

INTERVIEW WITH FANIA BRUNER

JULY 16, 1995

**Transcending Trauma Project
Council for Relationships
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Philadelphia, PA 19104**

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INTERVIEWER: July 16, 1995, and I'm doing an interview with a Holocaust survivor for the Transcending Trauma Project. Could you identify yourself, your name, age, where you were born?

FANIA BRUNER: Okay, Wanda Bruner. I was born in Poland, 1925. I give you the year.

INT: Or the date.

FANIA: 1925. December 9.

INT: And which town in Poland?

FANIA: Jaroslaw.

INT: Could you spell that?

FANIA: J-a...How do you spell that?

MATES BRUNER [HUSBAND]: r-o-s-l-a-w.

INT: Thank you. Who are you married to, how long have you been married, and how many children do you have?

FANIA: I'm married 49 years, and I have four children: Harry, Joe, Gina and Sam.

INT: Can you tell me about your education, the education of your husband, a little bit about your employment history?

FANIA: Well, unfortunately, I didn't have much education. I went to just a public school, until 1939.

INT: You went to approximately how much school until the war broke out?

FANIA: Sixth grade.

INT: Was this a public, or a religious school?

FANIA: That was a public school. I used to go to Bais Yaakov, which is a Jewish religious school for girls. That was after school, you go, I don't remember, for an hour and a half, you know. But I don't remember even if it was an hour and a half, or how it was. I really couldn't tell you much about it anymore.

And September 10, the Germans occupied, came into our town, and when I got up in the morning, the whole town was like in a panic. People, the Jewish people tried to stay in. Was mostly what you saw in the street, is the Poles and the Ukrainians, because it was close to Ukraine, and there was quite a bit Ukrainian in the area.

INT: How many Jews were in that town?

FANIA: 10,000. It was more than 10,000, but 10,000, around, you know, a little over 10,000.

INT: Can you tell me a little bit about what kind of work you did after the war?

MATES BRUNER [HUSBAND]: (Interjects) What was the population in Jaroslaw? The total population?

FANIA: Well, when they round up all the Jews...

MATES: Not Jews. Not Jews. The total population.

FANIA: I don't remember that. I really don't remember that. It was 50 years ago.

INT: It was a good sized community.

FANIA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: We'll get a little into that later. What kind of work did you do when you came to this country? Had you thought about working outside the household?

FANIA: When I came to this country, I wasn't thinking about work at all. I had a four-year-old child, and I had a sixteen-month-old toddler. And I didn't know the language, so it even didn't occur to me, you know, to find a job, or... (laughs)

INT: Go back to school?

FANIA: Go back to school was really hard. He had to go to work. He was a watchmaker, and in the evenings he got some part-time jobs, so I had to stay with the kids.

INT: You're speaking of Mates, your husband. He was the primary provider [wage earner]?

FANIA: Yeah, that's right.

INT: I can imagine it's pretty overwhelming coming to this country with two small children; then you have two other children, and not being as assimilated or comfortable with the language?

FANIA: Yeah, it was very difficult. It was very difficult. But I did find...I was very fortunate to find nice neighbors and people that, you know, they tried to help me out as much as they could. I really was very lucky, and people were **very** good to me, and very friendly. As far as Jewish people, and Gentile people. I used to live in a mixed neighborhood.

INT: Can you tell me what your economic status is, or how comfortable you are now?

FANIA: Well, I would say I'm comfortable.

INT: And you work in your husband's business now?

FANIA: I don't work in his business. I retired eight years ago, is it? And I'm staying retired (laughs) and I'm having fun with my friends. I don't want to have any part of working anymore. I worked for thirty years in the store.

INT: You were a bookkeeper and did sales?

FANIA: No, no, I used to be the salesperson. Yeah. We had a jewelry store. I used to go into the store 9:00 in the morning, as soon as I put Sam on the bus to kindergarten, got into the store, set up the store for the day. And he had a job in the beginning, the first year, and I took care of the store. And the store used to be open till 9:00 at night.

INT: Long hours!

FANIA: Yeah, so in the meantime, I used to run back home when he came from work to make dinner, come back, and he will go have dinner with the kids.

INT: Was there a lot of time that you were the primary childcare provider? You were raising the children while he was at work?

FANIA: He was at work, and he was always with something. He always had inventions, or something to, you know, that he didn't...I guess he was very, you know, I don't know what happened, but he...I don't know how to say it. He couldn't, didn't took the interest, you know.

INT: Of balancing maybe, of family and work?

FANIA: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

INT: So work was a priority for your husband.

FANIA: Pardon me?

INT: Would you say work [was important]?

FANIA: Work was his priority. That's right.

INT: Could you describe your religious affiliation, any organizations you belong to?

FANIA: I just belong to the...sisterhood, in B'nai Aaron here.

INT: It's a Conservative synagogue?

FANIA: It's a Conservative synagogue, yeah. And I have a, like a little social life with my friends, the rabbi's wife. We go out once a month. And I have some other friends, that I met during the, in the synagogue, and I continue with them at forty-something years, you know, the same friends. You know, the kids grew up together, you know. And...the whole group, you know, of people.

INT: Would you say your social friends are Americans, or Holocaust survivors?

FANIA: No. They are all American Jewish ladies, yeah. They are teachers. They are teachers, and they are principals, school principals. But they're all Jewish American.

INT: Was it an adjustment moving to a community that was as assimilated, with a smaller percentage of Jews than in a city?

FANIA: I didn't...

INT: When you moved here [from the Midwest]?

FANIA: To Philadelphia?

INT: Yeah, and then Mates described this community being pretty assimilated. I wonder, was that a preference of yours, or did you see yourself living in more of an urban Jewish neighborhood?

FANIA: No, I would have rather want to be in a Jewish neighborhood, yeah.

MATES: You say you would? What did you say?

FANIA: I would have rather been in a Jewish neighborhood, you know, when I first came over. When I moved to this area, of course my kids used to be in school, and college. I didn't have anybody in high school even. The youngest was in college. So this was like a Jewish ghetto. Now, the people are selling their homes, and the Gentile people

are moving in. But it was nice, because you felt you are with, you know, like you are a part of neighborhood.

INT: Earlier there was a larger Jewish community?

FANIA: It still is. It still is. The whole Havertown. Yeah. It's a lot of Jewish people. That's why we have a lot of synagogues in the area. We have B'nai Aaron, we have at least four synagogues in this area. You felt, I felt that...you know, that I am just...(husband interrupts)

INT: You're talking. (directed to Mates, laughs) You started to say what you were feeling.

FANIA: Well, when I moved here, I felt very comfortable with the people around me. My next door neighbor was Jewish. This neighbor was Jewish. Across the street was, the doctor was Jewish, the dentist was Jewish. I really felt secure. I felt like I'm a part, you know. You live in a...Gentile neighborhood, and when Christmas comes, you know, you have to keep the children, you know, you have to explain to them why we don't have all those things, and when they are young, this is very difficult, you know, to explain. We want a Christmas, too.

INT: So when the children were growing up, you lived in different areas?

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about that? How they were different, contrasting the life here?

FANIA: I remember one time...Sammy comes in a few days before, and he said, he knows for a fact that Santa Claus is going to come one night. I don't remember what date. "It's a fact," he says. He knows this for a fact. (laughs) And he's expecting something, because everybody's going here, that he's expecting something. So I didn't want to argue with him. I was working in the store. The poor kid was at home, you know, by himself. And one of my, I don't know, somebody told me, "Get him something. What's the difference? He will, sooner or later, he will know the truth." So I remember those days, we used to invite those guys, you know, I ran out and bought something for \$1.50 and put it near his bed. And he waked up, I think it was maybe 10:00 or something, and he comes down, "Was he here already?" I said, "Nobody was here." (laughs) He went back to bed. Then finally after 10:00 I put it down, and he came down, he came down, he said, "I told you he exists! I told you he's for real!" (laughs) But as soon as he got older, he knows. But Gina never believed in it. She never believed in it. But it was a little problem with Sammy, when it came to the holidays.

INT: It's hard to compete with our Jewish holidays.

FANIA: As a matter of fact, a couple of years before, we had a neighbor, Irish people, and Chanukah came earlier, so we got some...You know, we couldn't afford those days a lot, and we weren't accustomed to giving gifts at Chanukah. We used to have Chanukah gelt. At least that's what I remember. We played dreidel, and we won, and we got Chanukah gelt, and we make the traditional, you know, my mother make, donuts here, but it's like something similar to it. And that's how we used to celebrate it. But I remember Sam had a little friend, he came from an Irish family, he couldn't be more than five years old, and Sam, and was Chanukah, we had a holiday, and the little kid comes in, and you know, to play with Sam, and he sees Sam got something, a train or whatever, and he runs out so...so, you know, upset. He comes into his mother, back to his family, he says, "How come Sam got Chanukah present? Why can't I get Chanukah present? I want a Chanukah present!" (laughs) His mother comes in, she says, "He knows a little about Chanukah." It was typical Irish, you know. She comes in, she says, "What is the matter with Chanukah?" I said, "We have a holiday, that's our holiday." But see, that's because you ask me, how you handle.

INT: Can you talk about your life before the war, and about your family? What was the community like that you were born or grew up in, and who was in your family?

FANIA: Well, I had my parents, and my sister, and I had my two brothers. And we lived in a Jewish, it was basically a Jewish community, because those days, you tried to stick, you know, be close together. And you know, like my father twice a day, he would go to the synagogue. Very early in the morning he will go, and in the evening he will go. He was not that religious. However his parents were Orthodox, he was not that religious, but he want a social life in it, so he will go in the evening, and after the service, he will walk, there was a square, he will walk there, and he will talk politics, and they will try to settle the world's problems, and all those things. And sometimes, if my mother had too much, she wanted a rest from the kids, she want to spend some time with her neighbors, so she said to my father, "Why don't you take a couple of the kids with you, and buy them some ice cream at the square, and you can still talk." I mean, we used to play there too, it was like a little garden.

INT: What did he do for a living, your father?

FANIA: My father had a tailor shop. Yeah. So he was, that's how he used to, you know.

INT: Did your mother work at home caring for the children, or did she help him?

FANIA: During the day she was at home, and in the evening, she used to work, it was like a, you know, they used to make fancy cakes, I don't know what you call it here.

INT: Like a bakery?

FANIA: No, it was not a bakery. It was just the fancy, you know, pastry and things like that. And we had...we have like outside, you know, chairs and tables, and used to sell it there for people.

INT: Where were you in terms of birth order with your siblings? What were their ages?

FANIA: Well, I was the oldest, and then my sister was two years younger, and my other brother Abram, he was five years younger, and my youngest brother, seven years, Jerry. He's a professor at M.I.T. in Boston. He grew up in Israel.

INT: So there were four or five of you?

FANIA: Four.

INT: You said that your grandparents were more religious, father or mother's?

FANIA: No, my mother didn't have, I don't remember my mother's parents, but my father's parents. Yes, they were very Orthodox.

INT: Were they part of your growing up? Did you see your grandparents?

FANIA: Not too often. We lived in a different town, so it wasn't so easy.

INT: Could you talk about how hard or difficult your life was? Your parents struggled to provide?

FANIA: Whatever my parents struggled to provide, but they made sure that we had what we needed, you know. That we had, you know, the clothes, and food, and she sent me to, you know, she sent me to the private, they used to call it Bais Yaakov, that was a school for girls, because the boys used to go to the cheder, you know. The girls used to go to Bais Yaakov, so she had to pay for this. That wasn't free.

INT: Did all of the children in the family go to religious school?

FANIA: Yeah, yeah. In the beginning, when we were very young, so I remember used to come the rabbi, but I don't believe he was a rabbi, but he was a melamed. He used to come, and he used to teach the boys, the boys, you know, to read and write before they were even old enough to go to the cheder.

INT: Was the Jewish community segregated or integrated into the larger communities? How did Jews and non-Jews live?

FANIA: Well, the center of the town was basically Jewish. Was everything Jewish, the area where we lived. But like the side, the best sides of the street were Gentiles.

INT: Did you interact very much? Did you have any early experiences of anti-Semitism?

FANIA: Yes, of course. You know that you are Jewish. If you go to a school, and I would say, would you say, Mates, is it fair to say 90% Gentile, Catholics, and 10% Jewish?

MATES: Where, here?

FANIA: In a public school. No, in Poland.

MATES: In Poland?

FANIA: It would be 90% Catholics and 10% Jewish.

MATES: Are you talking about yourself, where you went to school?

FANIA: Yeah.

MATES: In your school, it was 20% Jewish and 80% non-Jewish.

FANIA: It wasn't 20% Jewish.

MATES: Oh? All right? (interruption) Where I was it was almost 70% Jewish.

INT: You had a larger Jewish population?

FANIA: He went to a public school, but it was just Jewish.

MATES: Yeah, it was only 10%.

FANIA: Catholics, non-Jews, and 90% Jews. But I happen to know.

INT: And you were familiar with the area? It was close by?

MATES: No, it was about 150 miles. I know it was a small town that has about 20% Jewish population. (loud noise in the background for a little while)

FANIA: See, what happened, shortly before the end of the war, they opened a school, a Jewish school for Jewish children, so only the ones who could afford. It was expensive, too. So the children, the doctors, the lawyers, the pharmacists, their children, went to the private school. (noise stops)

INT: So your family was lower middle class?

FANIA: That's right.

INT: Mm-hm. What was the extent of religious practice, Jewish identity in your family? Like keeping kosher?

FANIA: Very kosher.

INT: Celebrating holidays?

FANIA: Yeah, it was a very traditional Jewish home.

INT: Do you have memories of helping your mother prepare for the holidays?

FANIA: I don't think I was helping that much. Maybe sometimes to help her to clean something, but not really, everything, you know, she was so fanatic with everything. Had to be, G-d forbid if I mixed up a knife or a fork, she stuck it in the ground, it's supposed to get kosher. Isn't that right, Mates? That's how they...**very** fanatic. Very fanatic. You know, if I G-d forbid took a knife, and it was a meat knife, and I spread butter with it, or something, I don't know. So I made it treif. And of course, she stuck it in the dirt for 24 hours or something, so it's supposed.

MATES: Kosher home.

INT: How did you observe your parents getting along with their parents? Any other relatives? How involved were they as a family? How close? Siblings?

FANIA: Well, my mother had, she had two sisters. Used to live in Lvov.

INT: That was a nearby town?

FANIA: I think it was about 100 kilometers, or something. I'm not sure anymore. I don't remember all these details. And then she had another sister and a brother. And then she had...another brother. You know, they just, we didn't...visit too often. We didn't have the cars, and the transportation was...everybody used to ride to each other. There wasn't telephones that you can call up and have contact. We wrote to each other, of course, in Yiddish. And once in a while, they would visit each other for a few days. And...I remember she always used to pack up and go to her hometown, or when it was the...she had yahrzeit, so she went to her parents' cemetery.

INT: So Yiddish rather than Polish was spoken at home?

FANIA: No, we spoke...we happened to speak Polish, because you go to school, we didn't have any...we didn't have any...she didn't want us to have an accent, because, it wasn't like here, you are free, you can say whatever you want, and if someone tells you

something, you can tell them back, you know. You were, it was, you know, the...you know, the Gentile was, you know, he was the...we were afraid of him.

INT: Because they had all the power?

FANIA: Yes, absolutely. Yeah, sure. They didn't like us. We really weren't welcome. That was their country. We thought all the problems, we kept to ourselves. You know. That's how it was in our town. I don't know how it was in other places, but this is what I can remember.

INT: What did you observe between your parents in terms of how they solved problems, made decisions, handled conflict?

FANIA: I tell you the truth, I don't really remember.

INT: Did they argue in front of you? Do you remember how they communicated?

FANIA: Yeah, they argue. They argue in front of us. Yeah. And...my mother was always, you know, very bossy.

INT: Oh, so she was more in charge?

FANIA: Yes, my father was very quiet.

INT: So between them, in terms of family roles, or who had the power?

FANIA: Usually they will talk it over, and then she will decide we can't afford it, or we cannot afford it, we have to do this way or this way, but they would talk it over, you know.

INT: Who handled discipline?

FANIA: Oh, my mother handled the discipline. We could get away with Dad, he was a very gentle person, but usually my mother.

INT: So she would scold you, or make you pay?

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: Punish you.

FANIA: That's right. Well, usually you tried to behave. You tried to behave and to do what you're supposed to do. You do your chores, you know, that you might suspect...you know, like every day one of us had to do certain things.

INT: So you were a good daughter.

FANIA: I think I was okay.

INT: And more responsible? You had to have more responsibility?

FANIA: Not really. She never made me more responsible. I remember one time she made me watch my little brother, and I was playing, there was a lot of kids outside, and he fell, and he cut himself very badly, I don't know how. So of course, she said I didn't watch him. She told me to watch him, I didn't watch him. He was hurt; he got hurt.

INT: You were just a kid.

FANIA: But I really wasn't, she really didn't make me, you know, responsible for taking care of the younger kids. I guess she didn't trust me maybe. (laughs) I don't know. But it was not my responsibility.

INT: Did you see them show affection towards each other? Were they affectionate towards their children?

FANIA: Yes. Very much, yeah. Yeah.

INT: How about the expression of feelings? Did they show happy as well as sad feelings? Anger, worry?

