

INTERVIEW WITH REGINA FIELDS

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**Transcending Trauma Project
Council for Relationships
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INT: I just want to introduce for the tape. It's an interview with Regina Fields, a survivor. The interviewer is Allan Gottlieb. I just want to start with what your situation is now, your name, age, birth date.

REGINA: My name is Regina Fields. Maybe I should put former Stanger. At least Stanger should be-

INT: How do you spell Stanger?

REGINA: S-T-A-N-G-E-R. It's a German name. I was born May 7, 1923, in Poland, in Stanislaw. That's Eastern Poland, close to the Russian-Romanian border. Now, it is Ukraine. In my mother's time it was Austria. I was born in Poland. That's where I was born, in that city, in Stanislaw. That's where I was in the ghetto and that's where I survived.

INT: And now you work as a teacher.

REGINA: I work as a teacher at Adath Israel. I'm there for twenty-three years already. It is a full-time job and I'm very happy to have this job because it keeps me busy. It gets me up in the morning. The best part of it is that I come in and I see the beautiful children and their faces, and you forget about yourself. I think it's fortunate to get up and to work with young people, and the faculty also is very pleasant, the people I work with. We try to make the room as beautiful as can be because we spend most of our day there.

INT: So you work with the early morning group?

REGINA: No. Summers, I do not work. Summers I spend with my children and my grandchildren and I travel. I also try after work to work out, so I belong to the Y, and I find it's very rewarding, not only for my well-being, but I see all the kids that are in the morning in my class playing basketball and all that, and they all say, "Regina, hi." I try to be there until after five, because five o'clock is my low point in my day. I don't say that I'm getting depressed. I don't like twilight. I felt that it is a bad time, so I try not to be here. I try to be in the Y. That was sort of my cure of this problem. As soon as dinnertime comes, I'm alright again.

I have a friend, a very dear friend; he's Meir Adler. He's the sexton in Adath Israel. He is a very lively and happy person, and I had, through my lifetime always, I remember I always associate with someone who's happy, who could lift my spirit, not somebody who is morbid. I don't say that I'm morbid. I'm not morbid and I don't put my problems on other people, but I found when I talk about my problems, I feel much better about it. For example, when my husband passed on ten years ago, I think I talked incessantly for five years, and I didn't care who I talked to because I felt that if I won't talk, I'll have to wind up with a psychiatrist and I don't think that...I don't want to insult a psychiatrist but I don't have the money to pay. (Laughter)

INT: So you knew it was important to talk.

REGINA: Yes. I feel it's important. I'm this kind of a person. Something hurts me, I like to tell somebody. Maybe somebody doesn't want to listen, so they won't. But after that I feel better. My day is very full. Weekends I go...since my friend is so nice, he cooks Shabbat dinner, so I go to him. We play house. I light the candles and he says Kiddush. We go to services. And Shabbat morning, most of the time I was in the synagogue. I enjoy listening to our cantor. Almost very so often, the kids who are bar mitzvah or bas mitzvah used to be in my nursery class at one time or another, so I'm glad to see them, and I'm also glad that they get the tape of me. Yesterday was a bar mitzvah in Adath Israel and I had the boy in my class. He did beautiful.

INT: You told me about the tape before I put the tape recorder on. Could you just repeat it again, what the tape is, so that we understand?

REGINA: The tape is about the lives of four survivors. It was abbreviated to make one tape, to give the child a glimpse of the past, and I hope they watch it. If they won't watch it now, maybe someday they will.

INT: So it's a videotape.

REGINA: Yes, a videotape. And I also talked to the children in Hebrew school last year, and the Rabbi said, "I don't know what you told them, but they never sat so quiet in a classroom for such a long time."

INT: This is in the Hebrew school.

REGINA: It made an impression on them. I know that one of the teachers has a child in her class and she came home and she talked about it. I never felt obliged to talk about my past, but as time goes on I just feel a responsibility. I just think I should because there are so few of us left and when I talk to the kids...my friend's daughter, who is the principal of a Hebrew school, invited me, and has told the kids, "Take a good look. You'll be able to tell your grandchildren that you saw a real survivor." We are going, and one day we'll be gone, and then they'll say it never happened. I am blessed with a nice family. I have three wonderful daughters who are very well-established and each of them has three children.

INT: What are your daughters' names?

REGINA: Edna, Edna Metzker, and she's married to a physician. She has three children, two girls and a boy. My middle daughter is Estelle Fields, and she is a physician herself. She is a radiologist. She has three sons. My youngest daughter is Debra Fields, who works for the Federation. Her husband is a periodontist, and they have three children, two boys and a girl.

INT: So you have three children, three daughters, and each have...

REGINA: I don't think I'll make it a dozen. (Laughter) Estelle, Mark's mother, is my last hope.

INT: So she has a lot of work to do.

REGINA: We tried to talk yesterday to have another one, but I doubt it. (Laughter)

INT: Well, three children and nine grandchildren, you have a dozen.

REGINA: Oh, I have my dozen. I never figured it that way. I have more than a dozen. I have three wonderful son-in-laws. So the children are very close. They love each other. My oldest daughter feels very responsible. She thinks she has to be a mother to them, which is nice, because she's five years older than my middle.

INT: So she's like a mother to her sisters.

REGINA: Yes. And they care a lot about each other. We get together for the holidays and we're as far as the telephone. I'm proud of them and I told my children who just left- I said: "you should be proud of me too," because I was very dependent on my husband. He was everything to me and he was a very wonderful person, and that I was able to survive the loss of him. I guess time is a great healer.

INT: How long ago was he...

REGINA: It's ten years. I don't believe that I could. In five years I thought he's coming back. I still have his clothes in the cedar closet. I'm a great hoarder of things. I guess maybe that is because we lost so much in my lifetime. I can't throw out a thing, not even a piece of paper, which is sort of a sickness. I think that I was the first ecologist in this country. I could not stand the waste, the jars of sour cream especially. Forty years ago you throw out the jars. You throw out the glasses.

INT: So you didn't throw out the sour cream jars. You used them?

REGINA: Yes. I had like a hundred, two hundred, when I moved out of Wynnefield. I finally had to get rid of them. But at that time, it wasn't recyclable. So finally, they started recycling. My kids always laughed. They say, "Mom, remember you used to say that someday we'll be sorry that we throw everything out?" So I foresaw that problem. In Europe you had old rags and people used to come to your house and used to cut them up in stripes and make runners out of old clothes. They were very good runners. I think they have them in this country too.

INT: Runners for like the doorway?

REGINA: The doorway, yes; out of old pieces of material. We used to also alter clothes. You had a dress from a mother; you could make a dress for a child. But we had seamstresses who knew what they were doing. Here there are still very few who will make you a garment.

INT: Unless they're from Korea or China. They're the only ones.

REGINA: Or Europe.

INT: And your children are living where?

REGINA: One lives in Scranton. They settled in Scranton. One in Harrisburg, and one is Rosemont.

INT: So only one lives in the immediate area.

REGINA: Yes, but I get together with them often. As I said, the telephone is the best thing around. I never lost my wonder of the conveniences we have. I'm going to put on the tape: "I don't have a dryer and I don't have a dishwasher." (Laughter)

INT: We won't tell anyone else.

REGINA: I think it's a waste. My kids think that I'm old fashioned.

INT: So you still hang your laundry.

REGINA: I hang up my laundry in the basement, which is very nice and outside in the summer. But I did have -- I shouldn't say I didn't -- when the children were little, I did have a dryer and I did have a dishwasher in my old house, but I thought to make a new kitchen twice was too much trouble for me. I don't know-maybe I am...there are days when you get gloomy. I'm like the weather. When it is raining, I'm said. When the sun is shining, I'm happy. So what I do is I make a lot of light in the house. I don't save on light. I try to...I'm very happy to work with children and I think that I'm doing my part, instilling in the little ones love for Hebrew, for Israel. I try to make a nice Shabbat table in school, to give them the feeling that...some don't have it at home. I think I do my bit.

INT: And this is for kindergarten?

REGINA: Kindergarten, yes. I worked in kindergarten for the last three years. I worked with four year olds ones prior to that.

INT: So you get the children...Ellen passes the children on to you then.

REGINA: Some of them come. Now I have siblings already, and sometimes a third child from the same family.

INT: So you're active in Apath Israel, and you go to the JCC. Are there other organizations that you belong to or are active in?

REGINA: I support the Federation, of course. No. I tell you why. For example, Hadassah; my mother was very active in Hadassah. In Europe, you used to go evenings to the meeting. Immediately after the war, I resented her being absent. I missed her so much that I thought the organization was taking her away from me. That's why I didn't want to belong.

INT: This is before or after the war? You're saying with your mother.

REGINA: Before the war.

INT: So you remember then resenting her...

REGINA: Resenting her being away.

INT: This was every evening?

REGINA: We had a Jewish...not maid, she was a Jewish housekeeper, and she used to leave me with her, and I was for six years an only child. She had four brothers and she liked to go to visit and all that. And every time she left the house, I resented. Many times I went with her; I went to visit. I had a grandfather who died when I was five or six years old, and I adored him. I'm going to show you the picture. After the war, a cousin had quite a few photos and I got some.

INT: This was a cousin who was in Russia?

REGINA: Who survived. I came from a quite comfortable background. We were middle...I don't think upper class. I don't know. My grandfather was a merchant and he was very well respected in the community. I know that he had the seat in the mizrach in the synagogue. And then my father inherited this seat. We were related to the Horowitz family, which were rabbis.

INT: The Horowitz?

REGINA: Horowitz. What else can I tell you?

INT: So you don't like...other than Adath Israel, you've never liked...so it's always been true that you didn't like to be involved in other organizations. You wanted the time for your family.

REGINA: Yes. I'm not an organization person. I thought people who have less on their mind, let them do it. I felt my family was very important. I didn't have it that easy financially in the beginning and I used to sew for my children. I wanted them to look nice. I always worked because prior to working in Adath Israel I worked in Har Zion. We were affiliated with Har Zion from the very beginning.

INT: When it was in Wynnefield?

REGINA: When it was in Wynnefield. My husband taught Hebrew in Har Zion while he enrolled in Dropsy University to get his degree. He had more than one degree prior to that, but he didn't have any documents, and in order to get a document in the United States, so he enrolled in Dropsy, which was free at the time. I think it's still free if you choose to go. And then he got his doctorate. Then he was professor of...he was teaching in Cheney. He thought that he is doing his bit for the United States, teaching in Cheney, because he was offered many other positions. He was offered positions in Florida, at the university. He was offered in West Chester. And even somebody called him from Columbia. He was a great scholar.

INT: What was his doctorate in? What was his field?

REGINA: History. And of course he knew very many languages. He knew fifteen languages. He did a translation of an Arabic, Tabari historian, from Arabic into English. It's been just published by the press, New York Press, in Albany. SUNY Press.

INT: SUNY Press. Would you believe after all the years I just got copies of it?

REGINA: When was the book published?

INT: The book was published like...he gave it to them eleven years ago. Just before he passed on they contacted him. It was his dissertation, and some scholars worked on that historian, and everyone wrote a chapter, so he gave his chapter.

REGINA: It was all about the same historian, this Tabari?

INT: About the same historian, Tabari. And this picture was taken in Russia?

REGINA: In Russia, yes. This is the same lady. Can you imagine?

INT: When was this picture taken?

REGINA: '28.

INT: So it was a Rosh Hashana card.

REGINA: Yes, from Russia, to her sister in the United States. They also gave me that. And this was taken during the Russian Occupation, later on. His mother wanted very badly to go to Israel and she applied, and they never let her go. It was before Perestroika. She had a sister in Israel. She was a very intelligent woman. She knew Hebrew. She wrote to her sisters and she studied...she reviewed her Hebrew on Radio Free...

INT: Radio Free Europe.

REGINA: She hoped to go to Israel but she never made it there.

INT: So she never was able to get out of Russia.

REGINA: No. And there were still two sisters in Russia. One died last year and one is still alive. I'm not in contact with them, because my husband was so afraid to write to them, there shouldn't be repercussions during...

INT: This is the family in Russia.

REGINA: He made me promise that I will leave them alone, but my daughter is.

INT: So she established contact. So you always knew where they were.

REGINA: Oh, yes. We always knew where they were.

INT: But you didn't communicate with them or anything.

REGINA: We didn't communicate. They communicated with an aunt in New York, but since then this aunt passed on, so my daughter is in communication with the relatives. There are some cousins. I think she sent them some money through a shaliach (messenger) and they got it. So maybe they'll come to visit. My husband always said, "I wanted to get out, I got out. If they want to get out, they have to let us know. To prod them makes no sense. There must be a reason why they don't want to get out." Then we realized that they had two children at the university, so they were afraid to jeopardize their education. They're all educated people. Maybe they'll come, maybe they won't. We will be glad to see them.

INT: Have you ever spoken to them or is mostly...

REGINA: Yes, on the telephone. I did. And they wrote in a letter not to write them letters straight. If we can send a letter with somebody who goes to visit, it's okay, but not to write things by mail. Sometimes we send some packages. Sometimes they got it, sometimes they didn't. I'm not sure. But we did manage to send some money through...my son-in-law had a cousin who was an editor of a paper, who spent a year in Moscow. He took some money and gave it. Somehow they got in touch by telephone and they met in a hotel. They're still afraid. They're still very...

INT: Even now?

REGINA: Even now. My husband was afraid half of his life. He changed his name. He changed his birth date.

INT: So the name Stanger was...

REGINA: Stanger is my maiden name. His name was Adler. He took a name of an uncle in New York, Kimmelfield. When we became citizens, it changed into Fields. So Fields is not our name at all.

INT: So Fields just came from nowhere.

REGINA: Just from green fields. He thought it is a very American name. Is it?

INT: Sure.

REGINA: And my daughter...if that name was good to us, so my daughter named one of her girls Fields, middle name Fields.

INT: So you go by Fields but it really would have been Adler, and your maiden name was Stanger.

REGINA: Righter (?).

INT: So no wonder you have a hard time remembering names; there's been so many changes.

REGINA: Oh, there was more. When I was married, my name was...first of all, I had papers as a Polish girl, and my name was Drushkovsk. Then when I got married it was Britefeld. Somebody gave my husband some kind of papers to leave. Polish Jews helped...

INT: So his name was Adler but you used the name Britefeld to travel.

REGINA: Britefeld, and then it changed into Kimmelfield. And his name was not Phillip. His name was Moses, and he just took on Phillip. He was a lecturer in the Russian Army, a political lecture, and many people knew him, and he was so afraid that somebody would recognize him, the name, that he changed it to save his relatives who were left behind. He was not a deserter. He got demobilized. Instead of going to Moscow, he went the other way.

INT: So after the war his name was Phillip Britefeld, and that would be-

REGINA: Phillip Kimmelfield.

INT: So it was Kimmelfield before he came to the States.

REGINA: Yes. I was married in Poland by a rabbi, and then in Germany I was married in City Hall. I had already a child. We went with the child and we got married in City Hall officially. That was already Kimmelfield. It is normal for us. It's very abnormal for most people.

INT: As long as you remember the most recent name. That's the most important thing. So I think I have enough information here for now about the present. What I'd like to do now is to go back to childhood experiences and memories of those. You lived in...the town was Stanislaw?

REGINA: This city is called now Ivano-Frankivsk, because it's part of Ukraine, which separated from Russian.

INT: So when did they change the name?

REGINA: To Ivano-Frankivsk? They changed the name during the Russian Occupation. I think it stays that.

INT: So that was the name after the war. They changed the name from Stanislaw.

REGINA: It was a nice city. It was clean. We didn't have trolley cars but it had quite a few parks. You wouldn't say a park, but what would you call Washington Square? Squares like that.

INT: Public area. If you live in a city, it's a park. If you live in the country, it doesn't look like a park, but an open area, a public area.

REGINA: We had a park too. My recollection of the city is that it was a nice, clean city where in center city most Jews congregated. There was also a part of the city where very poor people lived, which eventually the Germans made a ghetto there. I lived in center city, in walking distance from my school. We went to public school, to a Polish public school, to grade- (end of tape 1, side 1)

INT: So you went to public school until the sixth grade.

REGINA: Until sixth grade. And then to a Jewish gymnasium. The Jewish gymnasium really was like Akiba. We had Hebrew as a language. We had Bible. We studied Rashi, and secular subjects. My sister, on the other hand, went to a school like Solomon Schechter, because they opened a school, a Hebrew school. Five years later, they opened a school. I was taught Hebrew by teachers-not rabbis, but teachers. I studied Sefardit. My parents were Zionist and my father said he doesn't have a son, so someone has to say Kaddish. He was quite modern.

INT: So he anticipated that he wanted you to...expected you to do that.

REGINA: Yes. And on Saturday afternoon many a times he sat with me and we studied the parsha of the week.

INT: Was that unusual in your community for a father to do that with the daughter?

REGINA: I never paid attention to it. I know that my parents were very...wanted me to learn Hebrew. Not so much maybe prayer. Not prayer, but Hebrew language.

INT: For Zionist reasons.

REGINA: Yes. They themselves didn't want to go to Israel. I don't think so. But we were always hoping maybe someday something will be. I myself belonged to Betar. I enjoyed being in the organization. We had many Zionist organizations in our...Zionist organizations. Betar was, of course, Revisionists. They had a Mizrachi. They had others.

INT: So the town was a Zionist oriented town, the people.

REGINA: Yes. We had a Jewish hospital. We had a Yeshiva in our city. There is a survivor here who was going to that Yeshiva. I met him. Life was good.

INT: How long did your family live in...how many generations had you been there?

REGINA: Many generations.

INT: Do you know how far back?

REGINA: Great-grandfather. They had it very good under Austria, under Franz Joseph. My family had a very nice store, a dry goods store, that was on a picture postcard. I don't know whatever happened. I had it somewhere. With the name Stanger on it. It belonged to my great-grandfather, and then my grandfather was the owner of it, and then my father and his brother.

INT: So you can trace your family back at least to your great-grandfather.

REGINA: Not that I remember. I just remember one grandfather but I know...their name was Wolish.

INT: How do you spell that?

REGINA: W-O-L-I-S-H. There were many dry goods stores, because most of the Jews were in business. My uncle still had...our store was different than the others because we specialized in fabrics for suits and coats mainly, and linings for it, not ladies' materials. Some were even imports from England. It was a special store just for...in Europe, everybody wore handmade. Lately, they opened ready-made clothes but not...maybe like five years before the war you could get ready made stuff. It never was considered good quality, the ready-made. But of course in Europe, you make a suit and you wear it for years and years. We had a very large non-Jewish clientele. They were very fond of my grandfather. I remember when my grandfather was sick already, they always wanted the old Stanger to tell them if it is good. When he tells them it's good, then they knew.

INT: And this is the grandfather that you mentioned to me earlier when we were talking, that you remember very well.

REGINA: Very well, yes. He was very sweet and he had a sense of humor. (Shows a picture) Here we are in a...They used to go to drink bitter waters and he used to take salt baths.

INT: This is in Poland or in-

REGINA: In Poland. There was Grenetza, a summer resort in Ivonich, and every year we went to a different...in the summer. My father used to come weekends, because somebody had to mind the store. We stayed. I even remember the name of the place. It's Old Palace. It was sort of a hotel, hotel where you get your food too.

INT: Like a spa.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: This is your father's father's father.

REGINA: I don't remember my mother's parents. They died young. Apparently one died of cancer from smoking. That's what my mother told me, that it must have been that. But she had four brothers and she was the only sister. My mother was a modern lady too. She

worked for the lottery during Austrian times, not when she got married but before that. That was rare for a young woman to work.

INT: So that would be unusual in the town for her to work out of the house?

REGINA: Yes.

INT: So what would...did women of her age work out of the house at all?

REGINA: Some helped their husbands in business. Some women were in business and their husbands were studying, the old-fashioned [way]. But we did have in our city a doctor, a woman doctor, and a dentist. My dentist was married to a dentist, and she was a woman. I know that my sister was born in a sanatorium, what they called it, and the woman was a doctor with her husband. He was a Ukrainian and she was Jewish, and they were in partnership. I was born at home, but my sister was born already in a sanatorium.

INT: So it was a sanatorium just for childbirth or-

REGINA: Just for childbirth.

INT: It went from a sanatorium to a hospital. Now they have what they call birthing centers. So they've come all the way back.

REGINA: All the way around, yes.

INT: So working for the state lottery, would that be considered today like a professional job or civil service job?

REGINA: Yes. She always told me that she made a lot of money, and when the money was worth nothing she had a million. (Laughter)

INT: We had a drawer of Austrian money. My family comes not far-from Lvov, Lemberg.

REGINA: Stanislaw was near Lemberg. It's right near Lemberg.

INT: When I grew up we had a drawer full of Austrian money that was worth...we used to think we were millionaires.

REGINA: That's what she said. She had a million dollar dowry that was worth nothing.

INT: So your mother kept very busy. Did she have a full-time job?

REGINA: This was before I was born.

INT: So she always worked though.

REGINA: As a young women, yes. And when she got married, of course she was busy raising me and busy with some organizations too.

INT: So once she had family, she was mainly like a housekeeper and mother and organization work.

REGINA: Yes, and a sister to her brothers, of course. Every Saturday after services the brothers used to come to our house to have some goodies. Life on Saturday was different than it's here. Here maybe yes. Now it's happening again. I see people walk to each other's houses, especially the Lower Merion Synagogue area. I like to see that.

INT: So your family kept Shabbas?

REGINA: Oh yes. We were not Orthodox. Well, here we would be Orthodox but my mother's brother, older brother, was more religious. Not more religious, but more observant. He wore a "shtreimel" [special kind of hat] on Shabbas, for example, and he wore a "gartel" [a special belt] around his coat.

INT: So was her family a more traditional family than your father's family?

