**INT:** Perel and Esther Raizel.

**SARA:** Yes, very close. They always used to be...you could see in the house, friends. She used to come, she used to ask her.

**INT:** And Perel did not marry before the war.

**SARA:** No. She was engaged.

**INT:** And did she survive?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Okay, I see on the family tree, which is what I'm looking at, that we didn't talk about Josef because he's somewhere else on the tree. He is between Esther Raizel and Perel Leah, your brother Josef. Describe him.

**SARA:** Josef?

**INT:** You said he was in the army during the fire.

**SARA:** Before. When he was growing up, he was a very handsome fellow. Very handsome and very nice, kind. He was close to my father. He loved to learn, he loved socializing with friends. He had a lot of friends, and he was very good-looking. When he was drafted to the army, I remember that my father went to the rabbi, the Kotzker Rebbe.

**INT:** So the draft took place at what age in Poland?

**SARA:** I think at nineteen or at twenty-one. I don't remember. I don't know. He was drafted. Before you're drafted, you have to be...the height I knew that he's going to be drafted, but the weight. If you didn't have the right weight, they wouldn't take you. The Jewish people didn't want to go to the army.

**INT:** Why?

**SARA:** There was a lot of anti-Semites, especially for Orthodox. There was no place where to eat. They had to do certain things on Shabbas. My father wanted to avoid this if he could. The rabbi told him, "Let him lose weight." I remember my mother used to make pancakes on cod-liver oil, to have diarrhea. He used to walk miles and carry a bicycle on his back. They did whatever the rebbe told them to do just to lose weight and then he went to the army.

**INT:** So he didn't lose enough weight.

**SARA:** He didn't lose. When he went to go for the test, he was drafted. He was drafted. He came home. My mother said, "Listen. It's meant to be. We did everything what we could. You will survive."

**INT:** And this is what year? By '39 he was already in the army.

**SARA:** I think it was '38, the end of '38. I remember my father going away over there to arrange in the city, it was Minsk Mazowicke.

**INT:** That's the name of a person?

**SARA:** No, of a city. There was stationed the 7th Pulek Ulanow, the cavalry. The seventh unit of cavalry.

**INT:** Why don't you write it and then spell it into the tape. You want to write Minsk...We're trying to spell all the places correctly.

**SARA:** M-I-N-S-K M-A-Z-O-W-I-C-K-E.

**INT:** And the other words you said?

**SARA:** 7th P-U-L-E-K U-L-A-N-O-W.

**INT:** And that means?

**SARA:** The 7th division of cavalry.

**INT:** So you said your father went there. For what reason?

**SARA:** To arrange for him where he should eat, for kashrus. There was a rabbi. For instance, every time when he can get away from there...they were stationed in this city. He should eat there. My father used to pay. When they had to go for exercise, like the army, we used to send in food parcels. My mother used to bake and dry things and a lot of preservatives, like fruits and all kind of things. When he goes, he takes it with. This they were allowed to take.

**INT:** To bring food.

**SARA:** To bring food for them, and he managed not to eat treif. This meant for my parents probably a lot. After the war started and he was fighting in the Second...

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

They were fighting, the Polish Army with the Germans. After, when the Russians advanced, they captured them and, how do you say in English, when you capture...prisoners. Prisoners of war. He was there by the Russians, and after he ran away from them and was going for months until he came home. When the war started and we were in our city, my father and mother wanted with the children...everybody was running away from Poland, and they all ran more north, to Russia, to Vilna, to all these cities. My mother had a tremendous foresight. She said, "Listen. Let's take the children and whatever we can and just leave Poland." My father didn't want. First of all, he didn't want. He said, "If Josef survives, he will come home." Second of all, he had tremendous pride in him.

**INT:** Pride in himself?

**SARA:** In the family and himself. He said, "Here I'm an owner of a house with my children and everything. The minute I leave the house and take my family, I'm a wandering Jew. Everybody is going to look at me that I'm not...the war won't last too long." We had provisions. "I have friends, Gentile friends." They never suspected what's going to be. And he said he remembers the First World War. "Even if they will tell us to work, even if they tell us what to do, we're going to be in the same places," and he didn't want to leave. And a few months later, Josef came.

**INT:** Came home.

**SARA:** Came home. It was too late already to leave. The borders were closed. It was hard. But she wanted to leave.

**INT:** You were describing...we're going to go back to pre-war and war. You were describing other things about Josef when he was young and at home. You said he was very social. He had a nickname.

**SARA:** He was "Prince Charming."

**INT:** You called him Prince Charming?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** What else did you call him? It was prince something.

**SARA:** Prince Farouk.

**INT:** You called him that?

**SARA:** (Laughter) Yes. We didn't know what Prince Farouk is. I didn't know that there exists a name Farouk, but this we were calling him. He was always very elegant, very clean and very well groomed.

**INT:** You said he had his clothes made in Warsaw?

**SARA:** No, in Demblin. Usually, you go to a tailor. In a shtetl like this you have a tailor and you make clothes for the children. Not for him. My father used to go to Demblin and he used to make clothes for him. Not for the other ones, just for him. This was not good enough for him. He always wanted to look the best.

**INT:** And you said something else interesting about him the other day in terms of how he looked at other people.

**SARA:** He was a snob.

**INT:** He was a snob.

**SARA:** He was always like...he never associated with people what they were...like the other brother, Harry. There was a tailor's son or there was others, he didn't mind to be in cheder with him. He didn't mind to talk to him. Not Yossel. In cheder, fine. The minute he went out, not him.

**INT:** So who did he socialize with?

**SARA:** He had his friends in the same caliber. Until this day he's like this.

**INT:** So was that a joke in the family or were people upset about that?

**SARA:** We were not upset about that. We knew this is him. We never were upset about it or joked about it. We knew this is him. Everybody was different and this was him.

**INT:** What else about him before the war?

**SARA:** He was a good brother. He helped in the business whenever he could. He was in the yeshiva. He loved to learn. He was always close to my father, to Harry, to my other brother. In a religious house, it was different. The boys were different and the girls were different.

**INT:** What do you mean?

**SARA:** The girls were sticking with the girls and the boys were with the boys. If we had something or whatever, we didn't go to talk to the brother. We went to my mother and to the sisters, one another.

**INT:** So who did you talk to?

**SARA:** I talked to my older sister, to Pearl, and to my mother. When there has to be something, chores, to be done for the boys, they did.

**INT:** Did Josef survive?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And how old is he?

**SARA:** Josef is now, I think, eighty.

**INT:** We'll talk more about Josef when we talk about after the war, his life after the war. So there's Butche, Yeshaya, Esther Raizel, Josef, Perel Leah.

**SARA:** We talked about Perel Leah.

**INT:** Then comes?

**SARA:** Harry.

**INT:** His Hebrew name?

**SARA:** Herschel.

**INT:** What kind of person?

**SARA:** He always was called in the house the baby. He was the youngest from the boys. He was very loving. Everybody loved him in the house, especially my parents. My mother was crazy about him. Sometimes we were all jealous. Whatever she prepared... "kint," she called him the baby. Not that he was a baby, but he was the youngest from the boys.

**INT:** So you were jealous. You felt that she favored him?

**SARA:** I think so. I think so, she favored him. When she made, for instance, cookies, she put in a tin jar. We all ate. If there was not enough, she said, "Don't eat. Nobody should

touch it. For the baby we are not baking so fast.” Children. For the baby you have to leave. She always made his favorite food. He was not a good eater at home and he liked certain foods. She always made the favorite food for him. His character was nice. He didn’t want to be favored. After, when I was growing up and he was older than me, we were very close. Everything we did, we did together. I had responsibility in the house. Pearl was already grown up, she was a young lady and she was going out and she had already a boyfriend, so I was. I used to complain to him whatever I didn’t like or whatever, and he used to talk to me and we were very, very close, the two of us.

**INT:** So even though the girls talked to the girls and the boys talked to the boys, you were close with this brother.

**SARA:** Yes. Especially when the war started. When the war started, I think that my parents relied a lot on me and him. We assumed responsibility. Josef was already in a different way already. Josef was already in the committee, Judenrat. Josef was already, he had a girlfriend what he’s supposed to get married. He socialized. In the house was only the two of us, and the two younger sisters. I remember in the ghetto, we were sick, the two of us. We got typhoid. The Germans, which house got typhoid, they burnt the house with the people. My mother...

**INT:** This is the ghetto in?

**SARA:** Leopoldow. It was not actually considered a ghetto, but all the Jewish people were in one area. We were very sick. We knew that every time when there is a...they go from house to house to check who is sick. We find out that they’re coming today, and I was very sick that day. He was sick, but he was better already. He came in. He dressed me and he put me in a chair. I was sitting and everything. He said to me, “When the Germans will come in and they will tell you to stand up or whatever, I will come close to you. You hold on to me and we’re going to walk together.” So I was sitting and I was so sick, feverish. They came in and they said, “Who is sick here?” My mother said, “Nobody.” The men are at work. My father was hiding someplace. Josef wasn’t there. He was probably at work. “These are the little ones.” He said, “Why is she sitting?” She said, “Don’t you see that she’s eating...” or whatever I did. I don’t remember what they put there. And she said, “This one is a baby, is running around, is a baby.” He looked and looked and they walked out. When they walked out, he took me and he put me into bed, he undressed me and put me to bed. This I will never forget. And he was sick himself.

**INT:** This is typhoid or typhus?

**SARA:** Typhus.

**INT:** So this was diarrhea and pain.

**SARA:** And high fever. This was going around from the lice, from this what we had in the ghetto, one from the other. Nobody got it, just the two of us. My mother used to boil our clothes, used to boil everything. She used to boil the water, wash us. I remember she washed our hair, we shouldn’t have the lice with all this thing. I remember she took the

kerosene, what you burned, and she put it in the hair and they combed and combed, and then she washed it.

**INT:** That was very frightening.

**SARA:** Very. People were dying. Every day you saw, especially children. She didn't let the children, the two younger girls, close to us. Never. They were not allowed to be close to us, and they knew.

**INT:** So you're describing a very special connection between you and Harry.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** In the fire situation and this situation.

**SARA:** We were the oldest in the house.

**INT:** So how many years apart were you in age?

**SARA:** We were, I think, two or two-and-a-half years apart.

**INT:** And did Harry survive the war?

**SARA:** Harry survived the war, and he passed away.

**INT:** Passed away when?

**SARA:** I don't remember which year. He came to New York with his wife. In '82.

**INT:** And what was the cause?

**SARA:** He was sick and he passed away.

**INT:** So we'll talk more about him and his life after the war. So in the family, you come next. We'll talk more about you later. Then comes who?

**SARA:** Gittel. She was two years younger than me. I was always envy of her.

**INT:** You envied her?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Why?

**SARA:** She was bigger. She was more developed than I was. She was pretty, very beautiful. She didn't look like two years younger, but two years older than I was.

**INT:** So she was beautiful in a different way than you?



**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** She was more like one of the older sisters?

**SARA:** Older sisters.

**INT:** So you had a different look than the sisters?

**SARA:** A different look than all the sisters.

**INT:** Who did you look like?

**SARA:** I was more like Harry.

**INT:** But which parent did you and Harry...

**SARA:** I think I looked more like my father.

**INT:** And the other girls were different.

**SARA:** Not so much like my mother. I think the grandparents. They were tall. My grandparents were very tall and my mother's sisters were beauties. She had another sister. The rest I don't remember.

**INT:** So you were jealous of Gittel.

**SARA:** I wouldn't say jealous, but envied her. She was always so...she did the hair and when she washed it, she had such a beautiful...in Europe, it was beautiful, wavy hair and everything. She was a big girl. I was skinny, straight hair. Every time we went out and we went to school, the boys were carrying her books and this. She was very beautiful.

**INT:** And they ignored you.

**SARA:** Maybe they didn't ignore me, but I felt it this way. I felt it this way. Listen, this was...And she always tried to make me feel good. "Oh, you look so good and let me braid your hair. Let me..." And I said, "No, I don't want it." It was all just...I know why you want to do it. Children are children.

**INT:** And did she survive?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** And there's one more child. Who is that?

**SARA:** Chava.

**INT:** What kind of child was she?

**SARA:** She was a beautiful little girl. She was little. She was the favorite in the house. She was a baby. Everybody was fussing over her and everybody was talking about her. She was very nice, very kind, very loving. In a house where there's a lot of children, she was the baby. When the war started, I don't know, maybe six years. She was a happy one, running around. She was a pleasure in the house. She didn't survive.

**INT:** Now we've gone through all the children in the family. I want to go back and talk about your parents and your lifestyle and the business and your religious life.

**SARA:** Didn't we talk yesterday?

**INT:** A little bit. I want to sort of...

**SARA:** Tie it together.

**INT:** The whole picture. I didn't ask you yesterday to describe your parents. You told us stories about them. Let's start with Faiga Rosa. You described things about her and how she liked to dress and how she treated the children. Tell me more about her, other adjectives, what kind of person she was.

**SARA:** As a mother, you always picture your mother perfect. Whatever she did. She was a very charitable woman and very sensitive to other people's needs. When she taught us to give, to help, to bring, there were certain things what I remember. We had a sukkah in our house, stationed, not built every year.

**INT:** A stationary sukkah.

**SARA:** In Europe everybody had a sukkah. In our court, there was one family very poor. They were shoemakers, and they couldn't afford one. She made a point that they should eat with us in the sukkah. These people couldn't afford to bring in nice food. In a sukkah, you always...Yom Tov and everything. She used to go to her and she used to say, "You know, I will prepare. I'm cooking anyways for my family. The only thing what you can bring is make nice, like compote." At that time, the fruits in Europe were very cheap. "Make applesauce. Bake something, and this will be the contribution for you to the sukkah."

**INT:** So she tried to help them not feel bad.

**SARA:** Yes. We used to say...we were children, "Why do we have to have them?" She said, "They cannot...and we're going to sit in the sukkah and sing and everything..." And they had two children. She always made them sit better than us, like closer. She put him and his wife and the children, and after us. We said, "Why are they sitting there?" "They're our guests." Now I realize that she was a good person. It takes a special person to do this. At that time maybe I didn't realize this. I can see that she was a very nice person.

**INT:** So were you one of the kids complaining, "Why are those kids over there?"

**SARA:** Yes. Even myself. Even myself. “Why are they sitting there?” In Europe, you had to marry off somebody or something like this, they used to come to my mother to go out and collect money for a kallah to get married. They didn’t have money; she went out and she took two other women, whatever, and she knew to whom to go. They knew if she comes in, they cannot refuse. She was charitable herself in giving.

**INT:** So she was an example.

**SARA:** Yes. She was a very good mother. Very good mother.

**INT:** In what way?

**SARA:** She always had a kind word to say to us. Always encouraged us. We went to school and I remember she had a saying when we used to come home and we used to always say that this one is so bad and this one is...She said, “Why are you wasting time looking for bad? Look for the good things in them. Not everything is bad.” We used to say, “Oy, Chaya, she’s terrible and she’s this and she’s that,” all kind of bad things, and she said, “Look at Chaya. Look at the good things that she has. Did you find anything good?” Always had something nice to say, even to us. Sometimes we were with school or whatever. She said, “Fine, you did your best, tried your best. Tomorrow is better. As long as you do your best.” She never let us be lazy. Never. We had to share. This is what she learned us. We never, never had in the house something not to share with each other.

I remember once, this was such a funny thing. We had in the dining room a buffet, like a commode. There was drawers. I never had an interest to go to this commode. Once, I was looking for something and I opened the drawer and I see a drawer full of silver dollars. I was thinking that we are millionaires! Silver dollars. I ran out and I said to my mother, “Ma, from ven huben a za fill gelt?” (From where do we have so much money?) There was fifty zlotys. She said, “Listen, there is always money. If somebody comes in the house, we should have to give charity.” I never knew this. Never went there. It was an explanation. I bought it and closed the drawer and that’s all. She had certain things, the way she was telling us. Now I’m a mother myself and in my mind I think she was a very good person and a wonderful mother, a wonderful mother.

I remember an example. In the time from the ghetto, I told you when my sister-in-law was pregnant and she had a miscarriage, and she went out from the ghetto to her...Butche’s wife was pregnant and we had somebody...there was no telephones. Somebody came from there and told us that she’s very ill. She’s pregnant and she’s very, very ill. She might die. My mother had to make a decision. She discussed it in the house. We were all at the table. My mother says, “I have to go there. I have to go there to see what’s going on.” How can you go there if you’re not allowed to go out? She said to my father, “Yankel, I cannot stay here. Whatever will happen to me, you stay here with the kids and I have to go there.” That day she got dressed as a Polish woman. She took a basket, put in wood, all kind of this, and she went. She said goodbye to us and she said, “Kids, I don’t know what’s going to happen to me. I have to go to Butche to see what happened to his wife.” I forgot her name.

**FRANCES:** Toba.

**SARA:** Toba. She said, "I have to go and see her. She's very ill." And she went there.

**INT:** What do you remember thinking and feeling when she said to you, "I'm leaving?"

**SARA:** We were very upset. We started to cry.

**INT:** So you knew there was danger.

**SARA:** Oh, we all started to cry and everything. "Ma, gei nisht." (Don't go) She said, "I have to. I cannot stay here." And my father said to her, "Okay, you go, and I will take care."

**INT:** How do you understand that choice?

**SARA:** Now I understand the choice as a wise choice. She felt as a mother they needed her.

**INT:** But she left children behind.

**SARA:** Yes, but she left with a father. Over there, they were on their own in despair. Despair. She left and we didn't hear from her for two days. There was no communication. After two days, on the third day, I don't remember, she walked in. It was a hysteria from joy and crying. She sat us down. We were already grownups. I was fourteen years old. She was telling us when she walked in, she saw her, my sister-in-law saw her and she said, "Cut my nails, I'm dying." She said to her, "Cut my nails. Take care." The other two children...her parents couldn't leave. She couldn't let them know even. They were near Demblin someplace in a city. She said to...I don't know what she said to her. And my mother said, "Don't worry, you won't die. People don't die from things like this. You're going to be all right. You want I should cut your nails, I'll cut your nails." She washed her, she prepared her, everything, in case she dies. She went out in the ghetto and got a doctor. She said to my brother, "You take care of the two kids," and she came in with the doctor. And the doctor said to her...he examined her and everything and he says, "She has to lose the baby. If she won't lose the baby she will die." I don't remember what she...to lose the baby.

**INT:** Your mother?

**SARA:** Yes. She didn't tell her that the baby wouldn't survive. The doctor explained the baby has no chance. The baby has no chance and she has no chance. He said, "We have to do something." So my mother said, "You do what you have to do," and she lost the baby. She lost the baby and my mother was there. And after she lost the baby, my mother went out and she got some food, I don't know from where or from what, I don't remember. She prepared a few things for her. She was feeding her, was up with her twenty-four hours, feeding her, and she got better. She got better. She said, "Listen, I have to go back. I left the house. I left my husband with the kids. I have to go back." And when she came back, she told us...

**INT:** She sat everybody down?

**SARA:** Yes, we were all sitting.

**INT:** And she explained everything.

**SARA:** She explained the purpose what she went, the event that it took there. This was a policy in our house.

**INT:** That what?

**SARA:** To discuss.

**INT:** But as a family.

**SARA:** As a family. To discuss as a family.

**INT:** Today what we call a family meeting.

**SARA:** This was not a meeting. Every time when we sit down to a meal, we were talking.

**INT:** About real things.

**SARA:** About real things. Not narishkeiten. What was in school, what happened.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** You were discussing with the family, family discussions.

**SARA:** And I used to love this. I used to love this, and Herschel used to love this. We used to say like this between us, "Oh, oh, here comes naya maases (new stories)." Always made fun.

**INT:** Of your parents?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Because of their stories.

**SARA:** Yes, but we used to love it. We used to love it. It used to be fun. Here you go to movies, you have television, you have everything. We didn't have this.

**INT:** So that was the entertainment.

**SARA:** It was like an entertainment, and you heard about...they didn't have a choice, the other children, but to tell the father this. To us they wouldn't tell what's going on in their things. When my mother came and she sat down and she told us this.

**INT:** Do you remember how she told you? Was she upset? Was she strong? Was she crying?

**SARA:** She was crying.

**INT:** She was crying.

**SARA:** She was crying that she lost the baby. She was crying about the circumstances, the way they lived. She was crying what she saw the misery. There was a bigger city and more Jews, and she saw the misery, the hunger, from other people. She was very, very upset. She was so upset, and she was talking and she was crying, and we all cried. This always stayed with me. I can never forget this, how strong she was. What a mother to make a choice like this. (Tearful)

**INT:** Which means what to you?

**SARA:** That a mother never abandons a child. She puts her children first, then herself. This is the right thing in my mind of a good mother.

**INT:** So that's the right way to be.

**SARA:** Yes. This is the way I feel. If your child hurts and is angry or aches, it aches you. And when your child is happy, you're happy. And this was my mother. Always put herself the last in every way. I didn't realize this before I became a mother myself and became an adult.