FANIA: Well, there was all kinds of mixed, every day, you know, not every day was the same, I would say. See, those are things before the war, which you know, I was a real, see, to me, I know I have to get up in the morning, I have to go to school. After the school we have our dinner, because about 1:00, 2:00 was our big meal. And then I would go, either go back to Hebrew school, and...I came back. There was a little time that you can go outside and play with the kids, or visit your friend, or she will come over, and making homework, and that's how we pass the day. Sometimes if it was a nice day, warm day, wasn't school night, so we would go to the park, you know.

INT: Would you say that you were protected?

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(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

FANIA: Made my homework.

INT: Did they have expectations about school? Did they encourage you?

FANIA: Yes, very much. Very much. Yeah.

INT: Would you say there was any kind of philosophy, or attitude about the importance of family, or a view of life that you learned from your family, that you carried with you?

FANIA: Well, I guess, you know, of course you learn, you know, you marry, you have your own children. You saw how your mother treated you, and you try to do just the same or maybe better for your kids.

INT: If you could describe maybe in adjectives, or characteristics of your parents that influenced you? Could you give some?

FANIA: In what way?

INT: Aspects that you valued or appreciated about your parents that stayed with you, or helped you? Was your mother particularly a strong person?

FANIA: Of course she influenced, because with all the problems in life, afterwards, what I had. So I must have been influenced.

MATES: (interruption)

FANIA: So of course she must have, some kind of influence must have grown over me, you know.

INT: And your father, too?

FANIA: Yes.

INT: Could you describe how you knew the times were changing, with the early signs of war, how life was dramatically affected, day-to-day life?

FANIA: You mean still in Poland? I was only eighteen days with the Germans, and then they round up all the Jews, we were, you know, over the River San, and they round up all the Jews, and...

INT: This is by the Germans?

FANIA: By the Germans, yeah. The Germans came on the 28th of September. They round up, oh, we were eighteen days with them. (interruption) So they rounded up all the Jews. It came Ukrainian, or a German. I don't know his rank. If he was an SS man, or whatever he was. So he said, so he say, that in an hour we should...so they said we should meet at a sports stadium, all Jews. If not, we'll be...you know...we'd be, I forget what he said. We'd be shot, or punished, or whatever. We all have to meet there. And they gave us, I remember, a little tag, you know. To put the key on it, and put the address of the house. So I remember my father was starting to write down the name and the street and everything, and my mother said to him, "Why don't you print? They won't be

able to read it." So he said, "What do you care if you even know? You are not coming back." (laughs) That was, you know, something my mother started to holler at him, that he is writing it, and maybe they won't be able to read it, so she want him to...he says, "We are not going to bring you, we are not going to let you come back. They want to just destroy the Jewish population." He always used to say this. Always used to say this. Years before, even.

INT: He predicted that?

FANIA: Well, he used to go and listen to, you know, I remember there was a big, did you listen, you know, like to the radio, and Hitler used to speak certain days, because Germany was close, you could hear it very well. So when he could hear, you know, Hitler speaking, you know, so he was, he used to read a lot. He used to read a lot. So he felt that they wanted to destroy the Jewish population. He always used...this I remember since I was maybe nine years old, he used to say this. But he wouldn't believe it. You know, there was nothing that he could, she would, you know, believe anything that anybody will go and kill somebody.

So...well, I was with a, you know, so they came and they told us to, you know, assemble there, and not to take anything.

INT: Nothing personal?

FANIA: Nothing to take. So my mother got hysterical, and right away the neighbors started to scream and cry, because he was going from one door to the other. There wasn't only one that ran, there was a lot of them. Especially the Ukrainians. They were collaborating right away with the Germans. So saying this, I don't have, my earliest picture that I earn, I am, I think fourteen years old, from Russia. I had my first picture. Because she didn't know what to grab first. September, it was already cold. September 28. She told me to put on three sets of clothes. You think I'm going to put on three sets of clothes because she told me? I didn't. So she just put a few things and then my father, you know carry. So we really couldn't take anything. We had a young kid. My brother was three years old. My father had to carry him. And it was a couple kilometers, it wasn't so close. And we walked, first we walked to the sports stadium, and then they assembled all the people. They put them like in a row of eight, I remember, and there was, and the Germans with the rifles. And they made us to walk to the river. We came to the river. So the Poles put dynamite and they set off the bridge, so the Germans made us, I remember it was about that narrow. I can remember the bridge. Very narrow, wooden, little things. When you walk, so you walked in the water to cross.

MATES: (?)

FANIA: I don't know. We crossed that bridge, and on the other side used to be, you know, like farms. So, and there was no government. Because that town was split. On one side the Germans, on the other side the Russians supposed to come. The Red Army

supposed to come. So three days later, the Red Army came. And of course, it was like, you know, you felt kind of, looked up to them, like to, they tried to help us. We saw that they know that we are Jews. They figured it out right away.

INT: So that was your hope. That this was a good sign.

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah. That was a good sign. I didn't tell you all the things that was going on in Poland during the eighteen days.

INT: I'm curious. That was my next question. What was happening that led up to this time?

FANIA: Before we were assembled? Well, when the Germans come in and a few days, you know, I really have it written down here. You know, we used to, we talk like, I think it was...

INT: Made restrictions?

FANIA: Yes, made restrictions. (Polish word) Excuse me, I just cannot think of...

MATES: People as...

FANIA: Hostages! They took the people, like the Jewish banker. He was a very respected man. The man who was in charge of the Jewish community center. He was the head, and he said to the Jewish people, "You have to bring so much gold, so much money, so much, and if not, we're going to be shot, executed."

INT: So you had to bring your valuables.

FANIA: So people tried to bring the valuables, to save the people, because you don't know if you are not next in a couple days. But I don't remember much about this. I was really too young to get involved with those things.

INT: Do you think you were scared?

FANIA: The only thing I remember, across the street used to be a very, very Orthodox synagogue. And they used to sit and just, those people used to sit, I don't know, pray, or they were very Orthodox. And this they set on fire. And they took out all the Torahs, and everything what is in the synagogue. You know, the old machzors, the books, and they put some kerosene, and they set it on fire. And I was just, I was just standing, you know, across, and I was...I said, "It's supposed to be so holy. Before you enter, you're supposed to wash your hands. How could they get in and destroy all this?" And all those goyim, you know, they was standing and look. Some of them cried. I saw tears on some of them.

INT: These were friends and neighbors?

FANIA: Yeah, yeah. Some of them cried, and some of them were even happy. That was a show. Very few were upset. I remember a woman, she was crying, and I remember her words. She said, "We've been living all those years."

INT: Generations.

FANIA: Yeah. And...and then they started to round up the people for work, you know. Especially the men. And they would take, even took such...they tried to...you know, in the old country, the people who had beards and earlocks, you know, peyos. So that was...a horrible thing, when you see the Germans goes and cuts it. With the flesh. He's bleeding, you know. Just for no reason! Just picks up an old man and just cuts him. Of course, the young tried to hide, but they found them anyway. But it was such a brutal and such a savage way, the way they did those things.

INT: Did you have any idea what was happening in the rest of Poland? Were you hearing stories about what was happening?

FANIA: Yes, we did. Because I remember...before when the Nazis first came in a few days, the people, especially the youth, you know, like my husband's age, were the young people, young girls and boys. We tried to get into...see, our town was, like I explained to you, was on one side was German, on the other side we were expecting the Red Army to come in, because we made the agreement, Hitler and Stalin.

INT: So half was in Russia?

FANIA: Yeah. So a lot of people came out, as a matter of fact, from his hometown, from Cracow, and even (?).

INT: To cross the border.

FANIA: Yeah, what the Germans are doing, but unfortunately, nobody believed anybody. Nobody believed anybody. They thought this is a cultured, you know, the Germans are very cultured, and they wouldn't do things like this, brutal things.

INT: No one believed it.

FANIA: Yeah. And then finally, coming back, we crossed the bridge, we got back then, we stayed there three days till the Russians came, and...then my mother got into, she got up to them. She spoke very well Russian. She was born in White Russia. So she asked them if they could help her to get to, she had two sisters there. So they said that could be arranged. And I don't remember if that was the same day, or that was the next day, or that was a few hours later. They put us on the truck.

INT: That took a lot of courage, don't you think, on your mother's part?

FANIA: Yes. She was a go-getter. Oh, yeah, she was a go-getter.

INT: She was concerned about her family.

FANIA: Yeah. She went to them, and she told them that the Germans took away everything. She sent out from our homes, I remember the words she used, and they put us in a truck. And they promised us that they will take us, when they're going to go. So they put us on a truck, and they gave us those army blankets, because it was cold already. Covered up the kids. And I remember they gave each child five rubles. I remember. I don't know if it was a lot or not at that time, but it was nice of the soldiers, you know. It was kids, so they gave us twenty rubles, I remember, and we were so happy with them. (laughs) And they brought us back to Lvov. And my mother's sisters, we came to our aunts' place, and she, they wouldn't believe us one thing we told them. They just thought we ran away from the Germans because those days people were running. Because the Poles used to, you know, like the Poles, the officers, you know, they ran away from the Germans, and they got into Hungary and Rumania, you know. She said, people were just running away. Nobody believed us what was going on, that we were really **forced** out of our house. And her own sister, she couldn't believe it. It was very hard people to convince.

INT: What do you think your parents were feeling? How fearful were they for their lives and their children?

FANIA: Well, when we got into the Russian side, we didn't fear for our lives anymore. It was just the financial problems, you know. We didn't have much, you know. We had to...we had to do with very little. Very, very little. And the conditions were very difficult. We lived in a place, there was at least twenty families together.

INT: Like in a ghetto?

FANIA: Yes, like in a ghetto. And I think we were involved maybe a year or so, and then the city was so over-flowed with people from all over Poland. You could find people that were from all over. And the Russians made an announcement, that whoever wants to go back to the German side, to register. They gave an address. That was a trick from the Russians, too. (laughs) To register, and they will, we can go back to our homes. Of course, my mother was the first one to jump on the idea. She's going back home. She has all her stuff there, and her house. She wants to go home. So she was the first one. So she went and she registered.

INT: Why do you say this was a trick? They wanted the Jews to go back?

FANIA: No, they wanted the Jews, they took all the Jews, and sent them to Middle Asia, to Siberia. But they wanted people to register. They want to identify you. You had to give them the address, where you live, where you are, make it easy for them.

INT: So that being the worst conditions would be for the Jews?

FANIA: Pardon me?

INT: The worst conditions, the Jews would be sent to Siberia versus [to camps]?

FANIA: They wanted to resettle whoever registered. But we were very lucky with this, too. So one night, I remember, we were sleeping. There was maybe twenty people in that place, and we came, and we knocked on the door. That was the Russian soldiers, with their rifles, and they said, "Get up and get dressed, and take what you can." Now, they told us to take what we have, we took, and they put us on trucks, and they took us to the train station. Put us on the train, cattle train.

INT: Lots of people?

FANIA: Thousands of people. Lvov was over, how do you say, Mates (Polish)

MATES: Overloaded.

FANIA: Overloaded with the people who ran away from the Germans. They all thought the...because the Russians are liberators, you know. We are not afraid of, you know. So anyway, we got into the train, and my mother didn't have any food for us, and she decided, she didn't think the trains are going to leave right away, so she decided with my sister to go down and to go buy some stuff. So she, that's what I said. She was the...you know...

INT: So she left you.

FANIA: She left me and my father and my two brothers, and she and my sister left.

INT: In the train.

FANIA: In the train, and she and my sister sneaked out. She sneaked out. You couldn't go out, because there were armed guards watching. But she managed to get out, and she went with my sister, and all of a sudden, two hours or three hours, we are hearing they are bringing the locomotive, putting into the train, and the train starts to roll. And my father got hysterical. He started to gevalt! What is he going to do with three kids, you know? (laughs) You know, because my mother was always doing all those things. And I'm laughing, but it was a tragedy for him. I can imagine how he felt. And I was scared. I didn't know what's happening. And all of a sudden, it was like a miracle, I could hear her screaming, and she was running quick -- she was very energetic -- with my sister, and

people helped her to get on the...they opened the...pushed open the doors, and you know, they schlepped her into the, dragged her into the train. First she throw all the bagels. That was the most important. You know, and she got in, and **seconds** later we were underway to Russia. And we traveled, they didn't give us **any** water. **Any** food until we crossed the Russian...no. Granitza. I forgot. Border. When we crossed the Russian border, they stopped the train. When we were on the Russian side, they gave us, I remember they brought some sausages, they brought some bread. It wasn't like I could eat that food, and water, you know. You could wash, you know. But on the train, we had like some boards, and a little bit straw on it, on both sides, and people slept. There was maybe, I don't know how many people. Fifteen people in one train.

INT: Fifty?

FANIA: Fifteen, maybe more.

INT: And how long?

FANIA: Ten days. It took us ten days, and we reached Middle Asia. And then we had to change the, that we had to. They brought us, there was another train which was a much narrow train, small train that you don't see them here. I never saw them here. And they put us on that train, and we ended up, I think...nineteen kilometers from the major village. And all of a sudden, we are in a forest. But not a forest like here. Those forests are huge and tall. In a forest, and there is only one barrack, where the police was staying, that was their barrack, and that was just a few barracks, you know. No, there was another barrack, I think. I forget how many, I don't remember. And they said, "This is going to be your temporary house. You're going to have to build yourself some." And nobody, people know how to go to you know, cut wood and to build a place. Anyway, you know, some people got hysterical. They started to scream, to hide, and raised their hands to G-d. "Rabbone shel olam, what...?" That was a scene, I'm telling you. Like it was the end of the world.

INT: Was this a desolate place?

FANIA: This was a place that they were carving the wood.

MATES: (?)

FANIA: Yeah, there was nothing. There was not a town around. The closest town was Kazan (?). You had to, so you had to...

MATES: A wilderness.

FANIA: A wilderness, yeah, in the woods, yeah. And...

MATES: They give you tools to cut wood and so on?

FANIA: Yes, yes. We had. Yeah.

MATES: They throw them here, and you build yourself.

FANIA: Build yourself, you know. You know, and they gave us tools -- it's Russian, you know. And I remember the first thing what we got was corn flour, and you used to make like kasha, you know. And when you ate this, that gave you such a burning, you know. I don't know why that gave you such a burning. But that was the Russian, they gave you the bread. But their bread that time was very heavy. I don't know, it was black and heavy. And...

INT: So these were foods you weren't used to.

FANIA: No, no. Absolutely not. And then they gave us like...cards for rations, but it was very limited. There wasn't any meat on it, there wasn't any milk. I forget what it was. Was potatoes, bread, maybe salt. Just very few things, you know. So...again my mother, she took, you know, she had...you know, like covers for the down covers, you know, in the old country, your mother will probably know. They used to have the damask, white...a cover for it. So it was damask. It had like a floral design. So she cut it, and she made eight, you know, handkerchiefs. Eight. And she sneaked out. She didn't take all eight of them, but she took two, and she exchanged it for butter, for milk, you know, for all those things. She spoke Russian, so she could really get along better. And she probably told them her tragic story, so they felt sorry for her, too. So she used to take my sister with her always with her. I wasn't going. But my sister was better, I think.

MATES: She was a blonde. Her sister was a blonde. She looked like a shiksa.

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: So why do you think that made a difference?

FANIA: I don't know. I don't know. I really don't know. But she was more cooperative, maybe. And she was quiet. I would always open my mouth, you know, and talk back. I really don't know. But I didn't like those things. You know, it bothered me. I was a little bit like my father, you know.

So anyway, she brought milk, and she brought butter, and she brought beans. And she brought a whole bunch, she couldn't carry, as much as she brought, I don't know how she could carry. And she brought us, and we had. And the next time she went, they caught her, you know, because we were being watched, you know, under armed guards. They didn't hurt us, but they were watching the people, because they wanted the people to work in the forest, the men. So they caught us, so they put her in a little jail. The jail consisted from a few boards with a padlock, you know. People didn't (?) the punishment. So my brother went, he took off the board, and he said, "Mom," the one who is in Boston now, he said, he put the board back, so they thought she is in jail for the night, but she came

back to the barrack, and she made us dinner, we ate. But they didn't say, they tried to look away. They saw a woman with kids, you know. That shows they are human too, you know. So at least we had some food.

INT: Did it make her any more careful?

FANIA: You couldn't be careful. You had to have, you had to take chances. But she did that again and again and again, you know. But then the summer came, and you know, the berries came, so of course...

INT: What came?

FANIA: The summer, you know, the warm weather. The winter was **terrible**. And there was only one, you know, like a brick place with a steel thing that you can cook something that was heating the whole place. And the summer came, and I remember, I will go into the forest with the peasants, and we'd pick some berries, and with the different seasons, different berries are, you know, coming up. And the mushrooms. That was helpful, you know, that we could, we had. And we lived like this with sneaking out and coming back, you know, for about sixteen months.

Then when the Germans attack, that was sixteen months. Yeah, sixteen months we were there, and then Hitler attacked Russia. So they told us that we could, they freed us. Like we could travel any place in Russia where you want. They gave us passports, and we could go any place we want. So we managed to get into a village, to a bigger village, to a village, and...

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

FANIA: Because they used to come. I don't know...

INT: Mongolians?

FANIA: They are not Mongolians. It was a tribe of the Mongols. Some kind, you know, Mongolian. They had their costumes, and they dressed different. They talked, they spoke their language. So...they put us up with a family. They didn't ask the family if they **want** us. But they took us and they brought us over, and you know, those people, they never saw a train in their life. They never saw, you know, they're just peasants.