REGINA: Yes, in a way. She came from more Orthodox background. You can see my grandfather. He didn't have a long beard. My father also wore...was modern. My father didn't have a beard. You're wearing a beard because it's in style.

INT: I've had this for a long time, and it's also warm during the winter.

REGINA: I think that we have to stop because I'm getting tired.

INT: I know we started late.

REGINA: I'm not going to the Parkway for the memorial.

INT: Yes, I know. (End of tape 1, side 2) This is tape #2, interview of Regina Fields. The interviewer is Allan Gottlieb. Regina, what I wanted to start with today was to go back to your family life before the war and what that was like. Last time we talked a little bit about the family, but when I was listening to the tape I realized you had never even told me your mother's name or your sister's name and your father's name. So you can just start with that.

REGINA: Okay. My mother's name was Yetta. From home, Kreindler. Sister was Estelle, and father Emmanuel. My father had a brother and a sister. His brother was Arthur and his sister was Paula. My mother had four brothers. She was the only sister. Are you interested in the names?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: Marcus Kreindler, Abraham Kreindler, Chaim Kreindler, Hersh Leib Kreindler. They had families too. One uncle had one daughter who was a year younger than I, and they perished. My older uncle, whose name was Marcus, or Mordechai, they called him, he had two sons and a daughter, and they survived. They end up...it was a great tragedy because one cousin who survived contacted pneumonia after survival and

he died. The second married and went to Poland and in order to make a living you had to start a trade, to do something. So he made an arrangement with the Russian officer to take him to Cracow. He was in Lodz. And the Russian officer knew that he has some money, and as soon as they went behind the city he killed him and her, cut off their fingers because they had a wedding band. Even though it was after the war no one caught them. That was the end of the cousin after being in hiding for twenty-some months.

INT: How did you learn of that?

REGINA: His sister, who also survived with her husband, took me in. I was much younger than they and they lost a child during the war, a little boy. In fact, he was smothered in the father's arms because he was crying. They were all hiding and people were afraid that the Germans will hear, and they just choked him. Those cousins took me in.

INT: Do you remember the little boy's name, the one that died?

REGINA: Yes. Srulik. And the family name was Seidman. My cousin was a very fine, educated man. So was his wife. He really came from a wonderful family and learned people. He had a beautiful voice too. He would sing opera. When he sang, people stood under their window to listen. And they eventually managed to go to Israel, this cousin and his wife. They passed on. He passed on first and then she. It is about...how many years? Probably fifteen years ago. I went to visit them to Israel. I was very close with them. Whatever they had they left to buy a Sefer Torah and to give a scholarship for a youngster there in Israel. I met my husband because of them. When my husband came to Stanislaw, he was in the Russian Army. He liberated the city. They came out before I did. My landlady kept me. She was afraid maybe the Germans will retreat.

INT: So they were in hiding as well.

REGINA: They were in hiding as well, and a Ukrainian family kept them. They were in a cellar, under the kitchen floor. I was in an attic. When my husband came, he went to look for Jews and he met them. The few Jews who survived came to...I guess it was some kind of a government building that was empty because the Germans left and the Russians didn't occupy it yet. So they just stayed there and my husband met them. He befriended them. I remember that they asked him very much for a piece of soap. That's all what they wanted, and he, a Russian officer, couldn't get a piece of soap because he said when he needs something, his orderly goes to the farmers and finds for him. He himself had nothing. That was a Russian officer in the Russian army, and a lecturer and what not. So he immediately befriended them and he said that he would like to leave Russia.

INT: This is when he was still in the army.

REGINA: Still in the army, yes. Well, eventually they got some kind of an apartment and they took me in. I survived with another person, with two other people-a woman and a young man. The young man was my friend. We liked each other and we didn't get along very well. But when we came out, my cousin took me in and him, and we were all together until...they wanted us to get married and I said I don't know. We fought there-

we couldn't fight because we had to keep quiet. So he was a wonderful person. Now that I look back at it, he was very handsome and very good and he helped me. He helped me survive, but I was very young and I did not feel obliged to him because...I don't know why I didn't feel obliged, but I know now that if not for him, I probably wouldn't have survived. He was the one who built the hiding place and he was the one who befriended...I befriended the woman too, but he paid her. He paid her and he gave her...Did I say before that I worked in a chicken plucking...It will be a very mixed-up interview.

INT: I'll remember what to bring you back to.

REGINA: I was taken out of the ghetto to work in a plant where you plucked chickens and you fed geese, and they used to send them to Germany. This friend's family were in the egg business, and in Europe you preserved eggs in lime in order to keep them fresh. He knew how to do it. So the German treated him better than the others because he needed him. Also, his older brother worked also in that plant. He actually was stealing the chickens and giving it to this lady across the fence. The Polish woman that I contacted, in the beginning the Germans looked the other lady. There were not many Germans. There was only one overseer in that plant, but he was not the owner. The owner had in center city. This was behind the city. The owner had a store in center city where his brother was in charge of the egg plant.

Anyway, he got in contact with that woman and he also told her if ever something happened, would she take him in. I, on the other hand, asked her the same thing on my own, crying that I knew her. And then somehow we got together and we decided that we're going to hide if need be, and sure enough, after working there for a couple of months, the Germans caught me talking to him and he said to me, "You don't come here to flirt. You come here to work." And he hit me with a rubber-tipped whip. He hit me across my face. My mother, on the other hand, knew and encouraged me all the time to talk to the woman, to ask me if she would take me. In fact, she gave me some valuables that I gave her-gold coins and a watch and a ring, which we did not give to the Germans when we were supposed to give our gold and silver. They wanted to take everything away. Certain things we kept because it was small and you could keep it behind a brick in the outhouse, wherever it was. So I told him, I said, "You know what? The German told me I am not allowed to come to work anymore, and this is like a death sentence, because once you cannot get out of the ghetto, that is the end." We were taken out of the ghetto every morning, four in a row. There was a guard on one side, a guard on the other, and that's how we-

INT: What year was this in?

REGINA: That was 1940, probably.

INT: So you were there for about a year?

REGINA: I was there twenty-two months, until '42, I guess. I have the data written down. As the time goes on, I get mixed up with the dates. I came out '45, I think, or '44.

When did the Russians march into Stanislaw? I have it written down. Maybe next time I'll make a few notes. I said, "You know what? I'm not going home. I'm going to jump the fence, and you go to my mother and tell her that, if she takes me." And I did go to the fence and she took me in. There were a few boards loose and I crawled through the fence and I go in and she saw me. It was already black and blue from him hitting me, and I said, "Mrs. Bashuk, look what he did to me and I'm afraid to go home. My mother will die a hundred deaths. Could you take me in until it will heal?" So she says, "Okay," and she moved a kitchen...it wasn't an armoire but in Europe you have kitchen furniture, like pieces of furniture. She put me in a corner in her kitchen, behind a cabinet.

INT: Did you know her before you were working in the factory? You knew her name. You said you were talking to her. Did you know her before?

REGINA: I befriended her while I was working. I used to take out things from ghetto and she used to give me a few potatoes or grain and I used to take it home to my mother, to the ghetto. She knew my family because we had a dry goods store. Everybody knew our store. So she knew the family and she knew that we have a house. I promised her the house. I said after the war, it's yours. She sort of knew from what background I come and she wanted to help me. She wanted to help me, and also, she was eager to have something from it, especially he kept on giving her...She used to render the goose fat and chickens. That was very, very valuable because the Polish people didn't have what to eat either. They had to go to the farm or trade. So for chickens, you saved your life for food. When I was there no more than ten days, the Germans came into the plant and they took all the Jews away. This young man, because the German sort of liked him and he needed him, hid and eventually came.

INT: So this is after you had already-

REGINA: I was in her place like ten days. He even managed during that time to bring me a few things from home. He had this special card that he could take out something from the ghetto. It's all because he was a valuable person to the German. The German was not a military man. In fact, he was an Austrian. It was a private business, but they did deliver to Germany. A private businessman who had dealings with the army, because whatever they slaughtered and packed they sent to Germany or to the front. So he managed to bring me some clothes, some boots, a coat, a letter from my mother. A wonderful letter in Polish that says: "I bless you and I hope that you will survive and you are excused in front of G-d and people if Benny is going to be with you." She meant in case I live with him or whatever. And a little letter from my sister. It's already faded, but it's written in Polish. I have that letter.

INT: How old were you at that point?

REGINA: At that point I was seventeen-and-a-half, something like that.

INT: And until this point, you were working in the chicken plucking plant, and you were still, at that time, before you went into hiding, your mother and your sister were alive at this time and you were living in them. And your father?

REGINA: My father was taken away in the very beginning, in September. My father was taken away as soon as they made the ghetto. They took him to work on the railroad and one day he didn't come back.

INT: And that was September of 1939.

REGINA: No. '41. '39 to '41 the Russians took over our city, and then the Germans came. We were two years under the Russians. We could have fled with the Russians to Russia, but my father didn't want to.

INT: Do you remember why? What did he say?

REGINA: He said: "We go with the Russians three kilometers; we'll be full of lice."
(Laughter) He said: "How bad can the Germans be? Such a cultured country. They want us to work? We'll work." And that was the...who could ever believe that they had a plan to exterminate and annihilate the whole nation?

INT: And the family would accept your father made the decisions?

REGINA: My father made the decisions that we stay. Many people went with the Russians and they did survive. Some did, some didn't. It was a different type of survival. They also suffered. Some went to Siberia and they had to work very hard, but still, you did not have the Sword of Damocles over your head.

INT: So your father disappeared while he was working on the railroad.

REGINA: He did not come back one day.

INT: And did you find out what happened to him after?

REGINA: We knew that they shot him, behind the city. They took them to work at the railroad station and they shot them. Just like that. There were probably at that time maybe fifty, sixty people. I came home from work and mother said, "You know, Daddy didn't come back from work. You're an orphan, my child."

INT: So she knew as soon as he didn't come home that...

REGINA: Once you don't come home, that's it. I don't know-did we talk about how we got into the ghetto?

INT: No.

REGINA: We didn't talk about the time-first the German came and first took all the intelligentsia and then they took the...of course, the doctors too, and the teachers. Those were the first people to go.

INT: Let's go back one more step. The Russians came in '39 or in '40.

REGINA: The Russians came into Stanislaw in '39, and they stayed until '41. Stalin made a pact with-

INT: Right, the partition.

REGINA: Partition. And then the war broke out between them. The Germans marched into Stanislaw in '41-I think it was June or July, something like that.

INT: And life under the Russians. What was that like when the Russians were there for two years?

REGINA: Well, the Russians were not toward us as bad as they were to their own people because they knew that we lived under democracy. They did nationalize stores. Our store was nationalized, and they took the store with materials, whatever was there. Sometimes you managed to hide a few pieces before they came in. They also took away my house. It wasn't anymore my house, but they left us in our apartment. They gave us a judge. We had to give up a room for a judge from Russia. He happened to be a very nice man and he befriended my parents. My father knew Russian because during World War I, he was a prisoner of war in Siberia. He was an officer in the Austrian Army and so he spoke with him a little Russian.

Somehow, we knew Ukrainian. This part of Poland was Ukraine too, many Ukrainian people, and we learned Ukrainian in school, so somehow between Polish and Ukrainian, we managed to communicate with him. He left a wife and a child in Russia and they sent him here to be a judge. He terribly missed them. He was very polite and I remember we did not have running water, and my mother made him every morning a big basin of hot water so he could wash up. All he did was wash his face and hands. He was uncomfortable, I guess, to get undressed. Maybe he went somewhere else-I don't know. And once in a while we invited him to eat. He was very shy and a nice man. I met him after the war, after I was liberated. He came again to Stanislaw to look, and I met him.

INT: To look for?

REGINA: Maybe even to look for us. I told him that my parents and my sister were killed. He was very distraught about it. He was a big man, but himself he was afraid of his shadow too. He kept on saying...every day he kept on saying, "Who knows what happened to my wife and my child?" He wasn't sure that they are safe. Of course, the Germans were bombing. But that was even before. He wasn't sure that they would survive without him. Eventually his wife came and child, and they got an apartment. We were afraid that they would take our apartment, but he did not. He found another apartment. In fact, he invited us to visit him. My father knew Russian, so he got a job in a pharmaceutical...it wasn't a firm. It must have been a pharmaceutical firm before but the Russians nationalized it.

INT: So what happened to the family business when the Russians came in?

REGINA: They take it away and that's it. They take it over and that's it. We were afraid that they'll tell us that we are bourgeois, and they will send us out to Siberia, because

they did. My father found a piece of paper that somebody was a tailor in our family, and that was an important piece of paper, to show them that we're working people. But, you know, had they sent us out, maybe we would have all survived. Maybe yes and maybe not, but it wasn't meant to be. So the Russians treated us not badly, but we students-I was in gymnasium at the time, and all of a sudden they bring in Russian teachers and they start talking Russian to us.

INT: This is the Jewish gymnasium?

REGINA: The Jewish gymnasium, yes. And we didn't know...in Europe, if you want to go out to the bathroom, you don't have to ask. We did not abuse the privilege. We just got up and left. And it happened in our class like that, and the Russian thought that we are against the Russians, against the regime, against them. It took a long time until there was some kind of understanding what our habits are and what they expect of us. It was very difficult.

INT: Just because you were getting up and leaving the room on your own.

REGINA: Yes. On our own, and came back. And immediately they start teaching in Russian. They were very foolish because we knew Polish. You cannot start history in Russian. Language, okay, but...So it was very difficult. They did not take into account that we had another language.

INT: How did they treat you, the teachers, in terms of being it was a Jewish school and you were all Jewish students?

REGINA: No. There was no problem.

INT: So you didn't feel anti-Semitism from the Russians when they were there?

REGINA: No. Not anti-Semitism. But there was other difficulties because of the language. Eventually, we had to study and learn and we knew enough to go by. In fact, they even gave us a little stipend. It wasn't enough to buy bread but it was called a stipend, for going to school. The teachers who came were also very polite and educated. I think they sent the best out. My father worked at...he knew also Latin, and in Stanislaw, in Europe, most of the drugs were named in Latin, so he helped to translate things. He earned some money but it wasn't enough to live on. We had hidden pieces of material and you sold the pieces of goods and you could live. We stayed in our apartment, which was very important, because many people had to leave their place. It is thanks to this judge who was so polite, who left us. My sister went to school and I went to school and my father went to work and we lived. In our house they had gathered once a week all the neighbors. (End of tape 2, side 1) It was like a political lecture.

INT: Indoctrination.

REGINA: Yes. That it is good, that everybody is equal. Of course we knew everybody is equal. We had nothing. It was pathetic how they were eager for the goods we had-

watches. And the women saw that our nightgowns, which were pretty and fancy, they wore them to a ball, to a dance.

INT: So that they wouldn't know that you had better clothes? Why would they...

REGINA: They didn't know. We had to live. People had things, you went to the market and you sold. Let's say you had a nice nightgown. They bought the nightgown and they wore it to a dance. They didn't wear it to sleep. It was too fancy for them. It was sad. For a lipstick you could get I don't know what, a lot of money. You could buy a chicken and a piece of bread, and maybe even butter. The farmers used to still come to town also. Money had no meaning. You went back like in olden times. You were trading. You traded something, one thing for another. The same thing was during the Germans. My landlady, the woman who kept me, also was trading with farmers. I was knitting shawls for her. I don't know where she got the wool but I did make shawls, and she was trading the shawls with a farmer for food. She slaughtered a pig and she kept it with us, because you were not allowed to slaughter a pig. (Tape shuts)

INT: So the Russians were there for two years.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: And then the Germans came.

REGINA: Before the Germans came Hungarians. The Hungarians were six months. You know, the Hungarian joined the Russian Army. When the Hungarians came, it wasn't bad at all. They were very polite, the Hungarian officers. We said, "Oh, it's not so bad." But then the Germans came and it started. As soon as the Germans came, they gave out orders to deliver furs and silver and gold, to give everything into the marketplace, and there were heaps and heaps of valuables in Center City. Just the small pieces people hid. Most of it went. For example, my family took a big kettle, a kettle where you boil laundry, and they put in the silver, the Chanukiot [Chanuka menorah/candelabra] and sugar bowls and kiddush cups and all that. We had a neighbor who was very handy, and he dug a ditch, a hole, in our outside little shed and he hid it there. I took it out after the war.

INT: So in the kettle.

REGINA: In the kettle. But I had to sell it because I couldn't take it with. All I have left is a kiddush cup from my grandfather. That's the only thing.

INT: And that was hidden with the rest of the silver.

REGINA: Yes, and this I have.

INT: We were talking about when the Germans first came.

REGINA: When the Germans first came, in no time they started...first of all, they took us to work, to work in the apartments of the intelligentsia, to clean it out. They took me to work too. I had very long plaits and I was well dressed and the German who was there, he

didn't believe that I'm Jewish. He says, "You're Jewish?" I said, "Yes, I am." And I said, "Do you know that I'm cleaning apartment of Mrs. Klein? She was our professor of German." The jars of preserves were still there. The bedding was warm.

INT: So you're cleaning out apartments for the Germans to-

REGINA: For the Germans to take over. And they took the intelligentsia and they killed them somewhere. We didn't know that they were killed. Eventually we knew, because they never came back. So they took us out to work here and there. And then one day they decided to make a big aktion, and they killed 10,000 people in one day. It was Rosh Hashana, and they took us. They knocked on the door, "Juden, raus," [Jews, out!] and they took us to the cemetery. That day they killed 10,000 Jews.

INT: Do you remember the date?

REGINA: I think I have the date written down.

INT: It would be September of 1941?

REGINA: September, October, something like that. And we came to the cemetery and people were shouting and screaming and there were big ditches, and we thought in the beginning that the ditches are for air shelters. Then we realized that they start shoving people into the ditches and just shooting and shooting. We came pretty late to the cemetery. That's why we stayed alive. The cemetery was filled already and it got dark and it started snowing. Usually it didn't snow that early in the year, but the skies got dark and it started snowing. At the end of the day, the Germans were running, and if somebody was crying they shot him. If a child was crying they shot him. Right on the spot. And people were praying and saying Shema.

INT: So you could see and hear-

REGINA: I was there. I was there. And you saw even a German eating a sandwich with one hand and having the rifle, the revolver, in the other hand and just shooting. I don't know if they were drunk. Maybe they were. But still, it was terrible. And the corpses-they threw one person on top of the other. Eventually, there were some people who crawled out of the ditches after dark, because they were not shot completely. Some were dead and some were not. And after that aktion, they created a ghetto. They said everybody has to leave their apartment. They assigned a small part of the city, the poorest part where usually very poor people, beggars, lived there, and we had to move out of our apartment. We found a woman, a widow with a child, who had this small apartment and she said that she would take us in. At that time my father was still alive, and he tried to...I don't recall if he hired a wagon, a horse and wagon, and I think we paid the guy and we took whatever was possible. Certainly not furniture, just clothing and dishes, whatever. There was not much room in that place. I don't remember if we even took a bed. Maybe we did. I just don't recall. And she let us in. It was very tragic because this woman with her child lived in one room and we four people in one room, and we shared the kitchen.

INT: And the rest of...your four uncles and your-

REGINA: Everybody.

INT: At this point everybody, the whole family, was still intact.

REGINA: Yes, we were still intact at that time. And we all moved into the ghetto. Very soon thereafter, they took my father away. I think it was still...it was in the beginning...the end of September they took my father away. And I started going out to work. The Germans had a whole organization. There was a working office. They created a president of the ghetto and there were Germans, what do you call it? I should prepare for you some...I'm not prepared. It's called Arbeitsamt. Arbeitsamt means-

INT: Work master?

REGINA: No, no. Not work office. What would it be? They had a president of the ghetto, a president of the...In German, it comes but I can't translate it. I have it written down somewhere, I guess, and I'll come back to it. They ordered us to work, the Jews. They thought that they would save their lives that way. I don't say they were mean. I don't say they were...what could they do? The Germans told us to pick people who would be...

INT: So the president and that whole network-they were Jews or they were Germans, the president?

REGINA: Jews.

INT: So they created a Jewish structure.

REGINA: Yes, a Jewish structure. In fact, eventually they were hung, they and many others, because they said that somebody killed a German, and for that, they hung everybody. One day I came in and they were all hanging on trees; whole Arbeitsamt, the whole congregation that was in charge.

INT: So when you went into the ghetto, you were around eighteen. It was in 1941.

REGINA: Eighteen, yes.

INT: And your sister was younger than you.

REGINA: Twelve.

INT: So you were old enough to go work, and your father and your mother and your sister?

REGINA: No, my sister didn't go.

INT: So she stayed home by herself.

REGINA: She stayed home with my mother.

INT: Do you remember-when you went, when the ghetto was created after the aktion, until now things had been hard and now all of a sudden it really changes. Can you remember what you were feeling and thinking when you were going into the ghetto?

REGINA: We didn't know exactly that it's the beginning of the end, but somehow the feeling was there. I remember once telling my father...the Germans used to come into the ghetto and shoot. Especially there was one German, Kriger, I think was his name. He used to come in like hunting. So one day I said to my father, "We're all going to be killed." And my father used to say, "A Jew does not say that. When there is still life, there is hope. I don't want ever for you to tell me that we are going to be all killed." That's what he told me.

INT: And this is before you went into the ghetto?

REGINA: No, it was in the ghetto.

INT: In that short period of time.