**INT:** So what did you think before?

**SARA:** That she's a nice person. That this is the way everybody has to be. That this is the way it's done.

**INT:** Just as an example of a good way to live.

**SARA:** Yes. This is the way it is.

**INT:** And then when you became a mother, what changed?

**SARA:** I realized when I had to make choices, when I had children and I felt...I said my mother did the right thing. My mother did the right...she showed an example. At that time, I didn't realize that this has to be like this. She always was a listener and this is the way I am too, a good listener.

**INT:** Then you thought she made the wrong decision?

**SARA:** No. I didn't pay attention wrong or right. I was thinking that this is the way it has to be. Everywhere it's like this. I didn't go in other people's homes to see the way they conducted their life. I wasn't interested and I didn't care. But then you go through your own life and then you see what is right and what is wrong. I saw that she conducted her life...

**INT:** You were saying she was a good listener.

**SARA:** She was a good listener.

**INT:** And you're a good listener.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Listen to?

**SARA:** To everything, the children, my friends. And you have to be...she was very confidential. And I am the same too. If somebody tells me don't say it or it's in confidence, it never goes out. It's between me and my friend on the telephone. "Ma, vus hut tze gezugt." (Ma, what did she say?) I said, "This is in confidence. This is for me to know." And I think this is very nice. This is what I see now of my parents and I always think about her in this way.

**INT:** In what way?

**SARA:** She was a wonderful person, and when sometimes I'm in a dilemma, crisis, I always think what would she do in a crisis like this? By myself I sit down and I say what would this woman do in this crisis? How would she handle a situation like this?

**INT:** Like when Ryan was sick.

**SARA:** Ryan was sick.

**INT:** So you sit and think...

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** ...about your mother.

**SARA:** About my mother. And I would say Ryan will be okay. I have to be strong for Esther and Allan and the rest of the family. Whatever crisis will come, if we're going to be strong we're going to overcome it. Even in my own life when there were crisis I went through and I'm going through, I always think this way. You have to be strong. You will overcome. If you fall apart, you're not good for yourself and you're not good for the family.

**INT:** And your father, Yaakov?

**SARA:** My father, I think, was a snob.

**INT:** That straight?

**SARA:** Why? When we were growing up, you play outside with children, and there were certain children poorer. He wouldn't let us play with them, and we liked the children. They were good in school, like in cheder, in Bais Yaakov and this. The sheine mentchen (nice people), nit kayn yichus (without lineage) so the Tatty wouldn't want. Not my mother. We listened. We avoided this. He always liked the nicest things in the house. Nicely prepared. That's why probably my mother was always dressed like this, because he liked her to be like this. Always for Yom Tov, for the holidays, for Pesach, we should always wear something new. Us children, new shoes, new dress, new this. He was a snob. Every time when he brought Friday night people like from shul to eat, he always brought not the poorest and the beggars. Always something better, like people were traveling from city to city saying a sermon. This is what he brought. I was always wondering why he didn't take a lower one. I didn't understand. And later on I understood that he was a snob.

**INT:** So when did you figure this out?

**SARA:** When I figured it out? After the war, when I was older.

**INT:** You looked back and understood that.

**SARA:** Yes. It's a family trait.

**INT:** It seems that way. (Laughter)

**SARA:** He was a very good father. He was a very smart man. In the city, our city, if the business people had a dispute, small business, they didn't run to lawyers. There was no lawyers. Maybe there was, but they always used to come to my father to hear what he had to say. He used to take them in and?

**INT:** Advise them.

**SARA:** Yes. Take them in a room and close the door, discuss with them, whatever, and always for shalom bayis.

**FRANCIS:** Mediate.

**SARA:** Mediate whatever the dispute.

**INT:** Shalom bayis meaning he would work for a peaceful settlement.

**SARA:** Yes. Why do I know this? I used to come in, "Where's the Tatty?" Where's my father? And my mother used to say he's there with some people. We knew already that some people had a dispute and they came to discuss. He was wise, very wise. And he always learned. I remember when we used to come home from school and we had dinner, always the meal was daytime. When we came from school, it was always around 3:00.



**INT:** The large meal.

**SARA:** The large meal. Always. And we ate. After this my mother was with the business, the store. He always was sitting at the table drinking a glass of tea, there was a grosse samovar standing there, and some sugar, the pieces.

**INT:** Sugar cubes.

**SARA:** The cubes. And the chumash or the machzor, whatever.

**INT:** Always learning.

**SARA:** Always learning. One thing remained. When my father used to sit down to dinner, he always wore, like Ricky wears, this. Never a dinner table...always wore a bezurka. This was like a dinner jacket.

**INT:** Bezurka.

**SARA:** Always.

**INT:** This is weekdays or Shabbas?

**SARA:** Weekdays.

**INT:** Spell that please.

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** This is Yiddish or Polish?

**SARA:** Polish, bezurka.

**FRANCES:** Bezurka is not so much a dinner jacket. What it is, it's like a smoker's jacket type thing with a tie.

**INT:** I understand. You see it in the old movies.

**FRANCES:** Cary Grant, Clark Gable.

**INT:** Say the letters.

**SARA:** Bezurka. B-E-Z-U-R-K-A.

**INT:** Which was not a religious code. It was a formal jacket.

**SARA:** Like a jacket. He felt, and we asked him why, and he said he's a whole day wearing this. When he sits down to eat, he feels this is right. When I got married, it's true! The first thing I went out and I bought a bezurka. My husband said...

**FRANCES:** She was wandering the stores in Montreal looking for a bezurka and people were looking at her like a crazy lady. But that's what we had, Friday night was the bezurka.

**SARA:** I bought a bezurka and he had to wear it Friday night. He cannot sit down with a jacket the way you go to the business and everything. Michael wanted a bezurka. He only wanted when he got married a bezurka. I couldn't find it. There's no more style. No more. You couldn't get it.

**INT:** When you realized that your father was a snob, which you joked and said was a family trait, what did you think about that? Was that okay? Did you feel critical?

**SARA:** Not at that time. I didn't think of it nothing. I was thinking this is the way it is. Now I see he's a snob. At that time I didn't even think of anything like this. In Europe there was classes. Everybody associated their level.

**INT:** And the classes were based on economics.

**SARA:** Economics and yichus, and family background.

**INT:** Family background.

**SARA:** Not here. Here the father can be the worst and the son can be president. Here is on the ability, capability, personality and knowledge. Not in Europe.

**INT:** And so your family was from the upper class.

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Not the richest but upper class.

**SARA:** Baalbatish.

**INT:** And your father wanted to associate on that level.

**SARA:** That's right. This is what it was.

**INT:** What kind of business did your family have?

**SARA:** We had a bakery what people were working, and we had like a grocery store. We had a factory what we made oil, only in the winter, from poppy seeds, sesame seeds, eating oil. Only for the winter. In the summer my father didn't want to be bothered.

**INT:** So a bakery and a dry goods store.

**SARA:** Not dry goods. Grocery.

**INT:** Grocery, and the oil manufacturing. And your father ran all three businesses and worked at all three businesses?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And your mother too?

**SARA:** Mother helped out in the store and Josef helped out.

**INT:** So the store next to the house was which one of those stores?

**SARA:** The bakery and the grocery was connected one with the other. The oil was a little bit outside, separate. The farmers used to come to make oil. They used to buy in the grocery all kind of goods what they need for them, and brought in double business. My father used to buy off from them...they used to take the oil and he used to buy off from them what you squeeze out the oil.

**INT:** What's left, like the hulls.

**SARA:** It was like in a bulk, and he used to sell this to the farmers.

**INT:** For feed for the animals.

**SARA:** It was a very good business. Excellent business.

**INT:** Did he come from that kind of background, your father? Also business people, also successful?

**SARA:** Oh yes. Very successful. What kind of business? I don't remember. I don't know.

**INT:** What was the religious lifestyle of the family? You mentioned that earlier but I want you to say it again. They were Hasidishe, you said, and he did follow a rebbe.

**SARA:** All the things, kashrut, 100%. Everything you had to do. Pesach we used to take the house apart. Everything used to be taken out and apart and on the stove used to be all kind of things, and on the counters used to be brettter, like boards. My father used to go to the mikvah and my mother used to go to the mikvah. I was thinking that everybody is doing like this. It was nothing special.

**INT:** And your parents were in agreement? They were the same about their religious lifestyle?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And what would you say about their beliefs in their spirituality? You said your mother was very believing and saw difficulties as bashert and trusted. What would he say about his?

**SARA:** When my father saw things like this, "Gut hut azo gevart." This is the way G-d wanted. They used to believe and go to the rebbe.

**INT:** And what would going to the rebbe give them?

**SARA:** I think give them a spiritual belief. I don't know. I think when you...and like my brother had to go to the army or a shidduch, you go to the rebbe.

**INT:** For?

**SARA:** For advice. To talk to him. They felt that the rebbe has wisdom probably.

**INT:** And also, I think, people went for a bracha. They went for a blessing.

**SARA:** Yes, for blessing. This was my...

**INT:** You said that there was a large synagogue in town that everyone went to, but you said your father made a smaller one near your house. You also mentioned that you had a Torah that your father took out when there was the fire. What was that?

**SARA:** We asked from where comes the Torah, and he said that when he built the house, he made this little shtiebel and they wrote a Torah. Mir hut geshreiben a Sefer. (They wrote a Torah) Someplace, I don't know. I wasn't even born yet.

**INT:** Who wrote the Torah?

**SARA:** Somebody wrote a Torah and my father probably paid for it and it was in our shtiebel.

**INT:** Why did you start a shtiebel if there was a shul?

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** But that's where your father...

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** That's where your family davened.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** In the shtiebel. Not in the big synagogue.

**SARA:** I don't think so. Maybe they went, I don't know.

**INT:** So were you also responsible for taking care of it and supporting it?

**SARA:** It was not much to support.

**INT:** Just a room.

**SARA:** A room. It was part of the house. It was not this. This is what we saved and this is what we have now.

**INT:** You have this Torah now?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And where is the Torah?

**SARA:** The Torah is in Atlanta, by my brother.

**INT:** With your brother. Which brother?

**SARA:** Josef.

**INT:** And how would you describe your faith and your religious practice when you were a child before the war? What did you believe?

**SARA:** I believed what my parents told me. This is the way you have to do Shabbas. Shabbas is Shabbas. Yom Tov is Yom Tov. You're not allowed to do any other things. You're not allowed to harm people. You're not allowed to insult people. To be good human beings. This is the way I was taught and I was thinking this is the way it is.

**INT:** So you believed it too. You didn't have any trouble with it.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** And what about G-d?

**SARA:** I believed in G-d and I still do.

**INT:** How did you express that before the war?

**SARA:** Before the war? There is a G-d, that's all. He's the G-d. He created the universe. He created everything and this is G-d. Didn't question.

**INT:** Didn't question anything. Any other observations about the family and Yiddishkeit?

**SARA:** The only thing what I noticed, when my sister got married and she said to my father that she doesn't want to wear a sheitel.

**INT:** This is?

**SARA:** Esther Raizel. She didn't want to wear a sheitel. He didn't fight her. And he said, "You don't want to wear a sheitel, fine. But when you go in public places, you should dress accordingly. You should wear a hat. You should wear something." When my brother got married, Butche, he said, "I'm not wearing a beard. I don't want to wear a beard." My father wore a beard but never peyos. Never.

**INT:** Not even behind his ears?

**SARA:** Never.

**INT:** But he did have a beard. A long beard?

**SARA:** Long beard. He said, "I don't want to wear a beard." He said, "Fine." You're not allowed to shave with a blade. He had an electric shaver. It was not electric, it was on batteries probably. This is what he did. It shouldn't be too close to the face.

**INT:** So he didn't fight Butche and he didn't fight Esther Raizel.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Why is that?

**SARA:** I don't know. I really don't know. He said to her, I remember, this was before the wedding and she said, "Daddy, I don't want to wear a sheitel." (Voice whispers)

**INT:** So what do you remember thinking about that?

**SARA:** Nothing. She doesn't want, she doesn't want.

**INT:** So it didn't feel like turning against Yiddishkeit.

**SARA:** No. And every time when she went to people, she always wore a hat. But not in the house, not in the business. Always respectful. I was thinking there's nothing wrong. Not everything is to wear a sheitel.

**INT:** And your mother accepted it also it sounds like.

**SARA:** Probably. But my mother wore a sheitel.

**INT:** How about school and friends for you?

**SARA:** We only associated with Jewish friends. In Europe there was not such a thing. When we were playing outside we had other friends. We spoke Polish and everything. But our close friends in the house, we had Jewish friends. In school, the boys went to cheder and they went in yeshivas. The girls went to Bais Yaakov. They learned in Polish schools too.

**INT:** So you went...tell me about school. You went to a Polish school?

**SARA:** We went to a Polish school.

**INT:** From the time you were how old?

**SARA:** Maybe four or five.

**INT:** Okay, so that was a Polish school. All of you, the girls and the boys.

**SARA:** The girls and the boys.

**INT:** And then?

**SARA:** And half day we went to the Polish and half day we went to a Bais Yaakov, and we had extra lessons in Hebrew.

**INT:** So you went to a Jewish school.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And the boys didn't go to a Bais Yaakov. Where did the boys go?

**SARA:** They went to cheder.

**INT:** They went to cheder. And then you also had private lessons?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** The girls and the boys?

**SARA:** The girls and the boys. Then the war started and it's finished.

**INT:** The Polish schools were also open Saturday. How did you handle that?

**SARA:** We didn't go.

**INT:** That was not a problem.

**SARA:** Not a problem. I don't think that they were open Saturday.

**INT:** You don't think so?

**SARA:** I don't think so. Maybe, but I don't think so. We never went. Not on Shabbas, not on Yom Tov. Ever. I don't think so.

**INT:** And what did the children do for high school? I know that you didn't go to high school, but what about the older ones, Josef and Butche and Esther Raizel? Did they go to high school?

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** What, a gymnasium or a Jewish high school or a technical high school? What kind of training?

**SARA:** I don't know. When they finished school...

**INT:** Which was what grade?

**SARA:** Seven.

**INT:** So you're how old?

**SARA:** Thirteen years.

**INT:** Thirteen years was the end of public school for all the children.

**SARA:** All the children. Then there was other schools.

**INT:** High schools.

**SARA:** Some people went out of town, yeshivas and other schools. Some people...I think especially in Riky there were schools.

**INT:** There were high schools.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Did they go? Did your older siblings go to high school?

**SARA:** I think they went.

**INT:** But you don't remember where or what.

**SARA:** I have no idea where or what, but I know they went. What and how I don't remember. I don't. I don't know.

**INT:** And friends? Your friends. Did you have friends?

**SARA:** Oh yes.

**INT:** Did you confide in your friends?

**SARA:** I had very good friends. I had the neighbors. I had very good friends, girls and boys. Girls associate with girls and boys associate with boys. Especially in our house used to come in a lot of boys on account of Herschel. Herschel's friends. They were close to my age. We joked. We were sitting, we were talking. They were telling jokes, exchanging things like this. It was very freilich.

**INT:** So the house was open to friends.

**SARA:** Always. Always.

**INT:** Did you have a special friend? Did you have someone that you would talk to about all your important feelings and things?

**SARA:** To Herschel.



**INT:** So he was like your best friend.

**SARA:** He was my best friend. Herschel was my best friend.

**INT:** So you shared your feelings with him, and he shared his feelings with you?

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** It went back and forth between you.

**SARA:** Yes. We discussed. We laughed, we joked. He was telling me things from the girls, what they were looking at him. Children stuff. We didn't have any personal things in our lives that we had to...we had good friends. I had a very good friend. As a matter of fact, she was a relation to you, to your mother. She was...Josef's first bride, what he was engaged. Her sister...

**INT:** This is Upfirer.

**SARA:** I don't remember. Her sister was my best friend. She had a sibling, a sister, what she took her everywhere, wherever we had to go. Her name was, I think, Gittel. I said, "Why are taking her with us?" She said, "There is nobody in the house." My mother and father, and there was an old grandfather there. Why should she stay home? In our house was children. She always used to come into our house. There was always coming and going, hustle bustle, always.

**INT:** How about organizational life, Zionism, politics? What do you remember of the family?

**SARA:** I remember that Butche got engaged and she had a family in Israel, I think a brother. In 1939, they sent a certificate for them to emigrate, for Butche and his wife. When they received the certificate, my mother was hysterical. Hysterical. He was the first child that got married. Maybe it was in '36. I don't think in '38. Maybe in '36 or '37.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** Before.

**SARA:** Before the war. I don't remember what year. She said, "You're my first son that got married. You're doing so well. You're going to leave to Israel, we'll never see you." She was very upset, and he sent back the certificate. In the house, I remember we had tzedakah boxes from Keren Kayemet.

**INT:** Which is the Jewish National Fund.

**SARA:** I remember other things.

**INT:** Was your father involved in any Zionist organization? Was there any politics that you knew about it? How about the Communists and the Socialists?

**SARA:** No, no.

**INT:** Youth groups, Zionist youth groups.

**SARA:** I don't remember. Maybe Josef remembers. I don't remember. Maybe they went, there was. All the Hasidic things we went. I don't remember.

**INT:** What Hasidic things?

**SARA:** Like to get together.

**INT:** So the community would get together?

**SARA:** Yes. What and how, I don't...it's so long ago. I don't remember.

**INT:** What else could you say to describe the family, the relationship between your mother and father, the relationship between the brothers and sisters? What else?

**SARA:** I think the relationship between mother and father I think was a very good relationship.

**INT:** Did they have disagreements? Did you see them disagree?

**SARA:** Not in our presence. Maybe they did.

**INT:** But you didn't see it.

**SARA:** Never saw it.

**INT:** And what you saw was that they seemed to be in agreement.

**SARA:** Always.

**INT:** And they seemed to be getting along.

**SARA:** Yes, never in our presence. Between us, the siblings, we were very nice to each other.

**INT:** No competition, no conflict.

**SARA:** Maybe it was, but nothing major. I know we wore clothes one after the other. What was too small on this one, the other one wore. To compensate, my mother always used to buy an extra new one, not to feel bad. But you didn't mind to wear clothes from the older sister. There was no hard feelings and things like this.

**INT:** I think this is a hard question but I'll ask anyway. What is the most important memory of your childhood, the most powerful, the most emotional, the most important?

**SARA:** The most that I remember and I want to remember is my home, the life in the shtetl, and my neighbors, my friends. Very much I want to remember this. It's not easy, I don't...

**INT:** You don't remember.

**SARA:** I don't remember the streets. I don't remember the names. I see the faces vaguely. My house, our house, and my parents, and my sisters and brothers I see every single time. When I want to see them, I see the faces. I see the house. I see how to set the table. I know how my mother did it, or whatever. This is the most important thing. And the values.

**INT:** So it's really the whole picture of your life. There's no one memory, no one special time, no one conversation or incident that is the most powerful for you.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** It's everything.

**SARA:** The most powerful thing what made a tremendous impact on me is the mother when she went to my sister-in-law. This was such a...I was thinking she sacrificed so much and such a thing. Otherwise, the whole life. I was taught that this is the way it is. I never doubted or questioned or anything. You were taught that you don't question, you obey the parents. This is the way life is.

**INT:** Okay. Now I'd like to talk about the time period before the war, before the actual invasion of Poland by Germany. There were things going on in Germany already. What did the family know? What did the family think? What was going on in the family before the war? You said there was an increase in anti-Semitic incidents by some of the hooligans of the town, the rougher people. What else was going on before the war actually started?

**SARA:** I remember in 1936, my father came home and he said that he starts all kind of different countries, that Hitler lets out certain propaganda, and the main thing is for him for Jewish people.

**INT:** The main target.

**SARA:** The main target.

**INT:** In 1936 you were how old? You were ten?

**SARA:** How old was I? I was ten. I didn't pay attention to this.

**INT:** So it didn't fill the family environment. You didn't have a sense of worry.

**SARA:** No. In 1938 it started in Poland already, at the borders.

**INT:** What started at the borders?

**SARA:** All kind of maneuvers with the Germans came in and the Polish were preparing for a war.

**INT:** And you knew that.

**SARA:** And I knew that.

**INT:** The family knew that.

**SARA:** The family knew it. We came home once, I remember, and we were talking in the house that we heard this. We heard in school and we heard in the street, and especially we heard on the radio.

**INT:** So the radio was talking about preparations.

**SARA:** About preparations for the war. Josef was in the army and we started to worry and everything. My father used to say that the Germans are not so bad. How bad can they be? "Such a civilized country, that they should just destroy Jews for nothing?" I remember him saying this.

**INT:** So he was in disbelief.

**SARA:** In disbelief. In disbelief. But he still was getting ready. In what sense he was getting ready? To prepare money, to cash out the money, to buy gold. "Whatever can happen," he said, "for gold you can buy everything." Food. He was only concerned about food.

**INT:** That with gold you can buy food.

**SARA:** Food. In 1939, when the war started, they started to bomb, and we lived not far from a train.

**INT:** So that's the beginning of the war.

**SARA:** The beginning of the war.

**INT:** Anything else to say about before?

**SARA:** I didn't pay attention to it.

**INT:** So there was not scenes at the table about what to do.

**SARA:** No, no.

**INT:** The family life seemed to continue and you still felt happy.

**SARA:** Happy. The only thing was that Josef is in the army.

**INT:** So there was a sense of worry about him.

**SARA:** About him, and that he will be going to war. Fight. He will go to fight.

**INT:** So the war started September 1, 1939.

**SARA:** 1939. And they start to bomb, and the bombs were...we lived not far from the train. The train was going, and the station was not far from our house. When they started to bomb and the bombs were flying, we ran out from the house. Everything was burning, and the main target was the train station.