INT: So that was your family's choice, to leave and travel through Siberia?

FANIA: Yeah, well we just wanted to get out from the forest, because there was nothing, in a village at least you saw some people. So we got to that village, and I remember we got into the...what do you call, the commandant of the village, of the office,

and he just took us to, because he didn't ask the people if they want us or not. Just, here, you take care of them. They have to have a roof over their head. So I don't think the people were very happy. And especially, those people are not civilized even, you know. And...

INT: They probably didn't even know Jews.

FANIA: They don't know what's Jew or not Jew. He didn't know what means...so they're peasants. You know, he didn't know how to write, how to read.

MATES: (?) that you are a Pole.

INT: So how were you treated by them?

FANIA: So I remember, either he was, he used to, I remember he used to catch dogs, and he had like a tank, and he would tie them, because he needed the skins. So he would put up a trap till he will die, and then he will rip the skin off, and cats, you know. He had for this thing. Because he needed for clothing. So he went down to his basement, I remember, from the kitchen. He brought a bucket of potatoes, and he boiled the potatoes. He didn't tell us, but he did it. The potatoes were ready, he told us to sit at the table. He brought some salt and told us to go (?), to eat. It means to eat.

MATES: The potatoes were raw without anything?

FANIA: No, no, no, he boiled them in the peels.

MATES: No, but to the potatoes, did he put just salt, nothing else?

FANIA: He didn't have anything else! (interviewer laughs) That's what he ate, and his wife used to get up 4:00 in the morning, go to work in kohorz [communal farm]. He didn't have anything there, but it was nice of him. I thought it was very nice of him to do. But that was only one day. The next day he wouldn't do it. You know, he didn't have that many, you know, they didn't have that much. What did he have? A little room with a bed and a table. That was all the furnitures, and then he had a big fireplace, what he put everything inside, and on top of the fireplace, he used to sleep, because it was cold, it was very cold there.

INT: So he gave you shelter and one meal.

FANIA: Yeah, one meal. But he gave us the shelter. Well, he was afraid to say it, or they would take him away. You know, in those days, you know, they used to keep the people, the Russians were very strict. The government was, you know, he didn't have any choice to object. He probably didn't like it. I wouldn't like it if you bring me six strangers. But he didn't say anything. He gave us the food, and he helped us.

And then my dad got, I remember he got a job in the shop right away, and we...he had a job in the shop, but of course it wasn't enough to feed the family for what he was making. And my mother made a friend with a Russian lady. Yeah, that was in the village. And her son. She was from Byelorussia, too. Her son-in-law used to be a commissar in the hospital. So she used to always sneak away some stuff from the daughter and the son-in-law and give my mother in the pockets to take home, because she used to like to come, she used to like my mother to talk, you know. So she will bring it. But I don't remember how long we stayed in that village.

And my mother decided it's not, it's no good here, either, so we managed to get to the closest town, which was (?), and we rented a place, with a woman with two children. Her husband was killed during the war, because he was in the army, and that was a little bit, life started to begin a little bit easier, because you could do something on the black market. You could, you know, you could, you know, hustle and bustle. You had more Jewish people there. Of course, all the Jewish people weren't from Poland, you know, and from that area, you know.

INT: More of a community.

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah. It was at least you could...

MATES: (interruption)

FANIA: So that was a little bit easier for me. Much more easier for me than for my parents, because at least I had some, I made friends, you know, with the Russian kids. Oh, that was, the Russian Jews that they came from Leningrad, and from Moscow, you know, because the Germans advanced to Russia, so they tried to evacuate a lot of people. They always came there. And the same time, they build a big air force academy there. You know, they had the biggest air force academy in that town.

INT: What was that?

FANIA: Air force academy. Yeah, they trained pilots.

INT: Oh. The Russian army.

FANIA: Yeah, the Russian army. And then you could, you know, you could buy and sell, you know, and all kinds of things used to go on in that time. It was very hard, you know. And we didn't...

INT: So it was slightly improving.

FANIA: Improving, yes. It was slightly improving. (pause) Because I remember before I could go a whole day without food, you know, in the village, or in the, sometimes you

didn't eat for a whole day. You went to bed without anything, except you melted snow and had water, hot water. You boiled. And...

And then we came to that town, we stayed there, and I remember again, the winter. The winters are very, very rough there. You go in the snow, you know, you never saw winter or snow like...the snowing doesn't look the same here. The snow is wet here. There the snow is like little ice, you know. So...I remember my father got sick, he got pneumonia. And we took him on a sled to the hospital. And there was a very lovely young Russian doctor woman, very nice. Because men...and...

INT: All the men, you said, were in the Russian army.

FANIA: Yeah, the Russian front. So it was a very lovely young doctor. She was very nice to me, I remember. I must have been, by that time, I must have been sixteen or seventeen years old. And she examined him, and she said to me, he was running a very high temperature, and coughing up his lungs, and he said, "He is not going to make it." A (?) she called it. I don't know. It's a sulfa drug.

INT: A sulfa drug?

FANIA: Yeah, so she said, "I don't have it. The only place who has it is the army." So she said, "But as a Jewish lady," no, she didn't say "Jewish." She said, "As a Polish lady and a farmer," see, she happens to be a Jewish lady. "One of yours. Go to her, maybe she can help you. But I don't have one pill." Because in those days they used to have them in powder. You know. "I don't have one pill. I cannot help him. Except to make him compresses, but this is not going to cure him." He was perspiring. He was sweating. So I remember, dumb I was, I didn't know what to do. And I figured, I will go. And I went to the pharmacy. I didn't even tell my mother, because I was afraid. See how we used to be brought up, not to worry our parents. But here, when the kid have something, the first thing they tell you so that you don't sleep a whole night. (interviewer laughs) So I didn't tell my mother. I ran to the pharmacy, and I told her what's going, oh, and the doctor gave me a prescription, and she said, "If you can fill this, I can help him." So I went to the pharmacy, and I told her, if she could help me. So she said, "I cannot give up this. This is just for the military hospital. I cannot do it. They'll put me in jail." They will put you in jail for nothing. She said, "I cannot do it, Wanda." So I said, "So what, he's supposed to die?" So she said, "I cannot help you. I'd be happy to help you, but I can't." So she tell me, "But I can give you advice. Go to the commissar, the sovietska," you know, I know where it was. I know the town. The town wasn't that big that I didn't...and she said, "Go to him. If he signs it, I fill it for you in ten minutes you'll have it. I'll make it up." So I know how I'm going to get in. They won't let me. There are armed guards in front of the door, building. (laughs) But I was thinking a little bit, and I tried to beg her to give me the thing. I tried to do, I said, maybe she can skimp it somehow a little better, and have an accident, you know, that she spilled, or she said, "No way," she's a professional pharmacist. Those things don't exist. She wouldn't do it for me. But she gave me advice, to go to the commissar. I said, "How am I going to get in,

when they are standing here with the armed guard? They're not going to let me in." And I said, "What I have to lose? I'm going to try."

So I walked down, I walked down the street, and I remember there was a very narrow, and I said, "If they're going to see me to go straight, you know, you cross the rifles, we won't let you. That's the way they, they won't let me in. And there was no way I could persuade them, you know. So I went across, but I went like around. And I walked like I was walking, you know, this big street, and all of a sudden I went in! You know, and I screamed. I made such a terrible scream, and they followed me in right away. So I didn't know at that time, that that's the commissar who came out in the hall, and he said, "What's going on?" I said, "They don't want to let me in. My father is dying. I need a prescription, and they will fill it only if you will sign it." You know. So he told them to get out. See, I'm trying to...

INT: That's smart. How else would you get the attention?

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah. See, I couldn't...You couldn't go straight, because you couldn't get in. But if I went, I was walking on the street from a distance, and unexpected, I don't think they could see it, because they were looking straight at you. I made such a terrible scream, because I **want** him to hear me there. So he came out, and he said in Russian, that I just went in. He was embarrassed how I got in. (laughs) Guards, two guards. And he came out, and I told him in Russian that my father is, you know, very sick, and the doctor said that he is the only one who can sign it, he's the only one who can help me. And I'm not going out until he helps me. So he took me into his room. He took me in, he told me to sit down, and he was sitting. He had such a beautiful desk. I remember the shiny desk with the black, and he signed this, and he wished me good luck with my father, and I ran to the pharmacy, and in a few minutes, she gave me a whole bag of, you know, like a...and I got all those...that sulfa thing, what you call it, and I took it right to the hospital. And when I came next morning to see how he's doing, he could talk. But before he couldn't talk. He was just in a different, and it really helped him.

INT: What a story.

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: What do you think you were feeling, being there, and asking for this? Scared, or what?

FANIA: I was scared that he's not going to want to sign, because I know the military, they were bringing in every day I used to go watching the soldiers, bringing them without limbs, without faces. In such horrible shape, from the front, that he's not going to want to sign this. Because you know, when they have a set up rule, so it's difficult for them to break it. But I think he was a very good human being. He was a young man. I would judge him, he was in his maybe late thirties, and he did it.

INT: He was probably impressed by your courage.

FANIA: I don't know.

MATES: (?)

FANIA: (laughs)

INT: But your mother broke the rules to survive, to help the family.

MATES: I tell you again, you see, it comes back to this point: if she would be a grown-up person, they would take her out.

FANIA: Oh, they would escort you out.

MATES: Only because she was a child, okay?

FANIA: No, I was maybe sixteen, seventeen, yeah.

MATES: Whatever, you were a child.

FANIA: But my mother, what she did.

MATES: Yeah, but this situation, but typical, because it's a child, that he had some (pause).

INT: Empathy?

MATES: Empathy, yes. She was crying for her father, and he could bend the rule and give her. In fact, she could sell this on the black market.

FANIA: For a lot of money, because we didn't need all those medications. I didn't have the heart, you know. Some people, our people you know. Jewish people, they are always very smart. So one told me, he said, "I always thought you are a smart girl, Wanda." He was older than me. He was maybe thirty years at that time. He said, "I always thought you are very smart. But I didn't know that you are so dumb. You could have sold it and had money, and you could have given..." your father didn't need like maybe six, seven. He was the doctor, he knows everything. Six, seven things, and the rest you could have sold them. I say, "I didn't want to make money on this, something like this." Maybe someone else could help. And the doctor was so nice to me. She told me where to go. No, but she was nice to tell me. She said in the pharmacy there is one of your Polish people. Try to talk to her, maybe she'll help you. How can you sell it? You have to have a conscience, too.

INT: So what happened next, after your father recovered?

FANIA: My father recovered in the spring, and we used to go and deal and things with the people. And he recovered, and the next thing, they took him into the Polish army.

INT: Your father?

FANIA: Yeah, my father. He was forty years old. Shoulder to shoulder. They were supposed to go with the Russian army. But of course he was forty or forty-two at that time, so they put him in the supply thing.

MATES: (?)

FANIA: So we took, the...they took him into the...what do you call? He was drafted into the Polish army. So we had to stay. He came, they give him a draft card, and he had to report.

INT: There was no choice. You couldn't refuse.

FANIA: No, no. You don't refuse those things. That was, you know, they shoot you for that thing. So they took him. As a matter of fact, they took all the, mostly was Jewish people. There was a few Poles that had been with us there, that they ran away, and they got caught in the whole thing. But they took all the Jewish young boys, and like my father's age, they took them all. And they gave them 24 hours, and they took him to the armed forces. Because my father was older, so they didn't put him in the front. He was on the supply. And...I remember my friends. One came without a leg. His brother was killed. Because they were supposed to go shoulder to shoulder, but they put them as shields, the Russians, they put the Polish army in front, and they went as shields in the back. At least that's what my father told me, after, when we got back.

So we were again, I don't know how long, a couple years, two, three years. I don't remember the time. I don't have any recollection of the time.

INT: Did you know his whereabouts?

FANIA: No. I know his whereabouts when the, to the end when they crossed the Polish, no, as long as he was in Russia, I don't remember. I don't remember. He was writing to us, but I don't remember the time.

I remember, the only letter which got stuck with me, when he crossed the Russian border, and he and some of his buddies from our hometown, they took a jeep, because my father didn't drive, but the other fellows drove, he was a little younger than my father, and they got back to our hometown to take a look what's going on, what's left, you know. Because the Russians occupied, you know, advanced, and they took over that town. So there were four of them, which was very stupid what they did. So my father went back to our, to the area, you know, they separate. Each one went to his neighborhood. So my father, they're supposed to meet at a certain time, before it gets dark, I don't know, 6:00, or 4:00, so my

father went to our area. Of course that used to be Gentiles there. And he wanted to see what happened to the house, what happened to the things. And all four are supposed to meet at center city, you know, at the square. And the jeep, one was with the jeep waiting, and my father comes, and they are waiting and waiting, and one is not showing up. And it's getting dark, and the three guys said, "It's no point to, he didn't come back, there's something very wrong." So of course, the Poles, they want them to stay, they want them to sleep over, but my father didn't trust them. And the three of them decided to go back to their camp, you know, wherever. Outside town. And next day, they took more fellows, and they wanted to find out what happened to that guy. They used to have a factory, and they used to have like a bar in the square, because the peasants used to come there. And they had a beautiful big house, you know, three stories. A big apartment building. Was a wealthy man. So the next day, they came during the day, and they brought more fellows, you know, more fellows with him. And nobody saw him, nobody knows. So they know that something terrible happened. Anyway, they found him, and he was stabbed a number of times to death. They killed him. They were afraid, the Poles, that he came to claim his property. That was a very wealthy family. So they buried him at the Jewish cemetery, which was seven kilometers away from town. And then, I don't know, a few months later, but we know he's okay, and he's on the...

A few months later he came back. And he was with us another year. We stayed another year in Russia, and then they let us go back to Poland.

INT: This was at the end of the war.

FANIA: Yeah. And then it was the end of the war, you know, all the celebrations. They got, you know, what was going on. Everybody was happy, and then my mother started to get letters from her goyishe neighbors, and one of her neighbors, one of her friends, that, she was a Gentile woman, but she was very nice to her, so she wrote to my mother, and I remember she wrote her, "Dear Rachel," one sentence stuck to me. She said, "There is not even, your graves are not here." That's how the people cleaned out. "There's nothing left here from your people."

INT: So had your family considered going back?

FANIA: Yes, we had to go back. We couldn't stay there. That was a wilderness there. So finally after a year, well, the Polish government interfered at that time, to get all the Polish citizens back, and we were Polish citizens. So we, you know, they supplied the transports. It took six weeks to get back to Poland. And they took us back to Poland.

INT: You were all reunited? Your family with your father?

FANIA: Yes. We were reunited with my father. No, my father came back to Russia to see us. And we came back to, we came back to Poland. Of course, when we drove by our town, I remember the Poles threw stones, so we had to close the doors in the train, you know. We couldn't see, even. And...

INT: What do you think that meant?

FANIA: They're anti-Semites, you know. And...so anyway, we ended, there was no future in Poland for Jews. Really there was not. And again, my mother, she gets all the brain[storms], she said, "I'm not going, I don't want to live here. I don't want to raise my kids here. Let's go..." I don't remember how it was. We ended up in Silesia, you know.

INT: In Germany?

FANIA: Yes. At that time that was Poland, because Poland got that part. We still have this part. Yeah, they took it away. Yeah, they still have it. They still have it. So we came to (?), and that was basically Germans, but the Poles took it over. So it was revenge for the Germans. You know, the Jews didn't, you know, we tried to take revenge, too. And there used to be a lot of agitators from Israel, you know, Zionists. They used to come and agitate the Jewish youth. Every train, you know, "Get off the train, and let's go to Israel." And a lot of boys, and a lot of young people decided to go.

INT: Had your family considered going to Palestine?

FANIA: Oh, yes, my mother and my brothers. My mother and my brother lived in Israel at that time.

INT: So they did. So tell me more about what your family then did.

FANIA: Well, I don't know, we stayed in that place. At that time it was Poland, but it really was Germany. We stayed there for a while, and then I went to a Zionist organization that I met him there. [Mates]

INT: That's where you met him.

FANIA: That's how it was, wasn't it? I met you at the Gordonia (sp?) [Jewish community center], didn't I?

INT: So this was approximately when?

FANIA: '47. No, '46.

INT: And you were how old, and Mates was how old?

FANIA: I was nineteen, and how old were you? 26, I think.

MATES: I am five years older.

FANIA: Yeah, 24.

MATES: I was 26. She was 21. You told me you were 18. You didn't know about it.

FANIA: No, I didn't know. I just found out, as a matter of fact, I found out a couple of years ago, when I wrote to Poland to get my birth certificate, you know, I got it mixed up. Because my mother changed the year. Just a second. That was, you know, a survival. And if you will find, you know, my sister-in-law, and we all have the same problem. Because if you are under, if you are ten years old, so your ration was different. You used to get cream of wheat, rice, all those things they gave you for the younger children. The older ones, they would go in the fields and work. You know.

INT: So she made you younger to get more food.

FANIA: Yes, she made everybody younger, so we got more food. And I accepted this, and that's how it was. I never gave it a thought. I know I was born December 9, that was the most important. And I even didn't tell you in Russia how I worked in the fields, and all the...now I'm in Poland, I'm going back to Russia, is that okay?

INT: Mm-hm. So you were telling me that during your time in Russia that you had to work, too. You were the oldest.