REGINA: That short period of time, because it felt immediately...we knew that they took away the doctors, the lawyers, and they never came back, so where did they go? In the beginning we thought maybe they took them somewhere to work, but from my part, they did not send people to concentration camps. They just got rid of them. Very few people from my part were in concentration camps. I felt...I was young and I felt...I also felt that I want very much to live. The will to live was unbelievable. You wanted to do whatever possible. First of all, I wanted always to see the end of it. I thought if I see the end of Hitler, that is it. I don't need any other reward. At that point, if I would die it would be just as well. But of course later on you go on living. You should know, you were so absorbed with getting food and with- We did get some portions. They gave us some bread, especially when you worked. You got bread and you got soup. Immediately, your whole mentality was just directed into how to survive, how to find food, how to eat and what to eat. And also, people were thinking of hiding places. People made different kinds of hiding places in case the Germans come, you could hide, and they were incredible, the hiding places. Closets and nooks and-

INT: All in the ghetto, in their own houses.

REGINA: In the ghetto. It was very sad. I felt responsible to bring home to my mother some food, and the only way to bring food was...when I got a little container with soup, to throw in some raw potatoes that the Polish lady traded with me, or I used to...sometimes she gave some grain. I used to...very ingenious how to bring in stuff. I used to take a stocking and she used to tie a knot in one side and on the other side, and the grain was in the stocking and you tied it either around your waist or between your legs, to a belt here and a belt here, and you smuggled in like that. Sometimes you filled your bra with stuff. This was all dangerous because at the gate, when you entered the ghetto, there was some Germans standing there. There were Jews too watching the ghetto. Do you know-like there were kapos [trustees] in concentration camp. The Jews were watching the-

INT: The Jewish police.

REGINA: But the Germans often felt if you smuggled in stuff. If you're lucky you passed by. If not, either you were detained and either they let you go or they killed you. You took your life in your hands by smuggling in something into the ghetto, but there was no other way. You felt...hunger is a terrible thing. In the beginning we brought in with us a little bit of food because we knew that...my mother always had some flour and some potatoes. Even though the Russians were there, we always felt you have to have something. And you didn't have refrigeration, so whatever is possible, things that did not get spoiled, you had some of it. I was very brave. I know that I took my father's fur. My father had a pelt. It was inside...I think it was mink, because it had those...the little tails. It must have been mink, and on the outside also, a fur collar. I traded it for a sack of apples with a Ukrainian who lived not far from us. I don't know how I did it. Somehow I made friends with him and we did not give that pelt to the Germans. I traded it for a sack of apples and that was a very...and a sack of apples in Europe was a...

INT: That was a major thing.

REGINA: A major thing. So you made some compote and you gave it to...if it starts spoiling...I don't know what my mother did, but we ate apples morning, noon and night. I remember I was always chubby and I lost weight eating just apples. (Laughter) Start looking good. It is tragic to tell you. (Laughter) I had an aunt who had diabetes and she was also always heavy and eating well, but in ghetto she became healthy. She did not have enough of the good stuff to eat. Where are we?

INT: In the early days in the ghetto.

REGINA: It was called Judenrat. Did I say that word Judenrat? That's what it's called.

INT: The people who were in charge of the ghetto?

REGINA: In charge. The Judenrat.

INT: What I asked you-we lost that a little bit-if you remember being...I think of eighteen-year-olds today. At this point, your life is really being turned upside down even though the family is still together. Do you remember-were you feeling afraid of the future? How did the family help each other?

REGINA: What I remember is that once we had a few pieces of bread and we were all hungry, and the bread was standing at the table and nobody wanted to eat it.

INT: Because there was only for one person?

REGINA: It wasn't enough. If all four of us would eat, you still would be hungry. And then my mother said, "I'm not hungry. You eat it." And my father said, "I'm not hungry. You eat it." And we sat there, I remember, maybe a half an hour looking at that piece of bread. I guess we were not hungry enough because if you would be really, really...we were still polite, to look at that bread. I remember like today. My mother said, "No, no,

no. I'm not hungry." My father said, "No, I'm not hungry. You eat, children. You eat." And I think eventually we took a few bites, each of us.

INT: All of the family.

REGINA: Yes. I know in that letter that I have from my mother she writes, I sold father's coat and I got for it two pounds of something-grain or whatever, and also a half a pound of sugar. She writes in the letter: "do you think I didn't get enough for it? Who can understand that?" This is not...I think you tell it to the Americans, they would just be hysterical.

INT: That was survival, what seems now like it doesn't matter, that's what was so important.

REGINA: That was important. You were absorbed how to survive and how to make a hiding place and what to sell, what not to sell, and how to sell it and get most for it that you could. That's what people were...and you know-like they say, the Jews, they "hondle?" [bargain/negotiate] They hondled. No matter what you did.

INT: In order to survive.

REGINA: In order to survive, yes. And some people smuggled things out of the ghetto and some people smuggled in things into the ghetto. Life was going on.

INT: And how did you support each other at that point? You talked about nobody wanting to eat the bread on the table. But with your sister, and you saw her every evening.

REGINA: Yes, I came every evening home. Well, I brought something home. I used to bring. That's how I started dealing with that woman. My mother used to give me a pillow case to give it to her, a sheet.

INT: Were you the only one going out?

REGINA: The only one.

INT: So your mother was not working.

REGINA: No. They didn't take women to work. They did take them to concentration camp but not out in the ghetto. Not my mother's age. She stayed home with my sister, so they were dependent on whatever I bring in, or to sell something inside the ghetto. And then we had to pay that woman that we stayed. She took us in but we still had to pay her for it. It was her apartment. It was sad because shortly after the ghetto was created, you could see people immediately hungry, and if a person is hungry his feet start swelling and they walk like zombies. Their eyes are...they're disoriented and their feet get swollen and they walk like robots. It was horrible to see that, and I have seen that, because they were poorer people. If you're poor to start with, then you have nothing to trade, you have nothing to give.

We still had a little bit clothing and, as I told you, some gold, a watch, a ring, my mother's diamond ring. She gave it back to me after the war, and I sold it. Those things I can't forgive myself, to have something from your parent after the war and you still have to sell it in order to survive. But what can you do? I think that the ghetto was terrible. It was terrible, because people who went out in the morning to work, you didn't know if we will come back. And the ones who were inside were helpless. You never knew when a German will come and decide to shoot at you. I had an incident that...I became famous in the ghetto. There was a German who used to come into the ghetto. He used to come like hunting. He saw people on the street, he was shooting, so people knew already that he's coming. So everybody starts running. The more they run, the more he was trying to get them and shoot them. I decided...he came in, and I decided I'm not going to run. I said to myself, "So what? He's going to shoot me anyway, so why should I run?"

INT: What made you decide that? Do you remember?

REGINA: Chutzpah.

INT: Just chutzpah.

REGINA: You're young. I think that's it.

INT: But that was the sort of thing you would have done in different circumstances before this? Were you that type of child?

REGINA: Maybe. Maybe. So I just walked, and I thought to myself, "He's going to shoot me. So he will." And he comes on a horse behind me and he says, "Hey you, how come you're not running?" And he says it in German. He says, "What is your name?" And I said, "Regina." He said, "Oh, Regina, you think you're a queen?" I said, "No, but you're a human being." So he says, "Oh yes, a mensch." I said, "Why should I run? You are just a human being." So he says, "Off with you," and he let me go. He didn't shoot me. I guess it impressed upon him that I had that chutzpah and he let me go. And people watched through the windows. They saw that he let me go, and they just couldn't believe their eyes that he did.

INT: And you didn't plan this in advance. You just were there and you didn't want to run and something told you that this was the way to...

REGINA: Yes. What is there to run? He's going to shoot me. It was probably smart, because the people who ran were shot.

INT: But you didn't sit and think beforehand the smart thing to do would be this. This was your instinct.

REGINA: In fact, I was going from this...the place where they give you portions, your bread, your daily portions, and I think I came from there. I cannot understand how at that age, eighteen...now a person is grown up at eighteen. In Europe you're still a child when you're eighteen, but I was pretty...either the war made me or the responsibility that my

father is gone, that I felt that I have to provide for my mother and go out to work, and my mother, on the other hand, tried to talk me into- (end of tape 2, side 2)

INT: This is tape #3 with Regina Fields and Allan Gottlieb. At the end of the last tape we were talking about the German officer that you stood up to and what you did, that you felt you needed to do to survive. Your instincts told you to do that.

REGINA: The instincts told me that I should survive, I should find a way out, and this Polish woman was the way out. Sure enough, she took me in and I stayed there for twenty-two months. (Tape shuts) Believe me, this is all residue from being under that old tin roof in hiding. Wintertime was bitter cold and summertime was so hot, and fall it's rainy and damp.

INT: That's what I'd like to get to next. At this point, you're working in the chicken plucking factory and your mother and sister are still together.

REGINA: Still together and I went into hiding. She took me in. When he hit me, I went in and that was it.

INT: This is when you were hit by the-

REGINA: German.

INT: By the German, and then you just threw yourself at her mercy. You didn't plan that in advance. Again, it was...like the other time, you weren't thinking before for days on going to...were you thinking at all before this of hiding with her?

REGINA: That I'm going to go into hiding to her? Yes. I did talk to her about it. I said, "Eventually, if something happens, will you take me in if I have to?" She said, "Yes, we'll see." And it happened and she took me in and she kept me a few days downstairs in the kitchen.

INT: But when you went into hiding, you didn't say tomorrow...because of what happened, you knew that you had to do it then.

REGINA: Yes. Because there is no use to go into the ghetto if I cannot go out and bring any food back to my mother. If I'm not allowed to come to work, that was a punishment for flirting. Flirting. What flirting? I was talking to him. We were always talking what we will do and how we will do. He came one evening after work and he talked to her and they went upstairs and they decided where to make a hiding place.

INT: What was his name? This is your friend.

REGINA: Yes. Benjamin Abenstein. And they decided to make...there was a summer apartment upstairs, a kitchen and a bedroom. The bedroom had a balcony and a tree. It was a nice little apartment, like a summer place. From the kitchen, it was a built-in cabinet in the kitchen and they cut off the bottom of that cabinet and it let into the attic, and part of the attic...they took some wood and closed off part of the attic, and we were

there. I could go in, only into the attic from that kitchen and out through the kitchen. I don't know how to explain it to you. Let's see-if this is a cabinet, that's what it was, but it was taller, like this. (Demonstrating) Here they cut-

INT: They cut in the back.

REGINA: They cut the back and they made like a swinging door and here is the attic, and we crawled in. It was a little high, so you could crawl in. And she used to put shelves with pots and pans in front of this cabinet, because one day German officers stayed upstairs for three days, and we were hidden in the attic.

INT: When she took you in, at this point, what was her understanding of what would happen if she was found out and if you were found, if the Germans came to the house and found you? Did she understand the risk that she was taking?

REGINA: She knew the risk but she was a person who risked. She was this type of a person. She also felt sorry for me and she was...you call it a "rezicant" in German. She was a person who said, "Oh, G-d will help. Somehow we'll do it."

INT: So she was a religious person as well, do you think?

REGINA: Yes, yes. She was a religious person. When I left, she didn't want me to write to her. She said G-d will reward her for whatever she did. She was afraid the Russians...because the Russians came again. She was afraid the Russians shouldn't find out that she kept Jews. She was afraid the neighbors shouldn't find out. I lost touch with her and I lost touch with this young man.

INT: You lost touch with her because she didn't want you to be in touch with her.

REGINA: Yes. And the woman who was there went somewhere to Russia to look for her family, and I lost touch with that part of my life. Maybe somewhere in Israel, maybe he survived. The Russians arrested him. The Russians arrested him. He worked for the Russians and they accused him of stealing the few pounds of salt, and they took him to jail and I tried to get him out of jail. There was no way. So I really don't know whatever happened. They arrested me also. They let me out. They asked me if I'm his wife and I said, "No, I'm not. My name is different and his name is different." So they let me out.

INT: And when did the third person join you?

REGINA: Shortly. As soon as...I tell you, I was maybe ten days in hiding and they took everybody away from the place, and she ran from there and she went to her, and she took her in. So I don't know what that person gave her. That woman was a little older. She had a child and a husband. She was married already, and she lost her husband and the child. She was also knitting for her shawls, and she was also trading with her before. She wasn't trading just with me, but I was the one who approached her about hiding, and apparently she did too because she took her in.

INT: In the early points of the hiding you were able to get a letter from your friend from your mother, and a note from your sister. So were you able to keep in [touch]. Did you see your mother and sister again after this?

REGINA: No, that was it.

INT: And did you hear from them? Were you able to get mail from them?

REGINA: No. In March they start shooting and my landlady said, "They're killing off the Jews. They're killing the Jews." Three o'clock in the morning it started and it was going all day long, and shortly thereafter the ghetto was liquidated.

INT: So you basically left your mother and sister to go to work like any other day at that time-

REGINA: And never returned.

INT: So you never had a chance to-

REGINA: To say goodbye or nothing; just that letter. But my cousin who survived, she went into hiding a little later than I did. She told me that my mother was at peace and she hoped that I'll survive, and she says, "Your mother loved you very much." And I said, "I always thought she loved my sister better than me." She says, "No, that's not true." You know, it was sibling rivalry. When you are six years difference, it is a big change, and I was an only child. Not only that I was an only child, I was an only grandchild and was an only child between all my uncles and aunts. I was very spoiled. And then comes that sister. And I wanted a sister. I kept on crying that I want a sister, and finally she arrived. When she was born my grandfather died, and it was a terrible...sort of a shock to my whole system.

INT: So you lost this person you loved so much and now you have this new disruption.

REGINA: The new intruder, yes. Even though I loved her very much because she was a beautiful child. She really was.

INT: So after this note...the letters were the last things that you heard from them.

REGINA: Yes. I am amazed that I can talk about it and I don't break up. I think that there comes a point in life where you're already cried out. You're sort of hardened. I am hardened. Well, now I know that my parents wouldn't live anymore. It's so many years. But in the beginning, I always felt if, what if, what if they would still be there, and especially the holidays were very, very difficult.

INT: How did you cope with that? You're going into hiding. You had to do it and you did it to survive.

REGINA: You lived in fear.

INT: At the same time, you know by doing that that now you're cut off. I know what you did physically to survive but how psychologically?

REGINA: We lived in fear. We lived in terrible fear. After a year being in hiding, she came up and she says, "You know, there is still a ghetto in another city. Maybe you can go there." Do you know that I went with her on a train to another city, to look for the ghetto? She said, "I had enough. I cannot. There is a ghetto in Zlotchov [Zolochiv?]. Maybe you can go there." And not far from Zlotchov was hiding his brother, and we used to get somehow letters. I don't know how it was. We got a letter once that he's hiding and we knew where he's hiding. A Ukrainian woman kept him; he and his wife and a child. They did not survive because the Germans came.

INT: What was the name of the town?

REGINA: Zlotchov. I got dressed in my good clothes, the clothes that my mother sent, special clothes in case I have to go somewhere, and she gave me a cross and she went with me. I come to Zlotchov. On the train there was a group of Ukrainian actors. They were singing and talking. I don't know if they recognized that I am a Jew or not, but I heard them say, "Do you know, the Jews are fighting in Warsaw." That's why I found out that was the uprising in Warsaw Ghetto. That was the time that I went out with her to Zlotchov. And they didn't denounce me. We come to Zlotchov and we go where the ghetto is and she stands across the street and there is a young man, a Jew, watching the ghetto. And I said, "Can I go inside the ghetto?" He says, "Where are you coming from?" I said, "Well, I was in hiding until now and this is the woman that..." He says, "My child, are you crazy? What are you coming? First of all, I'm not allowed to let you in. And second, you have a place where to be and you're coming here? Tell her we don't let you in and go."

INT: Was she taking you there because she had had enough of you being there or she thought it would be better for you?

REGINA: No, no. She had enough. She started being frightened. She had enough, and she heard that there's still a ghetto there, and she thought maybe we can go. Not only that. I went to the place where his brother was and when I came there he told me also. He said, "There is no room here. There is no room. We are here. Tell her absolutely not." He talked to her. Not only that. They had a big problem there because the man who hid him-it was his wife, but the wife had a teenager child, and he told me there is incest. Something was going on there. But they were caught. They were caught, and they had poison with them and they all took poison when the Germans came. That's what I heard. I don't know what they did to this man. I think they took him away too. Someone survived. Somehow, this Benju, after the war, he tried to find out and he found out that they were taken away. So this was also like a lucky thing, that they didn't want to take us in. This guy didn't want to let us into the ghetto. And she saw that nothing doing, we tried.

INT: This would be the summer of 1943?

REGINA: When was the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto?

INT: The summer of '43 or '44.

REGINA: I think it was '43.

INT: I know it was in the summer.

REGINA: Spring, maybe. Spring.

INT: I'll look that up.

REGINA: All kinds of things happened there. He couldn't sit still. He used to go out.

INT: This Benjamin.

REGINA: Yes. When it was raining he crawled down the tree and he ran in the fields, and he used to bring me a corn and cherries. We shared it with that woman who was with us. She was smarter. She was older than we were. She used to say, "Please, you're endangering us and her and the family and everybody. What are you doing?" But you couldn't talk. You see, that's why I left him eventually. You couldn't talk to him. He was like a young stallion. It was terrible for him to be...

INT: Penned in like that.

REGINA: Penned in like that. And he couldn't straighten out too because he was tall and the attic was like on a slant. At the highest point I could stand but he had to...he was six feet tall.

INT: You were all day in the attic?

REGINA: All day. Sometimes at night we used to crawl out and go into the apartment.

INT: Could you see from the attic? Could you see out?

REGINA: There was a little, small window, and that window really kept me alive. At least you saw chickens running in the yard, or you saw a person pass by. But you saw spring and winter and fall and snow and again spring. That little window was very important. At night, we used to sometimes...wintertime we went out to the apartment. It still was cold, because you couldn't...in Europe you have to use coal or wood and you couldn't have smoke coming out of the chimney at night. We were very cold. I don't know how we kept warm. I had some blankets. She gave us some blankets. We were huddled together. It was hard. We had one bucket of water for washing and for drinking and one bucket to go. Many times he begged her she should let him take it down, at least for him to get out. Sometimes she did and sometimes she didn't.

INT: And what did you do during the day? How did you keep your mind active?

REGINA: Well, what was good-she used to bring us newspapers and we used to tell her every day the war is going to end. For two years the war was ending. And I said, “You see, “Mrs. Baszuk, when Rommel was attacking and you could read between the lines that things are not so good with the Germans, that he was retreating.” We kept telling her every day the war will be soon over, soon over.

INT: Could you spell her name?

REGINA: B-A-S-Z-U-K, JULIET. She was a nice lady and her husband was much older than she and he was a railroad man. She had an older daughter. She was his second wife. He was married to her sister and the sister died and he married her and they had a little girl. And the little girl was six years old, and she knew that we were upstairs and she used to come sometimes upstairs to us and she never told anyone.

INT: So her husband and the daughter were in the house as well all this time.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: And the six-year-old girl never said anything.

REGINA: And eventually came her daughter and her husband came to live there, and the daughter became pregnant and she had a child, and they knew we are there. But the grandmother didn't know that we are upstairs.

INT: She was living in the house.

REGINA: She was living in the house. She was an old lady. She had arthritis and she didn't go upstairs. She says, “I sometimes upstairs, something is moving at night.” She said, “Oh, grandma, the cats are running around.” She never went up to look. It was quite a large family risking their life for us because if the Germans would find us, they would shoot them too.

INT: Do you have any feel for why? We talked a bit about the woman herself but here's a whole family that...You said they were religious. Do you think it was at all to do with their religious beliefs, or they just thought that...

REGINA: No. They got stuck with us. You do something...I feel that she thought it will not last long. She thought: “Oh, she'll help us out and she'll have something now and maybe she'll have something later in her house, this valuable things.” She didn't get the house because the Russians took it. And she was stuck with us, because if she would tell us go and we go out, how far can we go? A few miles and somebody will find us, the police or Germans, and suppose they beat us and certainly we would tell them where we were hiding until now. So they were bound. It was...I want to give her the benefit of the doubt -- that she was a good-hearted person and she was sorry for me in the beginning and all that. She also did not think it will last that long, and since she had me there, so she thought what's the difference, she'll take two more people also.

INT: When you went into hiding, how long did you think it would last? Did you have any feeling for the future?

REGINA: I had no idea, no idea. I just knew in my heart that Hitler is going to be defeated, and how and what I didn't know. I did not know the United States would enter the war and somebody will save us. No. It's just...I hoped that I would live to the day to see Hitler defeated, and when I saw the Germans come to Russia, they were so strong and well-fed and boisterous and proud, and when I saw them retreat, they were a sorry sight. They were holding on to their pants because they lost weight and they looked pathetic. You never saw a German so proud and so mean when he's scared. "Oh G-d," I said. "I lived to the day to see them retreat. I don't want much more. That's it."

INT: I know that you grew up very Jewishly-involved and your mother was involved in Hadassah and Zionist organizations. You said you were Orthodox...here you would say you would consider yourself Orthodox but there you wouldn't.

REGINA: Yes, Conservative.

INT: During this time, the day that you knew you weren't going to see your father, the day that you went into hiding, how did that figure in with you?

REGINA: With my faith?

INT: Yes. Did it make you believe more or believe less? What role did that play?

REGINA: I don't think I had time to consider it. The danger was such that every minute was danger. If you live in danger, you don't think of those things.

INT: So all the time in hiding you were afraid.

REGINA: Oh, yes.

INT: There was no time that you could ever feel...

REGINA: Certainly. All the time. You live in fear. You're afraid to drop a spoon, because suppose a neighbor is downstairs and the spoon drops and you can hear somebody banging and there's suspicion, and then they denounce you. It was very dangerous all the time. When something dropped...even now, when the telephone rings, I get frightened. I always get frightened when the telephone rings. For years I used to have a tic when I dropped a spoon or a fork. And my child was born with it, my oldest daughter, and then it went away. I think that she is more affected because she was born immediately after the war, than my other children. She's more sensitive too.

INT: She was born in Poland.