**INT:** Was there any warning, any awareness that this was going to happen?

**SARA:** Nothing.

**INT:** So it caught you all by surprise.

**SARA:** All by surprise. And we all run out. We run to the forest, like to the fields.

**INT:** And this all means the family.

**SARA:** The family.

**INT:** Mother, father, all the kids, all together.

**SARA:** All together. And when we were running, the planes were going so low and the machine guns were just...I remember like today. My father was screaming to lie flat in the fields.

**INT:** He was screaming what?

**SARA:** To us, lie flat in the fields. And we ran and there was a field from potatoes growing, and we couldn't move. And after, when it got quiet, we saw so many people wounded, killed. Not only Jews. Then we saw that this is serious. Then people start running to go more north to Russia.

**INT:** So did you return home?

**SARA:** We right away came home.

**INT:** So the bombing stopped that day.

**SARA:** That day, and we came home.

**INT:** And when you say people started running, the neighbors started to prepare to leave?

**SARA:** The neighbors, and people from other cities had to cross near us, or it was the train. They used to come to the train.

**INT:** So there was a lot of movement.

**SARA:** A lot of movement and a lot of people were walking. Groups. And you saw soldiers.

**INT:** Polish?

**SARA:** Polish soldiers were running in different divisions and everything.

**INT:** So what was going on in your home at that time?

**SARA:** We came back to normal life.

**INT:** So that's when your mother said, "Let's go" and your father said, "No, we will have nothing."

**SARA:** Nothing, and we shouldn't move from the house.

**INT:** And you don't remember this being a fight, a conflict, a tension.

**SARA:** No, no. Worries. Worry.

**INT:** But your mother went along with your father.

**SARA:** Yes. He said, "No, we're staying here and we're not moving and that's it." In 1939, it was a Friday night, I don't remember if it was September 1st or September 9th.

**INT:** You're saying this is the following week.

**SARA:** The following week.

**INT:** So it must have been the 9th because the first was on Thursday. The bombing started on a Thursday?

**SARA:** I don't remember what day.

**INT:** Or is it Friday?

**SARA:** No, not on a Friday. In the middle of the week.

**INT:** So it must have been Thursday. So it was probably the following Thursday or Friday.

**SARA:** Friday, it was on a Friday, and my mother prepared for Shabbas and she lit the candles.

**INT:** Like normal.

**SARA:** Normal. And we were all dressed and she prepared and cooked and everything. And she said to me, I think to me or to Pearl, I don't remember, to one of us: "Close the shutters." Usually Shabbas were open the windows. She said, "I'm lighting the candles. Close the shutters. You never know." And we closed the shutters and a half an hour later the Germans, with motorcycles, with noise, they came in to us and start running from one house to the other.

**INT:** The German soldiers went from house to house.

**SARA:** And they were looking for men. Josef wasn't home. Harry didn't look like a big man. Never. He was a short, skinny man. My mother said to the Tatty, "You have to hide." He said, "What..." She said, "You wear a beard. You know what the Germans are doing."

**INT:** So he was a tall man, Yaakov. How did he look, your father?

**SARA:** He didn't look a tall man.

**INT:** So he was a short man, like Butche.

**SARA:** Like Butche. Butche, Harry, me, we were short. My mother had a lot of inside instinct. She said, "You have to hide." Here you're tumult, you don't know what...she said...He said, "Why?" She said, "You have a beard. We are targets. The Jews are targets. You heard what they did in Germany? And there's no way to go out." She opened the closet. There were clothes hanging, long clothes, and pushed him in the closet and closed the door. The Germans come in. They said, "Men, where are the men?" "My man is in the war." "Your husband, your sons?" "In the war. I'm here with my kids. Maybe you know where they are. I don't know."

**INT:** And she was in control?

**SARA:** Yes. He said, "Juden, Juden." "We are Juden." No men, no this. They start looking, looking, looking. She said, "Look, there is no men." They looked around. There were three, four Germans. And they walked out.

**INT:** What do you remember thinking about how your mother handled it?

**SARA:** I was scared. I was very scared. We were all scared. But we didn't know. You don't know until you don't see it later on. I didn't picture the Germans to be vicious or to do things like this. Never. My mother knew. She understood. When they left, she closed the shutters tight and she told my father to go out and then locked the door and she took him out. We sat down, we ate, and then we heard a lot of shots. We didn't go out. Shots one after the another. The next morning we find out that they walked into a few Jewish houses and even into Gentile, I think they took out a priest, they took out somebody else, and they shot them. Then we knew what's going on. A week later or maybe two weeks

later...and we opened Monday the store and it was going on, two weeks or three weeks later or maybe a month, I don't remember when.

**INT:** The sense was that the civilian population should just live normal life as much as possible.

**SARA:** Yes, as much as possible. That's it.

**INT:** Did you go to school?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So the kids went to school and the store was open.

**SARA:** The store was open, the kids went to school, life was going on, but it looked movements a lot. People were going more to Vilna, Bialystok, Russia.

**INT:** So some families didn't settle down to normal. They tried to move.

**SARA:** To move.

**INT:** But your family stayed.

**SARA:** We stayed and our neighbors stayed and a lot of people stayed. I later realized that the people what they're not so Orthodox, what they're more what we would consider now Conservative, went. More the Bund organization.

**INT:** The organizational people, the Zionists.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** The Socialists.

**SARA:** Yes. They moved.

**INT:** So how do you understand that when you look back on that?

**SARA:** They wanted to leave. They were afraid to stay.

**INT:** But the religious were not afraid?

**SARA:** I didn't question.

**INT:** But how do you understand it now?

**SARA:** Now, they had more foresight. Maybe they knew more. Maybe my father didn't want to accept this. And when we questioned him, he said, "It's not going to be so bad."

**INT:** Who's "we?" The kids? The kids begged him, "Let's go."



**SARA:** No, we didn't say, "Let's go." We came home and we used to say, "This family left, this family is leaving, this family." And after, when my mother mentioned it, when my mother said to him, "Let's go, let's take the kids and move," he didn't want. And later on, and Josef was in the army. We didn't hear nothing of him, so we were thinking that he got killed or he's someplace, whatever. (An aside here) This is Malka? When was it made?

**INT:** Yes.

**SARA:** By Malka?

**INT:** I'm not sure. This was a gift.

**SARA:** I think so.

**INT:** Looks like it's signed by Malka.

**SARA:** One of the biggest artists. I had my Ketubah made by Malka. She's one of the biggest artists in Jerusalem. The calligrapher and everything. I personally know her. Isn't that something? I have a painting by her and I have my Ketubah.

We settled down, but we knew that's not a normal life.

**INT:** So what happened for you and the kids in school? Were you all talking about it in school? What were the teachers saying?

**SARA:** The teacher was afraid and everybody was afraid. We didn't know what to think. We didn't know. We knew that something will come, it's not normal. I think it was a few months, a few weeks later and everything, the Germans came in and all Jewish business...they came in, they told us to go out from the store and they took all the merchandise and they threw it out on the street. And the Polish people, even the best neighbors, were standing and grabbing it.

**INT:** So you were watching this.

**SARA:** And we watched it, and we couldn't say one word. My father, I remember like today, said to us, "It's good that they're grabbing this. Then we'll go, they're our friends, they're our neighbors, and we're going to claim it back. They're going to give it back." They threw out everything. When they finished, they said we should close the store. Close the doors and everything. When it quieted down, my father said to me and Herschel, not Perel. Why? She was a very beautiful girl and tall and everything. My father was afraid to expose her to things like this. You never know. What could they do to me? I was fourteen years old, a little girl, a skinny. And Harry too, so the two of us. We went from house to house and we asked for it. Not one Pole wanted to give us back. I said, "You're our friends. My father sent us." We saw...first they were denying it. We said, "We saw. You took this, you took this." They said, "The Germans gave us." We had nothing to say. And when we came back...

**INT:** So who was the talker here? Who said, “My father sent us?”

**SARA:** Me and Harry.

**INT:** But who talked? You both talked?

**SARA:** Both.

**INT:** Or you?

**SARA:** No, both. Both. We walked in. I don’t know who said it or whatever. But when we walked out from one and the other and the third and the fourth and the fifth, we knew, we saw who took it. And we came home without anything and we told our parents and then they saw it was serious. And then it started the tsuris, all the problems, in the ghetto.

**INT:** Okay, but you’re not in the ghetto yet, so how did that all happen?

**SARA:** The ghetto, they tried...

**INT:** Let me ask this first. When you say they finally realized it was serious, was there any change in your parents in terms of their emotionality or how they made decisions?

**SARA:** They couldn’t make a decision of leaving. It was too late. Whatever we still had left, some this, they didn’t sell for money. For instance, you had a business, you had cloth. You wanted to have some sardines or you wanted some flour or you wanted some sugar, we exchanged. You give me this, you give...We knew the money is nothing. Whoever had anything, we exchanged.

**INT:** So they started to be more cautious.

**SARA:** And more aware of it.

**INT:** So that was a big change.

**SARA:** A big change. Then the schools. We were not allowed to go to Polish schools and we were not allowed to be in cheders in big groups. We used to concentrate in houses. Moshe was a student. He used to come into the house and teach the smaller children. But there was not so many teachers to go around and this, and we couldn’t be in big groups, so we used to have small.

**INT:** Just to make sure that education was going on.

**SARA:** Should go on. And not so much Polish education but Jewish education.

**INT:** So who organized it?

**SARA:** Everybody in the house. Parents. It was not a community but everybody wanted the welfare of the children.

**INT:** And you knew from that point on that you were not allowed to go to school.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And do you remember feeling frightened or?

**SARA:** Frightened.

**INT:** But all the time?

**SARA:** All the time.

**INT:** Or just some times?

**SARA:** All the times. The parents and everybody told us we should be aware, and if you saw something what's going on you should right away caution one the other. All the Jewish people were aware that if you find out something that has to go on, any event from the Poles or the Germans, we should let know one another.

**INT:** And in the meantime Shabbas went on and cooking went on?

**SARA:** Shabbas went on and cooking.

**INT:** Getting dressed.

**SARA:** It was not in such an elaborate fashion and not with such a...

**INT:** A joy.

**SARA:** Joy. Not with such an easy heart. But Shabbas went on. We davened in the house, never in the shtiebel. The Sefer Torah was taken out.

**INT:** And put in your home.

**SARA:** We put it at home, and the Sefer Torah was hidden in the closet, on the clothes. It was put like on a hanger and put on a suit. Never in this room was put in a table, or this, it shouldn't look like a synagogue or something like this. What else I remember? It was a very hard time for us, for everybody.

**INT:** Again, there might not be an answer to this question but how did everybody cope with the fear?

**SARA:** We coped with the fear because we had no choice.

**INT:** You just go on.

**SARA:** Just go on.

**INT:** Trouble sleeping? Did the younger children have nightmares?

**SARA:** I don't remember. We were afraid. Any knock, any thing what happened...There was not too much activity outside.

**INT:** So your father didn't go to business, didn't go to synagogue. He was home.

**SARA:** We had no business anymore.

**INT:** So he stayed home.

**SARA:** He stayed home.

**INT:** And you ventured out if you needed to trade for something.

**SARA:** That's it. And then the Germans forced there should be a committee, and you have to assign people to work. This was at the end of 1939.

**INT:** You're talking about around December, the end.

**SARA:** Yes, November or December, in this time. They came and they took all the most respectful people to be assigned.

**INT:** So you mean the most respected.

**SARA:** Yes, most respected.

**INT:** And was your father included in them?

**SARA:** They assigned my father.

**INT:** To the Jewish Council.

**SARA:** The Judenrat.

**INT:** They, being the Germans.

**SARA:** What?

**INT:** They, being the Germans, wanted your father to be on the Judenrat?

**SARA:** Not the Germans.

**INT:** Who picked your father?

**SARA:** The Germans came to the community and they said the Jews should assign a committee.

**INT:** So Jews wanted your father.

**SARA:** The Jews wanted. He was the most fair person. My father said no. He cannot be to assign somebody else's children or somebody else's fathers or girls or mothers what they're going to be killed.

**INT:** Do you remember this incident? Do you remember him saying that?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And do you remember your response and your mother's response?

**SARA:** I don't remember my response and I don't remember my mother's response. This I don't. But I remember.

**INT:** But he said this clearly.

**SARA:** Yes. And my father said, "I'm not. I cannot do it. I can't." And he said Yossel should be. When Josef came, he said, "You must do it."

**INT:** So when was Josef?

**SARA:** I have no idea. It was in 1940 when Josef came, or by the end of 1939. I don't remember.

**INT:** So your father wanted Josef to do it. How do you make sense out of that?

**SARA:** He said to him like this, "You're younger. You can cope with it. I have a beard. I'm so obvious. I can be harmful. If you assign whoever to work, you have to assign your siblings. Never assign somebody else that we should be spared."

**INT:** So you heard your father say this to Josef.

**SARA:** Yes. "You have to." (End of tape 4, side 2)

**INT:** Before we go on with the Judenrat, tell me about your brother's homecoming. What happened when he came home and what was the response of the family? What did he say?

**SARA:** When he came in, this was after a few months, when he came in, I remember the crying and the joy and my mother said, I remember, she said, "Why did you come back? Don't you see what's going on here?" He says, "I didn't know all these things and I didn't want to go there."

**INT:** He didn't want to go.

**SARA:** Over there in Russia, to be there, "When I knew that my family is over there, and I don't want to be in prison." They took all the soldiers and, "I don't want to be a prisoner of war." He ran away. And I remember we were all in the house sitting and he was telling us how he escaped, and that for months he was walking at night, walking, and in daytime lying in the fields, and for weeks and weeks he was on raw potatoes eating, raw carrots,

whatever he could. It took him weeks and weeks until he came home. My mother and father, they were ecstatic that he came home, but sad. They saw what the Germans are doing.

**INT:** What did he look like? Do you remember? Do you have that image in your mind?

**SARA:** No. I don't remember. I think he came not in soldier clothes. I think he came in civilian clothes. Skinny, filthy. I don't remember how it was, but the circumstances were completely already...and we lived not in our house anymore. It was the fire, so we lived already.

**INT:** In that other house.

**SARA:** The other house. It was not the same. The whole life already changed, and with the Germans and everything. I don't remember this scene so well. What did you ask me?

**INT:** What did he say?

**SARA:** I don't remember. Just he was telling us how he survived and he came home. He came home and we started to live normal, and he knew this girl from before he left.

**INT:** Before he went to the army he had a girlfriend.

**SARA:** A girlfriend. It was nothing serious. She was beautiful. She was nice. She was refined. When he came back, he started to court her. We were happy.

**INT:** It's amazing how life goes on, isn't it?

**SARA:** We were very happy and life was going on and everything.

**INT:** But also he went on the Judenrat.

**SARA:** After. It was a while already this, and they formed a Judenrat and they assigned people to work. He assigned two people from our house. It's supposed to be Pearl and Harry. Pearl was a big girl. The Germans, when they saw a girl like this, they did whatever they wanted and they killed her. They raped her, they had sex and everything. Harry was a man, a boy, they could harm. I went on Pearl's name. They didn't know if it's Pearl or not, and Gittel went on Harry's name. They didn't know if Harry is a girl or this. Two people from the Golcman family.

**INT:** You're thirteen and she's eleven.

**SARA:** Yes. She eleven looked like fifteen.

**INT:** Because she was bigger than you.

**SARA:** And me thirteen looked like eleven.

**INT:** And your father was just home?

**SARA:** He was home, and he used to help people whatever he could. My mother used to go and collect. They used to share. The people got sick, elder. They never stayed home, like stayed home not to do nothing. He used to bring in boys in the house, I remember, and they learned. Things like this, what to help.

**INT:** Just to hold on to something. So the Germans accepted two little girls to work?

**SARA:** I was not little. We had to be nineteen people in the field, we were nineteen people in the field. The work was done.

**INT:** Did you understand that? Did you resent that? Did you think, “Why me?”

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Send Harry.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** How did you understand that you were sent?

**SARA:** I understood. When my father saw what was going on, he saw what was going on, I said, “I will send my sister in danger and I will this when I can prevent?” I just felt bad that I had to work so hard. I never did anything labor like this, to be...7:00 we had to be in the fields until 6:00 at night, every single day.

**INT:** What work was it?

**SARA:** Potatoes. In the fall, we used to dig the potatoes out, and the sugar beets. When this was done, I got a good position. I used to work in the station, to bring in coal.

**INT:** The train station.

**SARA:** Train station, coal and wood and everything, and make the fire over there.

**INT:** So you made the fire in the train station.

**SARA:** In the train station. This was an excellent position.

**INT:** Because you were out of the field and out of the cold.

**SARA:** In winter you couldn’t work in the fields. They give different assignments, to dig snow, to dig this, to dig ditches and bury people. They used to bring soldiers from Russia, war prisoners, in open carts and it was forty, fifty below zero. They used to freeze standing up.

**INT:** These are German bodies or Polish bodies?

**SARA:** Polish, Russian.

**INT:** Soldiers.

**SARA:** Soldiers.

**INT:** Who died on the field.

**SARA:** Not died on the field. They were prisoners, prisoners of war.

**INT:** And they froze to death.

**SARA:** And they used to bring them for labor probably, in Germany or Poland. But till they brought them, they brought them in open carts. They used to freeze to death. They opened the carts and they used to fall out. So you have to dig ditches to bury them. Thank G-d I didn't have this. I used to go over there...first of all, I used to eat something what the Germans used to throw out, bread and something like this, and I was in warm thing, and I used to take in Gittel too. She used to help me bring food, bring this and everything, and whatever we could...crumbs or little pieces, we used to hide and bring it home. Until the spring. In spring they took us back to the fields.

**INT:** So in the meantime, everybody else was home. Josef was home, Herschel was home and your parents were home.

**SARA:** My parents and my sister.

**INT:** Perel was home.

**SARA:** The littlest sister was the little sister. One incident what will never go away for me is when I saved the Sefer Torah.

**INT:** You're in the house that you rented after the fire.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You're still not in the ghetto yet.

**SARA:** This is the ghetto. This house became a part, and they tried the Jews from all over to concentrate more to this house.

**INT:** Did you have more people in it?

**SARA:** No. People used to come in. Our house was a part of it.

**INT:** So you didn't have to move to be in the ghetto. Your house was in the area of the ghetto.

**SARA:** The only thing, the man which lent our house, my mother used to beg him he should leave the door open. Not open, but not boarded up.

**INT:** Right. In the beginning it was boarded.



**SARA:** For different reason.

**INT:** Why was that important that it now be open?

**SARA:** In case the Germans come in and they have to hide someone.

**INT:** They could run in.

**SARA:** Run in over there. His entrance was not in the ghetto.

**INT:** But he was not Jewish.

**SARA:** It's good.

**INT:** So he was stuck in the Jewish ghetto?

**SARA:** No. This is a house. This was our entrance. His entrance was here.

**INT:** Which was not the ghetto.

**SARA:** Not the ghetto. And the Jewish...different entrance. And the door was like in the middle, in case we needed it. In the beginning he said, "Yes, we will do it." I don't remember if this was in 1941.

**INT:** So for the entire 1940, you and Gittel were working, Josef was on the Judenrat and the rest of the family was home trying to help each other. For about a year.

**SARA:** More. This was going on for two years.

**INT:** And the hard work, how did you go home? Did you cry about it?

**SARA:** Cried.

**INT:** You cried to your family.

**SARA:** To my family. I didn't want to cry so much, so we cried on the way. We didn't want to come in to the house and distress our parents. They couldn't help it. They tried their best.

**INT:** So you and Gittel helped each other cope with this?

**SARA:** Yes. We were working and we used to wake up in the morning and when we came in our shoes were so muddy and we were so tired. My father used to take off the shoes for us and wash them and wiped them. Whatever food they had they used to give us, that we should have more strength. And we didn't want. We wanted to know what they ate, not to give us away their portions. It was hard.

**INT:** How did your mother deal with?

**SARA:** My mother tried to make the utmost fair, the best what she could, in the house. Never said a bad word, that this is not good. The only thing she was telling us is she wishes she could help others more. When she was talking about others more, we didn't complain. They were worse.

**INT:** So you just had to bear it. But you cried to each other.

**SARA:** Yes. We were very upset. Once it was winter.

**INT:** This is 19...

**SARA:** I don't remember.

**INT:** '41 or '42?

**SARA:** Not '42. This had to be in '41. The Germans came in and we heard that the Germans are going from one house to the other.

**INT:** So this is new Germans.

**SARA:** Everything was Germans.

**INT:** This is S.S. now?

**SARA:** Yes, always S.S. Always S.S. And I didn't know what happened. I was home. Maybe that day there was no work, I don't know what.