FANIA: That's right. Like in spring, when the Germans start to advance, so the food was just for the military. You know, there was very little food. So what the peasants didn't pick up, you know, I will go in spring, when the snow start to melt, and get the frozen that was sitting a whole winter in the snow, you know, in the ground, and the cabbage, the carrots, whatever, the potatoes, you know, and the peasants...

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

FANIA: That was the Zionist movement, getting all the youth back to Israel, because we'd been fighting for it. That was Palestine at that time. You know, I was there. Actually my sister went first. I didn't want to go. Because I didn't want to, you know, you have to do what they tell you. I like to be...but my sister told me to come once, twice. I went and I met some, you know, young people. Yeah, I met some young people. It was kind of interesting. We were singing and playing, and they used to have all kinds of lectures, you know, how to be a good Zionist, how to be a good Jew, go to Israel, you know.

And...I don't know, one of the boys came up to me. I used to be very fond of the other one. He was very nice, very nice fellow, but he was kind of very depressed, bitter, to say. He was an intelligent boy, but he was bitter. He saw his mother being shot and his little sister. And his father was in Russia. You know, not with us. In another place. And he came back with a Russian woman. He got very bitter. The father used to come there to visit him. He used to put money in his pocket. He would take the money and throw it

back on him. He didn't want to talk to him. He was sitting. It was...a nice guy, but very, very, bitter. You know, like almost...

INT: Very angry.

FANIA: Very angry. **Very** angry. And one day he comes up to me, he says, "You know, that guy has an eye on you." (laughs) I don't even care. And he was another, very quiet, too quiet. I was a happy-go-lucky. I used to...but this was quiet. Him, he was so serious, like a man from fifty years, not like a young fellow 24. That's how I met him. I don't remember all the details exactly.

INT: Mates put it well. He was like dull.

FANIA: Dull. Dull, right. (laughs)

INT: And that's why he was attracted to **you**.

FANIA: Yeah. And then he used to tell me a lot of stories, you know, before the war, which I didn't know. And from movies. I remember I got very fascinated. He told me the movie. He told me the movie about the invisible man, and only the, when they shot him, they saw him on the floor. I was so fascinated. How can a person be invisible? (laughs) And tell me all kinds of stories, and I met his sister, and we start to see each other, and that's how I...

INT: It was a pretty fast romance.

FANIA: Yeah, six weeks. No, I just really...you know what happened. I know that my mother would **never** let me go on the other side with him, or ten of him, he could be even the king, she wouldn't let me go.

INT: Because? She felt you were too young to leave?

FANIA: It wasn't like today. You go with your husband, you get married, you're living with your husband, you go with your husband. As a young girl you don't go with boys and girls. I couldn't even sleep in the...In the Zionist...she wouldn't sleep. But finally I persuaded. She came, she saw there was rooms for girls, and there was, the boys were separate from the girls, so she let me.

INT: She was more strict, you think?

FANIA: Well, that's how it **was**. It wasn't only her, but that's how it was. And his mother wasn't any better. So anyway...So that's how I met him. And he told me that he was going back to Germany, and from Germany we had been planning to go to Israel. But you have to smuggle through the Polish and German border. So I told my mother I didn't want to go, and I was driving her crazy, and I started to rebel, and she said, no way.

So finally she saw that I want to go. Anyway, how it was. But he has a sister-in-law, Sophie, she's in New York, so she said, "Why don't you talk to Mates?" Because he told me he's going to take me. So he instigate the whole thing.

INT: You'd go as a group, instead of just the two of you.

FANIA: No, he liked me, too. I'm sure he must have liked me, otherwise he wouldn't take me. He had to pay for the trip.

MATES: It was a lot of money, to smuggle her.

INT: But she was worth it.

FANIA: But anyway, he and Sophie talked to him. So Sophie, she said, "Why don't you get married, and you solve the problem?" So I said, "Okay." (interviewer laughs)

INT: You hadn't really thought of marriage?

MATES: No, your mother, your mother.

FANIA: Yeah, but Mama went to Sophie, because Sophie will tell you this today. She said the other day in New York.

MATES: Your mother came to her and said, "You want to take Wanda? All right, but you have to be married."

FANIA: And Sophie says, "She's right." Sophie was with her, yeah. Because Sophie told me this. I don't know. So okay, so we got married, big deal.

MATES: 50 years, almost. (laughs)

FANIA: 49. Don't make me older than I am.

MATES: This is why sometimes those marriages they never knew each other. And they survived better than those who were made out of love.

INT: It happened all the time.

FANIA: Yeah, so anyway...

INT: People found each other, had a loss to keep them connected.

FANIA: So we smuggled into Berlin. Oh, we got stopped on the...the Soviets, they stopped the barge. They came...yeah, they caught us. They came on the barge, but I don't know, the people bribed them with something, and they let us go. And we got into

Berlin. And in Berlin we had the UNRA camp, the United Nations camp, because the HIAS.

INT: This was for refugees.

FANIA: Yeah. For the Jewish refugees, yeah. Was big camps, thousands of people. Big camp. So the HIAS, you know, basically, the HIAS took care. So we were in Berlin.

INT: You started a family and you lived in Germany for a while?

FANIA: Yeah. We lived in Berlin for six years or five years, I forget. Five years. Or maybe six years, I don't remember.

INT: Your first son was born there?

FANIA: '46, and we came to the United States...so four years. Around five years. So we been a few months in the camp, and then he decided to get into, no, first we been in camp, then we got an apartment. We were in the camp for a while.

INT: Did you both work?

FANIA: No, that time we didn't work. Nobody worked. We been getting every day, you know, whatever we needed. You know, the HIAS was, they were giving us food. Plenty of food.

INT: The Germans were treating people well then.

FANIA: That was not the Germans. That was the...the Jewish organization HIAS, and the UNRA United Nations. No, Germans, they were starving themselves in the...So, after this he just, he must have told you, he opened, he got into business, and he start the business, we got an apartment, then I had my, a year later I had my first child, Harry. And that's how it was.

INT: How was life there for you until you [came to the U.S.]?

FANIA: Well, you come from the wilderness. You come to a city like Berlin, full of life, you know. People from all over the world there. And you know, a lot of Americans. And it's bursting with life. You know. Everybody's happy, you know, people who survived, you know. In the beginning. But of course we got personal problems. We got problems. As a matter of fact it was very difficult in the beginning for me.

INT: Financial?

FANIA: No, not financial. It was emotional, and we didn't got along, you know, there was a problem, there was a lot of interference from his family, you know. He started to

be responsible for...he had a whole family to keep, you know, so he was the (?). So we had a lot, I had a very bad time. Very bad time there.

INT: And your family was where?

FANIA: My mother meantime, they left for Israel. She was in Israel. So I did write to her. And I thought she would tell me, come over to help me. So she told me, "I didn't tell you to get married." You know, she blamed me. "You want to get married? You want a life? That's what life is." She wasn't very supportive. She didn't...you know, those days, you know, people, when you get married, you're supposed to stay married. If you're happy or not happy. For better and for worse, yeah.

And I was in a strange place with strange people. Don't forget, that's Berlin, that's a big city. I felt uncomfortable, you know, I just...I was still a kid. Young. I didn't know.

MATES: (interruption -- asking interviewer about how to fill out forms)

FANIA: So if I would have been here, it was a very different feeling when I came to the United States. You know, I felt more free and more...comfortable. I had neighbors. I had a lot of support. As a matter of fact, my next door neighbor was a very young girl. She just started college. And she was, she took German, so she used to come in for me to help sometimes.

INT: When you first arrived in the United States, where did you end up? In New York?

FANIA: We ended up in New York. But our contract was not for New York. Was for Iowa, Des Moines, and that was a little bit tough, in Des Moines. Because I lived, you know, they gave us an apartment, with a family. I'm sure they meant well, but it was, you know, Gentile people, and I wasn't...you know, I just...couldn't communicate with them. Of course I was Jewish, people used to come to visit me, too. But it was very difficult. He used to, he worked in Kansas City. I think he got a job, no, first he worked in Omaha, and for an Indian guy. American Indian guy. He was very nice, but I couldn't (?). He used to bring him for lunch. And I would make a nice lunch, I would set the table nice for him, and he was a good-hearted human being. He told me that he was a Cherokee or Sioux Indian. You know. But he didn't look like an Indian, but that's what he said he was.

INT: I'm just curious. So your whole family immigrated to Israel, or did they break up?

FANIA: No, no, my sister came to the United States, because she got married. She was in Munich after the war. But [my parents went to Israel].

INT: How was life there? Wasn't it difficult for your parents?

FANIA: In Israel? It was very hard in the beginning. Of course it was very bad. She had my brother, he was...fourteen years old. The one from New York. And then she had a younger boy seven years old, but he went to school in Israel. He fought in both wars, and now he's a professor for the last twenty-five years in M.I.T. in Boston.

INT: And she stayed there, or did she leave?

FANIA: No, no. After, I think, twenty years, she came here, because when my brother came here, the younger one, so she and my father came over here. She was in Brooklyn till she died.

INT: And your father, he died when?

FANIA: He died, he's dead about ten years. My mother seven, I think.

INT: So you would travel to visit your family in New York? Gina had talked about how enjoyable that was.

FANIA: Yeah, yeah. She still has things that my mother gave her. I'm surprised. On Chanukah she made the table, you know, she made the table, and my mother gave her such a pretty little scarf. She had it from Russia. It's a floral. And she made a, she put it on the table, you know, she put the candles, and a centerpiece, and it looked so attractive. I was surprised she kept those different things from my mother, because they're no value, nothing special, you know. Like a little scarf with paint, and nothing of value. But she keeps them. And we were surprised sometimes, when she sets the table she makes it so attractive, you think like a decorator will do it.

INT: In terms of your war experiences, what do you think helped you survive? And what happened to your faith, belief, values, feelings? How are you changed?

FANIA: Well...I don't know how I, what really made me, I guess I was watching a lot of movies, you know. And I draw my own conclusion. That only the strong can survive, and you have to have a lot of hope, you know, that tomorrow is going to be better. And I wasn't thinking. I just took day by day I guess. And...I don't know. I really...(pause).

INT: You were lucky to have not lost your immediate family. But what about friends or relatives?

FANIA: That's right. I was a very happy, you know...I don't know. I could be happy. I remember one time it was so hot in the barrack when we first came. So I decided to take my blanket, and whatever I had, and go and take a couple of boards, sleep outside. I said, "Why should I sleep in the barrack?" And then a lot of young people followed us, followed me. I had always these brainstorm.

INT: You were independent.

FANIA: Yeah. And I remember there was old people, you know, maybe they weren't old, but they looked old to me, with a fremmer, with a sheitel, you know. And they said, "We are such a tragedy. We are in such tsuris." Do you understand Yiddish?

INT: Mm-hm.

FANIA: (Yiddish) That we are having a dance. It wasn't a dance, it was just a commotion of talking from the young people. So they thought we are terrible. But we just thought, you want to sleep, you went outside. Inside it was very hot. There wasn't big windows in the barrack. You know, so many people, when they start to breathe, it's terrible. It was hot. But surviving, it was just, I don't know.

INT: How do you think you coped with all the difficulties that you had, and the hardships? How do you account for that?

FANIA: I couldn't do it today. I couldn't survive. But at that time, I think when you're young and...I told you, if I was hungry, I went to the forest. I always found enough wild strawberries. I found blueberries, raspberries, and you know. And I know, people used to say, the war is not forever. You know, this is just, and they were talking about the First War, and it ended. And you know, you just pass the time. It was boring. It was...you got sick. Thank G-d I was never sick all those years in Russia.

INT: Did you ever question your ability or your desire to go on living? To have a new life?

FANIA: What do you mean about a new life?

INT: Did you ever feel so depressed, or...[suicidal]?

FANIA: I was never depressed. I was never depressed. I always had some friends, girlfriends, around me. I was always, I managed, I don't know, G-d gave me a gift that I always could have very devoted friends. And I had them in Russia, and if it wasn't our own, they used to be Russian kids. But I always had somebody that I could talk, and I could sing, and I could, you know, play. Always.

INT: Do you think it made a difference that your family was together and survived? If you had been separated or been alone, do you think that would have made a difference?

FANIA: It's possible. It's very possible, yeah. But one thing, it's your make-up, too, which helps you survive.

INT: Your make-up, yes, exactly.

FANIA: Yes, your make-up helps you to survive. Because I remember, the girls the same age, their parents had a little bit more, one of the...one of the, her fathers used to be,

he used to, you know, used to go to (?), which was an agency things. He used to take some goods from the people, sell it for the people. He will make money, you know, rings, and diamonds, and gold coins, you know, things like this. But those teenagers, they have...had more food, better food than we. Because when he went to (?) he could buy everything on the black market. But I remember there was a girl, beautiful girl, and she had always, what do you call, skin rashes. To a point that she had gangrene, things like this. And then they got colds. All kinds. One died, she got TB. I don't know how she got TB even, because she had more food than what we had. You know, they were very fragile. But I guess the simple life, I go to the forest, I bring a bucket of raspberries, and a bucket I bring home, and I eat plenty there. I remember I was thirsty, it was hot. Because it's hot, the summers are hot in Russia. When you used to walk on the railroad tracks, you know, because there was not a road, so you could feel the heat, you know. So you tried to walk on the rough, you know, edges. So I remember, you been dying of thirst. So I saw what the peasants do. She takes off her thing from her hair, and that was, you know, you could see little bugs. That's G-d's honest truth. And she puts the thing, and she drinks the water. Through that neckerchief. Through the scarf. And I remember thinking, I was thirsty, I didn't care. But that's what I did.

INT: At any time did you question your faith, belief in G-d? Before the war, during the war, after the war?

FANIA: I tell you, I was brought up, which is fanaticism, you know, that you don't supposed to eat treif. And if I got treif, I ate. My mother didn't ate, six years. We brought a rabbit, and we cooked it, and I remember like today, my mother had some potatoes. She bought potatoes, and my brother took a little bit of the juice from the rabbit, and put on her portion, and she tasted it, and she got so angry. She threw the...even at the time, for a whole day she didn't ate it, to teach us a lesson not to do anything like that. But she did not object if we ate it the treif.

INT: It was her choice.

FANIA: That was her choice. But for the kids, she said we have to grow, and we have to eat. Before the war I wouldn't eat anything like that. We wouldn't eat this. I remember when the Germans one time caught us in the market, I was with my mother. I was helping her to buy vegetables and some other things. And a German grabbed us, and he thought we were Poles, and he put a lot of bacon, the whole pieces of bacon in her bag. You know, she used to have something, those embroidered bags, you went shopping. He put it there. So as soon as we got back home, she took the bacon, and she took it to the neighbor, to Marisha, she gave it to the neighbor, and then the bag she didn't want. It was a beautiful bag, she was so proud of that bag. G-d knows how many hours she was doing the...(pause).

INT: Crochet?

FANIA: Not crochet, that was, not crisscross, the other thing they do. And she gave it to the neighbor. And then before I got into the house, she made me wash my hands with ash, because she used to put the ash, because we had a little garden, with the ash, because there wasn't soap outside. So she made me scrub and scrub my hands. (laughs) And then after this, she scrubbed the knob of the door before she got into the house. That was my mother. And I told you, if I G-d forbid took a spoon or knife, and I mistake by not thinking, so right away it got into the ground. For 24 hours it was sitting in the ground to make it kosher.

INT: So when it came to your own family, you had a Jewish identity, but tradition or practice would be more modern.

FANIA: Yeah. There used to be people in the barrack, they lived with us. I remember there was an old man. All he was doing is sitting the whole day and praying. He didn't pray that he should be healthy or see his children healthy. Just that he should come to Kever Yisrael. He should be buried in a Jewish cemetery. That's all I could understand and hear him. All day sitting. Unfortunately he died in the wilderness, and his daughter-in-law and the two children.

MATES: Died there, too?

FANIA: Died there, too. But his son and maid, was a Jewish maid, so, they survived, and she lives in New York. And she took him with her. She used to be a maid for him. And she treats him as a father, you know.

INT: How do you think your war experiences affected your desire to have children; what did it mean? Did you have worries or fears for your children? How important was it to have a family?

FANIA: I didn't have any fears. I was looking forward to, you know, I felt the world has to be good. I didn't have this.

INT: That's wonderful.

FANIA: I really didn't. Why should I fear? I had enough fear when I was in Russia at night. I remember one time I got lost in the forest. I wasn't by myself. I was with another couple of people. Then somebody played a trick on us, and started to make noises. I got scared, I couldn't see them, because the forests are very thick. And I got terrified that time, because they used to say, there's a lot of deserters hiding in those forests, and they will kill you. They will take everything you have. You know, that's what I was afraid. But otherwise, I didn't have any fear. I really didn't.

INT: Was it important to have children? It was important to you to have a family?

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: Did you connect that in some way...[with the war]?

FANIA: I didn't have any fears?

MATES: No.

FANIA: No, I didn't have any fears.

MATES: No, she asked you whether it was important for you to have children.

FANIA: Yes. I did want to have, yes. Of course.

INT: Given what you had gone through.

FANIA: No, I didn't talk to them too much. Later when they got older, they start to question you, and they always say, you know, but basically I never complained to him, like some people, you know, you put food, and the kids didn't want to eat, or they didn't like it, and you know...somebody, some people will say, "What I would have given to have it when I was your age," I never did this. And if they didn't want it, it was leftover. If I could save it, I save it. If not, I throw it away, and I wasn't worried.