REGINA: She was born in Germany, not immediately but soon after liberation.

INT: What can you tell me about the liberation? How were you liberated? Is that when the Russians came in?

REGINA: The Russians came in and she came up and she said the Russians are here.

INT: Did you know that this was going to happen? Were you getting news?

REGINA: Oh, yes. First of all, I saw the Germans retreat. I saw them retreat. I saw them through my little window running. And she knew that the Germans are leaving, but she wasn't sure that they are not coming back. That's why she kept us another three days. She kept us three days longer. My cousin went out three days before. When she was sure that the Germans are not coming back, that's when she let us out. She was afraid for herself and she was afraid for us. I guess she figured she suffered so long, she might as well live. I went to visit her a few times. When I left, I went to live with my cousins. They took an apartment that was prior to that Jewish, and then the Germans had it and they occupied the apartment. I went to live with them and I used to go to her quite often to say hi. And before I left I went to her and she says, "Please, don't write to me. Do me a favor."

INT: This is when you were leaving the house or when you were leaving-

REGINA: No, for good. When I left with my cousin. I left with my cousins. My husband was still in the army when I left. I promised him that I'll wait for him a year and he said he'll get demobilized and somehow he'll find me, and he did. He got demobilized, he met with his sister, he told her that he intends to leave and some Polish Jews gave him some papers and he made a suit from his military material. It was English material because the Russians didn't have a thing. If not England and the Americans, they would starve to death. It was unbelievable how the army was. He was forever hungry. He really was. The orderly used to go to the farm and either steal or beg for eggs and he used to make him- what is it called? Fried eggs.

INT: Scrambled eggs.

REGINA: Scrambled eggs, yes. Not only that. He says he made him boots. The orderly sewed him boots out of pieces of leather. That's how the officers in the Russian Army were equipped. It was a country -- no one can imagine how that country...it was poor. They were poor, and even they won the war with sheer numbers of casualties, not because- (End of tape 3, side 1)

INT: We were at that point of liberation now. That's three days after the Germans have left.

REGINA: I went immediately to live with my cousin, and she-

INT: This cousin. Can you just tell me what the relationship was again? This is your-

REGINA: My mother's brother's daughter. First cousin.

INT: And her name?

REGINA: Her name was Malla Seidman. His name was Shabtai Seidman. They applied for work. She started working in a bakery, for the Russians. That was very good because she had some bread. We had bread. And sometimes she managed to get extra rolls, so she exchanged the bread for butter somewhere. I don't know. Anyway, I had a few things left over so I sold, I think, my mother's watch, so we had some money, to the Russians. And we started living. I also became pregnant. We had a doctor. I did not want to have the abortion. I didn't. Even though we were not married, my cousin, who was very religious and all that, they...it was such a situation that there was not even yet anyone to get married with. My cousin could give me chuppah, kedushin but we still did not get along very well.

INT: This is you and...who was it?

REGINA: My friend.

INT: This is still Benjamin.

REGINA: Benjamin, yes. We lived with my cousins, yes. And my husband is still in the army. He is in Stanislaw, but he is still in the Russian Army.

INT: Had you met him?

REGINA: At that time I met him. He used to come to my cousins. He became friendly with us from the very first day that they liberated the city and he became a very good friend to them. He used to come. I also was a friend with him and I felt very sorry for him because I knew that he wants to leave Russia. He lost a wife and a child during the first days of war. They were bombed. We knew his secret; that he wants to leave. And this Benny was also...liked my husband very much. In fact, later on he says, "I know. You are going to leave me and you are going to marry Adler." So I said, "Yes, I probably will." But you know what happened? He said you should have an abortion because we wanted to leave and we have a baby and what will we do and how will we leave and all that.

INT: This is still Benjamin.

REGINA: Benjamin, yes. So there was a doctor who survived and he was a friend of the family and I went to him. My cousin went with me. And I was already in the third month. I didn't know that I was pregnant. You know, I felt good. I didn't have any signs, but all of a sudden I see that I am a little heavier and the doctor agreed. He said just because I knew your parents I'll do it, and he did it. And I did not have any sleeping pill, anesthesia, nothing, and he just did it. He was very angry. He said it was almost formed.

INT: The doctor was very angry.

REGINA: Yes. And beforehand he told me, "Do you know? I cannot promise you that you'll ever have a child. You want to do it? It is your decision." And this Benji [Benju?], I listened to him. My cousin said, "I cannot say one way or another. It is yours." She said, "If your mother would be here..." She always kept on saying, "Oy, if your mother would be here, she would be sad." And after I had it done, I took such an aversion to him that I

couldn't look at him, and that's when we really parted. He still used to come and he still was friendly with my cousin and I was friendly with him, but we parted. I said, "That's it." He was crying, I was crying. My husband mediated between us. He said, "Look, you are two nice young kids and you survived such a terrible ordeal and all that." But then he was arrested. He was arrested and that solved the problem. It took me a year until I left and they didn't let him out.

INT: So Benjamin was arrested at that point.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: How did you make decisions? You really had gone into hiding. You were eighteen and you really were like a child beforehand and you come out and you're having to make...

REGINA: I still was a child. My husband says I was a child until I was forty years old. He says, "Now you grew up." (Laughter)

INT: But you still had to make adult decisions, and there was no one really to make the decisions for you.

REGINA: For example, what kind of a decision?

INT: Any decisions you made, even to decide that you're going to live with the cousin.

REGINA: There was no question.

INT: That was because you were the only ones.

REGINA: They took over [as] my parents. They married me off. They gave me fifty dollars.

INT: So they took over the parent role.

REGINA: Yes, after. But with all that, I was very childish. I remember my cousin said, "Look, it's after the war." They opened a little store in Poland and they said you can go and buy something and sell something. I wasn't very good with that. I just wasn't equipped to do that. I sort of relied on them and whatever I sold. I sold my silver, so I had some money. I sold my mother's ring. I was very sorry that I did it, but there couldn't be any other way. I did not want to have additional load, because my husband was very much afraid of not to be found out. He came after a year. I left with my cousins and I stayed in a city called Liegnitz.

INT: So you left Stanislaw, and this is afterwards. You had been there for a year after you were liberated.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: So what were you doing during that year? Were you working?

REGINA: During the year I was helping Benju. He worked for the Russians and I was helping him.

INT: What kind of work?

REGINA: Selling salt. Bringing salt from one city to another. Selling salt. And then he sold some salt on the side and they accused him of speculating. And they arrested him and they arrested me. They asked me, "Are you his wife?" I said, "No, I'm not." I thought what is the use of both of us being incarcerated. Maybe I'll go out and be able to pull him out somehow. I remember that I had a fountain pen, which in Europe was a very big thing, and I went to the judge. I wanted to bribe a judge. That's another thing.

INT: This is a Russian judge?

REGINA: A Russian judge. He took the pen. Not only the pen. We had a bicycle too. Benju bought a bicycle after the war. You know, he was athletic and he bought even a bicycle for me, but I fell and banged my feet up and I never went on a bike again. (Laughter) So I gave the two bikes to the judge. I tried to...in Russia, it didn't help. It didn't help.

INT: So he took everything.

REGINA: He took everything and that was it. And I went to my husband, mind you. I thought that he's a big officer in the army, that he can intervene, but he said he couldn't. He said it's a different, completely...it's not a civil job he does not have. He was afraid of his shadow too.

INT: So after Benju is arrested-

REGINA: Benju was arrested. We left, my cousin, I and her husband, and her two brothers. I told you the brothers...no, one brother. One died there and another one left. All three of us left, four. And it took a year, and I told my husband if he would find out maybe they'll let Benju out. At least I wanted to know that he...but he never...he inquired. He said they sent him to another city or whatever happened. I don't know.

INT: And you don't know what happened to him after that.

REGINA: I did contact Red Cross and they said I don't have enough data. I don't know where he was last. I said last he was in jail, in the city of Stanislaw, and that was it.

INT: And that's the last record that they have.

REGINA: Because they didn't let him out. My husband left a year later.

INT: So a year after you left, he was still in the prison when your husband left.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: So during this year, when you went with your cousin-

REGINA: During this year I went with my cousin.

INT: The second year, I'm talking. The first year you were living with your cousins in Stanislaw.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: And now at the end of that year, I forget where you moved to from there.

REGINA: To Liegnitz. To the part of Poland that belonged to Germany. They moved the borders. Russia took part and gave Poland of Germany. Russia took part of Poland. So we settled in a city Liegnitz and my cousins started a little business. They opened a little store. They bought, they sold. They made a living.

INT: Why did they make this move? Why did they move to Liegnitz?

REGINA: Because we were displaced persons. We didn't want to stay in our city. There's no relatives. There's no future. To stay in Russia-what for? And since we were Polish citizens, they let us go to Poland. We hoped that from Poland we will get out, either to Israel or to United States or wherever. But in the interim, in the meantime, if you went to Poland, you wound up in Germany. My cousins went straight from Poland to Israel. They stayed in Poland longer and they went to Israel. The ground was burning under me and my husband, because he was afraid. He didn't want to be found out, so he wanted to leave Poland as fast as he could, and he wanted to go to the American zone. Everything was divided into three parts. There was French, American and English. So we went to Berlin, and from Berlin we went to Bavaria, to a displaced person camp.

INT: This is with your husband?

REGINA: Already with my husband.

INT: How did that happen?

REGINA: My husband got demobilized. He put on civilian clothes. He grew a moustache and a beard, and he went to Cracow where my cousin told him that she has a cousin who survived in Cracow. This cousin speaks French. So when he wanted to find out where we are, he had an address to this cousin in Cracow. So he went to Cracow. He sold five pounds of sugar and he had money. He got sugar in the army so he sold sugar. He said that's the first time he made a big deal. He sold the sugar and he had some money.

INT: It's priceless.

REGINA: Yes. And he went to Cracow, and in Cracow he found out where we are. And he came to Liegnitz.

INT: He came for you at this time.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: You were, at this time, seeing each other before.

REGINA: I told him that I'll wait for him a year. He said, "Would you like to stay here until I get demobilized?" I said, "No. I'm leaving. And if you get demobilized, then I promise you that I will wait. I will wait a year." That was just before Passover.

INT: And were you married at this point? Did you get married then?

REGINA: No. No. I wasn't married. I wouldn't get involved. We just promised each other. And he came, and it was Passover. My cousin said of course you could get married, and we got married Lag B'Omer. And we had ten people and I understand this rabbi who married us became later on Chief Rabbi of Poland, but he made a mistake in the ketubah. [Jewish wedding contract] (Laughter) My husband...it's a written ketubah. He found a mistake somewhere there. And we got married and the next day we left. My husband found out that in Lodz is like a...not a camp, but a place where the Israelis come and they take you out of Lodz, through the borders. So we stayed maybe a week in Lodz. We got married today and tomorrow we went to Lodz and in Lodz we stayed a week and we got in touch with the Israelis and they took us over the border to Germany.

We come in middle of the night to Berlin. It was three o'clock at night. We were forty people and one child. And we don't know where we are exactly and a woman stands there on the street and we ask her where are we? She says, "You are in the Russian zone." Well, that was terrible. So which way is to the American zone? She says, "American is far but the French is this way, that way." And we all went to the French zone. From the French zone, they sent us to the American zone and they put us on trains and we went to Bavaria, to Leibheim, which was a displaced person's camp. And we stayed there two years almost. From there, we wanted to go to Israel but at that time I was already pregnant and they said if I would go to Israel the mountains are dangerous, because we would have to go through Italy. Had I gone from Germany to Italy, I would have been on the Exodus. But because I was pregnant, somebody, a Shaliach, sent word that it's too dangerous for me to go.

INT: This is in 1947?

REGINA: Probably, yes, '46, because my daughter was born in '47. We stayed, and my husband said, "Look, so many people applied to go to Israel and I have relatives in the United States." He wrote a letter. He wrote, "Kimmelfield, New York," and the letter came, without the address. I have the letter somewhere. I guess during the war, they were kind enough, when a letter came from Germany, they looked up the people. And my aunt and another uncle made papers and then we came to the United States. Actually, we came through the HIAS, but they guaranteed our...

INT: How did it feel when you were leaving Poland and Germany? You had memories and...was it just looking forward?

REGINA: There was no feelings, no feeling whatsoever.

INT: So whatever connections you had felt to the country itself and the places that you had spent almost all your life until then...

REGINA: There were good years, very good years, until the war. During the war, I consider the time since the Russians moved in. It wasn't very bad, but it wasn't good either. Feelings-the feelings of my family are with me. They live in me. I took with me what good was, and the rest is not important. It's not important. I remember my city is a lovely city but you don't have loyalty to the streets.

INT: It's just a physical place that without your family and...

REGINA: Without my family it's nothing. I'm not sure that my grandfather's grave is there or not.

INT: You've never been back to Poland?

REGINA: No, and I have no desire to go either.

INT: Why is that?

REGINA: Because I know that no one is alive. No one is alive. All it will bring...it won't bring me good memories. People go back not for the good. You go for the good and the bad. But there is nothing there to make me go back.

INT: Have your children ever had an interest to see where you grew up and where you hid and where these things happened?

REGINA: No. If I would know that my women would still be alive, I would. But other than that, I have no desire. I would like to see Cracow because it's a beautiful city. I have not traveled very much.

INT: Just to travel the way you would to any place that you would want to just see.

REGINA: I wouldn't mind to go to see Warsaw and I wouldn't mind to go to see the concentration camp, just as a pilgrimage to the ones who perished. I know that my immediate family did not perish in Majdanek or Auschwitz.

INT: They were all lost in the ghetto.

REGINA: They were all lost in the ghetto. They were all killed there. But it is sad that you feel that way about the country where you grew up. When I was growing up, I have good memories of my youth. And I think that as years go by, whatever was unpleasant

you tend to forget. Maybe sometimes glorified is best. I don't know. (End of tape 3, side 2)

INT: This is an interview with Regina Fields, August 17. This is our fourth tape. Regina, it's been a long gap since our last one so I'm just going to refresh you a little bit about what we talked about then. We pretty much had gotten up to the time that you had not left Europe yet. You were in Germany, waiting to leave. You were married and you had your first daughter, your first child. So if we can, I know there's a big gap. If you remember things we can always go back to things. But I'd like to pick up with what happened from when you were ready to leave Europe.

REGINA: We went to Bremen, and we left on a boat, on a ship actually. It was a military ship and it was called General Haus. They divided people into groups. There was a working group and there was a garbage squad. My husband was in charge of the trash squad, because he knew some English. We were pretty squished. I don't know-it was a military boat. I recall that I was on the lower deck and I had some nausea from being on the boat. My husband felt fine and he just made sure that everything is clean. My child, on the other hand, became sick and she had a very severe cold. I don't know if she had pneumonia, but what they did, they took her away from me and they put her into an infirmary. I think something like that she was a year and...she was eighteen months, seventeen months. I think that this maybe affected her. She doesn't know about it. I'm talking about it, but as I think back, the child was in a crib. They didn't let me in to feed her even. She stood behind glass doors-not a glass door but a glass room with her hand stretched out and cried, and they wouldn't let me in to feed her. She was sick there for the greatest part of our travel. I think we were on the water maybe ten, eleven days. Is it possible? I don't remember. Also, that military ship had a very noisy siren, terrible. Every so often they let out that siren, and the child was very frightened of that. I remember that the children didn't have enough milk. There were some children that used to go to bed with a bottle of milk, and I knew some English and I went to the authorities and I asked them to provide that milk for the children, which they did.

INT: Who were the authorities?

REGINA: The Americans, but the ship was military. Maybe they were from the UNRAH? I doubt it. I don't know who they were. They were Americans. They were nice, but they were very strict. I thought it was awful not to let me to the child. Apparently they were afraid we shouldn't bring any illnesses. I don't remember where we were deloused when we left. I know they did something to us. They sprayed us with something. Also, what was very funny-when we came to the United States, it was 4th of July, and we almost had a collision that night. It was a dark night and we had to put on our life preservers, and somehow the ship didn't collide. We almost collided with another ship. And we came and we were met by my husband's two aunts, three aunts, and three uncles. They took a look at us, and when we disembarked, we had a small wooden trunk, a wooden trunk, and that's all what we had. They said in Yiddish, "Oy vey, zey huben gurnisht (they have nothing)." They didn't know that this trunk was full of books. There was nothing there but books and two military blankets.

INT: These were your husband's books?

REGINA: Yes. As soon as he came to Germany he got himself involved with his business. I don't remember if I told you that when we were in Germany he was the principal of a school.

INT: No, I don't think so.

REGINA: We didn't talk about it? He became a principal of a school and the school was led in Hebrew. Every subject was in Hebrew. At that time, people thought that they are going to go to Israel. Everybody hoped to go to Israel. I think I told you that I was ready to go and then I couldn't. It was awfully hard. They took us to their house, one of their aunts, and we stayed there maybe one week, and the landlady was very much afraid that we may stay forever, because they lived in an apartment.

INT: Where is this?

REGINA: In New York. So another aunt rented for us a room in someone's house and we stayed there for two months. It was July, August, and September we came to Philadelphia and we are here since then.

INT: This is '49? Do I have the year right? What year are we in now?

REGINA: I think it was '50. Wait a minute. You know how I can count? My daughter was born in '47, so when she was eighteen months old, what year was it?

INT: It would be '49. What's her birthday?

REGINA: In March.

INT: So March of '47 until March of '48, then another six months would bring you just to early '49.

REGINA: Was it '49?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: I have in the bank, I have the ship's card. How come I don't remember such a silly thing? It seems to me that it was '50 but maybe it was '49. (Tape shuts) Israel was in-

INT: '48.

REGINA: And we celebrate Israel being born in the camp, and my husband made a very big speech, so I remember that, and she was in the carriage. Anyway, when we came, so another aunt, I think they collected some money and they rented for us a room in somebody's house. What I wanted to tell you also is that when we embarked from the ship, she had a carriage and a doll. They took away the carriage from her. She had a doll

without a head. We have a picture somewhere of her holding the doll without a head. And they didn't want her to have that doll when she was sick, in the infirmary. They wouldn't permit it.

INT: What's the oldest daughter's name?

REGINA: Edna. You know, the relatives were very nice and warm people but they were not wealthy. They welcomed us. They left before my husband was born, so it was awfully nice. I had one cousin who lives now in California. He remembers me from Poland still, because we went to the same gymnasium. My aunt had in Philadelphia Chomsky; Chomsky who was the head of Gratz College. He comes from the same city that my husband, and my husband's father was his teacher, so my aunt wrote to him a letter that the son of -- Shaya was his name, Yeshayahu -- came to the United States, maybe he can offer him some kind of a job or help him out with a job.

So he apparently went to Har Zion and talked to the rabbi and they gave my husband a job by phone, and he came to United States, and he started teaching Hebrew. Hebrew he knew very little...I mean, he probably knew a lot, but first of all, the pronunciation was Sefardi, [and not] Ashkenazic, and I sat with him in Germany and he switched to Sefardi, and he read and read and studied and studied that he became the principal of the school and he came here and he could teach Hebrew. That was...I don't know whether you're interested. He immediately enrolled in Heidelberg University when he came to Germany.

He knew that he needs some kind of paper, and when they took all his credit they told him that he has enough for two doctorates, and he immediately started studying Arabic and Aramaic. I have...He corresponded later on with a professor who wrote the Arab dictionary, and when he came to the United States he said, "You know, I was looking for your dictionary and I couldn't get it," so the professor answers to him, "I wasn't aware that it's unavailable." But eventually he got it. Anyway, he started teaching Hebrew in Har Zion. When we came to Har Zion, the rabbi met us at the train station. I don't remember if this Chomsky was with, but Rabbi Goldstein met us at the train station. They put us up in a hotel for two months, on Chestnut Street, until we settled and school started in September. We came here probably in the middle of August. And then we found an apartment on South Street.

INT: So was the job set up before you left Germany?

REGINA: No.

INT: This was after you came to the...once you were here at the aunt. So when you left Germany, you didn't know what you were going to be doing or how?

REGINA: No. The aunt, which was my husband's mother's sister, wrote to Chomsky. She knew that he's in the United States. She left in 1922, the year after the revolution. He arranged for this job, and on those premises we came to Philadelphia. The job was \$1500 a year, I think. But it was a beginning. And also, she knew another person who came from the little city where my husband was born, and he was a jeweler on 5th and South, and he moved to Latches Lane Apartments because the neighborhood started to change.

And he said that he would be glad if we would live in his house for \$50 a month, which was a very nice house. There were good houses there. He left the furnishings and everything in the house, and they moved to Latches Lane and they bought new stuff. I felt very close to that person where I lived. First of all, I didn't know that you could buy gefilte fish ready-made, and I was on First and South, so I bought fish and I made the fish and he liked it; and I baked challah and he liked it. We sort of lived there only one year, because I realized that it is black and it was noisy. Someone in Har Zion...(tape shuts) Where was I? Yes, we were-

INT: You were talking about moving from South Street.

REGINA: Yes. In Har Zion, just to teach one course wasn't enough so they suggested maybe he would like to teach evening class. There were some...you know, the president of the synagogue and some other men, older people, adult class. So he started teaching them and I guess they fell in love with him and there was one person, Mr. Schreiber, who said you shouldn't live on South Street. You should move out. It's not so safe and all that. So we moved to 52nd and Parkside, to an apartment that was closer to Har Zion.

INT: Har Zion was in Wynnefield at this time?