**INT:** So everybody was home.

**SARA:** Everybody was home. Yossel wasn't home and I don't think Harry was home. I don't think so. I don't remember. The Germans came in. As I said, they're going from house to house on a search. We had to give away all the furs, all the jewelry and all the possessions what we had, silver. We were hiding. Everybody was hiding. You walked in our house, it was a poor house. When they say that they had to come in on a search...my mother had the jewelry, and there was a stove with burners on wood. Where do you hide it? I didn't say anything. I took the jewelry and I put it in the last burner. I lifted the burner and put it in there. I didn't tell nobody. In my mind, it was something that I don't want somebody to be responsible. If they're going to hit somebody or they're going to force somebody, he will tell. If I only know, nobody will talk. I don't know if it's smart or not smart. This is the way I was thinking. The Sefer Torah was hanging in the closet. They walked in here. They searched all the house and they're going into the...they want to go into the other house. I say to my mother, [Yiddish words], and I walked in and I took the Sefer Torah and it was winter. Very cold. In the winter, we used to go to a toilet outside, and when you made everything froze, and when they had to clean, you had to lift a lid. I took the Sefer Torah. I walked out through the other door.

**INT:** So they were in the part of the house that was the Gentiles'.

**SARA:** No, in our house.

**INT:** They were still in your house.

**SARA:** You couldn't go to the Gentiles.

**INT:** But how did they not see you?

**SARA:** We were all here. When they were talking and searching, I walked out. We had two doors.

**INT:** So you had a moment where they didn't see you.

**SARA:** A moment what they didn't see. I took the Sefer Torah. I went out and I opened the lid. It was the toilet. It was frozen. The shit was frozen. And the Sefer Torah was always wrapped. I closed it and came fast in and I was there.

**INT:** What made you able to risk your life in that way?

**SARA:** At that moment I knew when they're going to see the Sefer Torah they're going to burn it instantly. It's not even a question. And they could do harm to the whole family why we had a Torah.

**INT:** So the Torah represented danger for everybody.

**SARA:** Everybody. And there was nobody...it was the instinct in me. I came in. They're going to search in the cupboard. My mother knew, but the Tatty didn't know.

**INT:** Your father didn't know.

**SARA:** No, that the Torah is out. At that time, my father cut already the beard a bissel. He wore a beard, but not such a this, and everything he folded up underneath they shouldn't see. And I left. They came, they didn't find anything, and they left. In meantime, when they left, my mother started a fire and the jewelry was there. I was busy, I don't know what I was doing. And she made a fire there. We didn't have much wood. I started to scream, "The jewelry is burning." I ran in and I grabbed...how could you do things like this? I said, "What could I do? I knew it was lying in the drawer. It's not the jewelry. We're all going to be this." Okay, I took it out. Then, how could I bring in the Sefer Torah back? We waited until it got a little bit dark. We were afraid that people will go into the toilet and everything over there. When it got a little bit dark I went out and I brought it in. (Whispering) Probably somebody saw me bringing it in. At night, the Germans knock on the door.

**FRANCES:** Again.

**SARA:** They come in and they said, "There was a girl who hid something. Who is the girl?" My mother started to cry and to scream. "There was nobody, there was nobody." They said they're taking us all out if you don't admit. And we were already in bed. So I

said, "It's me. I didn't hid anything. I had to go to the toilet. I had to make. I couldn't hold it in, I went out." They came in to us with somebody, and Josef was not home. He was by his girlfriend. She was next door and there was a curfew. Nobody was allowed to go out at night. But he sneaked out. It was not far. He sneaked out and he was there. And this Gentile was my father's friend, sort of, sort of. The Germans said, "We're going to take her. She did something." I said, "I didn't do anything. You want to take me, take me. I didn't do anything. I just went to the toilet." And this Polish said...

**INT:** The Polish man.

**SARA:** The Polish man. He was the man from this area, like the Germans needed something or whatever they went to him. And he said, "What this little girl can do? What did she do? How can she do? She had to go to the bathroom. She had to go." And they looked at me and they left. And this stays with me forever and forever.

**INT:** And what stays with you, the image? What feeling?

**SARA:** What made me, the strength in me, made me do, and the fear in me stays with me. The fear.

**INT:** So you remember the scene and the fear comes back.

**SARA:** The fear that I felt that this is the end of me. The fear in the faces of my parents and the fear in me, and I can never forget this.

**INT:** But the fear did not stop you.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** ...from bringing the Torah in. It didn't stop you from saying, "It was me."

**SARA:** I knew that somebody has to take the blame, and I said if I will take the blame, they will take only me and here is so many people. Hashem gives you a certain thing at the time. I always believed in this.

**INT:** This is self-sacrifice.

**FRANCES:** But determination. Look at what she's always done all along. You know even prior to this, her and Harry, with the fire, running in to get the money. It was an innate strength.

**INT:** So when this comes to you, can you shake it away from you or the images stay?

**SARA:** No, I shake it away. I say that it probably was for a reason. Probably I did something and I can see that there is somebody that guides me, and I always say, "Why was I the chosen one, from so many people in the family, to survive?" Probably there's a reason.

**INT:** What is that reason?

**SARA:** To tell the people that I survived and there was a Hitler and killed people.

**INT:** So you survived to tell.

**SARA:** To tell.

**INT:** The story.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Why you and not somebody else?

**SARA:** There is a purpose.

**INT:** So is there some other purpose for why you?

**SARA:** I don't know what's the purpose but there is a purpose and I should tell the story. I should build up a family, a "dor."

**INT:** A generation.

**SARA:** A generation. And the Jewish people shouldn't be wiped out.

**INT:** So you survived to rebuild.

**SARA:** That's it.

**INT:** And tell the story.

**SARA:** And tell the story and to have a Jewish people, and Hitler didn't succeed. When I made the first seder in Canada, when I came, and I invited everybody and I stood up and I said, "Hitler didn't succeed." (Crying-pause in tape)

**INT:** Okay. I would like to go back first to the Torah.

**SARA:** Before you're starting I want to say something. I'm very grateful to Beatrice Goldfein for giving me the opportunity to interview me. This is like to live a legacy for my city. I don't know whoever survived, but there's very few survived from our city. I didn't want to do it; I was thinking I will live forever. It doesn't look like. At my age, I see I'm not going to live forever. I wanted to...my children, my nieces and nephews, my grandchildren, to know the roots, from what kind of roots they're coming out and what kind of genes they're coming out. And it's good to know that there was a community what is erased. Still, somebody remained and is telling a story. And this will remain forever. And this history should never be repeated, and I'm very grateful to Bracha Goldfein for giving me the opportunity, for a chance in my life to tell the story. Thank you.

**INT:** Thank you.

**SARA:** Now the questions.

**INT:** You told the story of the Torah, that you brought it back and what happened with the Germans later. What happened with the Torah at this point?

**SARA:** The Torah was in our house. My father saw that there is danger and somehow or somewhere we're not going to stay here. There will come a time that we're going to be liquidated. We didn't know that we'll go to the concentration camps or to labor camps, whatever. He had a friend what he went with him in the First World War, learning Polish, and when this happened in the ghettos and all this thing, he came to my father and he said, "Listen, Jacob." He called him Yaakov. "Whatever you want, I will do for you. Whatever it's possible."

**INT:** So he was a friend of your father from a long way back.

**SARA:** Long way. He was a farmer. Very fine human being.

**INT:** A non-Jew.

**SARA:** Non-Jew. And my father said, "I want one thing in my life you should do it. I have three objects what I want you should hide it for me. Whoever will survive Jewish, I want you should return it. If it's somebody from my family or any other Jew, this give." He took the Torah, he took the shofar and the Megillah and he brought it. He gave it to him and he put it away in an attic in straw.

**INT:** In the attic of his house?

**SARA:** Not in the house. In the stables.

**INT:** In the barn.

**SARA:** In the barn, in the straw, what there was lying all the time. After the war, when we survived, my brother Josef and Harry and I think another friend risked their life, they wanted to kill them, went to this...

**INT:** This is after the war.

**SARA:** After the war.

**INT:** Who wanted to kill them?

**SARA:** The Poles. When he went and he picked up from them...he came to him, to his farmer, and he gave it back to them.

**INT:** The farmer wanted to kill them?

**SARA:** No. I will come to it.

**INT:** Okay.

**SARA:** He went to the farmer and the farmer gave it to them, all these things back. He said, "I don't want anything else." I don't know what my father gave, other things. This is it. Josef took the Torah. I think Harry was there too, I don't remember, and the Oshlack, they live now in Australia, friends, from Zelechow.

**INT:** You have to spell Oshlack and Zelechow.

**SARA:** And they came. They took, and they were walking back to the city, to Riky. The Poles saw three Jewish people were walking. They wanted to kill them. They put them in the ditch.

**INT:** Polish people. This is the AKA, the Polish Nationalists?

**SARA:** I think the Polish Nationalists, what they were afraid.

**INT:** So Josef, Harry and Oshlack. O-S-H-L-A-C-K.

**SARA:** They live now in Australia, and they put them in the ditch with the Sefer Torah and they were waiting. In the middle was a road, the main highway. They were keeping them there and they felt that when it's going to get dark or something like this they're going to kill them. What they were afraid, after the war, when the Jewish people came, they were afraid that the Jewish people will come and take away back all the belongings, whatever. Josef saw a truck coming with Russian soldiers.

**INT:** He was in the ditch.

**SARA:** He was in the ditch. He ran out and he started to motion to them that this, and he said to them...he told them, he didn't know Russian. He said, "Here are the Poles." They want to kill them. Probably in this unit what there were a lot of soldiers. Josef opened the Sefer Torah. One Russian said, "Oh, it's a Bozinky." Bozinky, in Russian, is a holy (end of tape 5, side 1) They took them on the truck and they brought them to Riky and they, we brought the Torah with us back. This is the story of the Torah, and since then it's in our possession. When your father Harry, my brother, came to New York, he took the Torah with him.

**INT:** Why did he get the Torah and not you and not Josef?

**SARA:** Josef and Harry had the Torah. I think he immigrated first to New York, then us to Canada and Josef to Savannah. I didn't want to have the Torah in my possession. I felt that the Torah should be by the men. I didn't feel that my husband should be in possession of the Torah when there are sons. He came to New York. The Torah needed reconstruction. It needed a new mantle, it needed all these things. I remember they called me, we all chipped in. I don't remember, \$500 or whatever, and we all chipped in, all three of us, and we made the Torah. And since then...

**INT:** But it waited many years before that.

**SARA:** Well, we couldn't afford it. Everybody was working and everybody was this. To take \$500 was like now I don't know how much. Until we all could afford it, we did it. And it stayed with your father until he was alive. When he passed away, Josef took the Torah. Now, I think, personal, that when the Torah, to a hundred and twenty, that Josef is not here, I think the Torah should go to you. This is my opinion and this I would like to see it. I don't know if Josef will agree or whatever, but this is my wish. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Talking about the Torah and the family legacy of the Torah and your sense of where it should go in the next generation.

(ADDENDUM: Brother, Josef Golcman, and a friend, Oshlack, went to get the Torah from the farmer after the war, in 1944. Farmer was the neighbor of mother's brother. Torah was in a hold in the ground covered with straw. Six objects were hidden: Torah, Megillah, shofar, shechting knives, tefillin and a tallis.

Torah was in Savannah, then restored and stayed in New York for many years, then taken to Atlanta. Megillah given to Jewish Federation in Atlanta. Shofar given to shul in Savannah. Shechting knives given to shochet in Savannah. Tallis given to shul. Tefillin will be given to grandson, Tzvi, on the occasion of his bar mitzvah in October 2000.

After retrieving these religious articles, they were brought to Zelechow, where the rest of the family survivors were staying.)

**INT:** I just want to ask you one more thing about this time period, which is two years of your forced labor, the family in different circumstances, the time the Germans came in. How did the family survive? There was no business. There was no money. Everything was burned in the fire. How did they survive this period of time? How did they get food?

**SARA:** People had some possessions somehow, were hiding or having, exchanged. The farmers used to come in to this. They used to bring in breads, potatoes, things like this, all kind of...We didn't eat much. There was not a matter of clothes. There was only a matter of survival, of a little bit of food. Even the food was so minimum what we needed, just to go on. Never had food to be full, to say, "I had something to eat." Usually people used to go out from the ghetto, go to the farmers. The farmers around had a little bit sympathy. They gave to the children or they gave to...like my mother used to go out and other woman used to bring. Never did this person keep for herself. Always shared with neighbors, with other people. She knew that this one is sick or this one...always, and this is the way we survived. Not just us but everybody. And the Poles took advantage. They used to take certain things, possessions, for a little nothing. But you couldn't eat the possession. You didn't care.

**INT:** So you did it for survival.

**SARA:** For survival, and this is the way we survived.

**INT:** I had a question about the farmer and the Torah which went through my mind before, and that is, what about the question of hiding people? Did that come up with the farmer? When your father asked him to hide the Torah, did he ask him to hide people?



**SARA:** Yes. And he hid us for eighteen months. When they liquidated the ghetto...

**INT:** So that came later in the story.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Okay. Before you go there, anything else about this time period and what was happening to the family?

**SARA:** I just want to tell another incident. Our liquidation of the ghetto was the 7th of May, 1942. The 6th of May I came from work with my sister. It was so cold. We were so worn out. Our parents knew that something is brewing, that there was going to be a liquidation. We didn't know. We went in the morning, we came at night. When I walked in with my sister in the house, my father, like he usually takes off the shoes and washes, he says, "I have good news for you." I said, "What is it?" "Mommy went out and she brought in three loafs of bread and milk and some kasha, buckwheat." We started to... "We're going to have enough bread to eat." He said, "Oh no. She gave away two loaves and three quarter. We only have a quarter of a loaf. We left you here two little pieces. The rest we divided." And a little bit of milk with this. I was so upset at that moment. I was so hungry. I didn't eat. I had no strength. And this he told us. In the morning we woke up. We had to be at work for 7:00. We were nineteen girls. We had to walk to work and everything. In the morning when I woke up, my mother insisted I should wear a vest. Vest? For what? She called it in Polish a serdac. It was a quilted vest, and underneath was like cotton quilt.

**INT:** S-E-R-D-A-C.

**SARA:** Yes. A vest. And my sister too. I said, "Ma, why? Why I have to wear a vest? I'm working so hard." She said, "Listen, whatever happens, there is something in this vest in the quilt. Remember. Sell it and try to survive," and the same thing she said to my sister. "One of you have to survive." Not meaning one of us, but one of the siblings has to survive. "We cannot get erased."

**INT:** She said that to you?

**SARA:** Yes. And this is the last thing.

**INT:** She said it calmly? She said it crying?

**SARA:** Not crying. She said it with a determination. I didn't even think of things like this. I was thinking this will go on forever.

**INT:** So that message didn't hit you in a particular way.

**SARA:** Nothing. When we went to work and around 10:00 I received a note. Somebody come up, a Gentile person, and brought me a note. And the note...and the Germans were standing with machine guns and watching us and we were working. And in the note was

written, “They’re taking us away.” I don’t know where. You go to this and this particular person, what I said, at that time, when I took out the Sefer Torah.

**INT:** The Polish man who was the town official.

**SARA:** Yes. It said, “You go to him.”

**INT:** What was his name?

**SARA:** I don’t remember. “And I left something for you there.”

**INT:** So this is in your mother’s handwriting.

**SARA:** Yes. My mother’s handwriting. And the Poles said, “If you’re going to watch the road,” we worked near a road, “you will see them walking.” And I saw everybody walking. My father was the head of the men. He was holding the tallis with the tefillin under his arm and everybody was behind him.

**INT:** No other baggage.

**SARA:** Nothing. Behind everybody was horse and buggies. I saw my mother sitting. She wore the housecoat. Probably she wore maybe twenty dresses. I saw the way it was this. She wore the housecoat on top of all this. My little sister was there.

**INT:** This is Chava.

**SARA:** Chava, wearing the red coat. And my other sister, not Pearl. Pearl was sitting on the other side. My married sister...

**INT:** Esther Raizel.

**SARA:** Raizel with both children. And I didn’t know how she came to Leopoldow. She wasn’t there.

**INT:** She was in Riky.

**SARA:** In Riky. I find out after.

**INT:** But you see this scene and what are you thinking?

**SARA:** All of us wanted to run to our parents.

**INT:** The nineteen girls.

**SARA:** The nineteen girls wanted to run.

**INT:** You’re all huddled together?

**SARA:** No. We wanted to run. Put away the shovels, the ditches, what we put in the potatoes, and the Germans with machine guns said, “If you move, you’re all going to get shot.” I said with the other girls, “We’re staying here.”

**INT:** You said that out loud.

**SARA:** Yes. All of us. In Jewish. “Mir bleiben du.” If we’re going to run, they’re going to kill us. They’re with the machine guns. We didn’t think that they’re taking them away to concentration camp. We were thinking maybe they’re taking them to Riky, to another city.

**INT:** So you didn’t know about concentration camps.

**SARA:** Never.

**INT:** You didn’t know about death camps.

**SARA:** Nothing whatsoever.

**INT:** There was no rumors that got to you.

**SARA:** Nothing whatsoever.

**INT:** So you thought perhaps they were just being moved.

**SARA:** Moved to another place.

**INT:** Did they call to you, your father, your mother?

**SARA:** Nothing. The little sister said in Polish, “Take me away. The Germans are going to kill us.”

**INT:** She said to you?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** In the field.

**SARA:** In the field. Chava. This is what she was screaming.

**INT:** She’s screaming to you.

**SARA:** Screaming out loud. And we had no choice. We stayed there. At night, they put us in a barn.

**INT:** This is May?

**SARA:** The 7th.

**INT:** 7th, 1942.

**FRANCES:** Who put you in a barn?

**SARA:** The Germans. All the girls, nineteen girls. The barn had a distance from the ceiling to the roof like this.

**INT:** An attic.

**SARA:** It was an attic, but it was not closed.

**INT:** A loft.

**SARA:** I said to the girls, "We have to get out and run away."

**INT:** So you were like a leader.

**SARA:** I don't know if I was a leader but I had an instinct in me.

**INT:** But you were the only one saying this.

**SARA:** Yes. And I wanted to go to this man what my mother sent the this. She had something for me. I didn't know what she has there. Everybody said, "It's a good idea. How can we reach it? How can you reach it?"

**INT:** I don't understand. You're in the barn. It's locked. But if you got to the loft...

**SARA:** You had to jump out. How could we reach it? We took one on top of the other.

**FRANCES:** Bales of hay.

**INT:** Hay or girls?

**SARA:** Girls. One on top of the other. And I said, "I will climb out."

**INT:** And open the door.

**SARA:** Open the door. I climbed out, opened the door, but one thing I said. "We cannot stick together. If we're going to stick together, they're going to kill us." Not the Germans, the Poles. We have to run away, everybody in different directions. Then somebody will survive. And this was the agreement.

**INT:** What was Gittel's reaction? Was she with you?

**SARA:** She was with me. She knew that where I will go...

**INT:** So what you said she agreed to?

**SARA:** She agreed. She was very tall and very strong. She said, “I will go the last one, on top of everybody, and I will help Shaindel to jump and to go.” I went out, I opened the door.

**INT:** So what did you do? Climbed down the outside or you jumped?

**SARA:** I jumped.

**INT:** So it was able.

**SARA:** You know, it was not so bad. I didn’t think of breaking a leg. I didn’t think at that moment. I jumped out, and it was like a wooden latch. I opened and they ran out and run in the forest. It was not far. We run in the forest. I said that I’m not going to run away until I’m going to go to the man for this what my mother said. I took Gittel.

**INT:** What made it so important to you to go to this man?

**SARA:** My mother wrote, “Go to this man, I have something for you.”

**INT:** Did you think it was something precious or just it was her words?

**SARA:** Her words.

**INT:** And you needed to listen.

**SARA:** To listen, and she left something for me. I took Gittel and I took another friend with me, and we went through the fields and everything. And I told the two of them to stay outside. Not outside the house, but outside the fields close to the yard.

**INT:** Of this man’s house.

**SARA:** Of this man’s house. And slowly at night I knocked on the door. She expected me.

**INT:** This man’s wife.

**SARA:** Yes. She expected me. I walked in. She opened the door, she looked around and she closed the door. She was cooking, cooking a chicken soup, and she was...The smell was killing. And she was skimming the fat off and throwing it out and everything, and I said, “Listen, my mother sent me.” And I show it to her. And she wrote in Polish, my mother. She showed me that she left something for me. What she took out? A nightie. A nightgown for me what I was wearing the night before, and another few things. I said, “This she left?” I was thinking maybe she left some pictures, something personal. I just took the nightie and I said, “I want to know, please tell me, how come my sister was there from Riky? How come she was there?” She said, “I will tell you. Your sister’s city was liquidated in the middle of the night. She ran away with the two children and she came to your father, to be with your parents.” And I says, “How come Pearl was there?” She said, “Pearl could be saved.” Pearl was engaged to a boy from Kotzk, to this boy

what I told you. He paid off a German and he came with a car and was written a personal letter to this.