INT: How did you deal with the war experiences with your children? Was there something you wanted them to know? Did you tell them about some of your experiences?

FANIA: When they ask me, when they ask me, I talk. I used to talk to them. But when they used to be very little, very young, I really didn't want to put any, I don't know, it was very...(pause)

INT: To burden them?

FANIA: To burden them with something. Because kids, you know, they love their mother, and I didn't want them to feel my pain.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

FANIA: But I didn't.

INT: Do you think you wanted to protect them, not deal with the pain yourself?

FANIA: In a way I wanted to protect them. I figured they will find out soon enough. If they will want to know, they will come and they will ask me. That's how I felt. I remember my son Joe, one day he decided he wanted to tape me. He never finished

taping me, but when he was ready for it, he came and he asked me. But I really didn't, I really didn't feel, it was such a long time ago.

MATES: They went to Auschwitz.

INT: To your trip to Poland. So were their differences among your children of what they want to know when they asked you? So you told Joe and was that different with Gina and Sam? When they asked you a question?

FANIA: They don't ask so much. You know, they don't ask. They know I was in Russia, and there was a time that Sam said he would like to go to Russia if I would go with him. But he was very young -- I tried to discourage him. And I told him, "Sam, this is not U.S.A., or this is not a democratic country that you think you can take a train and you'll be there, you know. We can travel so easy. You have to have a lot of permission from one place to another, and you have to be prepared to travel for months sometimes." And I don't know he just...there was a time, twenty years ago, he wanted to go to Russia. But then he never mentioned it.

INT: When Mates would be telling the children stories...and go into a lot of detail, how did you feel? Would you join in the discussion?

FANIA: I don't remember. I don't recall.

MATES: (?)

FANIA: No, I just felt... (pause)

INT: Were you worried at all by what he had said?

FANIA: If they are very, I just feel the same way today. I would do the same thing today. When a child is young, you don't know what, you tell him something terrifying, you tell him something, you know, and he knows he is Jewish, because here I am pushing him to go to Hebrew school. Trying him to be bar mitzvah. So why should I tell him such stories, how we used to...I thought if he's, my son Sam, he went to college. He knows more now than I do, even I was, I went through the war. Because he took an interest, and he started to dig in it. He went to the museum, he went to different lectures, and he learned a lot about it. And the same thing Gina.

(PAUSE)

FANIA: I just really didn't want to make, I didn't believe I should make you feel that we came from, that something horrible happened to his family, ancestors. I feel that when he gets older, they'll be old enough to understand, to read. I spoke to my niece a few weeks ago, and her parents immigrated to Israel. She was seven years old when she start, she told me, to show horrible pictures in school. First grade, second grade. How to be

strong, how to fight, otherwise the Arabs will come. That was 1948 or '49, when they immigrated to Israel. How the Arabs will come and kill all the Jews in Israel. So to this day, when she talks, she says, they were such horrible pictures and movies, and you know, constantly, day after day. In school. And so, you know, showing it. And she said, "That's terrible." She teaches Hebrew, you know. She came when she was a young adult to this country.

INT: And now she's an adult. How is she related to you?

FANIA: She's my husband's half brother's daughter. But it happens that I'm very close with her. She's now in her forties. The same age as my daughter. But she would **never** expose her children to see movies and to lectures. And that was constantly. She used to come home, at night her parents sent them to bed. She said she had **nightmares**, she would wake up screaming, that something is happening to her. I didn't know all this. But I figured there's nothing good. And as they get older, they will know. And that's true. Soon as they start to go to Hebrew school, so they learned about it, and then we tried to tell them, if they asked questions. But I think they are very knowledgeable about the Holocaust now.

INT: Do you think at times it was overwhelming for them to hear your husband's stories? Do you think that it was too graphic, or not appropriate for them?

FANIA: I think sometimes it was, sometimes they started to get bored, because they couldn't, you know, I think something like this has to be introduced in a way, on a child's level, what a child can absorb. The way he talked, he talked like an adult. But even young children, very young. Of course, when they got older, they started to buy books, they got a hold of books and other things. Then they learn in school, and my son went to college, so he took a lot in college, too, because he graduated in journalism, so he had to take European history, and international history and religion. (Pause)

And then, you know, even in school, even in college, your child sits next to somebody who's German, a German child. You know, I talked to my cousin. She survived Bergen-Belsen. When the Americans, Eisenhower came in, she was one of the survivors. And she has two daughters. And her daughters, when I first met them after the war, they were young teenagers. Very young, thirteen, fourteen, and sixteen, so I said, she went through hell on earth, after you know, they took her right away to a sanatorium. She had lung surgery. They removed one lung because she had TB and so did her husband. So I said, "What do you tell Sandra and Leah about it?" She said, "I never, even to this day I didn't say nothing about it, because I live in Switzerland, I have a good life here, and I don't want my children, they are sitting next to German children." Because Basel is German and Swiss. You know, it's a lot of Germans there. They are always there, those are not the Germans. But she said, "I don't want them to hate. They will look different. When they get older, and they start with questions, there's going to be time, they will find out." And it's so funny, that a few weeks ago, I was on vacation, and we stopped in Virginia to my niece, and she started to tell my son and my daughter-in-law, the horrible nightmares

she had from the Holocaust, from all those...and she was always a very nervous girl. But fortunately she met a nice fellow. He's Jewish, but he didn't know nothing. His family didn't know nothing about Judaism, but they have a very nice life, very comfortable life, and that takes care of a lot of her problems. That's what she said to me.

INT: I think you make a good point about how well the child is able to handle [the material].

FANIA: Yeah, how much can a child to handle? How much can a child handle, especially a young child? And I remember my husband had some pictures, of one, you know...Oh, G-d, how can you forget? Nuremberg. How the, how all those Nazis got hanged.

INT: During the trials?

FANIA: After the trials. He had all those dead pictures with, you know, Göring, Ribbentrop, all those things. You know. There were a whole bunch. You know what I did with them? I kept them as long as the kids used to be babies and toddlers, because they wouldn't get to them. Minute they got older, I said, "I don't want to have this in my room. Do with it whatever you want, otherwise I'm going to get rid of it." So we put it away. And my youngest son, he must have been 35 years old, one day he went through old, you know, so he found it, so he took it. But he was 35. They are horrible pictures if you show something like this to have a child that can walk into the thing and see.

INT: In terms of having a family and a marriage, what do you remember thinking and feeling about having children and how important that was to you?

FANIA: Oh, I did want to have children. Yes, I always was very fond of kids. I always used to, even as a teenager, I remember, I was married young. I didn't have a child yet, but I remember there was a neighbor, she had a little baby, and her husband unfortunately was killed right after the war. He survived the war. She was expecting that little girl. And I don't know, the Ukrainians or the Poles, I'm not sure. When they came back to their hometown, they made sure that they killed him. For what reason, I don't know. Maybe because he came to claim some property or something. Anyway, they took care of him. They found him dead. And she had that child. She lived together with her sister, and her family. So I always used to adore that baby. So you know, those days, whatever I will make for...it wasn't a baby, it was more like a very young toddler, like a year and a half. So whatever I will make, I always save for the baby. For the little child. I always loved kids. I don't know why (laughs) but I did.

INT: So that was important then.

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: Do you think your experiences in the war affected your desire to have children, and what it meant to put children in the world after what you went through?

FANIA: To tell you the truth, I never thought about it. I was a teenager, so those are...I could see if I would be maybe 28, 25 years old, you think about those things. I never thought about it. I never thought about it, to be honest with you.

INT: Many couples that meet after the war had other families that they lost. And oftentimes, there's an urgency to marry and have children, to rebuild their lives.

FANIA: Well, I met some people, as a matter of fact, in Philadelphia here. She was in Warsaw ghetto. And of course, she's partially crippled, because she was shot, you know. And I asked, we were talking one time, she didn't have any children. She didn't. But she had a niece, her sister's daughter, who was very young. I don't know, she maybe was ten years old or something. She survived someplace, and she married a Pole. You know, a Catholic. So I remember I came and she used to do some pearl jewelry. Had to stringing things. We used to have a jewelry store, so I used to come, be involved with her. So she showed me a picture she just got from her niece, and the little girl just took Holy Communion, you know. She was in the white dress and the veil. And she was so upset about it. And she wrote a letter, and she showed me the letter. It was in Polish, and she said to me that after what she went through, losing her family, her mother, her father, her grandparents, her aunts, she doesn't want that her children will ever experience something like this. And she had a big family here in the United States, that they wanted her to come over, but she didn't. For some reason, she didn't want it. She didn't want any part of Judaism.

I remember I had another experience. I met a friend, I used to belong to the, that was, I was only seventeen that time, to a Zionist organization, because in those days after the war, that was so big, and even so much, they were getting people, young people to go back to Israel. There is no place for you in Europe. So I remember I got very friendly with a girl. We used to sleep one bed next to the other, and I was talking with her. And she was older than me, and it was her turn, you know, she was going to Israel. Her name was (?), I remember, and I helped her to pack the few belongings, what she has, in the suitcase. And I opened her suitcase, and under the suitcase, in the suitcase, she had like a prayer book, you know, with the Blessed Mother on it, you know. In the old country we had those fancy covers. And shiny. And I looked, and I know she's Jewish. If she is not Jewish, she is in a Zionist organization. What the hell is she doing with that book? I couldn't figure out.

And I said, "You have something here." I didn't want to say what. She said, "Leave it on the bottom." And I left it. I didn't ask any questions. But it bothered me. And then there was the...what they call the madrich. That was the organizer. I said, "What is she doing with it?" So she said, "Oh, she's crazy." You know. But one day I mentioned it to my husband's sister, not Eric's mother, she was much older. She survived in the forest. And I said to her...

INT: This is Helen?

FANIA: No, no, this is Berta. I said, "You know, Berta." That was years ago. As a matter of fact, it could have been maybe two, three years before she died. She was already in her late seventies. And no, Berta was telling me that she was hiding in a house and she was doing some sewing for the people, working for the people, and they provide food and some place in the basement. She slept, or whatever. They kept her. And one day, Berta was a very, before the war she was a very fine seamstress. She used to do beautiful, you know, things. And the family took her in and she was doing some work for them. And then one of her, the family's relatives came in, a woman, and she said to her, "They're going to keep you. We're going to keep you, till you finish your work. And then we'll call the Ukrainian SS, and they will get you. You better, when it gets dark, try to get out and go away." So she said she took off, you know, the Poles are religious. So she took off her medal, the Blessed Mother, and she put it on her, and she said, "The Blessed Mother should save, protect you, or save you." I don't know. I don't remember what she said. And that's what she pointed out. The girl probably, somebody could have given it to her, and she claims that that's how she survived, you know. That was just an interpretation of Mates' older sister. She was in her late...so I could understand this. She didn't want to part with it. It was like a good luck charm, maybe for her. You know, like you get something. But you meet all kinds of people. You really did.

INT: Did you question your faith in G-d during and after the war? Did your sense of Jewish identity or tradition change after the war, the way you were raised?

FANIA: The way I was raised, I told you, I was raised in a traditional Jewish home, with a grandmother with a sheitel, and a grandfather with a beard, and very...But during the war, I saw innocent, I remember I was only fifteen or sixteen years, say a little boy, and we used to call him Avrumele, a little toddler, like such a beautiful, like the sun. You know, gold hair. And I saw how that child, the parents, and the mother was nursing the little baby. And what could she nurse? She didn't have it. That was so sad. And the baby was constantly sick, and the little boy, if he saw somebody ate, he will go and you know, beg for food. And the parents did whatever they could, you know, but there was never enough, or it wasn't the right food. So I was sixteen years old and I was wondering, "Is that G-d's will? That such an innocent child should suffer?" And of course, my mother was very fanatic. You know, Shabbas was Shabbas, even if there was nothing for Shabbas, but it was Shabbas, she didn't have the candles, she will take two pieces of stick, wood, and she will burn and make the, bless the candles. But that's the truth.

And of course you questioned. And after I married my husband, and his family, and they all, you know, I didn't see any...you know...

INT: Religious practice or tradition in his family?

FANIA: Tradition. Until you know, later, when we got older, they started to come back, and going to synagogue on Sabbath. But my husband, he never, I remember, he may not like it I'm saying, but I used to fight with him. We go to the synagogue Yom Kippur, he comes out of the synagogue and smokes a cigarette, lights a cigarette. And he had the children. You have to practice, you know, and he takes the kids to synagogue. He takes them to Hebrew school, he goes out on **Yom Kippur** and lights a cigarette.

INT: So it's confusing messages to the children.

FANIA: Absolutely.

INT: About what you believe about this.

FANIA: Like the kids will say today to him, when they get mad at him, when he tries to teach them or correct them or something, he said, Sam said, "What kind of father? Mom raised me!" Which, you know, I get angry with him. I say, "Sam, you shouldn't say this, it's not right. He will get hurt." But unfortunately, that's how it was. He was very numb, and very...I don't know what he was. I don't know why he wanted even children.

INT: It's a good question. He was [disconnected].

FANIA: Because he was an intelligent person. He wasn't a person that he came out someplace from a wilderness, you know.

INT: And he was older and survived on his own for so long.

FANIA: That's right.

INT: And went through a lot of very painful, difficult experiences. But you have to question what happens to his feelings.

FANIA: He was cold. He was very cold. And I don't know. You, when you interview, please, this is between me and you, I always got along with the kids. I didn't get along with him, you know, but I got along with him, because he used to come, and I used to do things for my children, Mike and Eric hooked it up for me. They used to work as electricians. But they came in, I want to pay them, they were very young, spend a few hours. They wouldn't take the money, and I make them dinner. I never had a problem with the kids. But I don't know. All three of them, I could never understand. I remember...

INT: What do you mean, all three of them? Do you mean your three children?

FANIA: No. I say my husband and his two sisters, they were very much alike. And they have problems with their husbands, too, you know, because their husbands, Eric's father, he was a saint. He was a saint. He was the nicest man, and he was well, he was a

very knowledgeable person. Maybe he wasn't so educated, but he was a self-educated person. He spoke beautifully Hebrew. He was from Lithuania. And I met his family in Israel. He came from a very fine family. They came to the hotel, they didn't know me, but Jack told him, he came, he picked us up, and they took us to their house. They made us a Shabbat, I never saw him before, I never know. He had a very fine family. I met Eric's cousin and Eric's aunt. That's not words to describe.

INT: So something happened with Mates' family, and his sisters. Do you think they were affected also by the war? You seem to suggest there's something about their family life and the lack of religious practice?

FANIA: Well, they came from a religious home. Their father was a very, you know, fanatic. But I really don't know. I don't know, maybe the concentration camp made him like this. I don't know. But it was very difficult, to, you know. If you don't think the way...so it's not right. You know.

INT: Eric talked about a lot of the conflict with his mother.

FANIA: Eric didn't have as many conflicts as I think Mike, you know. Because Abe is going to tell you different, and Abe, of course, he left very early. As soon as he went to college, he never came home. He just was...later he start to, you know. But Eric was the baby, you know. He was the youngest one. But Mike always had a lot of...but please, this is between me and you.

INT: Oh, Eric told me similar stories, and I'm looking forward to talking to Mike.

FANIA: With Helen, she could call you up 12:00 at night, 11:00 at night, with her...to wake you up. I say, "Couldn't you wait till tomorrow morning?" But if she wanted something, you had to be always right there in this manner.

INT: So do you think it had something to do with her relationship with her brother or her sister?

FANIA: If I talk to my husband, he said she was even before the war, she was very self-centered. That's what he said. But the camp didn't teach you anything good. Anything good. If you saw children being torn apart, ripped apart or killed, like he says, so how could you come out a normal person?

INT: And Mates' other sister was on Schindler's list.

FANIA: Yes. This is the one who got...who had a nervous breakdown. I think at 40 years or 35 years, and she was in a mental hospital, and she was getting the electric shock.

INT: I think Eric mentioned that though recently with the movie she's been talking about her experiences.

FANIA: Yeah.

INT: To get back to your marriage and family, so how did you think you came to choose Mates as a husband? How has it been for both of you? How are decisions made in your marriage?

FANIA: How I came to choose him? You know, I told you, I belonged to that organization. There must have been 160 or 200 teenagers. There was a lot of girls. At least with girls, or maybe more. And I don't know. He was interesting, because he was, he used to read a lot, and he know more than me. Of course, he went through a lot, you know. And then...I wanted to leave, to go to Israel, you know. And my mother, she had two brothers in Buenos Aires. They left way, way back. Those times they been already 30 years in Buenos Aires. She wanted to go to Buenos Aires. And I wanted to go to Israel, you know. I don't know...like...

INT: She wouldn't let you, right?

FANIA: No, she wouldn't let me go. And I know Mates liked me, and he was going to go, and then some other of my friends wanted to go. So I insisted I wanted to go, I want to go. We had fights at home, you know, and she said I became (?) and I talked back to her, you know. So anyway, she got a big talk with Mates. And his sister-in-law was there, too, and she said, "She's right. Either you get married..." But it really wasn't anything so true. Anything you know, that I really could think about the future. If I would, I wouldn't do it, you know. It was something like, you know, very sudden.

INT: It wasn't exactly love at first sight?

FANIA: I don't know. (laughter) I was a happy-go-lucky kid. I was happy, had a lot of friends, you know.

INT: How do you think you made decisions with your husband about child-rearing, or did you have a philosophy? How you handled discipline? Did you talk about these things, or did you feel that you pretty much made the decisions?