REGINA: Wynnefield, yes. It was closer to Har Zion. And we lived there three years, and from there we moved to a house, where we lived two years, also closer to Har Zion. It was Jefferson Street. And after that, the same Mr. Schrieber said it's time to buy a house. You're wasting money paying rent and this and that. And we didn't have a car, so he drove him around to show him houses. But it was so remote. He didn't have any money. So he said, "We will lend you money and you'll give us a promissory note and you'll pay. Somebody will give you the \$5000 down payment and you move." So he showed him houses, houses. Of course, we wound up in this ten-room house. I didn't have seichel [common sense]. I said, "Who is going to clean that giant house?" But I was young and I thought okay. And they did send us money, \$5000 for a down payment, and we lived in that house eighteen years. Of course, we did the painting ourselves. We did the floor scraping.

It happened so that this was the house where this Mr. Schrieber lived once upon a time and he raised three kids, and he says, "You have three daughters. This house is for you." When we bought the house, we bought it from a rabbi, Rabbi Foreman. This Mr. Schrieber moved already to Bryn Mawr Avenue, to another house, but that rabbi was transferred, I think, to New York. He bought this house from him. He did a favor to this rabbi and he did a favor for us. But it was...we were very happy in that house. It was a lovely house. It had good landlords. We bought it for \$13,000 and we sold it for \$14,000 after eighteen years, because the neighborhood was changing. In fact, I think we even paid \$500 deposit for the black people, that she should be able to buy it, something like that. I don't know what she paid at that time.

In the meantime, my husband enrolled in Dropsie and there were very good professors at that time in Dropsie. The famous Dr. Sclars and Dr...what's his name? Anyway, he attended Dropsie and within three years he started writing his dissertation and he got his

doctorate. He decided at that time...he switched. There opened a job in Akiba, and this he could teach everything. So he taught in Akiba -- I think math and Joshua -- that's what he taught there for a while. I don't know how many years he taught. We became citizens, because I know when he was teaching at Akiba, in 1957, we became citizens. It took longer for us to become citizens than other people because...six years, something like that, or seven years. He did not want to lie and tell that he was born in Poland. He wanted to say that he was born in Russia, so he went to HIAS. He changed his name. He changed his first name, his last name. His first name was Adler.

INT: His last name was Adler.

REGINA: His last name was Adler.

INT: Moshe was his name.

REGINA: Moshe, right. And he took a name of a cousin in New York, Phillip, and an uncle, Kimmelfield. And that's how it became Fields. So then we got our citizenship papers, even though on the other side it's written the truth. The people in HIAS told him to say, that you don't have to be afraid. But he was always afraid. He was afraid almost all his life. I don't know why. I know why-you live in a closed society and you live in fear, and you just can't rid yourself of it, so far that he did not permit me even...He died ten years ago. He says, "Don't write to the people in Russia. If they want to get out like I wanted to get out, they'll go out. Don't start. They will get into trouble."

INT: Did you share these fears? Did you have the same fears at all?

REGINA: I had different fears than he did. He could not understand my fears. I could understand his fears. For example, I just wanted every time when he went to work he should call me. I should make sure that he got there. I had the feeling that people leave the house and they don't come back. This was my fear. Also, my fear was if somebody approached me from the back I go like this. I still go like this when the telephone rings. Those mostly were the fears. When I send my child to buy a tomato, in Wynnefield you had the little store. As soon as I sent her I ran after her, because I'm afraid something will happen to her. I had a fear that people leave and don't come back. This I could not...and until today, my children drive home, they have to call in that they arrived. Not only that. I have my friend, Meyer. When he goes home, I say call that you arrived. It is something you don't really...

INT: Do you remember having those kinds of fears before the war?

REGINA: Oh, no.

INT: So you think it's really related to-

REGINA: Oh, yes. It is related to my...it is a terrible thing. You have no idea. It is like somebody has claustrophobia or agoraphobia. I have this phobia that people don't come back, that something happened already. G-d forbid somebody was late. Even when the children...I lived on the street where Har Zion was. I lived on 54th Street. When they

went home from Hebrew school I stood at the door to watch that they are okay. It is something you live with forever. I can't get rid of that. I think that my oldest daughter has things that she doesn't know about it, but she's different than my other two. The others are happy-go-lucky. She's more serious. I think it all comes from those times that she was...she must have. She went to nursery school and everybody spoke English and she still spoke Polish because I spoke Polish to her. One day she says, "I don't want to speak the way you speak. I want to speak the way they speak."

INT: So you spoke Polish at home completely?

REGINA: Yes, Polish and Russian.

INT: And with the younger daughters as well?

REGINA: No. By then already...because it took five years and then we had a second child. She was five when the second was born. And then two years later the third one was born. I couldn't tell her off in English. It was hard. If I wanted to tell her off. Also, what I made a big mistake, I went to the library and I took out books how to raise a child. So there was this permissive age. Everything was permissiveness, permissiveness, and I said, "Well, it's written. It's written in the book to behave like that." (Laughter) My husband said, "You'll be sorry. You're spoiling the child. What kind of business is that?" And I thought that I'm right. I never touched my children. I guess I was lucky that...He was the more strict. Coming from Russia, from this society, he was strict. He was very loving.

INT: What were your parents like as disciplinarians?

REGINA: I was very wild. I think that I was maybe "hyper." Now they would give me Ritalin. Well, my father used to take...used to wrap it, used to soak it, so the anger should go by (?). I used to get a potch here and there. It didn't hurt. My father used to hit me like that. I grew up in a good home.

INT: But your father did most of the disciplining at home?

REGINA: No, my mother too. When he was angry with me, he did that.

INT: Pinch your cheek.

REGINA: Pinch himself.

INT: So he was doing that to stop himself from getting angry.

REGINA: Yes, from getting angry at me. But I know that I was wild. I was like a boy. I was fighting. I didn't have a sister until I was five or six, six I think. I was spoiled. My grandfather loved me very much. There was not another young child in the family. I had uncles.

INT: These were your mother's brothers, right?

REGINA: Yes. They spoiled me. They gave me pennies for candy. But I know in school I had a hard time sitting. The teacher used to tell my mother, “She knows, but she can’t sit. If she would only sit.” I must have been a little hyper. Even now I can’t sit. Robbie thinks that I walk the floor. Every minute I used to get up. I sit a little, I do something and I have to change. It’s funny at my age to tell you that.

INT: It doesn’t go away.

REGINA: It doesn’t go away. I have a grandson. I was telling my daughter that I think that maybe it’s hereditary.

INT: There’s a lot of information that it is hereditary.

REGINA: The problem is that you take Ritalin and it takes away your appetite, and he’s slim. They permit him to eat ice cream and all, which is not good either because the sugar makes him hyper. But he is very slim; just the opposite of his older brother, who’s maybe a little heavy. They’re so cute. Oh, they have a third one. Did you meet my daughter?

INT: I know that I have but I don’t remember.

REGINA: They have a fourteen-month-old, a darling child. So spoiled. The brothers take care of him. There’s a seven and eleven year difference. It’s like a toy.

INT: So he’ll be a spoiled one too.

REGINA: Yes. I don’t think they’re spoiled. Mark is not spoiled. It’s just that he has a problem. As soon as the pill wears off, he doesn’t know what to do. He climbs the walls. Climbs on the couch. So my son-in-law said, “Did you take your pill?” He’s already taking care of himself. He really cannot control himself.

INT: Did you see this in any of your daughters?

REGINA: No. It skipped a generation.

INT: That’s not untypical. A lot of adults find out that they’re hyperactive and they never recognized it for themselves, but when they go to the doctor with their child and the doctor asks all these questions, they say, “Oh yes, I was just like that.” More and more they think that is a hereditary thing.

REGINA: I used to go on a swing and bring mice into the house and stray cats. More like a boy than a girl. Somehow you grow out of it. Now you analyze it and the children are on drugs. Somehow I grew up. Somehow I grew up and I learned how to read and write. I don’t know. I don’t know what’s better.

INT: I think some made it and some didn’t, like anything else. If you got the right teachers at the right time that might have helped.

REGINA: I know that I had a hard time sitting and studying but they made me. They made me. My mother sat with me. She sat with me while I did my homework, and I had to do it very perfectly. If not, she had another copybook and I had to start- (end of tape 4, side 1) I don't know what this has to do with my survival.

INT: We're looking for a whole picture of what happened afterwards. That's why I was going to ask you a little bit more about...when you thought about having children in Germany, what were your thoughts then and your husband's thoughts then?

REGINA: He was very ready to have a child and he was happy. He was thirty-six years old already and he lost a wife and a child in the first days of the war. They were bombed. And I always wanted to have a child. When I was hiding-I don't know if I said that I was pregnant.

INT: Yes. Right near the end.

REGINA: Yes, at the end, and I was very sorry that I had an abortion. I was always very fearful maybe I can't have any children. I just had this feeling. There was no question.

INT: Did you have fears about having a child at that time, given what you had just been through?

REGINA: No. No. Every woman, before she delivers a baby, thinks who knows what will happen to me. But I walked five miles to have the child all by myself, with another pregnant woman who went for a checkup, to a little city next to Leipheim. My husband was too busy in class. He was never at the birth of my child. He always was in a classroom. (Laughter) My husband retired with three months sick leave. He says, "I'm not sick. Why should I not go to school?" He was this type of a person. But then he came with a bouquet of flowers when the baby was born already. It was okay. In those days, the husbands didn't-

INT: It was not common.

REGINA: Didn't do birthing or whatever it is.

INT: Would you have liked him to have been there?

REGINA: No. It wasn't expected and I don't think I would, but he was a very good father. He got up and made the bottles and fed the babies and he changed the diapers. I always used to say, "You have to go to work in the morning. I get up and you get up. Why don't you sleep and let me do it?" But no, we both get up. It's a novelty, a baby, and it was with all of them like that. He was a very doting father and loved his girls. Fifteen years after everybody left he wakes up in the night, "Is everybody home?" I said, "Who is home? Everybody is married." "Oh." So that's a picture; that the kids are in your mind whether they are married or gone or still at home. I don't know. We were very concerned with the girls that they should come home on time. My children are more permissive.

INT: So your husband also worried about them coming home on time?

REGINA: Sure. We never fell asleep until they came home.

INT: Even when they were older?

REGINA: Yes.

INT: Especially when they were older.

REGINA: Yes. Because we were silly like that, my daughter went to medical school in Philadelphia and she lived in Germantown, and we both felt that this is the best for us. Suppose she goes to the library and she stays late and we will sit...

INT: So it was best that she was not in the house.

REGINA: Yes. It was better when they went away. I don't know if every parent is like that. I was like that because of what I survived and he was like that because I guess he got used to me already. (Laughter) As far as the kids are concerned, every parent is...we were lucky we didn't have the AIDS problem at that time, or I don't know. I don't know how they behaved. Maybe they tried marijuana or not. I didn't want to know. Now I'm asking them and they laugh.

INT: What do they tell you?

REGINA: I think that they did try it but they never smoked. He let them try a cigarette in the house, because he smoked for a little while. But it never took, and I didn't. We ate. We all liked to eat. (Laughter) So the adjustment was hard.

INT: How was it hard?

REGINA: It was hard because of the language. You felt embarrassed. I felt always, "oh, those people who meet me, they think probably that I'm born from a stone. They don't know that I had a nice mother and father and good parents and a home and things." For example, when we were in our aunt's house, my daughter sat down with her shoes on her couch and she got so upset, and I said to myself, "You idiot. We lost everything. This material thing, is it so important, that couch? A child..." I was insulted that she told her off. She could have said nicely. That is the difference between people who survived. Those things are not so important. Eventually, I guess, I probably am now like that too. You want to keep it nice.

INT: So when the grandchildren come over and they put their feet up on your couch, how do you react?

REGINA: I let them, and if I did, so I put a "shmatta" [old cloth] there and that's that. When glass breaks, I worry about the glass? On the other hand, my husband used to get very upset. He used to get upset because it was not available in Russia. When you broke something, you couldn't get it. When you needed a nail you couldn't get it. When you needed a pencil...He has so many pencils, boxes of pencils, sharpened to a point, upstairs, and I don't dare touch it. (Laughter) For him, that was so important. Really, in Russia, if

you had a few pencils you could survive. You could exchange a pencil for bread. Those little items were very...I have a friend who left Siberia and the girl in the office gave them five pencils, the ones that you lick. She says, "Here, those pencils, they will help you out." And they really did. He exchanged them for different things on the way out of Russia.

INT: But you also collected things, if I remember. You didn't throw away jars at all.

REGINA: Yes, I collect everything. I don't throw out a thing. I recycle. Your wife also collects, right?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: But she collects for different reasons.

INT: Everything goes into school.

REGINA: Yes, I know that.

INT: So all the paper rolls and egg cartons.

REGINA: And the teachers that I work with, they already know, "Regina, can we throw it out?" I always have another...Even now already, school has not yet started and I collect all the little green boxes. (Tape shuts)

INT: What else was difficult? Did you have any family here at all? When you came to Philadelphia, whom did you know?

REGINA: No one. Nor he or I. I met...I used to go to the park. We lived on Parkside, and in the park I met a young family with a child and they were both German Jews, also survivors of some kind. They survived in a different way. So I became friendly with her and she had a child my daughter's age and we're still friendly. Once in a while we talk on the phone. They live in the Northeast. Then we made some friends, some teacher from Har Zion, who was also from Poland, but he left Poland in '39, so he felt sort of a kinship with me, and he and his wife became our friends. In fact, he also taught eventually history. He listened to my husband. He was a communist but he was trying to convince him. He had tendencies and my husband was trying to convince him otherwise. We're still friendly. I'm still friendly with them and slowly, slowly, people wanted to invite us -- the Americans -- but my husband felt that there was more curiosity than friendship. He says, "We are not on their social level yet and I don't want to..." But they were nice. They wanted us. Rabbi Goldstein wanted him to speak to the congregation but he was so afraid.

INT: He was afraid of somebody finding him out?

REGINA: Somebody finding him out and maybe his family will be...that's why he changed his name. Because the Russians had spies; they had spies. I don't know if you

remember. There was a...called London, and he was killed. And since he was a lecturer in the army, my husband was not a plain lecturer.

INT: He was a political instructor.

REGINA: And so many people knew him. He said, "Let's sit quiet." And he always wanted to teach in a state school, because he felt that this is the safest place. There will be a pension and maybe you won't earn too much but...And also, because he taught in Cheney [University]. And he also felt that maybe he's doing something good, which he did, because they liked him a lot.

INT: So if I remember, politically he was very conservative but in social conscience he was...

REGINA: He was very conservative, yes.

INT: Who would you say, in these early years...you said you were more the...with you and your husband, who did more of the opening up the social doors?

REGINA: I did, but I met people from Poland. I met people from Poland and we all became friends, and I'm still friends with them.

INT: This through organizations or...

REGINA: No. Down the street from me on Woodcrest Avenue lived a Polish family. She survived in a concentration camp with her parents, and she lived with her parents. She graduated from Bryn Mawr and university. She's a chemist, and I'm still friendly with her. They have three boys. They used to come to me for Rosh Hashana and for Passover I used to go to them. I made for the children a family. My next door neighbor, my children used to say, "Oh, everybody has a grandmother and we don't." My next door neighbor, which I was on good terms with, said, "I'll be your grandmother." And then this introduced me to another friend. She introduced me to other people from Poland and we became friendly with them. Later on, we belonged to the Jewish New Americans. It was a group. And my husband met somebody from Russia that knew his brother. She was married to a Polish Jew, a Russian girl, and we became very friendly with her. We made a group of people, mostly new Americans. There was something...there was a kinship, and that's why Meyer survived in Russia. There is a book written. He wrote up his life. He's cousins with the Wachs', the Wachs' who sponsored this.

INT: The Spitzers?

REGINA: Yes. She is Spitzer. Her husband's name is Wachs but she keeps it Spitzer. My daughter wanted to kill me because I didn't permit her to keep her maiden name. She has all the diplomas in her maiden name. I said, "You take your husband's name, he should feel comfortable." I don't know. Does it bother you?

INT: Not anymore.

REGINA: What are the children's name?

INT: Gottlieb.

REGINA: I'm very sorry that I didn't keep my maiden name. You know why? Just add, Stanger-Fields. Because no one survived. There's no survivors.

INT: Why didn't you? It just wasn't done?

REGINA: No, I just didn't think of it. I just didn't think of it. Later on, you know...In the very beginning we were so much concerned with going ahead, raising your family, making ends meet and all that. I didn't think that much of...I did think of my family and all that, but I thought of them when the holidays came. I missed them and I talked about them, but I didn't think how to permanently give a name. For example, in the synagogue there is an old Torah from Czechoslovakia, and it is dedicated to the memory of my parents and his parents, but my name is Fields and my parent's name is Stander. It was Emmanuel Stander and my mother and my sister. Who knows that I am-

INT: The connection.

REGINA: The connection. I should have kept it. I think that if I would just start writing Stander-Fields, nobody would-

INT: Nowadays, nobody would...

REGINA: Because I don't have a middle name. In Europe you don't.

INT: Did you talk about your wartime experiences and your family with the friends you were making?

REGINA: Yes, but I didn't dwell on it very much. I did. So much that I said I delivered Edna in Germany, so she thought that she came from the "liver." She says, "Did I come from a liver?" I said, "I delivered here."

INT: So she had no idea-

REGINA: She had no idea what deliver is, so she thought that she came from a liver. (Laughter) You can see how children think. We went once to the butcher shop. That's how it happened. We went to the butcher shop and in Wynnefield, she saw the meat and I told him to give me a pound of liver. She said, "Is that where I came from?" (Laughter)

INT: That's funny.

REGINA: That's the English, probably. Maybe not.

INT: Who knows how kids can make whatever connections they make to things.

REGINA: She listens to what I said. She knows most what I survived, because I did tell some relatives. What's interesting is that I couldn't communicate with them. I didn't

know enough English, so I talked Yiddish with them. I didn't know very well Yiddish but they did, and she picked up the Yiddish and within two months in New York, she picked up some Yiddish. Just very easy. And then she switched to English.

INT: So when you were feeling at times, especially around the holidays, of missing your family-

REGINA: Very sad. Very sad.

INT: Did you talk that out with anyone? How did you deal with that?

REGINA: I have grief. I was grieving inside. It's very sad. And I did something about it because immediately I got involved with people and I had always somebody during the holiday. Either I went or they came. Even in Har Zion we made friends with Dr. Sarna. He is now a famous scholar, a biblical scholar.

INT: Nachum Sarna?

REGINA: Yes. He was one of my friends. They lived close by. And also, we went to them or they came to us. But again, it was European people. I find Americans very sweet and very good but no matter what, they cannot feel what we feel. It is something that...how can you? How can you feel or understand? You can talk from here till tomorrow. You really...words cannot transmit the certain feelings you have about different things. I have an outlook in life and it's different. Material things are not so important, even though I like to have them. I probably changed too.

INT: Is this true even today? Say if you meet new people today, do you still feel more comfortable with somebody who has-

REGINA: Yes, yes. I'm friends with Americans.

INT: Some of your best friends are Americans?

REGINA: He married an American person. I don't think I could. Maybe I could. I don't know. If I would fall in love, probably I could. But he married an American girl and he became very friendly with the family. (Tape shuts) I think it's important to finish with that because you never know-when I start working it will be hard.

INT: Finish with?

REGINA: With my own stuff. See, this is my dyslexia. Not dyslexia, but my thing that I go to other things.

INT: That's fine. That's fine in here.

REGINA: I think this is part of it, isn't it, that you cannot stick to a subject long enough.

INT: I'm the same way, so I think it's a sign of intelligence. You have a lot of ideas.

REGINA: Yes, and the idea comes and you just go on.

INT: So people who did not share your background, you did not share your story with them as much.

REGINA: Well, the tape that they made in the synagogue. Somebody became interested because I mentioned something, so I did share. I felt the time came to talk about it. For many years I didn't talk, and now my grandchildren are asking me questions. They want to know, especially my oldest grandson. Every time he asks me over and over and over.

INT: How old is he?

REGINA: He's seventeen. He's going to go to Drexel. They live in Scranton and he will be in Drexel University.

INT: So that's nice.

REGINA: Yes. He's a very sweet boy.

INT: Did he start asking recently?

REGINA: No. They had some assignments in school. Each of them had already some assignments. They called me up on the telephone and they interviewed me. He asked me-what was interesting-if I believed in G-d after that happened.

INT: And what did you answer him?

REGINA: Yes, I do. I believe more that my mother is watching over me; whether that's G-d's will or whatever. But I have that feeling that somebody is with me because I had so many happenings in life that it was touch-and-go. Yes, there is some kind of a Supreme Being. I don't try to philosophize and ask too many questions. I don't try to analyze it. Something took care of me. Some people turned against religion, how G-d let so many people die.

INT: How do you answer that question?

REGINA: How do I answer that question? That's the way of life. Look what's happening in Rwanda and in other places. Either it's natural disaster or man-made disaster. That's the way the world is. I think I am a pretty optimistic person in general. The only fear I have is that somebody doesn't come home, but other than that I'm okay. I would like to be able to be more happy, genuinely happy. What I couldn't understand is people were laughing hearty, and I just said, "What are they laughing about? What's so funny?" Certain things on television. They could laugh heartily at a trivial thing and to me, it still is...They too sit and laugh. But you see, he survived differently. He lost the family and he worked very, very hard and he survived by his wits. He's a happy person and he stayed happy. Even with the son being the way [?], he builds a wall around himself and doesn't touch...it touches him but he doesn't think about it.

INT: Is it conscious that you don't laugh out loud? Like you feel you'd want to but you say no, that's not appropriate, or that's just the way you are?

REGINA: That's the way I am, because I was a very, very happy child. I was very happy-go-lucky. But I don't know how to explain. I think it is part of whatever I lived through. The grieving never ends, even though I know now that my mother probably would have been a very old lady, and I know the problems with old age. But can you lose something in the prime of life? Even though my mother said to my father, "We lived some, but the children didn't." This generation is going to go down with the memories of the past, and then it will be over. Maybe the [Holocaust] museum in Washington will keep it alive for a while. Have you been to the museum?