**INT:** To?

**SARA:** To Pearl, that she should come to him and he will wait for her. And she read this. The German was waiting. Nobody knew. She wrote fast a little note to him that she cannot...she won't leave the parents and the whole family and go to him, and I'm sorry. She gave it to the German and she said, "Go back and give this to him." How I know this? From your father, from Harry. When Harry came to Yadamov from the other ghetto what we were by, Uncle Luzer.

**INT:** You have to tell the story. You're starting in the middle. Can I just...you go in and she gives you a nightie.

**SARA:** And I took the nightie.

**INT:** And the chicken soup...

**SARA:** I didn't touch. I didn't say anything give me something to eat. I didn't take any other things.

**INT:** And nor was it offered to you.

**SARA:** It was not offered.

**INT:** So were you like...

**SARA:** Nothing. I had my pride. I didn't this. I took the nightie. I didn't want the other things. I took the nightie and I still have it.

**FRANCIS:** What were the other things?

**SARA:** Stam a blouse. Clothes.

**INT:** Anything she could throw together.

**SARA:** I took the nightie and I had my sister and friend was waiting for me. We run away. We run away. We had made...

**INT:** When this woman told you, "Oh, your sister's town was liquidated last night and she ran to your parents," was there any feeling in her or she was just reporting news?

**SARA:** Reporting news.

**INT:** Totally cold.

**SARA:** Cold and she didn't ask me if you're hungry or you want something. The only thing she said that she was afraid that I'm there.

**INT:** She said to you, “I’m afraid you’re here.”

**SARA:** Yes, so I said, “I’m leaving right away, and my mother told me that you have something and I came to pick it up.” When I picked up this, I came out and I said to my sister and the other girl, “We’re going to Stahurski.”

**INT:** Okay. Spell it right now.

**SARA:** (Writes it down) S-T-A-H-U-R-S-K-I.

**INT:** So what’s the “ch” sound there, the h?

**SARA:** This Stahurski was a very wealthy man.

**INT:** Oh, this is the name of a person.

**SARA:** A very wealthy family. He dedicated himself to the Jewish people to save.

**INT:** How did you know that?

**SARA:** Josef knew and my father knew, and the whole Jewish people knew.

**INT:** So in the town of Leopoldow, they knew this man helped people.

**SARA:** Helped people. Whenever somebody needs something, they went to him. We knew that whatever happens, wherever we run away, this is the meeting place.

**INT:** So why was this man like this?

**SARA:** He wanted. He was a humanitarian. He risked his life and he wanted to do.

**INT:** Did he survive the war?

**SARA:** I’ll tell you. As I said, we’re going to Stahurski.

**INT:** So that was something in your mind that you knew before.

**SARA:** Before.

**INT:** That we have to go to this meeting place.

**SARA:** When I came there with my sister, I met there Josef. Josef ran away. When I met Josef there, there were other Jewish people too hiding already, and we said we have to go... We knew our uncle, my mother’s brother, is in a different town.

**INT:** Yadamov. And his name?

**SARA:** Luzer, I think.

**INT:** Faiga Rosa's brother, Luzer.

**SARA:** Eliezer. I think so, Luzer.

**FRANCES:** Her father is Luzer.

**SARA:** So what was his name? I don't know.

**FRANCES:** Yisroel?

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Luzer was her father.

**SARA:** Okay, I don't know.

**INT:** So who said we should go to Yadamov? Josef?

**SARA:** We all knew. No, I said, "Let's go," all the Jewish people there. By Yadamov was still not touched. There was a ghetto. People went to work, but not touched.

**INT:** How did you know that? Just people talking?

**SARA:** People talking and people went, like shlichim, from one ghetto to the other.

**INT:** Shlichim is messengers.

**SARA:** Messengers from one place to the other. Yossel said, "No. We have to wait for Herschel. Let's wait another two days, three days. Maybe Herschel run away."

**INT:** You have to say where Herschel was that he would run away from. So when you're at this man, Stahurski, where were you hiding?

**SARA:** In the attic there. He had a farm.

**INT:** And this was a whole bunch of people?

**SARA:** Yes. There was maybe ten people and we were all hiding.

**INT:** And the Germans didn't know of this man and his activities.

**SARA:** No. Now I will tell you about Herschel. Herschel arranged that for my mother to have a horse and buggy, my sister and this, and for other elderly people. He called in a German, he gave him some gold and he arranged. He was very brave, Herschel.

**INT:** So they were taking them away and he said to a German, "The women need a carriage."



**SARA:** The elderly people need a horse and buggy, and there were so many Poles with horse and buggies waiting that the Jews will go away and they will right away...like vultures, come in and this. He gave it to him.

**INT:** He gave him a horse and buggy.

**SARA:** A horse and buggy, a few horse and buggies. He put the mother with the sister and with the baby sister, and he climbed too on the horse and buggy, Herschel, to be with them. When they were driving to Riky, a German passed by and he said, "What kind of young fellow sits on a horse and buggy? He took out the bayonet and he slit his head.

**INT:** He made him get off the cart?

**SARA:** No, slit his head and threw him down in front of my mother. He fell down and Mama started to scream and cry and everything, and they throw him in the ditch. This is what Herschel told me. I wasn't there. He was lying there in the ditch for a while in blood. When he woke up, he saw blood all over and tried to stand up. He felt okay. He took out a hankie and we knew in ghetto that anything you have...you had no medicine, urine keeps the blood, takes away the infection. He urinated on the hankie, tied around and he was always wearing a hat, and he put the hat. He asked people where they took the Jews. They said, "To Demblin." He somehow got to Demblin into the train station.

**INT:** You don't know how.

**SARA:** I don't know how. He came to Demblin. When he came to Demblin and went to the train station, my mother saw him, my father. They start to cry, to scream. My mother tried to keep the family together. Whatever happened, they should be together. There was...Butche was there with his wife and the children. Esther Raizel was there with her husband. My father and mother and Pearl and Chava, and Herschel came. Yossel was already with me. This was Herschel telling me this story. They made right and left, right and left. My mother saw that the right was elderly people and children. Left was only young men. She said to Butche and my brother-in-law, Esther Raizel's, and Herschel, "Stick together and try to be in the other line what they're taking young men," and this is the way it happened. They went to the other lane and they took all young people.

**INT:** No girls? Just boys?

**SARA:** No girls. Men. And then they put on the train. In the meantime, Josef arranged with some men they should go with the train. He wanted to know where they're taking them. I don't know how he arranged or what.

**INT:** But which man?

**SARA:** A man.

**INT:** Jewish?

**SARA:** No.

**FRANCES:** How did he know where they were? How would Josef know?

**INT:** Josef was on the Judenrat.

**FRANCES:** He was at Stahurski.

**INT:** But probably before he got there.

**SARA:** No. (Tape shuts) Where they're going, they should follow the train. They should be on the train, to think that they are helping, that they are workers on the train. When they came to work in Demblin, they took Butche, my brother-in-law, and Herschel. Herschel was wounded. He somehow sneaked out and he ran away and he was hiding for two days in Demblin in empty apartments, in empty houses. After two days it quieted down and everything. He walked out and he walked to the Judenrat.

**INT:** The Judenrat of Demblin.

**SARA:** Demblin. In that Judenrat, he didn't know Bronia. Bronia was working.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** We're on the story of your brother Herschel, when he was wounded.

**SARA:** He came over there and she saw, and he told her the story. She, I don't know if she knew who he was or she didn't, she told you she knew who he was?

**INT:** That I don't remember.

**SARA:** Okay. She arranged for a doctor. She arranged for a doctor, Goodfider or somebody, what she knew in there. In the meantime he was hiding under the desk for the day, and at night he ran away and he came to Stahurski. A day later or something, Herschel walks in and he told me the story. From there we went, the four of us, to Yadamov. In Yadamov...

**INT:** Did you ever find out where the train went?

**SARA:** Yes. To Sobibor. From there...

**INT:** But Demblin people went to Treblinka. This train went to Sobibor.

**SARA:** Sobibor. This is what we knew. Knowing that my brother, the older one, and my brother-in-law are there, working in Demblin in the airport. In Yadamov there was this...everybody used to come to Yadamov to buy blueberries, mushrooms and everything. Polish. And they used to bring this kademblin. I walked over to a lady, to a Polish woman, and I said, "Listen. I will give you as many blueberries as you want to buy. I have a brother and a brother-in-law in this camp. I want you should deliver to them something and ask for Butche Golcman, they should give it to Butche Golcman."

**INT:** But what did you have to give her? You had no money.

**SARA:** Over there my uncle had money.

**INT:** Oh, so you made contact with your uncle.

**SARA:** Right when we went there. He took us in. There were so many Jewish people already in Yadamov. He gave the house and everything, whatever, and everybody was there. It was like one community. I had the gold.

**INT:** From the vest.

**SARA:** From the vest.

**INT:** When did you find that? When did you look for it?

**SARA:** When my mother told me. When I came to Stahurski. And Stahurski was the contact to sell it.

**INT:** So then you looked and you found the gold.

**SARA:** We had money. I went to this woman and I said, "I give you as many..." I didn't want to give money. Why? She will take away? "...as many blueberries as you want. You take this."

**INT:** Take what?

**SARA:** I gave just a letter. And I said, "Next week..." and they used to come always, every week, on Monday. I said, "Next week on Monday I will be here, and if you will bring me something from him, I will give you double blueberries. A big basket once, the second time two." The next week she's coming. She brings me a container, inside a tallis koton.

**INT:** Tzitzis.

**SARA:** A tallis koton from him and a letter, and he writes, "Wash the tallis koton." It was black, the tallis koton. Black. "Wash the tallis koton and see whatever you can send food." I used to buy bread. I washed the tallis koton. I don't remember what I did and everything. It was a big iron container. On the top I put a lot of blueberries. I gave her two baskets of blueberries and I said, "Every week I want this." She brought to him this.

**INT:** So he was in the Demblin work camp.

**FRANCES:** Airport.

**SARA:** On the airport they were working.

**INT:** But Demblin had a work camp, which is where the Apelkers were.

**SARA:** He was working in the airport.

**INT:** So he was on a work detail at the airport.

**SARA:** This was right in the beginning yet. And I sent for two months...contact with him. I knew he's alive. I remember once I couldn't find food. I remember like today. I cooked lima beans. Got a big pot of lima beans, cooked, put it in the container and on top I put blueberries and she brought it to him. Whatever I could find a hand on it, and this was going on like this for two months. And one Monday she comes and she said, "They liquidated and they killed them all or they took them away."

**INT:** And that was that.

**SARA:** That was that.

**INT:** So this is July, 1942.

**SARA:** Yes, July or August, the beginning of August. Something like this.

**INT:** And you're at your uncle's house, Faiga Rosa's brother.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And his name? You thought Luzer but Luzer is the grandfather.

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Maybe Josef is wrong.

**SARA:** I think it was Luzer. I think. He was a redhead. A good heart. A tzaddik fun a mentsch (from a person). A tzaddik. He gave away his bedroom. He gave away everything to share with the people. Everybody is sick and old. Everybody was there. Everybody was there. And after, until it came, the liquidation of their ghetto. Why I survived?

**INT:** Before that, what were you thinking all this time?

**SARA:** Survive.

**INT:** How did you get from day to day?

**SARA:** Survive.

**INT:** And did the four of you act like a team? Did you make decisions together? Did you act together?

**SARA:** Josef and Harry went to work for the Germans. Over there was an enterprise of cutting wood for building houses or this.

**INT:** Was it forced labor?

**SARA:** Forced labor.

**INT:** So they were taken to work.

**SARA:** Yes, but they went in the morning and they came at night back. Gittel developed a fear, a tremendous fear.

**INT:** So up till then she was with you.

**SARA:** All the time.

**INT:** And was strong with you.

**SARA:** Very fearful.

**INT:** The whole time.

**SARA:** All the time.

**INT:** So she followed your lead.

**SARA:** I don't know. She rebelled. She didn't want to. And I forced. I talked to her. I cuddled. I slept with her and everything. But there was always a fear. She lost her will power of life. I had a boyfriend over there.

**INT:** In Yadamov.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Very resourceful.

**SARA:** I had a boyfriend. Why I had this boyfriend? Everything is a reason. I knew I was very pretty and I was.

**INT:** Not as pretty as Gittel.

**SARA:** No. And I had a will for life. For life. Something, a drive in me. This boy, his father was the head of Judenrat in Yadamov. He knew all the decisions what was going on and everything. And in a ghetto everybody is close. We didn't kiss. We didn't neck. We didn't do anything. We just talked and everything. Somehow I felt that I can benefit from him. What can I benefit? Information. It was on a Thursday, I think. He comes to me and he said, "Sally..." No, he didn't call me Sally. Shaindel. "Shaindel, Monday they're going to liquidate the ghetto." Everybody. "And everybody is going to be taken to the big city." I think Lvov, Lemberg. "And nobody will remain. You should know. You should be aware. If you want to run away..." And I asked him, "What are you doing with your family?" And he said, "I don't know. My father didn't tell. But I wanted to let you

know that this will take place.” I come home to Yossel and I say, “Yossel, they’re going to liquidate the ghetto.” Then Josef started to cry.

**INT:** That’s when he started to cry.

**SARA:** I will come to it.

**INT:** Oh, in telling the story. Yes.

**SARA:** This is the story.

**FRANCES:** I never heard it.

**SARA:** You didn’t hear?

**FRANCES:** I wasn’t there.

**INT:** You weren’t there for Shabbas when Michael was there.

**SARA:** Michael was there. I came to him and I said to him, “Yossel, you know what? You take Gittel and go to Stahurski.”

**INT:** You said to Josef.

**SARA:** That they’re liquidating the ghetto.

**INT:** And you said to Josef, “You take Gittel.”

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** He said to you.

**SARA:** He said to me, “You take Gittel and go to Stahurski, and exchange money. Take gold and exchange money.” Whatever happened, we should have money.

**INT:** So Josef still had some gold.

**SARA:** I had, in the vest. We all had together. He said, “You take Gittel and go there, but come back on Sunday.”

**INT:** So what day is this?

**SARA:** This was on a Friday. I told Josef on a Thursday.

**INT:** And on Monday was the liquidation. He said, “Come back on Sunday.”

**SARA:** I left on a Sunday, I don’t remember when.

**INT:** You were free to leave or you had to hide to leave?

**SARA:** That's right. Hide. I left.

**INT:** So you went with Gittel.

**SARA:** No. I said, "Okay." He said, "I will remain here with Herschel. You come back and we'll divide. I will go. When something happens, I will come to you. We will be there. Herschel will go with Gittel." And she was afraid to go to the woods.

**INT:** "If the Germans come to Yadamov, we will escape. I will get you at Stahurski's and Herschel and Gittel will go to the forest." That was the plan, and this was Josef's plan?

**SARA:** Not to the forest.

**INT:** To the woods, you said.

**SARA:** No, to Lvov.

**INT:** Herschel and Gittel will go to...

**SARA:** To Lemberg.

**INT:** With the transport?

**SARA:** We didn't know that there's going to be a transport. They say that...

**INT:** That they're removing the people to Lvov.

**SARA:** People over there, and there is a big labor camp in Lvov. So they want to take all the Jews from surroundings. And he said to me like this, "If it's going to be good over there, the two of us will go there. If it's going to be bad, they will run away and they'll come to us."

**INT:** So this was Josef's plan.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And did Josef have that role in the family where he was the planner?

**SARA:** Not that he was the planner. We discussed it. He was the oldest. It made sense. It made sense. We didn't know where is good or what to do or how. I walked over to Gittel and I begged her to come. You have to go through the woods a whole night in the darkness. She was crying and she didn't want to go for love or money. I said, "I have to go by myself. Come with me. How can I go by myself?" She said, "Do whatever you want. I am not going. I don't care." I had no choice. I picked myself up and I went by myself.

**INT:** And what was that like for you that night?

**SARA:** Nightmare. When you walk through woods, there is the wild animals and everything. I always tried to walk in the side of...not in the middle of the forest.

**INT:** You mean on the edge of the forest.

**SARA:** At the edge.

**INT:** How did you put one foot in front of the other?

**SARA:** I put one foot in front of the other. I walked. One time I heard people talking. In the woods in the fall, all the farmers used to make leaves, like gather the leaves by the edge of the woods, and I heard people. I pushed myself in the leaves. I was lying there for an hour until it got quiet. I went out and I walked. In the morning, like when it was still gray, I came to Stahurski.

**INT:** What did you believe? Did you believe you would make it? Did you say to yourself whatever happens will happen?

**SARA:** That's what I said. I had no choice. We had no money. We had to survive. I had to take a chance. I had to take a chance. There wasn't somebody what was going to take me there. I came to Stahurski and I...he exchanged the money. The next day, I see Yossel is coming.

**INT:** So the next day is Sunday. When you were supposed to go back, he's coming to you.

**SARA:** I said to Yossel, "What are you doing here?" He said, "They liquidated the ghetto a day before. Herschel went with her to Lvov and I came to you. I thought you would come over there." So we are waiting there. A day later, Herschel is coming, without Gittel. I was hysterical. He tells me when he came to Lvov, the fiancée of Pearl saw him and he walked over to him and he said, "What are you doing here? They're liquidating the ghetto." He said, "They're bringing us here for labor." He said, "No way. We're all going to the gas chambers."

**INT:** So he knew.

**SARA:** He knew. He was older and he was there, in this ghetto already, a long time.

**INT:** In Lvov.

**SARA:** In Lvov. He said, "If you can, run away. Just run away." Herschel was very adventurous, like I was. He looked around and he saw a man with a horse and buggy. He said, "Listen, I have to escape from here with my sister. I give you everything what I have, and I have a lot of money." He didn't have a lot of money, but he told him, "I have a lot of money. You have to give me your clothes. We'll change clothes and your horse and buggy, and I give you the money, and I'm not going to take away the horse and buggy. I'm going to leave it out over there, and I will run away." The farmer sees a gold mine. He walks in to the house, a synagogue, a house, I don't know what, and he said to



her, "Gittel, we're running away." She says, "I'm not going." He says, "We have five minutes to run away. We have to jump through a window. I cannot go out through the door. The Germans are there. We have to run through the window." She said, "I'm not going." He took her close to the window and said, "You jump," and she said, "No way. I'm not going. You want to go, you go." This is what he was telling me. When he was talking to her by the window and people were jumping through the window constantly. The Germans were like coming in screaming "Raus" with the dogs and everything. The Germans were coming in. She didn't want to jump. The last thing what he heard her voice when he jumped, she said, "Ich glibiben allein-I remained alone." Before we were four.

**INT:** I remain alone.

**SARA:** And he jumped and ran over to this man. He gave him the clothes. He took the horse and buggy, drove through the gate. He was a Polish this. He spoke a good Polish. "I brought in the Jews here. Now I'm going home." He drove through the gate. He left the horse and buggy and he came to us without her.

**INT:** And your reaction was to cry?

**SARA:** My reaction? I knew...I don't think I cried. I don't think at that moment I cried. I just said to Herschel, "You had no choice."

**INT:** So he felt bad.

**SARA:** He felt very bad. And Yossel. He had no choice. And I walked out from there and I went separate by myself, and maybe for a day or two I didn't eat.

**INT:** You walked out from where?

**SARA:** The barn.

**INT:** And you just walked around for a day?

**SARA:** Like hiding in a corner over there. You couldn't walk. And I couldn't eat. I couldn't believe it. And I blamed myself for a while, why I didn't take her. I should insist, I should scream, I should fight with her, I should hit her, I should I don't know what. She was so fragile in mind. She was so afraid. I spared her. I didn't know that this will happen and everything, and I just tried to justify. I never could speak to Herschel about it.

**INT:** So you never said out loud that you felt responsible.

**SARA:** I said. I said, "If you wouldn't go, not one of us would be alive. You wanted to save her. You wanted to spare her." That's when Josef started crying.

**INT:** He blames himself.

**SARA:** He shouldn't. He shouldn't. And after, when we came from there, we went into hiding.

**INT:** How did that work?

**SARA:** We went...by Stahurski we couldn't stay.

**INT:** Because?

**SARA:** It was so obvious. They were searching for Jews every moment. Josef got contact with this Polish man, the farmer where the Sefer Torah was hidden, and we felt that this man has a certain obligation to our father and he made a hiding place.

**INT:** What was the obligation other than "I'll help you if I can?" What obligation?

**SARA:** Obligation, you know, sometimes you feel a moral or something.

**FRANCES:** They were also in World War I together.

**INT:** But we don't know in what circumstance. Were they soldiers together? What was the debt? If there was a debt, what was it? There doesn't seem to be one except friendship.

**SARA:** Friendship. I don't know. Maybe it's friendship. He called over his wife. This man died. This farmer died.

**INT:** Died when?

**SARA:** Before he was hiding us. Before he was hiding us, he called over his wife and he said, "If the Golcman family needs something, remember you have to do for them. You must promise me." And she did. When Yossel got contact with her, she, with her son and she had a stable boy, made a bunker in the barn. There was on top horses, sheep, pigs, everything, and we were underneath.

**INT:** So they dug a hole underneath the floor of the barn.

**SARA:** And on top was the manure, everything, and at night when she locked it up, she milked the cows, she used to bring us food, and locked up. She used to leave it someplace in a corner. We could lift from underneath. We lifted like this the manure with a piece of wood. It was like a square.