FANIA: Well...you know, I usually did what I felt is the best for the child, you know. Like the kids, I wanted them 8:00 to be in their rooms, even young. He would let them stay up till 11:00, 12:00. So of course, I said, we have to go to bed. They have to get up to school or something, you know.

INT: So you were more concerned about structure. Rules or limits?

FANIA: That's right. So I thought it was time for bed, and that's it. The kids used to fight me. My son used to say, "Others can stay up, watch this. They can watch this." So I say, "You are not others, you are you." (laughs)

INT: So did you feel it was hard being a team, or both being consistent?

FANIA: He wasn't consistent. That was a big problem in the marriage.

INT: So at times not feeling that you got support.

FANIA: No. No.

INT: Do you think you had attitudes about doing well in school or work, or goals, responsibilities? Did you have these kinds of opinions or attitudes about your children, what was important to you?

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

FANIA: With Joe there was so much sickness and everything. He is a very bright, smart boy, and he used to, he used to enjoy playing hooky from school, from high school. So...I remember one time his guidance counselor called and he said, well, the school used to check on him. Those days they used to be very, you know, strict. So he went to get someplace a chocolate milkshake, you know. He left school. And his guidance counselor called me up, and he said, "How is Joe? He left the school premises." If he's home, he doesn't feel good. Because he had that history that he wasn't...So I said, "I don't know. He went to school, and he is not here." He came home.

INT: So he would often come home because of his health problems?

FANIA: No. He did it because he just wanted to take a break. He felt that he got enough school or something. So I could have easily, he came home, and he expected me, "Why did you put me in trouble?" He says to me. I said, "You went to school this morning, I packed your lunch, and you went to school. You cannot eat what they give you in the cafeteria, I make you a nice lunch, and you're supposed to be in school." "Thanks a lot." (sarcastically) "You're very, very understanding." Now, if it comes to something like this, I was very strict.

INT: Would you say then you were more the disciplinarian than your husband?

FANIA: I don't know. He had such funny disciplinarian. You have to know how to discipline, or to talk, you know. The things...with him wasn't...he was still someplace in you know, Poland. And he...it was very difficult. Very difficult. If it came to this.

INT: He had different ideas?

FANIA: He for instance, to this day, if I make some dinner, you have to have bread with it. They didn't **want** a bread. Even me, you know. The other day I was eating for, I don't know, for lunch. I had a hard-boiled egg, and I had some carrot, I like radishes and cucumbers, I don't know, tomatoes, and I had a hard-boiled egg with it. So I ate it like this. He said, "How can you eat it without bread?" I said, "Where is the law that you have to have bread with everything?" How can I eat without bread?

INT: So sometimes you couldn't understand his logic?

FANIA: No. I'll tell you what it used to be. In the old country, they used to give you bread to make you fill in, to put on weight, I guess. I don't know. But I didn't want the bread. I got enough the bread. I take cottage cheese. You could see what I made for lunch. That's what I always eat. I would have a little bit cottage cheese with a fruit salad, but that would be my lunch.

INT: Did you discuss goals that you had for your children? Was there agreement or disagreement about expectations?

FANIA: Well...of course I wanted them to do well, to go to school and to go to college. But it doesn't work out always the way you want it. See, Gina, she was a very bright kid, and she was planning to go, she wanted to be an eye doctor. That's what she always wanted. But then in high school she met her husband. Of course, she must have told you, and I wouldn't have anything to...She is a very attractive girl and very bright. And instead of going to medical school when she graduated, so she decided to go to nursing school. She could finish nursing school in two or three years. She will make money, and she will be very independent. She doesn't need anybody. So it didn't work out the way I wanted. But then...you know. There was nothing I could do really about it. She was eighteen when she graduated. And he told her, "If you're going to wait till you're 22, you graduated from nursing school, you still wanted Paul, then...you know, it's your choice. But right now, just wait." Well, she grew up in a time that was such a rebellion, too. I never believed, he's good, you know. But even when she got married, a few months later, I **never felt** that she is happy. I don't believe it, and I never believed it. And he told her this. But she didn't say nothing, because she know how I felt. I used to say a lot before they got married. You know, I was very much against it. Because I saw him, I saw his family, and I saw her, you know. And she was such a vibrant go-getter, and he was quiet. He would have been happy to live in a little row house someplace, you know, in a goyishe neighborhood, and he didn't need anything. And I know this is not going, you know. But I'm sure Eric must have told you, you know, I was very much against it. I didn't believe in it. But I never believed that she is happy, and I still don't. No matter how she's going to, how high she will put him, I know what size pedestal, but that's my feelings, and that's my belief. She goes out, she has nice friends, and she sees that, you know. Well, what can you do? She has two beautiful children, and after they got married, I never said anything. Not one word against him, or to make him.

INT: Sometimes it relates to personality traits, that some people are more positive or negative, or happier or more satisfied with life, and it might appear that there is this...feeling that you didn't accomplish what you would have liked to accomplish, or not as happy with yourself. So it's hard to say.

FANIA: Yeah. There is feelings, yes. Absolutely right. But you have to cope with it, like I told you before. You have to make the best of it. I cannot run to somebody for advice. I usually want to be my own, I can ask. I have a lot of friends, you know, and I could go. But...it's...you have to learn to be strong and cope with your own problems, because nobody is going to cope. They will sympathize with you, and they will be nice to you, but that's something you have to be.

INT: How do you think you responded or handled some of your children's problems? They've had a lot of health problems and difficulties?

FANIA: Well, this is different. You know, when it comes to your children's problems, that hurts. That hurts very much. I did what I could. And I tried to deal the best I could with them, and so in fact to encourage even them. But how much can you tell, when the doctor tells you. I came in, she went to a doctor, which I...I took one look at him, and I could see such a...you know, he was a Gentile. Typical, like, I remember I am friendly with, the rabbi is not here anymore. He died very young. He was 52 years old. But with his wife, I am very close, and you maybe know her. Mrs. (?). She teaches, you know. And...I just...I lost myself, what I was...Could you repeat the question again?

INT: I asked how did you handle, respond to your children's problems, and cope with those kinds of difficulties?

FANIA: So I had to do the best I could, you know, and was a very painful thing. And...hoping, you know. I remember. When I came, I took my child to the doctor.

INT: And you're talking about which child, now?

FANIA: Gina. Because that was the...worst thing. And I came into the hospital. She managed to select such a typical goy, surgeon, the doctor, you know. I didn't like him. Just to take one look at him. He was big, tall. I don't know why I didn't like him, but when I walked in, and he told me to sit down. He said, "Your daughter has cancer." You know, that's how he put it to me. So this by itself, you know, if he would have, I would expect him to say, that was after surgery. That was after surgery. If he would say, "We're going to try medication, and..." because I had heard, because before she went to him, she went to three other doctors. My brother took her in New York to a couple of big specialists.

INT: For other opinions?

FANIA: Yes. And then she came, of course they all agree for her not to have the chemo, you know, thank G-d. But this one was such a...I don't know. I still see him. Because I got a lot of experience with doctors. You know, Joe had...but I never met anybody like him. I just couldn't say...eventually she left him, too. She went to another one here on the Main Line. And that was a very painful thing. Of course, I didn't want to tell her anything. That's her doctor. She made the choice, and Paul made the choice. But it was a very painful, was a very difficult thing. And she had the two little kids. You know, Jeffrey was eight. Was seven, I don't know. And the other one was only a toddler. So...it was a very painful thing, but what can you do? There's nothing you can do. You have to...

I remember, you know, one of his sisters called me up. With the older one I got along the best, you know. And she calls me over, and she says, "Wanda, you're not the only one. I know a lot of people," -- that was when I first found out -- "I know a lot of people who have had breast cancer." I said, "That's good for you." I don't know, I got mad at her, and I just snapped at her. I said, "That's good for you. But I'm not interested right now that you know a lot of people." You know.

INT: She tried to be supportive.

FANIA: Yeah. I didn't like the support the way she put it. If she would have said, "How is she doing?" or, "Can I do anything for you?" I would have appreciated it. But she's telling me how many people she knows. It's okay to know, but if you are directly involved in it, so...

INT: Mm-hm. That wasn't helpful.

FANIA: No.

INT: Do you have any reflections in terms of Joe's illness, and those difficulties?

FANIA: That was very difficult, too, because I was young, you know. You know, it's a painful thing. What can I tell you? You go through hell, and usually I keep it to myself, because I don't want to burden other people with my problems. I remember...when my sister-in-law was very sick, when she died, you know, I'm very close with her children. My brother's children. And her mother came from, when she died, and the next year, I went to visit her. And I stayed in Tel Aviv, and then she invited me, she came to visit me, and then she invited me to her place. And you know, I saw that the apartment was freshly painted. You know, they are sabras. Freshly painted. She re-painted. And then I saw the pictures of her daughter, which was very painful to look at.

INT: She had died of cancer.

FANIA: Yeah. Hodgkin's. And she said to me like this, I remember. She came to the hotel, it was Shabbas, she walked. She didn't, we took a taxi to her apartment, but she

walked, so I decided to walk with her. And my husband, I don't know who else was there. Sam, I think. So she said, what did she say to me? You know, I like to learn from people who are, you know, honest. And she said to me, "See, Wanda, I re-painted the apartment, me and my husband, because if I will cry in front of my family, if my friends, nobody will want to see me. They will sympathize, but people don't like you when you cry. They like you when you are..." Something like this. That was not exactly the words, how she said it, but she put it up, she said, "It's my pain. Why should I burden other people with it?" And that's how I, you know, took it, and I said, whom am I going to bother? They ask me, I'll tell them once, but I wouldn't go, you know, making, put like a guilt for help or for understanding, or for...I don't know. It's my problem; I have to solve it. I have to live with it. Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know. But that's how I feel.

INT: Do you think when your children were going through difficulties, younger, and as adults, they could go to you for support? That you could...understand their feelings?

FANIA: Well, I mentioned about, you know, the most, the hardest thing was with Gina, because once she started to date Paul. And there was nothing I could do, you know. She was in nursing school. In those days they lived in the dorms, and she was in Hahnemann, and this is twenty-something years ago. So there was nothing I could do. I remember I talked to my girlfriend's husband, he was the rabbi at that time. Rabbi Lachs. He was the president of all Philadelphia rabbis. And he said to me, "Gina's a smart girl, and she will never go away from Judaism." As a matter of fact, he was trying to console me, make me feel, he was the rabbi, he should be against it. But he talked, he had a lot of sense. And she was going to him, talking to him about it, you know. But I don't know. Of course, it's hard, you know, to go back into the past.

INT: So it was difficult for you to find other people to talk to about problems? Did you stay within the family?

FANIA: I was keeping usually a lot to myself. I figured this is my problem, and you know, sometimes occasionally I will mention something to somebody, but it happened. I hear so many of my friends, their kids, you know, as a matter of fact, I have a friend, and her father was a rabbi, and she married an Irish man. And as a matter of fact, he was a rabbi. And he wasn't an average rabbi. He was a...(pause)

See how nice she writes? I mean, it's writing sometimes, but she's a lovely person.

INT: Did you think raising your children changed as they grew older, your relationships with them?

FANIA: Of course when they are older and they have their own children, so they see, you know, how important it is. Like my son comes with his little boy. This one, he's four now. How he, you know, he wants him to be very close to the family, very close to his grandmother. And...I think they get more, you know, I think they understand more the feelings, because they have their own children now. He got a big kick the other day, we

went out to Hymie's for lunch, and the little boy, he said he wants chicken soup. He loves my chicken soup. So the waitress comes to take the order, so he says, "I want you to bring me some chicken soup like my Bima makes." He calls me "Bima." So the waitress looks, "What's Bima?" So my son says, "He wants the soup like his grandmother, with noodles." So she said, "We don't have noodles. We have matzah ball." So I said, "Jesse, the matzah ball is very good. Remember Bima made on Passover for the Seder." So he said, "I don't remember exactly the matzah ball, but it's something round I think." I said, "You know what, I'll cut it up in strips for you, and you can eat it with the soup with a cracker." So he took it. But he got a big kick out of Sam, you know that he wanted, you know, how he wanted that soup particularly.

INT: So the question is how do you want your children, your grandchildren to view you?

FANIA: How do I want them to view me? Well, you know, I never gave it any thoughts of this. It's up to them, you know. If I, I think I did everything that they have a good, they have probably good warm memories. You know.

INT: So you see yourself as loving and caring?

FANIA: I think so. Yes. Because my grandchildren are very close to me. All of them. All of them. Even the little one. He's so little, but he still has very, feelings, you know.

INT: How close are your relationships? They're different with all your children?

FANIA: Pardon me?

INT: The closeness of your relationships?

FANIA: I think it's pretty much close. Of course, Gina lives close here, and she's a girl, you know, so it's a little bit more in common. I have a daughter-in-law, and you know, she always takes me when they go on vacation, she always takes me on vacation, so I must do something right, because how many daughter-in-laws and sons will take their mother on vacation? (laughs) But they always take me every year. We go, you know, because he likes to drive, because he likes, he goes down south. You know. So...I think two years ago we took a ride for two weeks, you know. And this summer we took...I don't remember what happened last year. I couldn't go, because his sister, the older sister, was very sick, so I didn't want to go. But...I don't know. I have a good relationship with the kids. They always call me. My son calls me almost every day. Joe doesn't call too often, but he's kind of busy. He's divorced, and he has too much on his mind, and he works full-time. You know, he's in the store. But he comes. He can call me, when he's on the Blue Route, "Mom, I'll be there in five minutes. Will you have something for me and the boys? We're stopping." I always have a frozen, you know, I cook and I freeze it, so when he comes I put it in the micro-oven, and by the time he gets here, so I have dinner for him. You have to give a lot, you know. You have to give a lot, otherwise your

kids don't visit with you. I don't mean just to give, you know, material things. But you have to show them, I remember when Eric and Mike used to be young, they always used to come in, because we always had...you know, you always felt, you know, easy and comfortable in my house.

INT: Did you experience any conflict with the values of how you were raised in Europe, and how you were raising your children in this country? Did you have worries or fears about your children growing up in this society?

FANIA: No. No. I thought they're going to have much more to look forward than I did, you know. Because I remember as a Jew, as a matter of fact, I remember my cousin, he used to live in Lvov, Lemberg, you know. It was my mother's sister's son. And one was, I remember he, my aunt used to say that Joseph, which my son has the same name, he is coming home, from the university, and it's such an anti-Semitism that you are not safe even with your life. They threw a student from the balcony. Third floor, second floor. The kid, a Jewish boy, got killed. And she said, he has to go to med school, so they were trying to get, you know, a Jewish student, a medical student, couldn't go into medical school in Poland the last years. They used to go to Italy.

INT: So you felt that life in America had more opportunities?

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah. More opportunities. You have free choice, and nobody, people can tell you something, but you don't have to fear. I don't know. I was very fortunate. When I came, I was in a mixed neighborhood, but on both sides of my houses, used to be Gentile people. One house was a retired teacher, and the other was a young girl. She just started college with her father. Her mother passed away a few months before. And they were very supporting, very helpful to me and to the kids, you know. And of course, my English was very poor in those days, but she took German in college, so sometimes we tried to communicate, and I don't know, I kind of felt very comfortable, very at home, because I lived in Germany. I was comfortable as far as...you know. But it wasn't the same. I think the American people are very easy-going, you know.

INT: Do you...

FANIA: My neighbor goes away. He is a young doctor, with his wife and kids. He brings me the keys to the house. He tells me to go through the house. He goes on vacation. He didn't, now he knows me, because he's a few years, but in the beginning, a young doctor. So he comes and gives me the keys, I have his keys, with his telephone, his father's phone, and he said, "Please, go through the house," he likes me to go through the house to make sure everything is okay. Well, now I'm used to it. I became very friendly with his mother. When she comes, we always go out for lunch or something. She stays overnight. But in the beginning. In the old country, somebody will give you the keys, they don't know you, to his house?

INT: So you think you were raised in a culture or environment that was less trusting, more suspicious, more mistrustful of outsiders, or others?

FANIA: I think it was mistrust, suspicious, mistrusting. (interruption) People were different. People were absolutely different, you know. Even when I came to this country, the people were easy-going, you know, and very open. In the old country, everything was luck, and (Yiddish). I remember, I couldn't be more than ten or eight years old. My mother sent me to buy bagels to the bakery. Every morning I went, one day we had bagels, one day we had croissants, and one day we had rolls. In the morning she sends me in the summer for bagels. I go for bagels, and I go through the square to the bakery, and I see it's a black flag hanging over the city hall. I have to tell you this. (interruption)

MATES: One thing I like to tell you: Everybody can say what he wants. But when it comes, you are faced with death, and we are hungry, people, when they are hungry, they act, just everybody the same. They will kill. They will...

FANIA: Steal.

MATES: They put their own life in jeopardy. They would do, like the Russians claimed, I don't know whether you know about it. They train dogs, okay, to explode the German tanks.

FANIA: Put food under the tanks.

MATES: They put them with an explosive on top of the collar, which was not active, and they trained him to look for the meat under the tank. And they make him hungry, real hungry. They were running fast, because they were really hungry for it. For the meat. And of course, nothing happened, but when the real background and the Germans were there, they put in real explosives, and the Germans couldn't defend themselves against those dogs. Went under the tank and explode the whole tank.