INT: We're going in October. All the people involved in this project are going together.

REGINA: Yes, it will be very good for you.

INT: Ellen has been but I have not.

REGINA: I would like to go again. Every disaster in the world is different. The disasters in Africa and what happened in Europe is different. It's a different type of disaster. This was a person decided to annihilate a whole people, to destroy and to have museums about it. Well, he didn't succeed, and that is a very great reward. It is gratification. Every time I think, "Oh, I survived. I did it." This is something that makes you feel good, in spite of all the difficulties and in spite of...I outwitted Hitler; that was the first thought when I survived. I said, "Oh, now I can die. Now I don't care. It's a "nekumah" (revenge)."

INT: I remember when we talked and you said one of the things that kept you going was waiting for Hitler to die.

REGINA: Waiting for Hitler to go. Not only for me, but for all the people who perished.

INT: When you think back now to your parents, you said now your mother would be quite an elderly woman. Did you think about that over the last years? Does she stay in your mind?

REGINA: She stays in my mind as young as she was. I never picture her old. She stays in my mind the way she was, and so does my father, the way I see them in my pictures. I think I showed you. I feel very bad for my sister when I say Yizkor. That's when I feel like crying, that she was such a nice child. Twelve years old. Just really didn't have a chance and she knew that she's going to die. They all knew. That was a bigger punishment than what-to know that you are going to die. It's like having cancer and knowing that eventually you will go, but with cancer- (end of tape 4, side 2)

INT: Tape #5 of an interview with Regina Fields. It's August 17th.

REGINA: Wednesday.

INT: Wednesday.

REGINA: I didn't know yesterday what day it was. I asked a neighbor. (Laughter)

INT: You had to ask to...

REGINA: Because I refused to have the newspaper. It's so dirty. I cannot stand the print.

INT: How do you manage with not having the activity, because I know that keeping busy is important to you? Since you're not working.

REGINA: I had the most painful and the most wonderful time. I was watching the birds, listening to the birds, and when I got sick the leaves were not on the trees yet. I was sitting outside and watching the trees come. I watched the spring and it was beautiful. Really. And I knew which birds sing seven o'clock and which birds sing eight thirty, and now the birds are gone and all you hear is the-

INT: The crickets.

REGINA: The crickets. And I was reading a lot. I spent it all outside. I closed down...on my deck, the steps. And of course, I got very wonderful friends who came to visit. Look what they wrote, the kids who came. Isn't it funny? I hope you feel better. I miss you. I miss you. Please get better. Isn't it funny?

INT: You had a little break in the tape so I want to go back to it. I want to stay a little bit more with the first years in Philadelphia and with the adjustments to being in Philadelphia. You worked very hard to build up a family-like atmosphere through the friends.

REGINA: Right, and it did work very well. We did not go out to restaurants to eat, for example. Financially it was difficult, so I invited people for dinners or for evenings, and we took turns. Some evening one family, some evening the other. We had one friend from Poland who invariably the conversation always turned to his past. Not that we resented it, but it became...it wasn't necessary, but he always dwelled on his past. I guess it was important to him to remember. He always used to say, "Remember what Amalek did to us." We did not. We played Scrabble (laughter), not knowing very much English. We had good times. My husband was a different person. I needed people. I always needed people. He obliged me. It was okay. He said, "I don't need anyone. I need my books, I need you and I need my children, and that's enough for me." He was a person like that, but he was clever enough to be polite enough when somebody came. And I need people. I like people. I have very good friends.

INT: Who did you go to when you had problems, or how did you deal with it?

REGINA: I talk. For example, my husband died. I was talking, talking, talking incessantly, all the time, about him. And I find strange people to talk to, because I knew that my friends already know. But I felt instead of going to a psychiatrist, which I couldn't afford...I find talking gets me through all my problems. Of course, there are certain very personal things that you don't want to talk about. If I had some financial problems-not problems but I wanted some advice, I asked this one and this one and that

one. I'm not that...how do you say? I don't profess to know it all and that's the only way you find out, by asking and talking. You find everybody is willing to give you advice, even if you don't ask for it. Especially when you ask.

INT: Right. Advice everyone has.

REGINA: So that's the way I lived.

INT: So, for example, when you were talking after your husband died, it wasn't even so much telling...it would be the same story over. Was the activity of talking as important as...

REGINA: I know that I was talking a lot about him. I was talking probably three years, and I still talk about him. My friend talks about his wife too. He had two of them. He talks about the second wife. We both still say this and that. I don't resent it. I don't care, and I don't think he resents it, and if he does, tough. (Laughter) Too bad. In my view of psychiatry...I don't know. I always felt that people go for help if they don't have any friends. If you are ashamed to talk about it or you don't have any friends, then you must. Whether it helps or not, I don't know, because I didn't have any experience. I feel that most people who go into psychiatry and those professions, they are people who have problems themselves as children, and that's one way to solve their problems. I don't think much of Freud. He was a "meshugana" [crazy person]. (Laughter) But this is a necessary thing. It is. Apparently, people who have problems in the past, they find out things that they don't remember going through therapy. Whether it is planted in their mind and they remember or they really remember. I'm curious-do you believe in psychiatry? (Tape shuts)

INT: What about your daughters? How did they deal with...who did they go to when they had problems when they were growing up, within the family?

REGINA: (Pause) I'm thinking. Maybe they don't. Maybe they don't have problems, but they do. They do call me about different things.

INT: I'm saying when they had problems with boyfriends or something like that. Did they come to you or to your husband more?

REGINA: I guess to me. I think to me. They talked to each other too. Now they do. They feel very close. Everybody talks to everybody. My older daughter certainly confides in me more than the others. I know when my husband died she said, "Now the (?)." That's how she felt, that we kept...the family was intact. They're pretty well adjusted. They're well adjusted. I spend two weeks down the shore with my older daughter and my three grandchildren and I have noticed that she is much more relaxed with her children than I used to be with her. If they wanted to go for a walk and come home twelve o'clock, it's okay. If they wanted to sit and talk until three o'clock at night and giggle and then sleep the next day until twelve...I'm glad that she can do it. It was wonderful to see the grandchildren set the table and make dinner and then clean up. They're very sweet kids and they're very nice to me. I think that I did something good raising her that she has good children too. There is lots of love and devotion. They always end the conversation,

“I love you, I love you.” Of course there are some problems. If there are, they don’t tell me.

INT: As adults they don’t tell you. Do you feel when they were children that they were pretty open with their problems?

REGINA: Yes, I think so. I think so. They were open. I never thought of it. I did my best to raise them. I did more than everyone else. For example, I know that in some households you expect a child, when he becomes a teenager, to work and to earn and to supplement, to give something to the parents. Maybe it is good. Maybe it is good to teach them to be independent and all that. We kept the kids very dependent on us. Even when my daughter went to medical school, she had very little borrowed money, so when she finished she shouldn’t have a big burden. And that was on a salary of teachers. We managed. My kids hardly worked. If we did, we took vacations together.

INT: Did you work as a child, when you were fifteen?

REGINA: No.

INT: Was that something that was done?

REGINA: In Europe? No. Boys used to maybe work when they were fifteen, if they didn’t go to school. They were apprentices or they worked like a salesperson in a store. But not in my time. My parents paid an awful lot of money for my education because it was a private gymnasium. A lot of money, plus I had a violin teacher, plus I had a Hebrew teacher at home during the summer; so I don’t waste all the time. Of course you didn’t have television. You didn’t have other entertainment. And my father kept me every Saturday-I sat with him to do the parsha of the week. I came from a well-to-do home, and the same thing was my cousins. They were okay. That cousin who is now in California, he had a grandmother in the United States, so she sent for him and he came on the last ship. We are very close and we keep in touch. We call each other.

He had a sister in Israel who used to come and visit. Now she’s an elderly lady. She’s in her eighties. She stayed with me two weeks. You know what? In Israel...well, maybe I said it already. I had a cousin who survived in Russia and he lived in Israel and I had one cousin who left Poland before the war and he was in Israel. And I had a cousin who survived the war and also went to live with her husband, and when I came to Israel for the first time, if somebody would give me a million dollars I wouldn’t take it. I felt so rich. I had three cousins with their wives. I never will forget that feeling. You’re talking about missing family? I just felt, oh my goodness, I have somebody who knows where I came from or remembers my parents, who remembers the past, the city and all that. It’s a wonderful feeling because I never met anyone from my city, a friend. There’s one person here in Philadelphia who went to a yeshiva in my city, and I feel close to him too. Also we are friends.

INT: So he knew your family?

REGINA: No, no. He just knew the streets where I lived because the yeshiva was not far from it. He remembers the Turkish baths. We can talk about those silly things. Just knowing that he studied in the yeshiva in my city makes me feel like he is my relative. But the feeling of rich...I was so rich in Israel. I had all those cousins. But not so many.

INT: Is part of it just to have the ability to find out about your own childhood and grandparents?

REGINA: No.

INT: Because you were old enough to...

REGINA: Yes, I was old enough to remember. Just the feeling that somebody loved me and I loved them and they were always very hospitable and happy to see me. My mother was a very good aunt, and that cousin who lived in Israel, his mother died at childbirth. There were like ten children left. She was one aunt. She used to come and bathe them and bring them candy and all that. Later on they had a stepmother, so suddenly they used to come to her to tell on the stepmother. My cousin remembered that, his aunt, my mother. And they accepted my husband like we were one. Americans are also like that. They care. There are many Americans who care about the relatives who were in Russia. But you always think my caring is different than somebody else's, or my caring is better; is more stronger, more intense.

INT: Are you still in touch with these cousins?

REGINA: Yes, I am still in touch. Of course, they died. My cousins died but their wives are still around so I write. In fact, before each holiday I write. I was in Israel three years ago. In fact, I stayed with one of them. They're getting older. They're all getting older. Now I write a letter...before I used to write a letter that I'm having fun, I go to my children. But I'm going-what's tomorrow? Thursday? Friday I'm going to the shore with my youngest daughter. For example, I feel very comfortable in my children's house. I know that when my children invite me, they mean it. They don't do it because they want...I don't know what they want. I'm not going to leave them money. But if I can, I do give to my grandchildren and my children the best I can. I don't buy their love. I don't have to. They want me to have fun. They say, "Go and spend. If you get sick, all the money you have is not enough." So I'm lucky. I'm lucky that way. For years and years and years I spent two weeks down the shore with my children, even though when I used to go with my husband somewhere else, but it was quality time spending with my children.

INT: When did you go back to work outside the household? Were you home most of the time?

REGINA: I worked in Har Zion for ten years and I'm twenty-two years, twenty-three years in Aduz Israel, so it's thirty-three years.

INT: So you were working through most of the time that your children were little.

REGINA: Well, thirty-three years. When they stopped coming for lunch. From Gompers they came home for lunch. When they stopped coming for lunch. That's when I started working first a half a day and then a full day. I don't think that I took...by me working they missed out, because I was home four o'clock. I always lived close. That's why I didn't go to Har Zion, not to waste another ten minutes driving. We led a very regular life. Dinner was dinner and breakfast was breakfast. My husband didn't know if he's hungry or what, but it's six o'clock, it's time to eat.

INT: That was the time.

REGINA: He says, "Oh, it's time to eat." I feel I'm hungry I want to eat but...My children are more...they're more Americanized. Sometimes one eats before and one eats later. I can't stand it.

INT: So when you're at their houses-

REGINA: When I go to my daughter, she says, "You know, Mommy, we didn't sit down to dinner for a long time." But when I come, they do it officially. Maybe it's better that way. You don't have to be so prompt. I don't know if it's easier. I think it's easier to be more organized but many American families don't eat together during the week. If they eat once a week together, then...

INT: We're like that. It's hard to do it.

REGINA: But maybe this is not...for me, it was important. That was the time we talked. But then my husband liked to listen to the news. He didn't want to miss out on something, which I didn't like either.

INT: So he would have his dinner and then watch the news, the same routine every day.

REGINA: Yes. Dinner at the table. I'm glad they had it. Let them do what they want to do. I don't care.

INT: How are you as a grandparent?

REGINA: I love them. I don't spend as much time with them. I don't have as much patience to spend with them because I am working in school. But we play games. ???
Mostly it's thank-you notes for sending something, but it doesn't matter. Some grandparents don't get thank-you notes. I think my granddaughter went to Israel this summer for four weeks and she said she showed me a postcard. I think it's coming by ship. I said, "Did you send it Air Mail?" She's back already a few weeks and the postcard isn't here yet. But I'm sure she wrote it. It must be the stamps. I'll see her so I'll ask her. My oldest daughter's children are more devoted. I don't know why. Maybe because they're the oldest. My youngest daughter-they like me, especially one. One is hooked up on me. I had to sleep in his room and stuff like that. Estelle's children are a little different because their father is different. They're very sweet children. They like you, but they're a little more reserved. They're not...I don't know how to explain it.

INT: They're not demonstrative?

REGINA: Yes. Not so demonstrative but I think it's just because the mother isn't home. That's what I think. She herself loves the children very much, but she's not huggy and kissy herself. My youngest daughter, she will take the big spoon and hit them, but then she'll kiss them the same. She's different. Each one of them is different. Estelle is the professional. She's not the professional mother. He's like a mother more, holding them and disciplining them. They listen to him. But then he is...he's different. Very good father, very loving, but not smothering. They think that my girls-either they're afraid of me or they still think what mom will say. I don't know what...they're teasing me. I don't care what they think of me. Let them think what they want. I think they're very lucky that I don't sit on top of them because I have my own life and I have my own friends and I'm not dependent on them, but they're very devoted. They cared very much that I was sick. If not he...I didn't drive, so he took me shopping and all that. They would have to do it and they would do it. I'm sure they would do it. Estelle was wonderful and her husband too. He drove me to the doctors and for x-rays. I don't think they feel it at home that they have to help me. So far they were very lucky. But I'm getting...

INT: Were you very involved with their career decisions or did you let them decide for themselves what to do? Did you have hopes of what you wanted to see them do?

REGINA: I cried when she went to medical school.

INT: This is-

REGINA: Estelle. I knew she will not be a mother, and I'm still...it hurts me. But she's a different person. She would have gone to graduate school, so she would be a history professor, so she might as well be a doctor and make more money. The others? You know, we talked it over and we applied to different schools. Yes, I was involved but I think that mostly what they felt like what they wanted.

INT: Was your husband the same way, to let the daughters find their own way?

REGINA: He was a big influence on them. Estelle wanted to be a history professor because he was. He said, "Where will you go? The jobs are scarce. You're going to get a degree and you're good at math, try medicine." But when he was sick he said, "I would never tell anybody's child to become a doctor, because when things are tough they cannot help you." That's what he said on his deathbed. I wouldn't recommend anyone to become a doctor.

INT: Because it was too hard to not be able to-

REGINA: To help the person, yes. That doesn't mean that he wasn't proud of her. She helped me a lot by being a doctor because I had to have certain tests, MRI and this and that. She went and she called up and I got it the same day and I came to her hospital. "Mrs. Fields, you are Dr's ...mother." They immediately-VIP treatment. It's not so bad, and she likes it. She likes it. (End of tape 5, side 1)

INT: I think this might be a good place to stop. (Tape shuts) This is an interview with Regina Fields. The interviewer is Allan Gottlieb. It's January 22, 1995. Tape #6. We again have had a big gap since the last time we talked. I want to pick up today with some general things. We've covered in the interviews most of your story, the story line itself. I want to get some things behind it, and I'll be looking at notes today as opposed to what I usually do, because I don't want to forget things. This is not as clear a sequence.

REGINA: I hope I remember something.

INT: You'll remember. You're doing fine. This is something that we touched on but we haven't talked a lot about. I'm going to ask in three times, both now, the past and also before the war. What role has religion played in your life? You talked about it a little bit. We can start before the war. You grew up in-

REGINA: I grew up in a Conservative home. Not Orthodox; observant, not fanatic. My father used to go morning and evening to services; Saturdays to the synagogue. Of course, women didn't go to the synagogue. My mother used to go for High Holidays. I know that my grandfather had a seat on the eastern wall and it was a seat yet from my great-grandfather, so it was sort of inherited. You inherited the seat. My grandfather died when I was pretty young, so all I know is that my father sat there. He had a younger brother but he didn't get it. He had the seat. And of course, the women prayed High Holidays. It was wonderful. We enjoyed it. Good food and stuff. I even remember Yom Kippur I liked best, because my mother prepared me a platter with the best food. Of course, the mother was...she took everything with a grain of salt. She was observant, religious, of course, but sometimes she said, "Oh, you can say the same thing at home. You don't have to run to the synagogue." And he did sometimes. I know many a times he said, "Oh, I had an aliyah today."

The synagogue that we belonged to was called The Great Shul. It was a beautiful, old building, and around that shul...that was the main synagogue in the city, and around that shul there were little "shtieblach," [small local shuls] where they were more Orthodox and there were maybe four; four of these. In one, my uncle prayed, my uncle who was much more observant than my father. My father wore a hat. He didn't wear a kippah in the house. I don't remember. I don't remember if he ate with a kippah. How come I don't? Those things you didn't pay attention to. No, he must have eaten with a kippah. Not a kippah, a hat. He didn't wear a hat in the house.

INT: He wouldn't have worn a hat in the house. Maybe just when he ate?

REGINA: (Pause) No comment. I don't want to lie. I just have to think real hard about it. I know that my uncle always wore a kippah because it was a black one-not a flat, but it was like a little higher. On Saturday he wore a "shtrielmel." That was one uncle. My mother had four brothers and she was the only sister and they revered her a lot, and on Saturday they used to come to our house. Is this part of religion?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: They used to come Saturday to our house, three brothers. The more religious one didn't eat in our house. I know that during the High Holidays the kids used to get dressed and run to the synagogue. I used to go to my mother to watch her pray. There the women were upstairs, and my mother sat also near a window. That was also an inherited seat from my grandmother. To sit near a window was nicer than...the windows were not so high. There was a curtain, but you could see. So I used to climb on her and look down. But I used to go to my father. Girls used to run around.

INT: So these are positive memories.

REGINA: Very positive. Very positive. And then I used to go to a temple with my aunt. During the holidays, I used to hop synagogues. And this was my mother's third oldest brother. He was more Reform, and he was praying in a temple. The temple also was a beautiful building, and they had a choir in there. When you belonged to a temple, you were like a goy. He didn't give a hoot. His son lives now in California. That's the only cousin that's left alive, and he has a daughter in Israel. So I used to go from one synagogue to the other, and sometimes my girlfriend's mother went to another synagogue, so we went to the other synagogue too. Of course, Friday night was Friday night.

You had to take a bath. You had to put on a clean dress. I had to be home for dinner. Sometimes I used to say, "The other children play outside. Why do I have to be home?" Summertime especially. My mother used to say, "That's how it is and you don't ask questions." So we had Friday night-it was lovely. My father didn't have a very nice voice, but he made the kiddish as best as he could. Saturday was a day of rest. It was absolutely wonderful. We went visiting or somebody came to our house. Especially I had two uncles who used to come to our house. I don't think we had gefilte fish every week, because we didn't have the gefilte fish. We had plain fish, but a piece of fish and challah, and especially I had an uncle who liked burned challah, so he used to ask my mother (in Yiddish), "Did you burn the challah?" He wanted the burnt part. It was a joke with us.

Saturday was wonderful. I used to love when my uncles and aunts used to come. They just gossiped and talked and talked. I know that the religious uncle and aunt always slept Saturday afternoon. Since I was an only grandchild and an only girl...my cousins were older. Everybody was older, and I was the kid around. So I used to go to this religious uncle too, because I liked the chicken soup. They had a very golden chicken soup. (Laughter) And my cousins were nice to me and he pinched my cheek and he kissed me. I don't know. And I had a grandfather that I loved very much. My grandfather, on the other hand, I don't remember him going to the synagogue because when I remember him, he already couldn't walk. He walked with a cane. He had sclerosis, which is hardening of the arteries in the legs. That's probably what I have. I have what he had. He prayed at home. I remember him putting the tefillin on. He was also Conservative. Of course kosher.

There is no question about kosher. Everybody was kosher. Maybe some people went out to eat further some place, but they didn't do it at home. All the memories are very pleasant. It is something that gave me...that still gives me a good feeling. Something that

my children don't have. Sometimes they bring in ham sandwiches. I know that I had one friend and I came there [on Shabbos] and she was sewing. Her sister was sewing a button inside, and I said, "How could you do that?" I was so upset, you know. I said, "There's a whole week. Why do you have to do it?" For them it was nothing. The father was an engineer and they were not observant. They were Jews, not observant.

INT: At this time, in your teen years, before the war, how would you describe your belief in G-d? I know you were in an observant community and you did the things, but-

REGINA: I never questioned G-d. I never did. I leave Him alone. As long as-

INT: As He leaves you alone.

REGINA: I didn't lose faith because that happened. I was thinking how can G-d let such innocent people die and all that. I always said, "It's bashert. It was meant to be. It's fated." So since I left everything to fate, so I did not question the belief in G-d. I just believed that it's my mother who's watching over me. I don't know if G-d is watching, but I know my mother is.

INT: How does that show itself? Did you think that?

REGINA: How did it come about? Because my mother...I don't know. She had such power. She had power over me and she had power to make me stay alive too. She had a lot of power over her brothers. They used to come to ask her questions, and when something was bad she used to say it will be good, it would be good. She was this kind of a person. She was a very strong woman. You know, she worked. My mother worked for the lottery during Austria. She just was a good person. She was positive, very devoted to the family, loved her brothers, loved her nephews, nieces. She remembered birthdays. She had a sister who had six or seven children and she died at childbirth, and her husband remarried. In fact, he remarried even in the ghetto and had a baby so late in life. It was a disgrace. There it was a disgrace, but he was a lively, sexy man and he needed a woman. So she used to come to the house of this uncle to watch out, because there was the stepmother. She used to come and help with the children. He married a woman-he had already six children and he had four more, ten children. She used to always take care of the nieces and nephews. One survived. He lives in Israel. He came here to visit and he always used to talk about my mother, about what a good aunt she was. So that was my other cousin who lived in Israel. We were pretty well off. She was very attentive. Somebody had a birthday, she bought them a ring, she bought them something pretty. And I had a younger sister, of course.