**INT:** So you could open the floor.

**SARA:** Yes, open the floor. We went out. We used to pee, we used to make, and take a little bit food. The children from ten, twelve years, didn't know that there is somebody there. Nobody knew.

**INT:** She knew, her older son and a...

**SARA:** And a stable boy. Nobody else. Nobody else. We were there for sixteen months.

**FRANCES:** The three of you.

**SARA:** The three of us.

**INT:** Did you give her...you gave her some of the gold, the money?

**SARA:** We didn't have already.

**INT:** You were out of everything. So she did it without payment.

**SARA:** Without payment. Without anything. And we were there and we had no air. And the foundation in this barn was from big stones. I took a stick and was digging so much that I made a hole between two stones. Every time the dog was lying there. The dog was lying, and I couldn't push him out because he would be barking. We couldn't turn. If we had to turn, we had to turn all three of us. We couldn't this. No. We stayed there, Josef and Harry and myself, maybe for six months or three months.

**INT:** I thought you said eighteen.

**SARA:** Wait. I don't know, somebody found out that we are there. They knew that Josef was in the army. You have to go to partisans. You know how to fight, a freedom fighter.

**INT:** So whoever knew you were there did not turn you in.

**SARA:** No. It was Jewish. I don't know how or whatever. And Josef wanted to go, not to lie there. He wanted to go. I don't know how he got in touch with them. Maybe somebody told him, I don't know. This thing I don't know. Brought me other two Jewish girls in their place.

**FRANCES:** Harry went with Josef?

**SARA:** Harry went with Josef and they got two Jewish girls. We were there with the girls, and this was boyfriends. The boyfriends got the two Jewish girls. The two boyfriends were partisans. Very strong partisans.

**INT:** When you say partisans, what are you talking about?

**SARA:** Freedom fighters.

**INT:** From the Polish?

**SARA:** No. Jewish underground.

**INT:** But they were not fighting Jewish partisans.

**SARA:** Yes. Blowing up trains. Fighting the Nazis.

**INT:** But I thought the only armed group was the Bielski Brigade.

**SARA:** You know how many groups?

**INT:** Small groups.

**SARA:** Small groups. We were not big groups, but there were so many. We had a double fright. We had to watch out for the Poles, the AKA, and we had to watch out for the Germans. We were in this area.

**INT:** Which area?

**SARA:** Like near Leopoldow. More in the forest, in the big forests. The partisans need food. They had maybe twenty, thirty. They used to come to villages to take food from the farmers with revolvers. If not, the farmers wouldn't give. They never used to come to this village. Another group of partisans came to this village. This was in February. Tremendous snowstorms. A lot of snow. They came for food. The AKA found out that there is partisans. There was a shoot-out. There was a shoot-out. The stable boy in our farm...caught fire. It was straw. The attic was straw.

**INT:** The farmer's name is what?

**SARA:** I don't remember.

**INT:** But it was this farmer whose wife is now hiding you. There was a fight between...

**SARA:** The AKA.

**INT:** The AKA, which is the Polish Nationalists, and the Jewish partisans. Not where Josef and Harry.

**SARA:** No.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** So because of the shoot-out, a bullet hit the straw and caught fire.

**SARA:** The stable boy was afraid that we'll get burned. He came in. He said, "You have to run away. Open the..." Here, sitting underneath my feet, we couldn't walk. We didn't walk. We couldn't. We came up and when we were hiding...like his door opened, like this. We were hiding, the three girls, under there. The Polish Nationalists came in. They see the farm is burning, the stable is burning and here the door is open, they came in and he saw us and we were all in nighties, myself and the two girls.

**INT:** This is eighteen months after you went into that hole.

**SARA:** Eighteen or sixteen, something like this.

**INT:** This is when? Just give me an approximate...

**SARA:** This was in '43, by the end. In February.

**INT:** February, '43.

**SARA:** In February, '43? I think so.

**INT:** Or in February '44.

**SARA:** I think February '44.

**INT:** Because you're close to the end now.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So it's February '44.

**SARA:** And when he saw us, he recognized me. He was a son of a guy what he cleaned our toilets, outside the toilets, taking away all these things for fertilizing the fields, and he said, "You are Jewish girls." The minute he said, and I see a gun, the minute he said, "You are Jewish girls," and he got so "fatumult," I ran out and I start running. The snow was clean. It was fresh snow. Like you made a part, and he was running after me, and the two girls ran after him, like behind him.

**INT:** There was a whole chaos.

**SARA:** Yes. I couldn't walk. I fell in the snow. It was fresh snow. I fell in the snow. He didn't know where I disappeared. He started to curse in Polish. He turns around and he sees the other two girls. He caught them, and they start to cry. I still hear their voices. And he said, "I'm going to kill you." They said, "Why? Why? Why are you killing us?" And I heard one shot and another shot. Another shot and another shot, and then it's quiet and I'm still in the snow.

**FRANCES:** In the nightie.

**SARA:** In a nightie, forty below zero. And I knew I had to run away from here, that the Germans will come right away. There was a shoot-out. There are Jewish partisans. Now they will find out that the Jewish girls got killed, the farmer is going to get killed.

**INT:** Did they?

**SARA:** I waited maybe an hour until it got quiet and it got dark.

**INT:** This is during the day, this whole thing.

**SARA:** At night.

**INT:** No, the scene of the shooting.

**SARA:** Everything at night. The partisans wouldn't come in daytime.

**INT:** It got darker.

(ADDENDUM: What happened with the farmer who was hiding Sally and the other girls? After the girls were shot, the Nazis killed the stable boy who helped to hide them and possibly killed the son. Sally doesn't know for sure. When they were in Zelechow, the farmer's widow found out that they were there and came to find them. She found Sally and gave her a chicken and some butter and asked that she not be contacted by them because it would be bad for her. They respected the widow's wishes. "The goyim were good as long as they could be good. When they found a Jew, they killed the goy.")

**SARA:** When it got to be quiet and dark I climbed over the fence. I don't know how, with stiff feet.

**INT:** Which fence? Just the neighbor fence?

**SARA:** A fence. There was always...the farms had fences. All around a fence, a wooden fence. I climbed over the fence and I ran. The field was frozen. I was barefoot. I didn't have my period for two years. I was running and running and running and running and I came to a forest. I came to a forest and I got my period. I got my period. And I was running a whole night. In the morning came back. Why I knew I came back to the same area? From the blood.

**INT:** So you ran in a circle.

**SARA:** Probably. And I hear from far screaming, like the Germans and everything. I said I have to go to a farm far from here. They won't kill me. If they will kill me...the partisans didn't know who survived. They knew that two girls got killed. They didn't know if it's Josef's sister or the other two girls. And they were very big fighters, the other partisans. I knew that they will come look for a girl, for a Jewish girl. My mind was working. I knew. So I walked into a farmer's house and I was ringing, not ringing, banging. She opened the door and started to scream and everything. I said, "Listen, if you will say one word, the Jewish partisans will come and burn you to a crisp. Remember, don't say one word." She says, "I cannot keep you." I said, "You have to hide me until at night."

**INT:** So you tried to intimidate her.

**SARA:** Yes. "You have to hide me until at night." She says, "I can't." But she says, "In the field is the big hay. You go in there, in the hay."

**INT:** Piles of hay. Piles of hay, and you could hide in between them.

**SARA:** Hide in the hay. And I said, "If somebody comes and you will tell them that there is a Jewish girl, that there is a girl hiding, you have dead. If a partisan, a Jewish, will come, you tell them I'm hiding there." I went there and I didn't go in with my head, like this. No, with my feet, pushed in, and I was lying. And it was warm there. And I heard at

night...I was lying a whole day and I heard at night the dogs were barking, so I knew something, movements is there. Partisans came.

**INT:** You didn't know though.

**SARA:** I didn't. And Harry came with the two partisans.

**INT:** They walked up to the...they went to the farmer?

**SARA:** They went to all the farmers to ask who is there.

**INT:** Is there a girl here.

**SARA:** Did she hear something? She said, "Yes. There is a girl over there." Josef went that time away. They sent him to blow up a train or to bring food. He wasn't there. He wasn't there. Harry came. When Harry saw me over there, I was frozen. I had no clothes. The two partisans saw that it's not their girlfriend, they have no obligation. First of all, Harry took off...he wore a big vest, like a wool. He took it off and he put it on me like panties, something like this. Then he went and brought rocks and wrapped my feet. I had no shoes. And he said to me...and the boys said, "We have to leave. We'll help you to bring to a special place, then we have to leave."

**INT:** These people were armed?

**SARA:** Sure.

**INT:** I never knew that. They always said they didn't have weapons.

**SARA:** What are you talking about?

**INT:** So Harry and Josef had weapons.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** As far as you know, did they kill anybody?

**SARA:** I don't think so. The main thing is only to bring food for the other people, and if they send them to blow up a train or to put a bomb on the road, something like this. Not to kill. We had to cross a train track.

**INT:** So the three of them carried you.

**SARA:** Yes. They made like this (shows with hands) and they carried me.

**INT:** Like a stretcher with their arms.

**SARA:** And they were changing. And they said to Harry, "We'll bring her to this and this house." We have to cross the train tracks. The train tracks were guarded by Germans, but there's a certain time when they're changing guards. It was very, very cold. When they

were changing the guards, we ran out through the train tracks, behind over there, and they brought me to this place and they left me with Harry.

**INT:** So this farmer was a friend of the partisans.

**SARA:** Yes. He was helping. They knew, the partisans knew, who to trust and who not. When I came in there, she saw what kind of condition I was. She had an oven what they were baking bread. The farmers had high ovens, and she put us over there.

**INT:** Us?

**SARA:** Me and Harry.

**INT:** Harry stayed with you.

**SARA:** Yes, and the other two left. When my feet were frozen, it didn't hurt me. When she put me over there in the hot thing, the pain was unbelievable. Frostbite. Unbelievable. She gave me food. She gave us that night, and said we have to leave. Harry said that he knows where the partisans, not particularly this group what he was but other groups. More or less they knew where this. She gave me clothes. She binded my feet and everything. I went with Harry. We were walking and every ten feet he said, "We are there soon. We are there soon." And I said, "You're lying. You're a liar. I don't want to go. I cannot live anymore."

**INT:** That's what you were saying.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** So this is the first time when you lost hope or lost the will.

**SARA:** The pain.

**INT:** The pain in your legs.

**SARA:** My legs. The pain was unbelievable. And I said...

**INT:** You wanted him to leave you?

**SARA:** Yes. I said, "Leave me and you go. Then you will come with people." He said, "Oh no." And he said to me, "I swear to you..." This was his words. "...that it's not far. We're going to walk this way and over there is partisans." We walked there and we come to a big place where partisans. The partisans were not there. The Germans probably found out that they were there and with grenades blew up all the bunkers and everything. We had to go run. Who knows who was there? He knew more or less where to take me. He took me over there with Josef, and Josef came.

**INT:** Took you to another partisan group?

**SARA:** No. He took me to the partisans what he came from, where Josef was.



**INT:** Where those other two young men were.

**SARA:** Yes. Other two and other...

**INT:** So you had more walking to do.

**SARA:** Yes. And I had more hope already.

**INT:** Why?

**SARA:** I saw there was groups of partisans. The Germans blew up, but there is in this area other ones. I got such a stamina that why the Germans blew up there.

**INT:** Say more about that. What changed from, "Leave me behind, I can't live anymore?"

**SARA:** I said, "Why should I die here? When I'm here and the Germans are killing us, I should just give up and go to them? He should leave me behind?" I said, "No. We are going," and with all my strength I went and they took me there where Josef was and Harry. And since then I was with them together. I had such a pain in my legs, such a gangrene. I had no shoes and there was nowhere to get.

**INT:** Do you have any damage from that time on your feet?

**SARA:** Only when it's very cold.

**INT:** So you didn't have gangrene. You did have frostbite.

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Gangrene cannot recover.

**SARA:** Okay. Whatever it was, it was very terrible pain. And in the forest, in the partisans, every girl had to belong to a man. This was her survival. I was very close with Herschel. I said, "No way. How can you belong..." And this boy said he will bring me shoes, and this boy he will bring me that and he will bring me this. I said, "No way." I used to melt the snow and wash the clothes for them. I did the chores.

**INT:** So they let you stay because you did the laundry.

**SARA:** No. They let stay everybody.

**INT:** But Herschel and Josef were...

**SARA:** I needed a comb. I needed a piece of soap. I needed things. Sometimes Josef and Harry couldn't bring this. I used to do this type of things and I used to get. But shoes...

**INT:** They would give you something for this work.

**SARA:** Yes. Shoes I didn't have. Shoes I didn't have. Once they went to bring food. They went to bring food.

**INT:** Who's they?

**SARA:** The partisans from this group. Not all of them. A certain group. Certain men. When they were walking back...when they went, it was snowing. That was good. When they got all the food and they came back, it stopped snowing, so they made marks. The partisans was...there was posts, first, second and third. The first when you saw something you have to shoot that there's danger. The second one had to protect not to let, and the third one had to take out the people to run away from there.

**INT:** So there were three lookouts. One man was here, one man was in another place. The first would shoot as a warning. The second would do that?

**SARA:** Stay there and protect not to let them.

**INT:** Try to stop the person.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And the third had to?

**SARA:** Evacuate. When the first one saw that there is marks and he heard some noises, he ran to us and he said we have to run away.

**INT:** But it was really the partisans coming back.

**SARA:** No, the partisans were there already.

**INT:** So it was danger.

**SARA:** It was danger. In the meantime, we ran away and we left everything behind. The wild pigs or the wild this. We waited a whole day in another forest and at night the man came. They saw that the Germans didn't come and there's no Germans around. We took everything and we went in another place, in case. They brought shoes. They brought all these things. The man, the head from the men, liked me very much. I was a young girl, a good girl. He was single. He took a pair of shoes and he said to me, "This pair of shoes go to Sally, to Shaindel." I said, "No way. I'm not taking any shoes." He said, "Not from me. From all the people what risked their life. This is the shoes for you." And I accepted it. Bracha, I slept with the shoes. When I was going to sleep I put them in, the shoelaces, on my neck. They were maybe three sizes too big.

**INT:** But they were shoes.

**SARA:** They were shoes.

**FRANCES:** That's why you love shoes to this day.

**SARA:** (Laughter) This tells you stories about survival. This is a best seller.

**INT:** Yes. I want to go back to the hole in the barn. Eighteen months. How did you survive each and every day for eighteen months?

**SARA:** She fed us.

**INT:** What did you do? In your head, what did you do?

**SARA:** We talked.

**INT:** It's dark.

**SARA:** We talked. We reminisced. We were sleeping. We were talking to ourselves. We were thinking about everybody.

**INT:** What were you thinking?

**SARA:** About the family. About the neighbors. About school. About so many things. Just to be busy.

**INT:** So you in your mind would think about all these things in a very deliberate way.

**SARA:** Yes. And at night we used to go up.

**INT:** And stretch.

**SARA:** She used to bring in a pail of water. We used to wash ourselves, make ourselves clean, go to the washroom, walk around, everything. And when it came like three, four o'clock in the morning, we used to go right away back.

**INT:** And then you would sleep a little.

**SARA:** Yes. This was our this.

**INT:** So you needed a vivid imagination to think of life and family and school.

**SARA:** Sanity. Now you can see why strong...Josef was a very big help. He was telling us stories from the army.

**INT:** When you were in the partisan camp?

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** When would he tell you stories?

**SARA:** When we were in the bunker.

**INT:** Oh, together.

**SARA:** Yes, together.

**INT:** So he tried to keep...

**SARA:** Yes. And of the exercise what the army used to do and of the city and of the rabbi and of this and of that. We used to...things like this.

**INT:** So now you're with the partisan group. It is 1944.

**SARA:** Yes, and we got liberated in 1944, June the 17th.

**INT:** That's early.

**SARA:** Yes. The Russians advanced and they pushed the Germans. They were advancing towards Warsaw, towards the Vistla.

**INT:** But that's much earlier than the camps were liberated. The camps weren't liberated until January. So where were you those six months?

**SARA:** I was in Zelechow.

**INT:** Spell Zelechow.

**SARA:** Your mother got liberated there too.

**INT:** No, no. My mother was in the concentration camp in Tzerchlikova (Czestochowa?) in Poland. She was liberated January 1945.

**SARA:** And we were liberated in June or July.

**INT:** So that's six months early.

**SARA:** We were in Zelechow.

**INT:** Write Zelechow. Say the letters.

**SARA:** Z-E-L-E-C-H-O-W.

**INT:** Liberation means the Russians came into that area, there was no threat from the Germans.

**SARA:** No. When we were in the forest, we heard planes going. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Explain to me what it means to be liberated in the forest and what happened in that six month time period.

**SARA:** We were liberated. We heard that the war is over. We didn't know. We didn't know. We walked out from the forest. Then we met some people and they said, "The war is over." There were going trucks of Russian people, Russian soldiers, not people. All

over. And I said, "Where are you going?" They said they're going to Lublin. Why Lublin? Lublin is liberated. Lublin is liberated. We came to Lublin.

**INT:** How?

**SARA:** The Russians took us on trucks.

**INT:** So they took you.

**SARA:** They took us on trucks. We all went to Lublin.

**INT:** How many in the partisan group? Ten? Twenty?

**SARA:** Maybe more. Maybe thirty. Thirty, thirty-five.

**INT:** And they took all of you.

**SARA:** In two, three trucks.

**INT:** And Lublin is where in Poland, south of Warsaw?

**SARA:** Yes.

**FRANCES:** It's not far from Krakow. That's where Majdanek is.

**INT:** But where is vis-a-vis Warsaw? South?

**FRANCES:** Yes.

**SARA:** We came to Lublin. The Polish Army marched in. Wanda Vashilewsky. In Russia, they formed a Polish Army and they were fighting side-by-side with the Russians against the Germans. They came in.

**INT:** What did you call them?

**SARA:** Wanda Vashilewsky. The army came in.

**INT:** V-A-S-H-I-L-E-W-S-K-Y. And who was she?

**SARA:** She was probably some...named after a general. I don't know who she was.

**INT:** This was the name of the unit. I see. So the name of the Polish unit was Wanda Vashilewsky.

**SARA:** And the Germans were bombing unbelievable. The Russians and the Poles advanced and they were retreating, but there was still bombings. And they bombed Lublin and there was one house from the Jewish people who were liberated a week before or two weeks before. They were all concentrating in one building to see who survived, who did not survive. We were all concentrating in there. When we came in and

there was tremendous chaos, and when the bombs were falling in the backyard I said to Josef, "I'm not staying here. I didn't survive to get killed here by bombs." And we were all jumping through a window. We couldn't go out through the front door.

**INT:** Because?

**SARA:** Of the bombs and everything. When people were jumping through the window, and I jumped out and somebody hit me in the face. Not willingly. Herschel said to me, "We're leaving. We're not staying here." Where can we go? We heard that Zelechow was liberated. We came to Zelechow. We came to Zelechow. We had there family.

**INT:** You had family. Who?

**SARA:** I don't remember the family.

**INT:** Who lived in Zelechow, or they came there after being liberated?

**SARA:** No. They lived. Yossel knew the names. He went to the city hall and he told them that we are...they gave us a room in a building.

**INT:** So it's not that you found the family, but because you had family?

**SARA:** Yes. And all the Jews from around there what they were liberated came there and formed a Jewish community. We were all living there. The anti-Semites were so big, and Josef joined right away the police, the Polish police.

**INT:** The Polish police in that town. He joined voluntarily?

**SARA:** Voluntarily. If he's going to be there, then he could protect. Then he knows what's what. Then can give support. Then can give houses. He has an in. One evening he comes and he tells that we have to run away. Why? We have to be in a big city. The Poles...over there where your mother got shot, Zelechow.

**INT:** Oh, it was in Zelechow.

**SARA:** Sure. She got shot in Zelechow. He said he heard that they're trying to make a massacre of the Jewish people, and in Zelechow we were already living like a normal life.

**INT:** But the war was still going on.

**SARA:** Yes. It was going in front, and the Russians this. In our room a Russian officer lived. There was not enough accommodations. I didn't mind a woman officer was living there. We're going to dances. I made myself...Josef brought me once a parachute, a white parachute, and I made myself a beautiful blouse and a pair of pants, a skirt. I had to go to a dance.

**INT:** You had to.

**SARA:** I had to go to a dance.

**FRANCES:** Life goes on.

**INT:** In the shadow of the war.

**SARA:** I had to go to a dance and there were young people and we tried to have a little bit normal. One night Josef told everybody to run away. Left everything behind and just run, and we run to Lodz.

**INT:** So Lodz was liberated.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And this is when now?

**SARA:** This is...in Lodz, in '45. I think in January. In the meantime, Josef met Bronia in Zelechow and he got married in Lodz.

**INT:** You were in Zelechow like a few months.

**SARA:** Yes, maybe six months. And when we came to Lodz.

**INT:** And this is walking. Everybody walked.

**SARA:** Who said walked? We got lifts by trucks, by cars. Who can walk it's so far? We arranged transportation. When we came to Lodz, the Germans. He got a beautiful apartment for us. We opened a business. We opened over there a store.