FANIA: But it worked the other way, too, because they ran under the Russian tanks, too.

MATES: It happened?

FANIA: Yeah. That was the whole things. Then we stopped this.

MATES: How do you know?

FANIA: I remember. I remember this. They start to do this. Because they took all dogs...

INT: So you're saying people coped with terrible hardships.

MATES: If you are exposed to hardship, and let's say the Germans caught your own son, he will give up where your mother is, where your hiding place is, because they torture him. See? So people cannot control themselves.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

FANIA: I don't know, nine, ten years old. It must have been before the war. No, that was 1936. 1936. Well, it doesn't matter. And I went to the bakery, I got my thing, and I saw the drape, the fancy draping, by the city hall. And black. And I come home, and my father was home, because he used to go in the morning to davening, you know, to shul. I came home, and I said to my parents -- we spoke Polish, you know. And I said, "Somebody very important must have died, because there's a black flag on the city hall, and the door is all draped in fancy things." You know, because you didn't see this in a small town so often. So she said, "Who could have died?" I said, "Maybe Pilsudski." Pilsudski used to be, your parents will probably tell you more about him. He used to be the marshal of the armed forces. Not only armed forces, but he was more than the president. The president was just a puppet in Poland. So I just said it because I know he had a beard, and to me he looked old, you know, because you saw him in the movies, in the pictures, you know, newspaper. I just said it. I didn't know anything. So my mother came up to me, she slapped me on my face, she said, "Don't you ever repeat this, because they're going to tell the Jews are telling stories." You know, she slapped me! Oy gevalt! Who else did I say it to? That's how they were afraid of the goyim in those days, you know? She slapped me. So I just guessed it, because I thought he looked old. He wasn't that old, but with a beard and everything he was old to me. So because you asked about suspicion and fear. And here, this is, my mother mistook me. She said, "You're not going out today. You're sitting here." I wasn't allowed even to go and play outside with my friends, because of this, because I spread, G-d forbid I spread a rumor or something. And you know, what was the...there was a few goyim on the street where we lived, Gentiles, that they probably will find out and start to make the Jews, you know, make lies. You know, that's what they used to be.

So...then later, I don't know what happened. She got up, and she used to go always, we didn't have a refrigerator, so you used to do your shopping every morning. You go to the butcher, you go to the market for fresh vegetables, or fruits. You do a lot of shopping every day, we used to shop. So she comes back, and she saw I was right, because she saw on the other side, his portrait was draped with the black. And she said that he was dead. But the point is, what I want to bring up, how fearful, and how, you asked me if the people, how fearful and how distrustful people used to be.

And here, if I would say, G-d forbid, I don't wish anything bad on Clinton. That Clinton, you know, may be dead. If my child would come and say something, would I think to punish him right away, to keep him at home? I'm not allowed to go, to take away the

privilege to go outside and play? But that's how it was. You're asking about living in Poland. That's how it was. Especially if you're in a Jewish community. Very strict.

INT: Do you have any regrets or disappointments about what you could have done with your life, or opportunities, if the war hadn't happened?

FANIA: I don't know. I really cannot answer this. Because I was thirteen years old when the war, and I wasn't thinking about the future. I was still, you know, in school. I was, I really wasn't thinking, you know. I know...whatever I would say, I would just guess. I don't have an answer.

INT: That's certainly significantly altered your life.

FANIA: Pardon me?

INT: The war certainly significantly altered your life.

FANIA: That's right. Everybody's was

INT: When you started rebuilding your life in America, how do you think you coped with hardships, financial ones, having not an education, difficulty with the language? How do you think that affected you in terms of yourself and providing for your family?

FANIA: I was very hopeful. I don't know, I have a nature that I am very hopeful, and I just look forward for the good things, you know. And...I know it has to be, it's going to get better. I was pushed into a nice neighborhood, and the people were very nice. I remember Gina was maybe four years old. I took her to a party across the street, it was a birthday party for a little boy. And of course, they were settled, because they were American Jews, and he had a nice home, nicely furnished. And I came in, there was a lot of people. And they tried to talk to me. Because I was I guess like I came from [outer space]. (laughs) But they were very nice, very hospitable. They offered me whatever they could. And I think I was very hopeful. I was young, too. Don't forget, I came, I was only in my early twenties. I was 22 years old when I came, or 23. So I don't know, I was...like I say, I just didn't feel I want to get depressed. I told you before, I have to always think, (laughs). That's how I was. I guess that's why I probably survived. I know some in the family, they always used to take medication for depressing. Eric's ma, she was always. And she, each time I would drop by Haverford Avenue, I see her coming out. Not each time, but a lot of times, I met her coming out of the doctor. I know she was at the doctor for medication. But thank G-d. I don't know. I just always managed somehow to, if I was lonely or something, used to travel a lot. I have always neighbors. I was really, G-d gave me a gift, that I get along with people. That I have always friends, neighbors, and I get along with them. And they will do anything for me. I have a friend, you know, she doesn't live in this area. If I call her up right now, "Martha, I need right now \$2,000, and I need it now." So she will probably dig up her savings, she will come

and she will bring it to me. I'm just giving an example. I know whom to trust. I always know whom to trust, and how to choose my friends.

INT: So in terms of successes in your life, how have you achieved them? What do you attribute the successes in your life to, and what are they?

FANIA: In which way? What kind of successes? You mean material, or...well, I worked hard for most of the things. I spent a lot of time working. I used to go in to the store, as soon as I put Sam on the bus to kindergarten, I would go in the store. In those days we had like a...I was scrubbing, first I do the floor at 9:00 in the morning, because the store opened 10:00, and I set up the store, and he was on a job, because we didn't break even the first couple of years, so he was on a job. And I, and sometimes I managed. We were successful with it. Even, I didn't have any knowledge of the business. And I guess, the language wasn't so great, but people came in, and they gave me business, and they came back, and he even was wondering, you know, that they didn't come once and bought something. But those customers been coming in, then their children used to come in, their grandchildren. To this day, they used to come into Gina's store. Grandfather, he will bring his granddaughter.

INT: So you worked hard.

FANIA: I worked hard. But I was nice. I feel good that the people are smarter than me, you know. Before they go, because that was right after the war. Five years and we had the business in a neighborhood that was, you know, the fellows just came back from the war, they got married, they didn't have that much money, and if they had to part with a dollar they checked a few times before, you know. But I always feel good that a lot of people were smarter than me. (laughs) I had to think, you know, he's smarter than me. And without working, honesty, and giving good service.

INT: In terms of your personal life or children, do you see them as successes?

FANIA: (pause) I think it's a different generation. They didn't have the hardship. They didn't have to save to buy a pair of shoes, the way I had to work and save my money, and get my mother's permission, if I saved the money, if I can buy it. If I'm allowed to buy it, get it, you know. And they are a little bit, it came easier to them. And they are not as, I don't think even as appreciative of those things. Maybe it was my fault, because I had a hardship. And I tried to make it better for them, which maybe was wrong. I should have kept them a little bit, you know, you cannot get it right away when you need it, you know. You have to wait for it. Like my son told me the other day. My little grandson calls me up. He's four years old, and he's a very bright boy. Not that the other kids are not as bright, but for his age, he's very bright. He tells me, "Bima, take a pen and a piece of paper." Because I asked him one time what he wants for his birthday. His birthday is coming up at the end of the month. He calls me up, he says, "Take a pencil and write it down, because you may forget." So he tells me on the phone what he wants. He wants the black choo-choo train. He wants the other wagon, he wants the milk wagon, he wants

something else. Several different, he collects those little wooden trains. Seven of those things, and he says, "Put it in your wallet." He knows in the wallet I won't lose it, because it's money I told him, you cannot lose the wallet. He likes to play with my pocketbook. I say, "You cannot play with my pocketbook. I have my money in my pocketbook. If we lose it, we cannot get anything." So he said, "Put it in your wallet (laughs) so you won't lose it."

So anyway, I didn't know nothing about those things, and I said to my son, "You're coming with me to the store, and we're going to buy it for his birthday, what he wants." So I have the list, and I start to pick up the things he wants. I said to my son, "You pick it out," because I still don't know what's what, you know. So my son picks some other things. He said he needs more tracks, he needs a turning table, he needs the garage where the train goes in. He plays with it, too. He likes trains. So I said, "Sam, I can see you picking what you like, but not what Jesse told me to get. I want to get the things that Jesse wants." So he said, "Mom, you don't have to give him everything. He has to look forward to it." So anyway, we bought those things, and I have them here for his birthday. I ended up spending \$149 exactly. So he said, "You don't have to give it to him in one time. You can give it to him later." So I said, "We will see till we get to it."

Then my son needed, I think I mentioned that to you before. He needed something for a gift, for a neighbor's boy. He's eleven years old. He wanted to go to the Judaica shop. So he said, "You want to come?" Then we stopped for lunch. So we had the little boy with us. He walks in, and he finds a little stuffed Torah. So he says to me, "I'd love to have that Torah. I'd really love to have that Torah." So I said, "We have to ask Daddy if you should get." So he said, "Well, it cannot hurt him. Let him have, he will sleep with it." Because he likes stuffed. So we bought the Torah. Then later he said, "I want a tallis like..." Oh, because Saturday my son goes with him to the synagogue. He says he has to take him now to services. By the time he's ready for Hebrew school, then it's going to sound strange to him. So he takes him every Sabbath. So he goes, and he takes his older boy, he was just bar mitzvah, and the little one, they have those toy tallis. So he said, "Can I have a tallis?" He's only four years old. So he takes him on the side, he said, "Jesse, a tallis, you have to look forward to. You get your first tallis when you are bar mitzvah. Remember how David got his tallis? He was presented with his tallis? You're not supposed to get it." I'm surprised really, that he's, how nicely he raises them. He understood. He didn't cry. He didn't say, "No, I like to have it." He just understood. So. Those are little things that, you know, you can see how the second generation, how, when he was young, he couldn't care less. After he was bar mitzvah, there was **no way** he would want to go. Only on holidays he will go to synagogue with us.

INT: What do you see as mistakes or regrets that you've made in your life? Have you forgiven yourself, or you blame yourself for any of them?

FANIA: Well, I felt that maybe if...I don't know which way, the beginning, or the middle of my life, or raising the family? Well, I think it's too late to regret. To regret, or to think about the mistakes, you know. Of course, if I would have known what I know

now, my life, I think you can never tell, because that's something G-d directs us to. I maybe could have done things different. But why to grieve over something that we cannot help it now?

INT: So there may have been some disappointments in terms of your life?

FANIA: Well, there was a lot of disappointments. I think if maybe I would have lived in a Jewish neighborhood, maybe Gina wouldn't marry out of, you know, Paul. And I don't know, but it turned out okay, because they are close to, you know, if you have a person like Sam who is so liberated and nothing mattered as far as religion. Now he goes every Saturday. He gets up. He has to be in the synagogue, 9:00. He takes both of his kids. Of course, the older one will sit through. The little one is in a little nursery. They take care of the toddlers there.

INT: And Joseph, too, didn't have a strong sense of religious identity as well?

FANIA: But for his kids, he sends them to confirmation class, the boy. It came later. It's amazing, you know. They never, you know, even his wife, Sam's wife, well, Joe married a girl, and they got divorced. And Sam married, she was not Jewish, but she converted to Judaism. As a matter of fact, at the bar mitzvah, I was so shocked, because in front of her mother, of her grandfather, of her brothers, and she had some sister-in-laws, aunts, she had her grandmother, her father's mother. She denounced her religion. She was Catholic. She got up, you know, and she gave up, you know, she made a statement why she did it, and why she continues to be Jewish. And my, the rabbi, but her mother doesn't care, because her mother and her grandfather came to the conversion. I was shocked. So I remember Rabbi Hauser, that's on the Main Line synagogue, so he said in all of those years, he's not a young rabbi, he's retired now. The first time he witnessed that a mother and a grandfather witnessed a conversion, you know. Because I was shocked when she denounced it. Oh, by me, that was it. Maybe 200 people in the synagogue, you know, because it was 170 of her guests, plus some people. So here she comes and she, you know. She wrote a whole thing. And she was talking to her son, you know, why.

INT: So you think...what?

FANIA: That was something, you know, because I didn't think that my kids, after they got married, that they will get back to their, you know...

INT: Religion. Return to the tradition.

FANIA: They thought maybe I'm too fanatic. I really cannot explain, you know. If I had regrets, I had them, but not after what I see what they are doing now. My son's son, after he was confirmed. He went to confirmation class. After bar mitzvah he had two years' confirmation class. In a Conservative synagogue. And then that was all. All of a sudden he didn't have any part of it. He went to college, and that was the end of it. But now, he calls me up the other day, he says, "Mom, I'm signing up for Akiba courses." To

here, to...you know how far he has to drive, for two hours? He lives in Swarthmore, so he's coming to Akiba, taking lessons in you know, religion, Hebrew writing, Hebrew reading, and Hebrew language. And it's expensive course. It takes you \$160 for six weeks, then he has to repeat it. But he does it because of the boys. I was shocked. I couldn't believe it. He said, "Why don't you come with me?" I said, "Sam, I'm going to be seventy in a few months, and I don't think my memory," you know, I can't remember things from back, but I don't remember things. You know, I'm very forgetful some days. I said, "I don't think I will absorb the way you will."

INT: It's hard to remember the language when you were raised.

FANIA: That's right.

INT: How do you confront Holocaust material, such as literature or films? Have you been to the Holocaust Museum? Do you think it's important for the world to see films and go to the Museum, to learn about the Holocaust?

FANIA: I tell you. I think it's important. It is important. But however, when I'm talking between us, I start with my husband, when I start to watch something, so he doesn't believe in it. He said, "I don't think they should show it."

INT: Show?

FANIA: The films, you know. Some of them are really, that they get to you. So he said, "If some people," he said, "Why did they hate the Jews so much? There must have been a horrible something. Why just the Jews?" So I said to him, "It's not the Jews." One time, I don't know, I found a book about Onassis, you know. I was in an airport, and I was bored, and I went over, our plane, we were coming from Kansas City, I went to a bar mitzvah with Mates' sister Berta, and was a storm, and our plane got hit and the windshield in front, and we had to make an emergency landing, and they had to put us with a big jet, they had to put us in another plane. So I had a few hours, you know. And I remember, I picked up the book. It was a paper book, you know, and I started to read about it. And he was writing about his boyhood, childhood, and he was born in Turkey. And how one day the, they made like, they slaughtered all the Greeks, the Turks, the Mohammeds, you know. The Greek Orthodox. He was there how his whole, not his father and his mother and his family survived, but how people were slaughtered like cattles, because the Greeks, you know, they make like a pogrom.

INT: A civil war?

FANIA: Yeah. And he was writing about it, how he survived, how he was hidden underground, someplace. Somebody hid him, you know. But most of the people in town were completely, you know. In fact...you know, I said to him. I said, "It's not only Jews. Take a look what's going on." They have to have a reason always for, you know.

INT: So you question it, the importance of what?

FANIA: I believe that should be, we should tell this, and we should teach the, you know. I don't believe they should put it to young children, like my niece. Because to this day, she was always a nervous child. And I was, she was always very nervous and very fragile. But I never know why. You know, her mother never said. But when I was sitting there, when she start to talk about it, so she said, "That was," I said, "You were always a very nervous child." So she said, "Yes, but you don't know what I went through in school in Israel. I used to have nightmares. I used to scream. I wouldn't go to bed. I was afraid to go to sleep, because as soon as I would close my eyes, you know," to take a child to a child psychologist or psychiatrist to talk it out. But the day they present those things they show those pictures. She was scared. So I don't think young kids should sit and watch this.

INT: Do you think the Holocaust affects your political views? Any concerns that you might have about what's going on in Europe and Bosnia, and Israel?

FANIA: Well, (pause) I don't know, what goes on in Israel, it's very, you know, I feel like it's one big family to me. When I go to Israel, people I don't, I walked on...in Jerusalem, and I was asking, I wanted to go to a place. And I asked an older man, you know, he spoke nice English, and I asked him, because I don't know Hebrew, and I ask him how to get there. He said, "No problem. I'll take you there." Then another one comes up, he says, "He's taking the longer way." I said, "It doesn't matter." So they all are very helpful. I don't know, it (?) very much. Bosnia, I don't know. I was reading a lot about it, and they were such anti-Semites there, you know. And I don't know. I hate to see anybody, I cannot stand when I see a little bird, you know, cannot fly. I will put it in a box, give him some water. But I just don't know. It left a lot of bitter memories, you know.

INT: For you.

FANIA: Yeah. Especially the Ukrainians and the Poles. Bosnia, it's a different country, but they're very much like the Poles. Very much, the Slovaks, you know. They all cooperated with the Nazis.

INT: Is it hard to have empathy for what's happening?

FANIA: Yeah, I think so. My husband watches, and the other day he puts, I don't know how much he wrote a check for. And I said to him, "I don't think I would write a check." I'm honest with you. Not that I'm stingy. But he said, "Take a look the pictures, take a look at those kids. They are innocent." So you write. But you know, I don't know. If you ask me what goes on in Europe and in Israel, so I'm partial to Israel. I think if we would have had Israel then, a lot of things would have been different in Europe, too.

INT: I think we can start summarizing and reflecting back on your life. What have been some of your most happiest moments since the war, and some of your most difficult moments that you've had to cope with?