INT: Let's go back to-

REGINA: The belief in G-d.

INT: So when you would pray-can you remember? Were you praying to G-d?

REGINA: All I say was the Shema. My father used to say we don't have to pray. Just say Shema before you go to bed. I did this always and still do.

INT: What meaning does that have for you?

REGINA: It has the meaning that I am with my family, that it's part of the tradition. It doesn't have...I don't pray to G-d. I don't know. I don't know why I'm doing it. I'm just doing it. My children say it too. I don't know if they say it now, but I made them say it with the grandchildren and they still do. I just said as long as you say the Shema before you go to bed, I don't care what else. And I know that we went to Turkey. We went away, and I took my youngest daughter with me. Estelle said, "Only when I say the Shema I am with you."

INT: So it passed on to her.

REGINA: It passed on. I don't think she says it now. I don't think she says it even with her children. She would love to, probably, but I'm not sure.

INT: When you were teaching the Shema to your children, if they would ask why should we bother saying this, what would you have told them?

REGINA: My father taught me that and I'm teaching you and we are Jewish and we say a prayer before we go to bed. And you know what? It helps them to go to sleep. After you read a story and say the Shema, they know that's it. You don't even get a drink of water. It helps them to go to sleep.

INT: That's a cut off.

REGINA: It also makes you go into the room. I didn't ask them to say it by themselves. My husband went to one room and I went to another. This was way to say good night. They sometimes say, "Okay, go to sleep, good night." I don't like it. I like when you put the child to sleep. Of course, sometimes they say lie down next to me, and I once lay down and banged my eye and I had such a blue eye because they are restless.

INT: It's an important part of the day, I think.

REGINA: Now, in retrospect, I think that I used to send my children to sleep too early. There's nothing wrong if the child runs around a little later and goes to sleep. If they say I'm not tired, I don't want, so you let them be. I was a little more strict than this. You know, I wanted to have the evening to myself a little bit, to relax. By the time you put them to sleep, you have to go to sleep yourself. (Laughter) My husband used to say, "You have to go to sleep because you have to get up." I said, "I know that."

INT: So you don't put them to sleep early for their good. You do it for your good.

REGINA: With my grandchildren, I wouldn't mind if they stick around. They just feel a part of the family, because in the evening really is when everybody is home and they're doing and they are with their parents. I think they get a better feeling. They feel a part of a family.

INT: You say that your experience in hiding and all the losses, that that did not affect your religious beliefs one way or the other: G-d stays a constant.

REGINA: Yes. My father said a Jew doesn't question. He kept on saying you don't question. Okay? So I don't question. He's there; G-d is there. That's what my grandparents believed in. I don't know if they believed, but that's what it was. Personally, I don't think G-d cares if you eat a little chicken or a little nut. Now that I think for myself, in kashrut I know if something that is not...it is man-made, G-d didn't say that, and in the Torah it's written you don't boil goat in its mother's milk, but the chicken doesn't give milk. The chicken is just a chicken. But why don't you do it? Because my parents didn't do it. So that's it. I'm not fanatic.

INT: How did you transmit these things to your children? What was important to you?

REGINA: For me was just important they should know that Friday night is Friday night and Saturday was Saturday, because I lived in front of Har Zion, on 54th Street. They expected me to behave that way.

INT: And your husband taught there as well.

REGINA: My husband taught there, so it was cast upon us to behave in a certain manner. When we moved from Wynnefield, we took liberties. I drive on Saturday and all that, because I don't think that you make a very big "cheit" (sin) if you drive on Saturday. It is a different world, different times, and I don't know if you have an "eruv" around the city, you can carry and...

INT: Did the children go to Hebrew school?

REGINA: My children went to Hebrew school, to Har Zion. They didn't learn as much as I wanted them to learn. I still know more Hebrew than they do, but they did. And they have very fond memories of Har Zion. There's never going to be a place like Wynnefield and Har Zion because Wynnefield was a neighborhood and the kids used to congregate at my place and play Monopoly, and they used to stand in front of the synagogue all dressed up and come to visit. And of course they had children's services and there was USY. I always made sure that on Yom Kippur they all come to listen to the shofar. They had to. And they grew up with good feelings. My children belong to synagogues.

Estelle doesn't, but she feels guilty. Her son is not going to be bar mitzvahed but he's going to see bar mitzvahs because he's invited. He goes to Shipley and many kids are bar mitzvahed. Will he feel sorry for himself? I don't know. I'm going to give him a big gift for his 13th birthday because he deserves it. That he didn't go to Hebrew school, it's not his fault. She says it's not her fault either. She can't get up Sunday morning, and nobody lives close by to take him. They couldn't make this effort, so they have a good excuse. She would have loved he should learn something, but it was just too hard. So she has an excuse. And her husband-I can't expect him to do it but he's a wonderful son-in-law.

I'll give you an example. The other night I was talking to her and we got disconnected. And I figured oh, we talked a lot. I'm not calling back. And apparently she kept on

calling back and calling back, and I didn't answer. My telephone is...and I hear downstairs, something rings downstairs. And I think to myself, oh, it must be neighbors or whatever. And then lo and behold I hear knocking and noise. My son-in-law came to check. And he went upstairs and he said, "Something must be wrong with the telephone because we called for an hour and no answer." So he's a nice man. He's a good man. I don't care if they grow up to be Jewish or not. I do care. I care, but I try not to care. I try to build up a shield. Something that you cannot help, what is the use? What is the use to tell her? I could probably take him to Hebrew school but I didn't want to interfere and I didn't want to...suppose the weather is bad and I cannot, and suppose something like this happens to me.

INT: What does it mean that they'll grow up Jewish? How does that...

REGINA: That they'll grow up Jewish?

INT: Yes. How would you define that; that they would marry somebody Jewish?

REGINA: I would like they should marry Jewish but it is very difficult to go about it. I know that my little granddaughter goes with a non-Jewish child in Scranton. So far they're pretty serious. She's only seventeen. She'll go to college. Maybe it will break off, but if it won't-

INT: How would you feel about that?

REGINA: Do you know? You cannot stretch yourself so far. I did for my children and I did the best I could, and look what happened. She met a non-Jew and it happened. If she would have married some Jew, she would be (?). He tolerates and they try harder. They try harder to show, to prove they're okay. And they're very happy. The boys are wonderful. He has good manners. She's lucky that she married a man from a good home. His stupid mother thinks our grandchildren have the best of both worlds. And he laughs, because he doesn't think it's going to be the best of both worlds. And my grandson grew up with many Jewish boys. He went to their bar mitzvah and all that. He was very interested and he took comparative religion and he could give you good arguments any way.

But I feel that what I cannot help, why should I alienate my children or my grandchildren? I did what I could and things will take care of themselves. Like the country-we have the Democrats and they fight and all that. G-d has to help out. G-d has to help me and my children and my grandchildren. And once a person is good-and you know what? The United States, the Americans are very good people. They're just good people. And they're not anti-Semitic. It makes no difference what you are. I wouldn't like to break bread with them. I wouldn't like to have them be my close friends. I wouldn't, but if my grandchildren want, I can't help it. This is my philosophy of life.

INT: But you have your friend...I know you were talking beforehand that your friend-

REGINA: Yes. I avoid her when he had problems with the Arabs because she's a peacenik and all that. She just went to Somalia. I avoid talking with her about Israel. She knows my stand about Israel.

INT: So you're able to separate out the friendship from-

REGINA: Yes, sure.

INT: What has been your experience since you've been in the States and recently, your experience of anti-Semitism? Have you experienced it in Europe and in the States?

REGINA: Once. You know, when I was in Acme, I parked the car to get my packages. I parked the car close to the market, which you're allowed to do. So somebody sticks up her head out and she says, "You kike. How do you park?" I was in her way. So I said, "You're a kike yourself." (Laughter) I didn't know what to say. This was the only experience about anti-Semitism.

INT: So you've not experienced it yourself personally. Do you see it as a problem in American society?

REGINA: I think so.

INT: More so than it's been?

REGINA: I don't know what it is about the Jews that they are very vociferous and they act upon every...I resent it when the Jews march with the blacks. They were in the forefront of every issue.

INT: So you resent it in the Fifties and Sixties?

REGINA: Yes. And I resent when they are with the abortion business. I feel that we are still a minority and sit still and don't make waves. You're better off. It is a wonderful country. They let us live, they let us study, they let us do things. Why to irk people and why to bring upon yourself stuff? I even don't like when he runs for politics.

INT: I was going to ask you that question next. How would you feel about a Jew running for president? You wouldn't want that.

REGINA: I would hate it. I wouldn't vote for him and I would be afraid.

INT: You would be scared that whatever they would do would be a lightning rod.

REGINA: Sure. Like a lightning rod. All you need is to have a Jewish...oh my G-d. I would think it would be a disaster. Not because he wouldn't be a good president and not because...because there is this anti-Semitism under the surface everywhere, especially now in Russia with the church being so strong again. The Jews have a way of throwing themselves...I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. (End of tape 6, side 1) There was a group coming, in the airport, coming from Portugal. They were from the Midwest.

And I saw them all bedecked with stuff. Sometimes I think they do it because the Jewish women do it. This is the American way of life. They're well off and they have it, so they wear it. But when a Jewish person colors herself up with all that stuff, I resent it. Not that I don't. (Laughter)

INT: So your lesson has been to blend in.

REGINA: To blend in and to keep quiet and to be happy that you live in such a wonderful country where they let you go to school. You could choose what college you want. You could raise your children. This is a paradise.

INT: How did you transmit to your children attitudes towards the non-Jewish world?

REGINA: We talked at our table. They listened enough to know. I know that my children feel that way too. I think so. Of course, they're grown women. They have to think for themselves and they act for themselves. I know my daughter, my youngest daughter, works now for Penn State, in the office building, in the administration there. She says she's going out for lunch, and they wanted to know all about her, and she told them that she's second generation, that her mother was...So she said they all wanted to listen to know about it. Whether it is because of Spielberg's film that made everybody aware. I know on the trip also, they asked me about it. First of all, I have an accent so they immediately ask where are you from. I said, "I am from Poland but I'm Jewish. I'm not Polish." So people are interested. And now, I feel obliged to tell them too because I say, "Here you see a live person who survived the Holocaust and this wasn't a hoax." Before I'm used to a wall on this subject. I didn't feel like talking myself about it, but now I'm strong enough to talk about it. I always get upset when I talk about my experiences and then it takes me a while to calm down. But I think it's my duty.

INT: Do you think that your experience of the non-Jewish world is different than people who did not go through what you went through, like the people who know of your peer group who are American-born and second generation Americans?

REGINA: Yes. They don't give a hoot. They think that the Jews should speak up. It is growing up in a free country. I grew up in Poland. I did not...I knew that there was anti-Semitism. I saw it, but I didn't experience it personally, especially when that woman took me in. How can I be real angry with the non-Jews when here is a woman-whether she was smart...she certainly wasn't smart doing it because she never thought that it will be twenty-two months. And not only I was there; two more people. It was a big risk, but in the beginning she did it for money and then she was stuck. She did it for gain, and she did not realize it will last so long. She didn't realize the danger. She didn't realize. She must have not, because...she did it on impulse. Whether she did it from her good heart, I say now she did but I know...I'm really not sure. And G-d is there. Probably He arranged it.

INT: So you do see some intervention.

REGINA: (laughter) Yes, maybe. Maybe. I don't say no. Maybe yes.

INT: Tell me a bit more about...I know it's something we talked about but how you informed your children of your experience. Were you always open about it?

REGINA: I didn't for a long time. My oldest daughter sensed it.

INT: Did the people around you know your experience? Like when you met new people, when you met new people at Har Zion, is that something that people knew about you?

REGINA: Yes. They asked and they knew that we are survivors. Yes. In Har Zion they knew that I am but they didn't ask me particularly how it was and what it was. Only privately, when we meet somebody face-to-face, and sometimes it comes out in conversation. But in Adath Israel, when I met this Shayna Barlas, she was very much aware of what was going on in Europe, because his mother went to visit and she heard from the Holocaust. So it was like a personal loss for them. She started questioning me and she was the one who made the tapes.

INT: The videotape.

REGINA: But she was a very unusual person. She had a feeling for Israel. I don't find Americans having...they give money, but there's not that feeling deep down inside.

INT: That was one of the questions I was going to ask. We'll come back to it. Is that something that...what is Israel-

REGINA: Meant to me?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: Israel meant to me everything, the hope of two thousand years. To live in Israel too. And that's why my parents taught me Hebrew, and I learned English also because I knew that...not because I hoped to go to America but because I knew that England is...

INT: The Mandate.

REGINA: Yes. My family did not go to Israel, just one cousin. Two cousins left to Israel. They were the two educated cousins who were educated in Prague, because they couldn't get into a university in Poland. And those were men, and one became a chemist and one became an engineer. The engineer worked in Israel in-I don't know if you want to know that-in a plant. They made ice. But he got a ??? in his head and he died young. Very brilliant young man. And since then, in the family, if you go to Israel, you die. There's this sort of...One made it and he got married and he sent for his sweetheart. I met him after the war and they have now a daughter and the daughter has children. I keep in touch with her and I correspond with my cousin. He passed on already. Those were the two cousins who went to Israel before the war. But nobody wanted to go because they knew it's hardship. All of our family was...I don't know. They were not that [well] off, if I look back. Look, they made a hard living. They all worked. Usually they had a store, a dry goods store, but somehow they survived. There was nobody anxious to go to Israel.

INT: How do you feel about what's going on in Israel now? Do you trust this peace process?

REGINA: I don't trust the peace process. I don't know. Israel should have been just a spiritual place for the Jews. I don't know about the country. I don't know. I'm not sure. I think that now that people were born there and there's a generation, now I want Israel to be a country, but to start with, I thought it would have been enough it would be still...you know, the dream place that you hope for, where the last sacrifice was. Bloodshed is happening every day, every day. I think [author] Achad Ha'am was right. But then again, you cannot...I think Israel will exist. It has to. It has to because people are born there and they have to fight for their life. Unless everybody will make...not aliyah but-

INT: Yerida. [emigration of Jews from Israel]

REGINA: I'm curious. What do you think about Israel? You lived there. (Tape shuts)

INT: You started to talk about how you introduced your children to the Shoah.

REGINA: I didn't tell them in the beginning. I didn't want to talk about it myself. Now my friends' children ask me. They ask me.

INT: When did you first tell your children? Did they ask you? Did you wait for them to ask you or did you tell them?

REGINA: I didn't tell them. I think I told them in bits and pieces. There came a time when they were old enough to say, "You know, mother, you don't tell us anything about you." And that's when I started telling them. In the beginning I was embarrassed that I lived with this fellow, so I tried to avoid it, but then I told them. I sort of felt what kind of example am I going to give my kids, even though I have a wonderful letter from my mother that said that she forgives me? I am forgiven in the eyes of G-d and people and what not. A beautiful letter in Polish. It's a shame that nobody can...

INT: This is the letter that you got when you were hiding?

REGINA: Yes. And they started saying, "Mother..." But now they know. Now they know, and my daughter asks me to come to Harrisburg to talk. And my grandchildren gets A from their homework. They interviewed me.

INT: Were you and your husband of like mind in this?

REGINA: Transmitting about how I survived? My husband survived something completely different. He used to tell them about his life and it did not interfere in my business. I feel that no matter how it was, he could not feel what I felt. I thought maybe he didn't, but then he was very angry with the Germans that he did not permit me to take the money. He did not permit me to apply for...he said, "Nobody can pay you for blood of your parents." He was sorry later that he didn't let me but it was too late.

INT: You listened to him.

REGINA: I listened to him, yes. I listened to him. He was a person you listened to. He was my everything. I listened to him, yes. He was the boss. I know now. Now that I'm free to do what I want. But I needed it. I did not resent it. Yes, I like a strong man. I like a father should be a father. Somebody has to. A mother should cuddle and this, even though he was very loving to my girls. He was a strong, strong character.

INT: Was this like your own family, let's say how you would characterize your mother and your father that way?

REGINA: No. My father disciplined me but my mother was the stronger.

INT: That's the impression that I had.

REGINA: Yes. She was like the backbone. My father-of course, he hit me if I was bad, but he made such a ceremony from hitting. Life was good. It was good then. It was tough when we came here. It was very hard when my husband died. And it is good now.

INT: How did you recover from that, when your husband died?

REGINA: By talking. I was talking endlessly, and I didn't care who I talked to and where I talked to. I just talked and talked and talked about our life together. I couldn't get together with my children. In the beginning, I didn't ask them to help me to go to buy a stone. I said I have to do it all by myself. I had friends who I invited the first year to stay the summer. They went with me to buy a stone. They said it's time to do it. I didn't think of it. I would postpone it and postpone it, but once you put down the stone I knew that that's it.

INT: Finale.

REGINA: Finale, yes. And of course I still have his clothes. First it was upstairs and then it was in the basement. And it doesn't bother me. In fact, it makes me feel good to look at. After a year and a half, I realized...I went also to a support group in the Y, which helped a lot. It helped an awful lot. My friends were very good to me and I used to be invited to dinner. But when I used to come, I saw how they...maybe I told you before. They sat on the couch and they sat closer to each other. Each couple. I was like the harbinger of bad news. They invited me and they wanted me-

INT: These are your friends.

REGINA: My close friends, yes. Usually they are new Americans, and they're still my friends and I still visit. I realized that I'm ready...because I need somebody. I need a man, a person. So I met Meyer and that's how it started. It's already ten years. Not quite ten, but almost. And I think it's very good not to be married and to have a very close friend. And I'm not embarrassed in front of my kids. I don't know what they say. They love him. Now, after so many years. He's a lovable person. Of course, my grandson calls him up to watch television with him. He doesn't call up me. He called him up the other day, he wants to rent a wrestling film and he should come to watch with him. But he made a mistake. It was yesterday instead of Saturday, so he went, but the film wasn't there.

Anyway, I'm very fortunate. I think my husband sent him to me. That's what I think. Not my mother, but my husband. (Laughter)

INT: I was going to say this wasn't your mother's...

REGINA: That was not my mother's doing. That was my husband's doing, that he knew that I need somebody. Because he knew that I'll need somebody. I'm not a girlfriend. I mean, I'm a good friend, but I don't get satisfaction with being friendly with women. I cannot go with a bunch of women and go to lunch and have fun. That's not my...I need a man to sit next to me in the movies. Well, I'm not ashamed of it. I need a male person, an opposite sex, to be my friend. That's it. And thank G-d I got it, and I'm very happy.

INT: It strikes me that when you faced such a big crisis in your life and such a change that you were very active to rebuild your life.

REGINA: Yes, I did.

INT: You got the help you needed and made the changes. You didn't sit back and...that's very impressive.

REGINA: I did not despair. I was very depressed. I was. I tried to drink a little, you know. Especially five o'clock was terrible.

INT: In the afternoon.

REGINA: Yes, it was terrible. And friends of mine...in fact, one of the friends, she was the one who said why don't you go to the Y and join that group, and I did, and after a year I felt that I outgrew the group, because I met my friend. When I met the woman who took charge of it, I told her, "You know, I feel bad that I don't come but I don't think I need it." She said that's how it should be.

INT: That's what the group should do. If it works, you leave.

REGINA: She said, "I'm glad you are able to go."

INT: It's like a good parent will raise a child and then send them out.

REGINA: Yes. And even until last year, I tried to avoid the twilight. I used to go to the Y and all that. Now-what do I do now? When it is cloudy, Meyer says, "I know you don't like to be home by yourself so come to my house." We will play cards or do something.

INT: I know when we first talked, that's one of the first things you talked about, that you like to go to the JCC and see the children and get out at that time, that twilight time of day. So that time of day still is hard for you or you can manage it?

REGINA: Yes. That's why I went to Spain. That was...the Christmas vacation, when the days get so short. Now it is already better because the days are getting a little longer.

INT: Has it always been like that for you? Do you remember that, or is it since the war that you remember...do you remember as a child not liking that time of day?

REGINA: No. I don't think I knew the difference. The only time I didn't like when my mother went away to visit her brothers. I missed her very much. I felt very lonely when she used to go away from the house, even though there was that Jewish maid. There was always somebody with me. But I felt...I don't know how to say it, but my heart always...You know what I used to do? I used to take a clock. We had a clock that had a bell, and I used to ring the bell. I thought maybe she'd hear and she'd come home. I missed her. But she used to come to put me to sleep at night. My father was there. But they used to go very often to visit my grandfather who was sick. They used to take me too, but we felt obliged to go to see him every night because he was ill. He was a very bright man, making jokes. He joked with me. But there was a duty there; that we had to go to visit the sick parents. Even though he lived with his single daughter and there was the maid there too.

INT: What rituals do you have to remember people that you lost, like your parents and your husband? Do you go to shul for kaddish? What do you do on the yahrzeit?

REGINA: I didn't say kaddish. I didn't go to say kaddish. I was too angry.

INT: Angry at G-d?

REGINA: I don't know at whom. I didn't go say kaddish. First of all, I don't believe in a wife saying kaddish. If he would have sons, let them say kaddish. I do say yahrzeit. Yahrzeit I do. My husband said: "Don't run to the cemetery. Remember me, that's all." And that's what I do. Now I am very...I absolutely say always yizkor, because I feel that I have to say yizkor for all my relatives, not only for my parents. This I never miss. Maybe I missed it once in my lifetime.