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** Bronia was not liberated until January of 1945, so you're talking later already.

**SARA:** 1945 when?

**INT:** In January. Some of the camps weren't liberated until March, April, May, but their camp was liberated in January.

**SARA:** And they came to Zelechow.

**INT:** So this is already after that liberation if Bronia was there.

**SARA:** They came to Zelechow, and Josef met Bronia and they got married. I don't remember when. And after this we ran away to Lodz. I met the boyfriends.

**INT:** So in Lodz you didn't have the same danger from the AKA.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** Because it was a big city.

**SARA:** A big city. There was already a committee of Jewish people and they were taking names who survived and everybody was marking down names on the walls and everything. If you survived you know to come to this and to find out who survived. Over there, from Lodz, your mother went to Riky. Not to Riky, to Zelechow. Over there, eleven women, your mother, your auntie and this is the way they got killed. She's the only survivor. This is the story.

**INT:** But there was also something earlier probably where Harry...someone had to go to the army.

**SARA:** When we came to Lodz, they were taking people to the army.

**INT:** But the war was over.

**SARA:** The war still went on.

**INT:** Because they had to go into Germany. So you're talking earlier.

**SARA:** And he went to the army. When he got wounded, I met already Uncle Chanon.

**INT:** In Lodz.

**SARA:** In Lodz. We got the news that Harry got wounded and he's in the hospital.

**INT:** Official news or just people talking? The army informed you?

**SARA:** I don't know if it was the army or people. And Josef says he has to go there to bring him back.

**INT:** Where was he? In Poland?

**SARA:** Harry was in Berlin.

**INT:** So he was in a hospital in Germany.

**FRANCES:** How did he get from...

**INT:** Because he was in the army.

**FRANCES:** From Lodz he got all the way to Berlin?

**SARA:** In the Russian Army. An army is going.

**INT:** So that's how Josef got to Berlin.



**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Also on the army trucks.

**SARA:** Probably.

**INT:** And the war was over or not?

**SARA:** Not yet. The war was going on. The war was going on. And Yossel was married already to Bronia. She was pregnant with Burt. I didn't want to stay in Poland. The anti-Semites was so big, and Josef too didn't want to stay. Nobody wanted to stay but the Jews tried to make a life. They opened stores and they used to throw in grenades in the stores. You felt you're not safe.

**INT:** So at this point you're in Lodz. Josef was married to Bronia and Saba was there, and Saba's son COSHJ. Was Saba already shot when you met Chanon? When Saba was shot, you went to her, so...

**SARA:** I didn't know Chanon when Saba was shot.

**INT:** So Josef went to get Harry. How did that work?

**SARA:** Josef left to get Harry. I stayed with Bronia. We had a store with a partner, a woman. We worked in the store. Bronia couldn't work in the store because she was bleeding, staining, not bleeding. She couldn't. When Josef went for Harry, your mother went with the auntie to Zelechow.

**INT:** So it was at the same time.

**SARA:** All in the same time.

**FRANCES:** But why?

**SARA:** To take some goods or whatever.

**INT:** So Bronia and Saba are part of the Apelker Family, and Saba went back to see if she could retrieve...

**SARA:** COSHJ remained with me and Bronia. When I went to work in store, I used to bring COSHJ downstairs to Leah. We lived on the second floor and Leah came from Russia.

**INT:** Leah.

**SARA:** Leah Bedzow with Johnson, with her husband. My husband, his mother, Bennie and maybe other fifty people. They gave them an apartment. Whoever came. They didn't stay long, but the Bericha was working already and taking people to Israel.

**INT:** The Bericha is...

**SARA:** The Jewish Brigade. The Jewish Brigade was taking people not legal. They used to make them Greek passports. They used to make them all kind of different things to take them out from Poland, to take them closer, to Italy, Czechoslovakia, closer to an ocean to emigrate. Not legal. We have to go through the borders, so you have to have passports. They used to take them in trucks, hiding them in trains, whatever they could. They worked very, very feverishly to take out the Jewish people to Israel.

**INT:** So they were downstairs and they watched COSHJ while you worked. Josef was getting Harry and Saba was trying to get some piece goods for money. And when were you called away to...what's the story?

**SARA:** What's the story?

**INT:** And when is this? Do you have a month when this happened?

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Some time in 1945. In the spring, summer?

**SARA:** The spring. We got a phone call that Saba was shot. There were eleven women they were surrounding. Probably your mother told you. They were surrounded. She was the only one who survived. They rushed her to Praga in a hospital. It was the outskirts of Warsaw. And she's in hospital and she's critical. Who can go? Bronia cannot travel, Josef is not here. I'm going. I took a train. Went by train. Josef gave me some money. He wasn't there.

**INT:** Before he left.

**SARA:** I don't know before he left or whatever or took along money, and I went. It was in the hospital. I came there, somebody stole my money. I go off the train and I have no money. I don't know where to go, what to do. I knew the name of the hospital and I didn't know where the uncle lived. I know he's in Prague but I didn't know. I said first I have to go to the hospital. How can I go to the hospital? I had no money. Over there the streetcars were going. I see a soldier, a Russian soldier. I walk over to him and I said to him, "I have to go to this hospital. I have no money. Somebody stole my money." He looks at me and he starts to laugh. He starts to laugh. I said, "My sister is shot there and I have to go there." He said, "Come with me." Here I was reluctant, but I had no choice. I had no choice. He takes me straight to the hospital. When I walk into the hospital I see your mother in critical condition, but they told me that she's going to be okay. I said, "Who's there?" She tells me the uncle is here, and the uncle had a nephew. She told you? He's a single boy. And she told me the situation that the wife got shot, the uncle's wife got shot and he's after her and she wants to get home. I said, "First is first. You get well. You cannot travel." This boy comes in and I tell him the story. "I have no money."

**INT:** The boy is a nephew?

**SARA:** A nephew of the uncle. His nephew, not your auntie's, but a survivor. I said, "Listen, you have to help. There is a situation what we have to work together." He was a

very kind human being, and he got an interest in it. I don't know if in me or in the situation, I don't know. And your uncle somehow, let him rest in peace, didn't behave nice. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** The story that you're telling now is about Saba Hollander, who is also interviewed for the project. This story is in that tape but you played a certain role in this.

**SARA:** When she saw me, Saba saw me, she knew that she has nothing to worry. She said, "Sally, Shaindel, I'm in your hands. Your judgment is good for me." I come in at night, she was in the hospital. I come in at night and I see the uncle and the way he talks to me, that he wants to have Saba and his wife is not here. She's just...not even cold, and you were already like this.

**INT:** The story is that Saba is there with her aunt.

**SARA:** The aunt is dead.

**INT:** The aunt is this uncle's wife.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** When the eleven women were shot and Saba survived, the aunt was killed. So you're saying that this uncle's wife would have just been killed and he's now after his niece, who has been shot and in the hospital. The amazing part of the story to me is why couldn't you just say no to him and leave.

**SARA:** To who?

**INT:** To the uncle.

**SARA:** Saba?

**INT:** Say no to the uncle.

**SARA:** You couldn't.

**INT:** There was something about him that was very threatening.

**SARA:** She couldn't leave. She needed him and I needed him.

**INT:** To recuperate.

**SARA:** To recuperate or for whatever reason. She was afraid of him or whatever. I didn't know this. I never met him and I never knew. I said to Saba, "Don't worry. You just recuperate. I'm here. I won't leave you until you are not well," and I got very friendly with this boy. Very friendly. We brought Saba to eat and fruits, and he used to help me to go to the hospital and we used to let Bronia know that she's getting better. I promised her.

**INT:** Now Bronia is Saba's sister.

**SARA:** Sister.

**INT:** And Bronia is married to your brother Josef. That's the nature of the relationship.

**SARA:** My relationship with Saba is not that she's my sister-in-law's sister. We had our own relationship.

**INT:** But you met that way though.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You met her as your sister-in-law's sister but developed your own friendship.

**SARA:** Yes. Our own relationship. I sized up...he's an elderly man. Very prost.

**INT:** How do you translate prost? Simple.

**SARA:** Simple and arrogant. I couldn't believe that he was married to her aunt. This I didn't question. This guy, this nephew, promised me that he will help me take out Saba from the hospital when she will be able to recuperate. This soldier what he met me used to come and visit me every day in the hospital. He used to take me home.

**INT:** Home was the uncle's home?

**SARA:** The uncle's house. He used to supply me with all kind of food. I brought in to the uncle's house sardines, all kinds of other things to eat. Breads, challah, whatever I could, from Warsaw. He was very nice. By the end, when I got to know him better, he was a Jewish man. A Jewish boy.

**INT:** Did he express interest in you?

**SARA:** Maybe he did but I had no interest in him. I didn't want to show him that I'm not interested and I didn't tell him that I'm interested.

**INT:** I understand.

**SARA:** I was very nice and I appreciated very much. I made a plot with this guy, with the cousin. I said, "Listen, there's a guy what he takes me and brings me. In the meantime we're having what to eat. Let's play it this way." He said, "Listen, Shaindel. You are yeneh chevrehman. You are something else."

**INT:** I think we call that a conniver in English.

**SARA:** No, I wasn't conniving. I wasn't promising him.

**INT:** I know. I don't mean it that way. You were planning ahead.

**SARA:** Planning, and I told him the truth. He came in to visit your mother and he came in to the cousins, to the uncle. The uncle made a...that we should bring your mother home there and she should be there and he will supply and he will take care of her. She was hysterical, your mother. She knew if I will leave, she's trapped. They were planning to go in Australia.

**INT:** Who's they?

**SARA:** The uncle with the cousin. And he wasn't...and I didn't say that Saba had no interest in him. Not a word. I only said that we have to see Saba should get well. I don't know how long she was in the hospital. I have no idea. She told you?

**INT:** I don't remember. It was a very critical situation.

**SARA:** Yes. I don't remember. And when the doctors...and I was very involved in it. The doctors had like pity on me and pity on her. I told them the story, how the situation happened, and right after the war and everything, and there was such a situation. When she recuperated and she got well, we had to take her home. We took her home, to the uncle, and he was thinking, "That's it." She recuperated and I said, "Saba, we are going home. How can you go home?" He had to leave someplace, I don't remember, for business or whatever. This cousin got tickets for us, went to the station. We came home and never heard. When I came home, I met Uncle Chanon.

**INT:** So you go back to Lodz, to this rooming house.

**SARA:** Yes, our house.

**INT:** So this must have been some period of time, a few weeks, a month.

**SARA:** A month, maybe even more. I was very, very brave in this situation. I couldn't believe it myself. I was lying at night, how I could pull a thing like this?

**INT:** Which, to disappear behind his back?

**SARA:** Yes. And to let him believe that we'll stay there and everything. That's why I'm such a believer in Hashem. Somehow every time came a good person to me. Look, this soldier. I stopped him in the street. I had no choice. I'm coming to Warsaw, I don't know where to turn, what to do. Then in the hospital they had a lot of love and pity for me and for your mother. And after the cousin. This was an angel, I'm telling you.

**INT:** So Hashem brought these people to you.

**SARA:** I'm telling you. That's why I say, I always say to Uncle Chanon when we are in situations or with the kids or stress, "He never, never disappointed me. He always helped me out." He said, "What, you have a direct line with him?"

**INT:** It feels that way.

**SARA:** Somehow it looks like this. Look what I went through in my lifetime. I was young. I was not experienced. I was in such different situations, and I don't believe it myself now when I'm talking about all these things that I went through this. That this is impossible for a human being to go through all these things by herself.

**INT:** By yourself.

**SARA:** By myself, at such a young age, and coming from a very protective, Orthodox home. But when I had to, I took matters in my own hands. I followed my instincts always.

**INT:** After the war, at whatever point things were settled down enough to check, how did you find out about your family and what did you find out? You were with Josef and Harry, and you. How did you find out about the rest of the family and whether or not they were dead or alive, or did you know that they were dead?

**SARA:** No, we didn't. We had a cousin. When Josef left, we tried to write and all this special places what you signed up to look for family.

**INT:** The Red Cross handled some of that, and the Joint.

**SARA:** The Joint. Everywhere we were thinking. Some people said that they saw my father in a concentration camp.

**INT:** Which you're saying was most likely Sobibor.

**SARA:** Sobibor. They saw him. And when we start to inquire, nothing came. We tried.

**INT:** Did you have hope?

**SARA:** Hope. You hope. So many years we always looked. The only thing what I was distressed, we never separated, myself, Harry and Josef. Never. And I never had intentions of separating. When Josef got married and Saba got sick and Josef went for Harry and I met my husband.

**INT:** When you went back to Lodz with Saba, was Harry already there?

**SARA:** No. Josef was with Harry in Germany.

**INT:** Because Harry was wounded. So he was recuperating there. So they were there for a long time.

**SARA:** Josef went to Harry. In the meantime, the Jewish Brigade was very strong, the influence of people taking to Israel. Not legal. I made up my mind I want to go to Israel.

**INT:** Separate from Harry and Josef.

**SARA:** No, not separate. With them. I knew that they cannot go now. First of all, Bronia is pregnant. She cannot go. Second of all, Harry has to come and recuperate. And Saba

had to recuperate. I said, "Let me go there first and I will see and we'll be in contact." Another motive was I met Chanon and I was madly in love with him. I knew when he leaves, I will never find him. I knew it in my heart.

**INT:** So you were talking about being together. Chanon was with a sister, a brother and mother. They spent the war, most of the war, with the Bielski Brigade. We won't have time to go into his story so I just want to make sure it's there. So he ended up in Lodz, also looking for his family.

**SARA:** No, not looking.

**INT:** Just because they were liberated and...

**SARA:** Liberated and wanted to run away from Russia with the intentions of going to Israel.

**INT:** So that was their intention.

**SARA:** Their intention of going to Israel. They came in to the...everybody who came from Russia came to Lodz. This was the center. There was the Joint.

**INT:** But the Bielski Brigade was not in Russia.

**SARA:** They were in Ukraine. And when they were liberated, everybody was going in their shtetlach. They were liberated, they went to Lida. People went to Vilna. They went to Novograd. From there, everybody wanted to run away from Russia.

**INT:** To get to Lodz.

**SARA:** To get to Lodz, and from Lodz they knew there is a very big movement to go to Israel, and everybody who was liberated, this was their intention, their love, their dream, to go to Israel. And it happened that I fell in love with him and I said that if he leaves, I will never find him. They organized a group of 200 people, and I knew already the family, Chanon's family. I knew the other people. I knew if I want to go, it's only with these type of people, the baalbatish menschen.

**INT:** So it felt similar to you.

**SARA:** Yes. And it's not that I wanted to go with Chanon alone, but with the family. If he wouldn't have a mother and a sister and all these things, I wouldn't go. I asked Yossel, "I want to go." I told him, "I want to go," and he didn't approve of it. He said, "How can a girl go not married?" I said, "I have no intention of getting married. I want to go to Israel." It happened that this group is going and I like this boy. I will go. And he says, "I don't approve." When he left to Harry, I left over there.

**INT:** So the whole incident with Saba came first. You were already back in Lodz.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You asked him permission and he said no. He disappeared. He left to get Harry, and you disappeared.

**SARA:** When I left, I paid for my own ticket. He gave me the money for this. I couldn't go, and Chanon didn't pay for me. He gave me spending money. When I put on my coat, I found a hundred dollars in my pocket. He knew that I made up my mind, I will go. He knew.

**INT:** So he left that for you.

**SARA:** Yes. And he liked the family. He knew the family before I knew. Why? While I went for Saba, he was still there and he met Leah and he met the mother and he met...and they were all together. And Bronia and him associated and everything. I was in Warsaw maybe three, four weeks. He knew that and he liked him, but he wanted I should marry him before I leave. I said never. I didn't. I didn't know him and I didn't want to get married. I knew I liked him.

**INT:** So beginning life again was not hard for you. You grabbed what life gave you. In Zelechow you went to a party. In Lodz you fell in love and you went to Israel.

**SARA:** I didn't go to Israel.

**INT:** You felt that you wanted to go.

**SARA:** Everybody did the same thing. It's not that I...it was like a flood. Like we were in Zelechow, we were a group. I didn't go by myself. Everybody. There were maybe fifty girls.

**INT:** But I'm sure not everybody was of the same...

**SARA:** Everybody. We said, "We're going over there," but there was nothing to do. It was sadness, after the time from the war and everything. We went by group. We met, here is a dance. Let's all go. All go. We all concentrated and we all went, and everybody was trying to wear whatever he could, to lend.

**INT:** To live a little.

**SARA:** Not to live, just to be together. When we went over there, it was just to be together with people. I will tell you an example. I had a very close friend I met in Zelechow. She was from Warsaw. I have a picture with her and her husband. The father was a doctor. Very wealthy people. This is what she was telling me. When she was liberated she was raped by a Russian soldier. After she met a man and she got married. She got married and she came too.

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)



She was alone. She was sick. This man took interest in her and she got married. She used to come to me and used to confide in me. She used to ask me...I was so naive that I didn't know myself anything. She used to tell me and everything. Then she came to me once, and this is going to be on the tape. I don't want this should be on the tape.

**INT:** There's no name. You didn't mention a name.

**SARA:** Okay. She came to me and she said, "Shaindel, I have to ask you something. You have to make sex always on a chair?" I said, "I don't know. I never had sex. I don't know what it is." She said, "My husband cannot have sex with me if it's not on a chair." I said, "We have to ask. We have to ask." We went to a lady what she was married (laughter), the two of us, and we asked. We asked. She said, "No. Whatever the husband wants. This is what you do." Fine.

Then they went to Israel. We had to say goodbye to each other. I lost my family and I was sad and I was crying. The same thing was with her. She wrote me, she gave me a picture of herself and her husband, and in the back she wrote in Polish, I have it in Montreal, and she said, "This picture we say goodbye, but we will never say goodbye in our heart, the two of us."

I always think about it. And she went to Israel and never wrote to me. First of all, she didn't know. Maybe she wrote to Lodz. Maybe she wrote to Zelechow. Maybe she wrote this. I emigrated. I didn't know where she was. I didn't have an idea. This is the way...you developed life. I personally like people. I don't want to be by myself. I come from a family, a big family, and Yossel likes people and Harry liked people. We like people. It's not that I wanted to...the only person what I felt really in love was with Chanon, with my husband.

**INT:** The only man you really fell in love with. You must have had many people interested along the way.

**SARA:** I was not interested.

**INT:** You never felt anything.

**SARA:** Never. This was a special chemistry. In Lodz I met Boruchovitch. Josef came to me, "If your father would be alive, he would be the happiest that Boruchovitch's son wants to marry you. He wants to be with you."

**INT:** This was in Lodz.

**SARA:** In Lodz. And in Zelechow.

**INT:** But you were not interested.

**SARA:** He was a creep. He had money, what the father took. They were very, very wealthy. Orthodox. Very wealthy. He's still now in, not in Caracas. I met him on a boat. I told you this?

**INT:** No.

**SARA:** I went on a cruise with my children and Chanon, all my three children. I went downstairs to the cabin to unpack. Michael was maybe fifteen, sixteen years. Frances wasn't married. We went on an overnight cruise, like a weekend cruise on New Year's. I said to Chanon, "You take care of the kids, give them something to eat," and I went to unpack. And Chanon talks to Michael in Jewish. A man passes by and said, "Oh how nice, a son talks to a father in Jewish." He said, (in Yiddish) "From where are you?" He said, "I'm from Zelechow." "From where are you?" "From Lida." "From Zelechow? My wife is from Zelechow," Chanon said to him. "Your wife is from Zelechow?" Chanon runs down. "Come up quick. I have a landsman, a man from Zelechow." I left everything and I come upstairs and I see a man standing near him.

**INT:** It's the creep.

**SARA:** I come upstairs and I see a man standing near him. "From where are you?" "I'm not from Zelechow but after the war I was in Zelechow." "Who do you know from Zelechow?" I said, "I went out with a boy what he liked me very much and he survived, a father and two sons, Boruchovitch." "Boruchovitch? Yeah?" He said, "Which Boruchovitch?" I said, "I went out with the older son." I start telling him all these things, and he looks at me and he said, "I'm this man."

**INT:** So you didn't recognize each other.

**SARA:** "You went out with me and you refused me a date when you went out with your husband and you had a date with me." And I looked at him. "How do you know all this?" And I start telling him from Bouchovitch's and from his auntie and how we were in Zelechow. He said, "You read my father's book?" I said, "Your father wrote a book." He said, "The way you're telling me all these things is in my father's book. That's why you're telling me this." I said, "Thank you very much. Goodbye," and I went downstairs. He came downstairs and told his wife the story. She says, "How could you do things like this?" She was...it has nothing to do a girlfriend or not. You went out with her. From the same city, you went through so much, how could you do a thing like this? At night we went for dinner on the ship. We had our own table and they had their table. He was with his wife and three children. When he came...a lot of people from Zelechow were in Costa Rica, and one was sponsoring the other. When he came to Costa Rica, his father sent him to Harvard. He graduated Harvard and he went back to Costa Rica and he's now in the government.