FANIA: Well, the most difficult moments used to be really when, you know, we lost our home, and we came to the Soviet Union, which I mentioned before, and they left us in the midst of a forest, you know. There was nothing close. Used to be maybe ten kilometer to the next village, and you weren't allowed to leave the premises. You had to have permission. They had to write you permission. You could go only whenever they would let you go. They wouldn't let you go. And those Russians, they were Asians, and they were so dumb, so they had rifles, but they didn't realize these are Jews, these are people who've been, you know, deprived, and...

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

FANIA: From during the 1942 till '44.

INT: How about since the war?

FANIA: Pardon me?

INT: How about since the war?

FANIA: Well, the only thing what I had difficult was with my, when my kids got sick. That was the most difficult.

INT: Mm-hm. Their sicknesses.

FANIA: Yeah, that affected, that made a big thing.

INT: And happiest moments since the war?

FANIA: Well, when I see my grandchildren, I see my grandson [Jeffrey]. He's going now, he was accepted to every university he applied.

INT: To where?

FANIA: To every university he applied. He sent away, he was accepted. He was accepted to Brandeis, but he's not going to Brandeis, because he got a better program in U.M. Massachusetts. Yeah.

INT: So he'll be far from home?

FANIA: He'll be far from home, but he was selected, it's a big university, but he was selected, 25 students, 20,000 students, and they selected 25, for creative academic writing. They put him up on a beautiful dorm on one floor. All the kids, all the students together that they can work together. And he got, you know, which I was very proud, because that was something, you know. I just prefer, I wish he would have gone to Brandeis, but this was a better, you know, they have a better program for him. So he was very happy.

INT: So there's been a lot of joy in the family.

FANIA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: How do you think your family background influenced you in how you've lived your life since the war?

FANIA: Well, I had a lot of problems with my husband, and with his sisters, you know. Because they were...I don't know if I should talk about it. I wouldn't want Eric, and you know, because if you're going to interview Eric, you're going to see it. They were, you know, they were depending on him, and they didn't always, you know...I don't know. And I used to give, maybe I shouldn't, but I lost my patience with them, you know.

INT: With your husband, in terms of how he got along with his sisters?

FANIA: Yeah. That was always, I couldn't have a holiday with my children, because they always used to plan some things, and there was a lot of problems. But like I say, both of his sisters have problems, you know. Even Helena, she's, she married a nice guy, he went to school back after they got married, and he got his Ph.D. He's a nice guy, but she has problems with him. She doesn't have a good, the marriage was always fights. As a matter of fact, a couple of months ago, she wanted a divorce, she wants to separate. She wants to do this. She doesn't have any reason, but he said that she, how did her husband told Mates? He said, that she once in a while she gets those...how does he call it? All of a sudden she gets, like explodes.

INT: Explosive temper or anger?

FANIA: Yeah, anger, and she starts to fight with him, and I don't know what else is going on. I thought she's in Baltimore, and I'm here, but I have to live with him all those times, you know.

INT: Your husband.

FANIA: Yeah. Well, he wasn't like this. He wasn't home like this, and in the midst of everything, you want to do something with the children, they are young, he had to go to consult her. She would call up and talk, and it was a problem. Finally it got too much for me, too. You can be good, and you can be understanding, but you know, there is only,

you know, but like I say, they were very selfish. They didn't live nice, I don't think, maybe because they had their hurts during the teenage years, they were in the camps. They went through a lot, no doubt about it. But still a lot of people went through a lot and they just thought about other people, too.

INT: Mm-hm. So specifically in terms of your family background, your strength, your optimism, that relates to how you were raised?

FANIA: I would think so. It's the background of your family. That's what I always felt, you know, that there was something wrong in their family background from before, because after all, he was 19 or 21 when he got into concentration, and Helen, Eric's mother, she was nineteen. And that must have been something from way before. Because after the war, you know, people got back, and they are normal, and I meet people who went through. Of course, some of them grieve over their families, or this. But they are normal people. They just don't think about, just always by themselves. For themselves.

INT: So looking back, how would you describe the impact?

FANIA: You know, I had a friend -- excuse me -- across the street when we moved to this house twenty something years ago. And one of my neighbors came over. He was born in Denmark. He was Jewish. He was a Jew. And he came years, years before the war here to this country. And he came because he know we came over from Europe, so he came over to introduce himself, and you know, to talk to us. And on his first visit he told us that there's somebody from Cracow on the other street, you know. And my husband's from Cracow, and he's going to tell him, and maybe we can get together. If I would be interested, to get together. I said, "Of course. Why not?" So he went home, he called them, and the next thing, I had a telephone from Clara, and I said to her, "How about if we get together, because there is nobody in the neighborhood that they know." And they came over, very nice people. He was an engineer. He was a young engineer, right before the war started, and she was a Polish-German correspondent. She was older than me, because she had this kind of education, and she could keep this kind of job. She must have been eight years older than me, after high school.

So we got to know each other, and we became very close friends. And then later we had a problem with the daughter. She married an Israeli, and they didn't got along too well. They were very assimilated Jews, too. And finally, after the daughter was married ten or twelve years, we decided, they got older, so the daughter and the grandchildren insisted they should move to San Diego. They moved to San Diego, they invited us to San Diego. But what I want to say, people, she was in hiding, he was in hiding. They used to eat, they used to drink from the sewers. You know, the water they used to drink, and they went through so much, because it was better sometimes in concentration camp, because you were with your own, than to be on the hiding, on the outside. And but they were wonderful, they were normal people. Normal people. They didn't cry over what happened. They didn't...always blaming everything on that.

I remember Ben Gurion, when I came to this country, I remember seeing him on TV one time, Ben Gurion. That was right after Israel was declared a state. And I never forget this. He was on TV, and he was interviewed, I don't remember by whom that time. And he said, he tries to tell his people not to grieve what happened. Just look ahead to the future, you know, and raise your children. Don't tell me what this Ukrainian did this, and what happened in this camp. Just look forward, put it in the background. It happened. It happened. But try to live now, and try to be, you know. I don't know, he said it very beautiful. And I don't know, maybe even this influenced me that time, because this was just when I came to the States. But I never forget this.

INT: Mm-hm. So to describe how you sustain the energy to work hard, and look forward to the future, and rebuild your life, again, how you account for those qualities?

FANIA: What do you mean, qualities?

INT: The qualities of having this energy to work hard, to look forward to the future?

FANIA: (laughs) I don't know. I guess I was a go-getter since I was a child. I told you, remember I told you, when my father got sick, we didn't have medication. And I came to the, you know, the doctor told me, "There's one of your kind in the pharmacy. Maybe she can help you." She gave me a prescription, I came there. She couldn't help me, she said, "I'd be arrested if I gave you the medication." But she suggested go, because the commissar, he can approve it, and then no problem. "You have it in a few minutes, I will fill it," something like this. I said to her, "How do you go in there? There's a guard." You know, who can go in there? There's a guard in front. You have to have...or you see people going, is just in uniforms, and with a lot of those fancy medals going in and out. I'll never get in. And they were sitting, they won't let me in.

INT: That was quite a story.

FANIA: And you know, and I said to myself, I was so young. I couldn't be more than sixteen. And I thought, and she said, "Go, try, what do you have to lose?" So I thought to myself, you know, they have to, I have to do it only once, because the second time they won't even let me...you know. So I remember as I was walking across the street I saw him. I said, I'll never make it, they were running. So I walked back, and then I started to walk in the middle of, I remember those cobblestones, walking, and of course, I found them, and they followed me. They followed me. I screamed, and he came out. And I spoke well Russian by that time, because I learned, you know, if you know Polish, and you are young, you pick up Russian very quick. And I told him what happened. And I said to him, "They are mean. They cannot understand that my father is dying, and the only thing who can save me, if you will sign the prescription." So he told them to go back and...oh, and he told them that I just, that I...that was an, he told me that was an order from them. He kind of apologized to them, and told me to come in, and he told me to sit down, to calm down. And I told him what happened. This is the only way you know, he can save, otherwise my father's going to die. That's what she told me. I don't

know. It was a young doctor. And he signed it, and you know, and he wished me well. (Russian) you know. And he gave me the prescription. But nobody told me. Nobody told me. And I know in my heart, if I go, and I ask him to, I want to see the commissar, they're going to tell me get lost. That's what they would have told me. They wouldn't talk to me. He had to see me, I have only one chance; I don't have a second chance.

INT: And you acted and made a decision, and you stood up for yourself.

FANIA: Yeah, yeah. And I got, and thank, you know, and my father, because of this, he lived another, after the war fifty years, he died ten years ago, he got another forty years.

INT: How do you make sense out of life, its predictability, the randomness? How do you understand life, when things go well in your life, when things go wrong?

FANIA: Well, I think we have to cope with, how do you say it, the good and bad, or the bad and the good, you know. We have to cope with it, and you have to fight for everything. Life is a struggle, no matter how, if you...no matter how well you're brought up, and how good, it's a constant struggle. And you have to, you know, you have to fight for things.

INT: How would you summarize the impact of the Holocaust on your life, and the lives of your children?

FANIA: Well, I think it has something to do with the, you know, the health was affected. I'm pretty sure it's something that...I don't know if it was me, or my husband went through during the war something. I think it had, I really do think it had something to do. He was, he was...you know, when he was younger, he was kind of...he was cold. He was...he calls it he was numb. He didn't have feelings, you know. I remember when we belonged to the Akiba, you know, those young fellows, and young people. But not everybody was like him. There was another, I remember there was another boy that I used to like a lot. He was such a bright kid, intelligent, and he came from a very nice family. He was so bitter. He had a father; his father survived in Russia, but he saw his mother and his sister being shot. As a matter of fact, they came from the same hometown as my husband's sister, Berta, the older one. And he was very bitter. His father managed to marry a Russian woman, and he came back to Poland, and he was very angry with his father. He didn't talk with him. His father used to give him some money, pocket money to put in his pocket; he would take it out and throw it on him. And his father will come every day to try to...renew the relationship. He was unforgivable. He was so bitter. And he wouldn't forgive his father, you know, that he married before he, you know, found out.

And after, I think 25 years, I came to Israel, and my husband's brother said, he know that I used to like him. We didn't date, but I used to like him. Because he was very intelligent and very...and the only thing that bothered me was that he was so bitter about everything. But otherwise, he was intelligent. He was good in sports. I used to like play ball. So his brother said that he know that I know him well, we've been in the same, you know. So

he, and I was at a swimming pool with my husband and some other friends. All of a sudden, his brother, my husband's brother who was in Israel, they are coming over, a different person. He was broader, and he smiled, he was a businessman. He outgrew, he...he renewed his relationship with his father. His father immigrated to Canada. He had a new sister. But unfortunately, the sister committed suicide. She was a psychologist, and when she was eighteen years old, she committed suicide. I don't remember exactly what he told me, but see, that's how a lot of people, the second generation, it affected them.

INT: So you're reflecting on ways that your husband coped with his [traumatic experiences]?

FANIA: I don't think he was, he was really able.

INT: By not showing feelings?

FANIA: He didn't show feelings, you know. Sometimes Gina's talking, of course, I try not to put any, put oil to the fire, but she said, "There must be something in the way he was raised maybe, too." Because a lot of people, they had more feelings for, you know, people that came out. They were very, too much feelings. I don't know.

INT: What do you think the impact of the Holocaust will be on future generations, the second generation now, third generations? What do you want your children and grandchildren to know about your experiences?

FANIA: I would want them to know what happened, but I wouldn't want them to dwell on it, you know. I think it's a part of history, and I would want to know, I would want them to belong to groups, you know. To be aware of what happened and what could happen. But I wanted, that's how I feel. But I wouldn't want them to dwell on it, you know, to live. Because they have to know. It's a part of life. It happened. I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm very wrong. But I just, I don't think the kids should carry a burden that what happened to their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, their uncles.

INT: How do you understand the recent interest, many members of your family, your extended family, in hearing about your memories and stories?

FANIA: I never talk about it, you know. You're the first one I think I've ever been talking to about it. Because to them, see, my brother, my sister, we all went through the same, basically. But to my husband's family, nobody exists, nobody went through nothing except them. You know.

INT: They see their experiences as they suffered greater.

FANIA: Yeah. Yeah. They did, they did. (Pause) Sometimes we didn't have food for a while, 24 hours, 36 hours, we didn't have. The food. You get a...a slice of bread which used to be 400 grams. But that wasn't bread even. It was mixed with potatoes, you know. That was your ration. You know. But I think everybody, I think I went through hell on this earth in Russia. Don't forget, my father wasn't there. My mother was with four young kids. And we didn't have anything, you know. It was terrible.

INT: In terms of how you emotionally respond to different situations in your life, are you more of a worrier about problems, would you say?

FANIA: I would say I worry. I'm a worrier. Yeah, I do worry.

INT: And that is associated with your background, your experiences?

FANIA: I really cannot tell you, because some people, they never had a bad day in their life, and they worry. I have a friend, Eleanor, and she, as a matter of fact, I just called her, and she cannot cope with little problems. She's educated. The only thing, she was raised with a, with her grandmother, which was on her father's side. No, no, she lost her mother when she was very young. She was very young. But she cannot, she cannot solve any problems. She's always, you know, she had a little accident, and she scratched somebody's car, and the woman came, and she wanted \$1200. No, Eleanor said she would pay for it if it's reasonable. So the woman came back and she said \$1200, and it was just a tiny scratch, really. So she said, what should she do? She doesn't have the money. She has a very limited income, you know. She's not a person that she has money. So I said, "You know what? You've been paying all those years so much insurance you are paying, why should you pay \$1200? I could see if it's a couple hundred dollars, I did it one time," and I called up the woman, I said, first I gave her my phone number, and I said, "If you want to settle it with me, it will be okay, you'll call me up." She called me up, and I said, you know, "Your car is very much scratched, but don't forget that the car was scratched. You have old scratches on it. I'm willing, for what I did, to pay you \$200. If not, we have to go to the...but you have old scratches." And by the way, there was somebody who could see, you know, we could tell, and I didn't do this. So she said, "Okay," and I sent the check, and I wrote on the check, that's the total settlement. But this woman, this situation, so I told her, so I said to her, "Don't give her \$1200, because you're going to have to borrow money to give her \$1200. You have insurance. Let the insurance take care of it."

So anyway, how she settled, but she cannot, she always worries. She's always upset. She cannot make a decision. Somebody always has to help her with something. But if you talk to her, she's nice, she's intelligent. She's sweet, you know, everything good. But she has problems. She sees...a psychiatrist. She cannot settle her problems since her husband died. But she had a pretty normal life here. She was born in Philadelphia. Raised in, you know. How you figure this out?

Then I have a friend, (?), she was born in Atlantic City. She grew up Atlantic City. Nice woman, very attractive. She's afraid. She went for a driver license, she passed the test, she got her driver license, she was afraid for her husband, that she will get into an accident. I came to this country, I was only two years, I couldn't speak English. What I write for the driver's license, so the officer, no, first, I couldn't understand, you know, they have those retired policemen, they were teaching you, so he said, "Caution, caution." I said, "What it means, 'caution'? I don't know what's caution." So he said, "Slow, slow." So I was going too fast. And then after I had eight lessons, and then my neighbor, I told you, I had a young girl, she used to take me to...

INT: So you learned to drive.

FANIA: I learned. I got people to teach me to drive. My neighbors, anybody close, take me for a ride. So he took me to a parking lot.

INT: It's hard to understand the other people's anxieties and fears given their life situation.

FANIA: Well, if I wanted something, I fought for it, even today. If I wanted something. My husband took one of my...I was in New York the other day, and I bought myself a pretty chain. I have a little pendant. Drop. A (?) pendant. And I love it, and I wanted to get something special for it; it's a beautiful piece. I hope this is not on the record. So I went to the jewelry store. I gave it to my husband, I said, "I want to have it fixed, and I don't want you to put it away." He will put it away, and it's going to sit months there. (laughs) So I torture him! He couldn't eat his lunch. I want it today. (laughs)

INT: Is there anything else you'd like to add or talk about?

FANIA: I cannot think of anything. Only if you ask me questions, but otherwise I don't. But like I say, you have to fight, and I keep telling my grandchildren, "Nobody will do it for you. You have to do it yourself."

I was very proud, I saw my other grandson, Joe's boy. He got a national award, he got a gold pen, he got a trophy, for math, science. He got seven awards. I remember sitting, people watching him. People said, "Who is he? He got seven awards."

INT: So you must be very proud.

FANIA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: You mentioned that your sister-in-law Helen, when she was dying, had said to you that she didn't know you.

FANIA: And when she told me, "Wanda, you know," when she was sick, you know, I tried to help her. And she said, "You know, we've been so close for all those years, I

never know you." And you know, I said, "Why do you say it?" She said, "Believe me, I mean it, too." That was Eric's mother, you know.

INT: What do you think that means?

FANIA: I don't know. I don't know. You know, in one way...she was like Eric will tell you, and in the other way, the woman had a conscience, you know. I don't know.

INT: This makes you sad when you think about it?

FANIA: Yeah, I do, I do sometimes. Because you know, take a look. She had, no doubt she had a very hard life. Her husband was not a provider. Like I say, he was educated, he was self-educated, he was a saint. And...but she had financial, she had always financial problems. She had three boys. They came out nice. But...she...she had a lot of problems, you know. Here in the United States.

INT: The families tried to stay together and support each other?

FANIA: Yeah. Tried as much as I could.

INT: We'll stop here. Thank you very much.

(END OF INTERVIEW)