INT: Do you remember your relatives by name when you say yizkor?

REGINA: I remember by name. I have their pictures. Did I ever show you?

INT: I'm saying when you go and say yizkor. I know you know the names but-

REGINA: I picture everybody. When I say yizkor they all stand in front of my eyes, whoever I mention, yes. I don't mention their names but I just-

INT: You take the time to picture each one.

REGINA: To picture, yes. And I would like my children to say yizkor and to remember the yahrzeit. I know some do, some don't. And this is, again, their business. They tell me...sometimes I say when I die, so they say, "You will never forgive us if we don't come to your grave. Daddy said we shouldn't." And they don't. They don't. I don't think it is important because the dead person doesn't know and they remember him better than the people who run to the cemetery. I know that. So it doesn't matter to me. I don't care if

they don't come to my cemetery. Just to remember me, that's it, and I know they will. I remember my parents. Why shouldn't they remember me? Don't you think so?

INT: Yes.

REGINA: I think what you give, you get. That's how it is. I know that I gave to my children the best I could. More than I could. Much more than somebody in my situation could, and so did my husband, and the rest will take care of itself. (End of tape 6, side 2)

INT: This is an interview with Regina Fields, tape #7. It's February 1, 1995. The interviewer is Allan Gottlieb. I'm going to ask a question that I wasn't prepared to ask. You just showed me pictures from the past. Can you tell me how you feel when you see those pictures?

REGINA: I feel good and I feel lucky that I have them. After all those years, the pain...when I say yizkor I'm very emotional about all the people, but when I look at them I try not to. They had a good life, all those people.

INT: So you try to remember their lives before the Holocaust.

REGINA: Before, yes, when we were all happy and good looking and wonderful. It is a shield that I try to put up because I feel that at this time in my life, many of them would be gone anyway already; my uncles and aunts and my parents certainly. Everyone who is in that picture would be gone probably. Unless my cousin, one young cousin who was my age. So she would be also an older lady now. (Laughter) I don't get emotional. For self-preservation you have to build up some...a shield. I was reading about...did you see in the New York Times about-

INT: I haven't gotten around to reading it yet.

REGINA: I have never been in Cracow or never seen it. But certainly, Poland was a good place to make concentration camps, because they were very well cooperative, in a way, and now they claim the Poles were also sent. This is true. They did send intelligentsia and many Polish people, but they sent them because they did something. They did something wrong. They did something -- either they sold something they were not supposed to, but the Jews were sent to concentration camp just because they were Jews.

INT: It's an important difference.

REGINA: It's an important difference. I understand it would be easier for us if we would, from the very beginning, say millions of people. If the Jews wouldn't just separate themselves from the group. But you have to. You have to, because there is a big difference. Hitler sent crazy people. He sent Gypsies. Why did he send Gypsies? Also for no good reason. The Jews and the Gypsies. But proportionate, we were a much larger group.

INT: What are your feelings today...if you could imagine you were going to Poland tomorrow, how do you think you would feel seeing and meeting Polish people, both of your generation and the younger generation?

REGINA: I imagine that some of the younger generation are curious about the Jews, when they were not indoctrinated by their parents or the priests that the Jews are Christ killers. This always goes back to religion. The discrimination is there because of hatred, because we are not going to be saved. But if all the Jews would become Christians, I think it would be the same thing. Hitler did not acknowledge the converts. He killed them regardless, because there were many converts to Christianity. I don't know. In Spain, they at least survived if they pretended that that are Christians. But in Poland...I have some feeling for some Polish people. This woman who saved me, for example. The Ukrainian people who saved my cousins, four people. I know that they suffered through it and it was hard, and I know there were many...there was a doctor who saved so many children and he went to the death camp with them. The same thing like people toward each other. I know that in Germany there are so many people who feel bad about it. For example, my son-in-law's family came to United States. They did not like Hitler. They did not like what was going on. They were able to leave. His grandmother left.

INT: This is a Jewish...this is non-Jewish, this one.

REGINA: Not Jewish.

INT: So they left.

REGINA: Yes. A large group left. On the other hand, I think that his father was in Hitler Youth. But they left. This grandmother was instrumental in leaving. You cannot hate a whole nation. You cannot hate the whole world. For example, like the German language. Some Jews say, "I can't listen to German." I put it on because I know it. I like every language. I like Polish too. They didn't want to hear Polish. Language has nothing to do with the people. It's a separate thing. And I enjoy speaking Polish because I speak well, and I'm going in March to Florida, to the mineral springs, and while waiting in the pool we met a couple from New York who settled in Florida. They told us that there is a lady who saved Jews and she rents apartments, so the following year we rented an apartment from her, and from then on we became very friendly with her. While my husband was alive we rented an apartment, but when my husband died she said, "From now on, you are going to stay with me. There is a room and a bathroom and you can stay with me." She was very kind to me. The only problem was that she's such a good cook that every time I went I gained twenty pounds. (Laughter) But I haven't been there for three or four years, so she calls me up the other day and she says, "You remember you used to come wintertime? We used to spend Christmas and New Years together? We used to have fun." I said, "You know what? Do you have room for me?" She says, "Yes. Somebody is leaving the 15th of March." I said, "Okay, I'll come for a few weeks." And I made arrangements to go. That was before my back started hurting again. Maybe it will be better by then.

INT: The weather there might help.

REGINA: I know definitely that this water helps, this mineral water. Maybe it is mentally that it helps but everybody goes to mineral water.

INT: When you went to Florida with your husband, did you stay with her because she was somebody who would help out Jews?

REGINA: She's a good person. She's a very smart person. She supports the synagogue there. She was so good to her Jewish mother-in-law that her Jewish mother-in-law left for her the diamond ring. Not for her daughter. She saved many ten people and they made her a Righteous Gentile. She went to Israel. But she is Catholic and she goes to church. Once we were there during Passover and she made a Seder and she has Hagaddahs in Polish. She can make a Seder better than a Jewish person, because her husband was a very nice man. He died of cancer of the bone, bone cancer. This person is a very nice person. She is devoted to Poland. She sends packages to her relatives. She sends money. She has one son married to a Jewish woman, and the girls were bas mitzvahed. She went to the bas mitzvah and she has the tape and she watches with pride. She gave money for the children to be educated. She herself is not an educated person, but she has inner intelligence. I admire this in her.

INT: Talking with her, a Catholic Polish woman. Do you find yourself more comfortable talking to her compared to an American-born person?

REGINA: Not any more. Not any more. We talk all the time the same things. She's a typical, typical Polish woman-hard working, who helped her husband in business, in a good business. And also, she believes like the farmers. If you have a piece of land, you have property, you're somebody, so whatever she saved she bought several houses and she made a business out of it. She does not resent that he became Jewish. Her son is Jewish and he has a Jewish wife.

INT: So she married a Jew and the son also converted.

REGINA: The son converted. She herself did not convert. She goes to church and for yahrzeit she sends money to the synagogue. She's a very interesting person. It's good to know her. My husband liked her a lot because he admired in her...what to G-d is to G-d, what to people is to people. She's this kind of person. She believes in Jesus and she's good to both religions.

INT: Do you ever ask yourself the question of what makes her different than the other people?

REGINA: She fell in love with her husband in Warsaw.

INT: So this is before the war.

REGINA: Before the war. She saved him and they got married and they went to Sweden. They had papers. They were in hiding but her husband was blond and tall. He was a businessman. He was a wheeler-dealer, and somehow she got involved with him. She saved him and his mother and his sister, and the sister is so devoted to her and she's

devoted to his sister. She has Jewish friends and she has non-Jewish friends, and she celebrates Christmas and she celebrates Passover. When I am there for Chanukah-once I was-so she made latkes. She makes better gefilte fish than me. The mother-in-law taught her. And she loves to cook. She cooks up a storm. You would think that this woman...and then she invites people for dinner. I don't know how she is now. When we rented an apartment, of course, she used to take us shopping. I did my own housekeeping. Passover she invited some other Jewish friends, the ones who introduced us to her, and us. She made a real Passover. You would ask why would she do that?

INT: Why do you think she does it?

REGINA: She's just a smart person. She knew that Jewish people are coming and it's important to us, so she buys matzah. All Passover she didn't eat bread. This is a person that is good to know. What makes her that way? Smart. She makes friend and she keeps them. And Christmas-we celebrate Christmas too. She puts up a tree. I went too with her to church. (Laughter) I don't have any deep hatred for the Christians just because somebody saved me. And in general, my father used to say, "You do not criticize anybody's religion. Don't say a bad word about the Christians. I don't like it." The Jews used to say instead of Jesus-they used to say "Yoize!" -- derogatory things. My father was very angry. He said, "You don't insult anybody's religion." Maybe my parents were tolerant because they had many non-Jewish customers.

INT: But lots of Jewish businesspeople had non-Jewish customers and they didn't feel that way, so obviously there's something else.

REGINA: But our customers were very kind people; also middle-class, high-class. Did you see my grandfather's picture? He spoke well Polish.

INT: So you taught a very strong message of tolerance.

REGINA: Tolerance.

INT: Even though in the context that you grew up, the Christians and the Poles were not very nice to you. But your father still-

REGINA: Yes. He says a Jew has to keep his place, and never mind them. Did they hate us? It doesn't mean that we have to hate them.

INT: That's a very, very powerful message.

REGINA: That was the message. My mother gave me another message. ??? By the way, I was telling you about my father. You asked me about the religion, right? Every Saturday afternoon he was sitting with me and studying the "sedra," because he said, "I don't have sons," and he wanted me to say kaddish for him. He didn't object to having a woman say kaddish. All was good. (Laughter) It was good.

INT: Would you say your mother's attitude towards the Gentile, the Christian world, was similar? Did you also get that message of tolerance from her?

REGINA: Yes. We had Ukrainian maids. She was very good with them. Many Ukrainian women used to be surrogate mothers to children. They used to feed them, breast-feed them; nurse them. They used to leave their children. I always felt sorry for them. They used to leave their children with somebody and they gave somebody a Jewish child. And they liked the child. You had to be nice to them. After all, she was feeding your child. They were well-fed and they took care of the child. Isn't it strange that...they were poor. My sister used to say when our panya was (?), she stays with her soldier by the gate, I'm going to build her a little house so she doesn't have to stand. After work, after seven o'clock, she used to stay...I don't know where they found the soldier. It wasn't a gate. When we lived in an apartment house, there were real long hallways, so they used to sit and make out. Sure enough, she became pregnant. (Laughter)

INT: The attitudes that your parents gave you have obviously stayed with you. Were those the same values and attitudes you gave to your children?

REGINA: Yes, I did, and my children were angry with me because when somebody came from school and she said she wasn't nice to me, I said, "How are you to her?" My daughter says, "You always take up for somebody else."

INT: How did you answer that?

REGINA: I don't know what I answered to that.

INT: You don't remember.

REGINA: You know, she says, "Mommy, she pushed me." So I said, "So what did you do to her?" She said, "Why would you ask me that?" I said, "Because it takes two to fight." They resented that. I know that my daughter is a very good person. They all are. They always go out...for example, she was by profession a social worker, but she didn't work. So she takes all kinds of...now she's going to a hospice-how to counsel the families. I said, "Why would you pick that up?"

INT: Is that a choice you weren't happy with, that she would choose to work there? That's hard, sad work.

REGINA: It's hard and sad, yes.

INT: It could also be very rewarding.

REGINA: Or she worked in Inglis House [home for people with disabilities] in high school. She's just that type of a person. If she helped the Russian Jews settle and all that, I was happy. But why would she go to...

INT: So do you feel protective of her, of not wanting her to be-

REGINA: Yes.

INT: How involved were you with the children's decisions about schools and careers, and your husband as well?

REGINA: We were. We didn't tell them...like when she wanted to become a social worker, we were not too happy about that but she wanted it.

INT: Why weren't you happy with that?

REGINA: I don't know. For the same reason that my husband didn't want my youngest daughter to be a nurse. She got a scholarship to nursing school and he said, "You want, you go to school and become a doctor." It's not snobbery, you know. You want for your children better than that. I personally think that nurses...it's not only helping with the pot. You can be a nurse, a clinical nurse. You can even be a nurse to a doctor and all that.

INT: But you did let them make their...you didn't intervene too much in these decisions.

REGINA: No. My daughter wanted to be a historian. My daughter took history. But when she graduated and she said she wants to go to graduate school so my husband told her, "What will you do now? The teaching field is over-saturated. You want to teach in a college, there's no jobs. If you want to do something already, go and become a doctor." So she listened to him. She took another year of science and physics and she got into medical school. And the dean of Villanova said she's the first history major who got into medical school.

INT: So she'll be a doctor with a perspective. So there's one doctor, one nurse and a social worker.

REGINA: No, the younger wasn't a nurse. She took business.

INT: Oh, she ended up going into business.

REGINA: Business. And she is working in her field. She works for the Federation.

INT: Your children's attitudes, personal attitudes of tolerance, are they similar to yours?

REGINA: Yes. They are friends with non-Jews. My son-in-law, he was in Desert Storm. He has Jewish friends and he has non-Jewish friends. Yes, they are very tolerant. And as I said before, my granddaughter is going with a non-Jewish boy and the parents are very friendly with his parents. I'm very fond of the in-laws, my son-in-law, Estelle's husband, because they are just wonderful. His mother is a wonderful lady. They're also very tolerant. His mother said that her grandson has the best of both worlds, and she believes it. (Laughter) My kids are good people. I have to say it myself. I'm very proud of them. They are very happy and they call whenever they have a chance. They're concerned. They want me to be happy.

INT: Is there one child that you're closer to than the others?

REGINA: No. One like all and all like one. My oldest daughter feels like she's the mother to the others. That was before. But now they are all equal. She's seven years older than the youngest and five years older than the middle child. The two younger ones are very chummy. But they all care about each other. I taught them to buy gifts for each other for birthdays. When they had weddings, the youngest sisters bought something and they buy for Chanukah and all that. I have a Chanukah present that my oldest daughter bought for my youngest, and I still didn't go to her and she didn't come here, so it's sitting there. When they go for trips...They care very much about each other. The cousins like each other.

INT: How does the family deal with arguments? What happens when you don't get along?

REGINA: We don't have arguments.

INT: Never had an argument?

REGINA: No, we don't have. Why would you have arguments?

INT: A disagreement over something.

REGINA: No, we don't.

INT: Is that how you remember your own home when you were growing up? Do you remember your parents arguing?

REGINA: No. I remember that when the business fell apart...there were three partners. My father inherited the business and there was a younger brother and there was a sister who was not married when my grandfather died. My mother promised that she's going to marry her off, and she did. And the young man, even though she had \$2000 dowry, he did not...he just wanted to get into the business. Maybe he did put some money into the business. (End of tape 7, side 1)

INT: You were talking about the family business.

REGINA: The family business could not support three families, so they parted. My father stayed with the business. The other two went with their uncle. It was competition because they used to go to the customers and they used to say, "Well, we don't have an overhead and we can give you stuff cheaper." I know that they didn't speak to each other.

INT: But within the family you don't remember-

REGINA: In my own family? No. The only disagreement was over raising the kids, like if I came home later or I came home earlier and she didn't study, she studied. Stuff like that. And the same thing was with my husband. We never had any disagreement, only because of the children. My oldest daughter, she was so advanced that she brought in a black fellow (laughter) and once she brought an Italian. He ???

INT: The Italian people?

REGINA: No, my husband. He beat up my daughter. He got very angry. I never saw him this angry in his life. She stopped going with them. He was a nice guy, a nice Italian fellow. He felt...because she was the oldest, he felt she's responsible for the youngest.

INT: Setting the example.

REGINA: We were much easier on the other two.

INT: That's pretty typical, I think.

REGINA: Much easier. And he loved (?) very much. I don't say he loved her more than the others. (?) Still, he was very serious. He mellowed. He had a little temper. It is not because he was a bad person. His life was hard and he wanted to do right by the children and I was very...I wanted to do it by the books. It was the period of leniency, and he said I'm spoiling them. When they had measles, all of them, so I let them stay home and have fun another day. They didn't want to go to school. Okay. And he was always angry that I'm spoiling them. But other than that, we didn't have arguments.

INT: To what extent do you think both of your parenting styles were affected by your experiences? Life is hard and there are things that you have to face.

REGINA: Well, I don't know. My daughter, the doctor, she's a softie with her children. The older one also. The youngest is more energetic. The kids listen their own way. Each family raises their children their own way, but each grandchild is wonderful. They're all very good kids. They do well in school and they like each other. They care. I know they care about me too. Now this weekend I'm going to give the car to my grandson and he's going to drive home.

INT: You have a grandson who's at Drexel?

REGINA: Yes. What's tomorrow? Tomorrow is Thursday. Meyer is going to pick him up.

INT: So he's going to drive up to Scranton.

REGINA: Meyer is going to pick him up from Drexel because his son works in Drexel, and he'll bring him here and take the car and go. He wanted me to go with him but it is still a long trip for me. But for example, Saturday I'm going to my youngest daughter.

INT: Where does your youngest live?

REGINA: She lives in Harrisburg. She just finished her basement. She remodeled her basement and she's dying for us to see it. They are good to each other. When they have the bar mitzvahs, the simchas, they're very generous. America did not do badly by us coming to this country. I feel we're an asset, and we love this country too. And what should I complain? The house is nice. I'm not greedy for a lot of money but I'm happy

with whatever I have. And I think my children are that way too. They are not the type of people that want or would go into debt. They have good credit. So do I, because they all send me...I could have twenty-five credit cards but I'm trying to have one and that's one too many.

INT: How are you feeling? You don't look too comfortable.

REGINA: It doesn't hurt when I sit. It doesn't hurt when I sit, it doesn't hurt when I lie down. And when somebody is here for dinner...I had yesterday a friend for dinner, the friend that I went to Spain with. I invited her when I felt good, so I'm going to back off? Somehow, slowly, slowly, I prepared and we had a lovely time. We played cards after. You see, you talk about being friends with non-Jews. Here she is this Quaker and we are very good friends. We are friends from way, way back. She went to my children's weddings and I keep in touch with her.

INT: Your war experiences-how do you think it's affected your political viewpoints, and your husband also? Would you categorize as liberals, conservatives?

REGINA: Conservatives. Very conservative. I believe in supporting the people who need to be supported, but the way...

INT: And his has been a consistent viewpoint in the Fifties and Sixties?

REGINA: Yes. From the very beginning. This Elvis is the ruination of this country. (Laughter) The shaking. He had very many...like Kissinger.

INT: Yet he taught in Cheney. [a predominantly black college]

REGINA: He taught at Cheney because he felt he's doing something good. He didn't think that they should give them handouts. They should study and pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. To help them as much as possible, yes. And he hated King.

INT: Why was that?

REGINA: He's insincere and he's...I don't know. He hated King. He felt he's a womanizer and he's insincere. I personally think that since then things changed. He made a difference. So many people come out now that he really was a womanizer.

INT: That senator, that state senator. Before we put the tape on you were sharing some pictures with me. One thing you commented on was the picture of...in the family picture. You see a picture of your oldest daughter, Edna. You talked about the fear. How did that play in your life?

REGINA: It affected her. It affected her a lot. She has problems. Especially she had problems when my husband died. She had big problems. I don't want to...

INT: We had an interruption in the tape. You were talking about your feelings when you were pregnant and you had your first child. Your fears.

REGINA: I had fears. I was insecure. I was afraid how will I come to this United States? How will I know how to cross the street? I knew that America has lights and big streets. Not that I came from a small city. I guess I was childish. It was some immaturity.

INT: You said that about yourself earlier.

REGINA: Yes, now I grew up. I know how to cross the street. Maybe it was because my youth was interrupted. I was overprotected by my parents. Yes and no. But I had terrible fears that something is going to happen to my husband, to my child. I always had that fear that somebody isn't going to come home. When my children leave here, they have to call that they arrived. Even when Meyer goes home, he has to call that he arrived. I have that fear that they may not come back, and this never left. This is something that I think will stay with me for the rest of my life. I'm better, but...

INT: You have to discipline yourself to be better.

REGINA: Yes.

INT: It's not your natural...

REGINA: I tell myself-they're grown up. They're forty years old. What do you want? They have their own families. They have their own children. They have to make their own decisions. They know how to drive. But I have...they have to call me that they are home.

INT: Are they the same with their children?

REGINA: I think so, yes.

INT: You gave this virus on.

REGINA: Yes, it is a virus. Now only that, but even my son-in-law calls. When my daughter is here, so he calls that everything is okay.

INT: So it's not in the genes. It's taught.

REGINA: Yes. I don't think it is healthy but I can't help it. I know it is because everybody is so important to me. Everybody is so precious. I don't have anyone but them and I guess they're concerned about me too, because they're calling. We don't have a set time to call, Saturday or Sunday or whatever. Whenever somebody feels, they pick up the phone, how are you. It's many times a week. I know that Estelle is so busy that many times I don't call because I feel that I am...I take away her time. But she calls-not as often as the others but she calls. They came here Sunday night. I wanted to go there but all of a sudden I couldn't move. And she has a wonderful baby. He took my hand. He doesn't talk. He's almost a year-and-a-half and he doesn't talk. He took my hand, he wants to go upstairs, and I couldn't go. So he was hysterical. And he goes upstairs and he looks in one room and the other room, the bedroom and the bath. He goes to the other room and the third room. He saw everything. He loves to clean, because the housekeeper is

cleaning. I cannot any more make dinners. Before I used to invite all the time. So they went out to eat and they stopped here. All of them. I guess I told you that my son-in-law came to see if I'm okay.

INT: Right, when he couldn't reach you by phone. (Tape shuts-end of interview)