**INT:** Very interesting.

**SARA:** He's in government and he married his wife. He didn't know what to do after. We spent dinners together and he sent over champagne and everything. I always attracted nice people it looks like. (Tape shuts) The rest is not important.

**INT:** Well, there's fifty-five years we didn't cover but that's okay.

**SARA:** This is not important. Fifty-five years you have...

**INT:** That's the whole story of rebuilding.

**SARA:** You see what we rebuilt. We have family.

**INT:** That's the what. The question is how, how the insides went, but let me ask you this. In terms of deciding to marry and have children, was there anything about your painful experiences that made you wonder about having children, or was it clear to you that you wanted?

**SARA:** Clear to me.

**INT:** What was your thinking about that?

**SARA:** Clear to me that I want to have a continuation and I wanted very much to have children. To have children and to continue the Jewish people what they perished. I survived. This was my thinking. I survived for this purpose, to have children, to build a life and to be successful in life. To do the best what I could with my husband.

**INT:** Did you have a sense that this was Hashem's plan for you, that you survived to have children?

**SARA:** I didn't think in this way.

**INT:** Or but since you survived, your mission was to have children.

**SARA:** Yes. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** We were talking about your desire for children and rebuilding. A piece of the story that I didn't pick up was actually after you left Lodz, you and Chanon and his family were headed for Israel, but you ended up in Montreal. What is that story? What brought you to Montreal and where did Josef go and where did Harry go? What happened to the family?

**SARA:** We went...the Bericha took us to, we wanted to go to Israel. First we went to Austria. We stayed there a few months. Then we ended up in Italy.

**INT:** This was by crossing borders illegally. All of this.

**SARA:** All illegal borders. I had passports as Greeks, they made for us.

**INT:** So you went through Europe under false papers. You didn't cross the borders at night?

**SARA:** Yes. Through the mountains from Hungary to Austria. We crossed through the mountains. From Poland to Czechoslovakia and to Austria. We had Greek papers and they taught us how to speak Greek, just a few words. Then from Austria to Italy we tried to cross three, four times not legally, in cattle trains and all kinds of this.

**INT:** They kept finding you and sending you back?

**SARA:** Always. When we came to Italy, they brought us to a DP camp, and this was outside Turino, near Venice. Over there we took over. There were 2,000 people in this DP camp.

**INT:** So this DP camp was run by HIAS? By the UNRA?

**SARA:** Yes, by the UNRA. We couldn't emigrate. They taught us all kind of trades. I took a course for a year, a designing course and a sewing course. They kept us.

**INT:** So you were stuck in this camp.

**SARA:** Yes, for three years.

**INT:** The Bericha could not get you to Israel.

**SARA:** Nothing.

**INT:** For three years.

**SARA:** Three years. What was the reason? I could emigrate with Chanon but he didn't want to separate...they wouldn't take his mother. She was too old. They wouldn't take his younger brother because he was too young. He couldn't fight. And the sister was at that time pregnant already.

**INT:** I see. So in terms of the illegal immigration to Israel, they only wanted to take people who were able-bodied.

**SARA:** That's right.

**INT:** And not risk the welfare of the other people. I see. So that stopped you in Italy.

**SARA:** That's right. Then when we could go already, I was married and I was pregnant.

**INT:** So in the camp you decided to marry. When did you marry? What year?

**SARA:** We married in 1946, in 8th of March.

**INT:** So it's about a year after you left Lodz. About a year.

**SARA:** Yes. I was there with the family and everything and I had a very good friend, and he came in and he said to Chanon's mother, he said, "Listen. She is with the family. The kids love each other. Why shouldn't she marry and be together? Let's make a wedding." And we agreed and we got married. We got married outside and 2,000 people came to the wedding.

**INT:** Like an Israeli wedding.

**SARA:** I had my first child in 1948. I wouldn't even have her so fast but when we came to the camp, everybody who got married had children right away. Once I overheard...I

was married already a year or more, and the people were sitting around and said, "Here is walking Bedzow's daughter-in-law." At that time it was Bedzowski's daughter-in-law. "She didn't become pregnant. Probably she cannot have children." And it hurt me so terrible, and I came home at night and I start to cry. Chanon, my husband, asked me, "Why are you crying? What is it?" I said, "There is a rumor that I cannot have children," and we at that time watched. We didn't know where we're going to end up or what.

**INT:** You wanted to be careful.

**SARA:** Yes. And he said, "Let's try." And we tried and I became pregnant and Frances was born in 1948, the 15th of August.

**INT:** So what did you decide to do? You couldn't go to Israel. You didn't want to break up the family. So what did you decide to do?

**SARA:** We wanted to immigrate. First we wanted to immigrate to...we went to Rome. We applied for papers to go to Brazil.

**INT:** Why Brazil?

**SARA:** Over there was the easiest immigration. When we could immigrate to Brazil, my mother-in-law, she suffered asthma. The doctor said it's not good for her to go over there, the climate. We held it off. Then we wanted to go to another South American country and we couldn't get papers. Then the Joint came and they wanted...they used to sponsor workers. They came in to...

**INT:** Canada was open for workers.

**SARA:** Yes. They came in and they wanted to take furriers. My mother-in-law, they had a store from fur and she knew about fur. Chanon couldn't take...he was married. She could take children, not married ones. He was married. We wanted to make papers that I'm her daughter, had a baby illegitimate, pregnant and the husband left me. I was Bedzowski already too. And Chanon is a son legally. But you had to pass the test. He went in Turino to school and he learned about it. When they came to pass the test, she passed the test and when he went to pass the test he couldn't pass the test.

**INT:** What test?

**SARA:** They asked him about fur. They asked him how to cut the fur and he cut his finger. And how to put the fur together, to match up and everything. He didn't pass. She left.

**INT:** With Benny.

**SARA:** With Benny.

**INT:** The only single child.

**SARA:** Yes, the only single child. We remained. When she came to Canada she started working right away in a factory of fur. There was very nice the boss. He was very nice to her and she told him that she had two children and he should help her to sponsor. She had to have signatures. They signed and six months later they sent the papers for us and for Leah. We emigrated.

**INT:** You had no interest of going to America?

**SARA:** We couldn't. I wanted.

**INT:** Because the quota was closed.

**SARA:** We couldn't. We wanted to emigrate wherever, not to sit over there.

**INT:** Josef went to Savannah because they sponsored families there. Harry went to New York. We discussed this. How did the three of you find each other and what kind of relationship did you have?

**SARA:** I found them. When I went away with Chanon as a single girl, I heard that they left Lodz. I couldn't find them for two years.

**INT:** So complete out of contact for two years.

**SARA:** I was devastated. Devastated. I couldn't believe it and I was asking and looking in the papers and everything. I couldn't. When my mother-in-law read in the Forward, I right away sent a telegram to him that I'm the sister and looking. In the meantime, Josef and Harry already had contact with him.

**INT:** With the cousin in New York.

**SARA:** The cousin in New York. He sent me the address and I wrote to them right away and we were so happy. When I came to Canada, I came before them. I send them where I am and I told them when they will emigrate, they will let me know. I don't remember how was it. I know your father came. He lived in a very, very small place. The minute I heard that he's there, Josef was already in Savannah, Josef came there was no place where to sleep. Your father slept in a bathtub. We slept on the floor and there was no air. I was sitting outside with the baby, with Frances.

**INT:** Lower East Side. Little tenement.

**SARA:** On the fire escape.

**INT:** This was temporary housing. This is what HIAS did for the Jews coming in to New York. There were lots of them so it was very temporary housing in these little tenement apartments. It was summer. It was very hot.

**FRANCES:** And you drove to New York?

**SARA:** We drove.

**FRANCES:** With Daddy.

**SARA:** Daddy and you. We just bought a car.

**FRANCES:** You hadn't seen them in many years.

**SARA:** Many years. Didn't see Harry.

**INT:** You're talking almost five years, four-and-a-half years.

**SARA:** And COSHJ and then Bronia came with the baby, with Berta. We had a reunion. We were in such a small quarters but we were all together. Not a minute we let go one of each other.

**INT:** Did it ever come up that some would relocate to be closer to each other? You were in three different cities. Did it ever come up that someone would try and move to be in the same city?

**SARA:** I was never thinking of leaving Montreal on account of the family. Chanon's family was there and everything. I was talking to Josef he should leave Savannah and go to New York. It's very close to us. But he was already establishing himself.

**INT:** They gave them a house and a business. Savannah, when they sponsored the five families, they committed themselves to helping them very actively. In New York there were so many refugees there, the HIAS could do very little.

**SARA:** The same thing in Montreal.

**INT:** But Savannah they took their five families and they set them up.

**FRANCES:** So they put Josef...

**INT:** Into the business.

**FRANCES:** Into the butcher business right away.

**INT:** Yes.

**SARA:** No.

**INT:** That's what they offered him, to be in the...

**SARA:** No. Josef worked in a dry goods store.

**INT:** Dry goods meaning grocery?

**SARA:** No. Dry goods means clothes. And after he went...

**INT:** But the community helped him.

**SARA:** Yes. Oh yes.

**INT:** Because they were in need of it.

**FRANCES:** Why didn't Uncle Harry relocate to Savannah?

**SARA:** Savannah is a small city and it had no opportunities.

**INT:** They were not offering to support another family.

**SARA:** And he went in right away in New York and he got a job by the cousin.

**INT:** It wasn't a great job. My mother says that it's because she wanted the Jewish life that New York offered, the schools. And Savannah...

**SARA:** New York you cannot compare to Savannah.

**INT:** For some reason they knew that, that Savannah was like galus Jewishly, but New York offered a life, offered other newcomers. It was a sense of community. Savannah was five families and they had a hard time.

**FRANCES:** Only five?

**INT:** Only five refugee families went to Savannah. Five, seven.

**FRANCES:** How large was the Jewish community in Savannah?

**INT:** Small. But they were established and they were comfortable. It was a comfortable, wealthier Jewish community, and it was small and it was established and they took in these families. So happenstance kept the three of you separated by geography.

**SARA:** And the same thing. When we came to Montreal, they didn't offer anything. There were so many.

**INT:** A little bit of money to get by until you got work.

**SARA:** Yes. And right away he went to work. We arrived today and tomorrow he went to work.

**INT:** How would you describe the nature of the relationship between the three of you since the war?

**SARA:** Very good. Very loving. Very caring for each other. We were close. We always were close. We had different interests. Life was different for all of us, but we were always close. Always. Your father used to come with your mother to visit us always. Josef used to come. We used to come to simchas. We used to come, drive up to Savannah. They used to come to us. Always close. You get older, the kids have different



interests, we have different, you grow apart but not in love and not in feelings. You grow apart in a different way.

**INT:** Would you call yourself an optimist or a pessimist?

**SARA:** Optimist.

**INT:** You've always been that way?

**SARA:** Always.

**INT:** Has it ever changed?

**SARA:** No. I cannot accept a pessimist.

**INT:** What do you mean you can't accept?

**SARA:** I can't. If somebody comes to me, even my friends or whatever, and say oh this...I say, "Think positive. Whatever will work out, will work out. Right away think positive. It will be good." I'm involved with so many organizations and everything. It just happened three years ago. I'm very big in cancer research and we started in the Jewish General Hospital for machines, for cancer. The first meeting we came in and the organizer said to me first, we were sitting around, she said, "I wish we could raise \$10,000," and I stood up and I said, "Listen, Frances. You cannot think so small. The minute we start thinking small, we're going to raise small. We have to think right away big. We have to present...If we won't think big and support the Jewish General Hospital, the government takes off the grant. We have to think big." Every time we have a meeting, this is our slogan.

**INT:** Think big.

**SARA:** Think big.

**INT:** And you're still involved.

**SARA:** Oh yes. And now to raise, we just raised a half a million dollars. We needed a special machine. I wasn't even there. I worked from Florida. One son, it was his mother's sixtieth birthday, gave \$180,000. That's big.

**INT:** That's very good.

**SARA:** This is the way I think.

**INT:** Do you think that it's possible for another Holocaust to happen?

**SARA:** Maybe not to such an extent but everything is possible. If we let. First of all, it cannot happen when we have Israel. We have our own country, our own ambassadors, our own flag. Nobody can take this away from us. Before we didn't have this. We were

scattered all over the world without a country. Now we have this. Now we only have to fight for one thing, a Holocaust, for mixed marriages. Integration, mixed marriages...

**INT:** The assimilation.

**SARA:** The assimilation, the way it goes, is frightening.

**INT:** So what do you see in the future and what do you think can help them?

**SARA:** We have to talk about it. The Chabad is doing extremely good work and we have to educate our youth, our families.

**INT:** So you see that as the biggest threat to the Jewish nation today is assimilation.

**SARA:** Assimilation.

**INT:** What do you think about Israel and the peace process? Where do you stand politically on that?

**SARA:** I think we're going to have peace and I think we should try for peace.

**INT:** How far would you go? Where do you stand on that?

**SARA:** I would go as far as you can. I'm not for it about Jerusalem. Jerusalem has to be our capital, and we can make the holy places, the Dome, like the Vatican has. For them, it should be theirs. But this is the capital of Israel.

**INT:** So in general you believe in land for peace.

**SARA:** Till a certain point.

**INT:** What point is that?

**SARA:** What they feel, I cannot say so much or this much or that much. Everything has a price. If we want to have peace, we were so much in war. People are tired of losing so much young blood and everything. This we have to leave it to the government.

**INT:** So you support the current government and the labor government under Rabin basically.

**SARA:** Basically.

**INT:** And you think it will happen?

**SARA:** Yes. On account of the common markets, this will happen.

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** How are you connecting that?

**SARA:** You know what? The countries with the technology, with the exchange of all the marketing and all the economies and everything, it will happen. We need it and the other countries need it.

**INT:** So economically the pressure will be to make peace.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** And the Arabs will...

**SARA:** Yes. When this will come, Israel will flourish unbelievable. We have a lot of know-how.

**INT:** So you are very involved with charities that involve Israel.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** You're very involved with Touro College that hopes to build a campus in Israel, and Bonds, as you mentioned before. What do you think about the current situation in Israel itself? There's a lot of discussion about the conflict within the country.

**SARA:** This bothers me. When I was in Israel and I saw that the, I wouldn't say the Reform, but the Conservative went to the Kotel. There was a certain incident. I wasn't there but I read in the papers and I saw on television and I was very disturbed about the religious came out, they threw stones, they were spitting at them, were tearing up the tallesim. I don't believe in this. A Jew is a Jew. Everybody can believe in whatever he wants. I don't believe that I have to go in Mea Shearim in a bathing suit or in a bikini. I have to respect their neighborhood. I have to respect what they believe. They have to respect...but when the Kotel or other places, it's for everybody. For every Jew, no matter what he wants to worship. As long as the women don't go to the men's side and the men don't go to the women's side, if this is what they want. But to do things like this? To spit and to curse and do thinks like...for what? That they're not like they? Hasidim? I don't believe in this. And this they have to see to modify and to do something about that.

**INT:** Do you think the country will be able to come together in support of a peace plan? Let's say the countries work it out. Will the people of Israel be able to work together for it?

**SARA:** The majority will, and what the majority will decide, this will be. I think the youth is for peace.

**INT:** What do you think about the relationships between Jews and non-Jews, in your own life, in your social life, in the political life of Canada, America?

**SARA:** There will always be anti-Semites. There will always be jealousy. They think that the Jews are chosen people. There are always going to be conflicts and we have to deal

with it. We have to. As long as there is Jewish people in existence and as long...this shows us for thousands and thousands of years. We were always discriminated. The only thing what we have to do, to support Israel, to have a strong Israel and a peace for Israel.

**INT:** So that...you see Israel as really essential to your safety in Canada.

**SARA:** Yes. 100%.

**INT:** And your children's safety.

**SARA:** 100%.

**INT:** And in terms of day-to-day life, do you believe that Jews should be part of the broader society or separate in communities? That there should be friendships across? Where do you...how do you see the social links between Jews and non-Jews and do you believe in trusting the community outside of the Jewish community?

**SARA:** I believe that we should have Jewish communities, strong ones. I believe we should mingle. We cannot be isolated. We cannot exist in isolation. In 2,000 years, the world goes at such a speed and so much is going on. We go to the moon and this. How could you isolate yourself? You have to exchange knowledge of medicine and all kind of different fields. I feel that not one Jew should try to lose his identity. I'm Jewish. I can have not a Jew neighbor. I respect your Christmas, you respect my Chanukah. You believe in this, there is one G-d for all the universe. This is what we believe. If you have another belief, it's good. The minute they will learn to respect each other, there will be peace all over.

**INT:** Do you have a sense of trust for the non-Jewish community or mistrust?

**SARA:** I don't know.

**INT:** Do you have a philosophy that says we can only trust our own?

**SARA:** No. There is all kind of different...between us too. Between Jews. Different opinion and different beliefs and different philosophies. We have to work on ourselves.

**INT:** What feelings do you have to Germans and to Europe? To Poles? To Germans? What do you carry with you?

**SARA:** This is a very hard question to answer, especially for a child what went through so much. I never stepped in. It's already fifty-five years. Never stepped in on a German soil. Never. I cannot see myself. Never went to Poland. I want to keep in mind the good things. I cannot look at their faces, to go into town, what they destroyed. Actually, the Germans came to our city, they didn't know who was Jews and who were not. They were pointing out. They participated.

**INT:** They is the Poles.

**SARA:** The Poles. All the concentration camps are in Poland. They took a part of it. I cannot say...I don't have hate in me, to hate a human being.

**INT:** You don't.

**SARA:** No. But I cannot be objective just to say they didn't know or this. I don't.

**INT:** What do you mean objective? You mean you can't forgive me but you hate them? You can't forget? What do you...

**SARA:** I cannot forget.

**INT:** But you don't hate Germans or the Poles.

**SARA:** The Germans maybe yes more than the Poles, and the Poles too. I could never go to a Polish hotel or to a Polish community or sit with them. In Canada, yes. We're all in a different country, but I cannot be in Poland and to be this. When I speak to my friends what they do and they go, I don't condemn them. They say for different reasons. One was saved, one is going to kever avos (grave of parents), one was going on different things, but I couldn't. I couldn't.

**INT:** What do you want your children to know about the Holocaust? What are the lessons you want them to learn? What's the legacy you want to pass on to them?

**SARA:** It should never happen another Holocaust. They should be good Zionists, good Jews. To love the fellow Jew and to be good human beings. No hate in them. I cannot...I want they should know what happened, how people can react one to another. The Germans were human too. They were intelligent people. They were cultured people and how they reacted to other people of a different nationality. The same with Poles or Romanians or Hungarians and everything. They should read about it. They should know about it and there should never be a repeat performance.

**INT:** And they should be part of working against that.

**SARA:** Oh yes. Oh yes.

**INT:** For any of your family involved in Holocaust related activities, do you think that's a good thing or not so good?

**SARA:** Yes, very good.

**INT:** You support that.

**SARA:** Yes, 100%. I encourage this.

**INT:** I'm going to put this in first before I go to another question. What would you say are the successes and failures of your life? What do you look back on with satisfaction and what do you look back on with regret?

**SARA:** My satisfaction is my family, my achievement, my marriage, my whole family. My regrets is that not too many of my family survived. I wish more Jewish people would survive and see all this.

**INT:** But I also mean regrets about your life and your choices and the way you've handled things, looking back. Any regrets?

**SARA:** I have no regrets. No regrets. I have a sadness that I lost my brother. This is a very big sadness.

**INT:** This is Harry?

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** Who died in 1982. And how do you handle that?

**SARA:** How I handle that? He left a beautiful legacy. He left a beautiful family. The family is sad, they miss him. We all miss him. This was G-d's will.

**INT:** So you handle it in the way you've handled so much in your life.

**SARA:** Yes.

**INT:** But you say you think of him.

**SARA:** Very often.

**INT:** And is this in the times of sadness, you say, times when you feel weaker or sad things come to you, or is it different?

**SARA:** No. Not in sadness. I think of him. It makes me sad, but I go on and I say, "There is children, there is grandchildren, there is his wife." We are here. We always think of him. We always love of him. He'll never be forgotten. He's always with us in our heart.

**INT:** I want to ask you...we're going to just talk another five minutes and then I will let you go home. What are your comments on this experience of telling your story? What has it been like for you? What closing words do you have to put on the tape?

**SARA:** My closing words is that yesterday when we started this program I felt at home, a little girl. Today I feel my age in experiences, in sadness, in good things, in bad things. Life goes on. You cannot stop. You cannot say, "Oh, I went through..." I only hope and pray for the whole family, my family, my extended family and everybody, they should be well. G-d should give them a lot of wisdom. They should go in the right direction. They should achieve whatever their wishes are, and I thank my interviewer what is very dear to me for giving me the opportunity to leave something for my children, my grandchildren and the family, that they should learn that life is not the way we want, and there were so many obstacles in life. You have to try to overcome.

**INT:** I want to thank you for this gift of sharing this.

**SARA:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity of these few days. Thank you. (End of interview)

(ADDENDUM: Quote upon returning home. "It was a good feeling to be home again-never felt this way even when I was giving birth to my children. I felt unburdened and complete.")