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INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY FINGER

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INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY FINGER

INT: Let's just start with your name, so I'll have it for the record on the tape.

DOROTHY FINGER: Well, my name is Dorothy Finger.

INT: OK. And your age?

DOROTHY: I'm 62 years old.

INT: And you were born?

DOROTHY: I was born in August 8, 1929. In the city named Stanislaw, Poland.

INT: Did you go to school there?

DOROTHY: Oh, yes. I went to school. I finished three years. In Europe, in Poland, you start the first grade at the age of seven. And the September 1, 1939, when the war broke out, I had finished three elementary grades of public school. We only had one school. It was a public school. And all the children there went to that school. We had Polish people, we had Ukrainian people. And Jewish people. And I also went to a Zionist Hebrew school. Not the religious Hebrew school, but a Zionist Hebrew school.

INT: So how far did you finally, did you get in school...

DOROTHY: Three. When the war broke out, I finished the third grade. I was ten years old.

INT: Right. And that was that for education there.

DOROTHY: At that time. Correct.

INT: OK. And you're married now.

DOROTHY: I am married. And I have three grown children.

INT: How old are they?

DOROTHY: My children are 38, 34, and 32.

INT: Are they married?

DOROTHY: One. The 32, my daughter, the 32-year-old is married.

INT: What do they do?

DOROTHY: My oldest son is a theoretical physicist. He has a Ph.D. from M.I.T. My next son is an attorney, practicing in Wilmington, and my daughter is getting her Master's in health education.

INT: Any grandchildren?

DOROTHY: No. Not yet.

INT: And your husband?

DOROTHY: My husband is an attorney.

INT: And you've been married how long?

DOROTHY: I've been married thirty-nine years.

INT: OK. Do you belong to a synagogue?

DOROTHY: Yes. We belong to Temple Beth Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in Wilmington, which my husband's parents were one of the principal builders or starters of that temple.

INT: Any Holocaust-related activities that you are active in?

DOROTHY: Yes. I am co-chairman, we have a (?) in Holocaust education center here. And I am very active. And I speak in schools. And we also have the Garden of the Righteous Gentiles, which Helene and I started in Wilmington.

INT: OK. Any other organizations you belong to besides...

DOROTHY: Yes. In our temple we have an education committee, and I am on the education committee. We have lectures and...

INT: OK. So you were born in Poland. And the name of the place...

DOROTHY: The name of the city I was born in was Stanislaw. And the Russians renamed it Ivano-Frankivsk. And at the present time it's in the Ukraine. Which just became the independent state of Ukraine.

INT: OK. Before the war, did you have to move at all from the town that you grew up in?

DOROTHY: I was born in Stanislaw, but I was (?), no, I lived there, from the time I was, we came, until the war.

INT: Who was in your family at that time?

DOROTHY: I was an only child. But my parents were each one of nine or ten, and my grandparents were again, one of ten or eleven, so we had a very, very large family. None of them living in the city I lived, but living all over Galicia. So I had an extended family, between ninety and one hundred people.

INT: But in your family you were the only child.

DOROTHY: In my family, my parents, yes, I was the only child.

INT: What was it like?

DOROTHY: My life was very good. We were middle class, upper-middle class. We were what you would call here Conservative or Reform. My parents went to synagogue, and we belonged to synagogue where of course the men and women were separated, and my parents had a small department store, which was closed for Shabbas. We spoke Polish at home. My parents spoke Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand, and life was very good. And my grandparents had a farm and an inn, and I would spend summers with my grandparents, and also with different various summer resorts that we would go every summer. And life was very, very good. Unfortunately, in September, 1939 it all changed.

First the Russians occupied our part of Poland. What happened is Hitler and Stalin made the pact in 1939. And they split Poland in half. The eastern part of Poland where I was born, the Russians came and occupied. The western part, Warsaw, Cracow, the Germans came. But of course Hitler did not stick with his pact with Stalin, and in I think June 22, 1941, he attacked the part of Poland, which was in Russia, where I was born. And of course everything changed.

When the Russians came, life was not so good. First of all, they nationalized my parents' store. Anybody who had property became bourgeois. And they came and put a padlock on and we lost all that. And they were also going to take us to Siberia. They had this philosophy of resettlement, and we used to hide. And after awhile that stopped, because at that point we had no properties, so they let us live in Russia, in our own home, but it was Russia. And had we known what was going to happen later on, we would have gone to Siberia. Because when they took the Jews to Siberia, it was awful. It was cold, and coal mines, and many people died there, but proportionately, those who survived, survived more as a family than those of us who survived the Holocaust. Because the Holocaust survivors mostly are one member from a family, or maybe two, but it's a rare, rare story where whole families survive. But those Jews who came back from Siberia suffered greatly there. But comparing to what we went through, it was a better choice, had we known about it. But we didn't know.

So in 1941 the Russians came, and of course our life became, excuse me, the Germans came, I get mixed up. The Germans came in '41. The Russians came in '39. When the Germans came of course, then we were victims of the Holocaust.

INT: So your family had a department store? Did your mother...

DOROTHY: A small.

INT: Did your mother work there, too?

DOROTHY: Yes. Yes. My mother worked with my father. We had a maid home.

INT: So you went to school, they worked in the department store.

DOROTHY: Right, which was first, it was part of where we lived, and then they opened a bigger one, but it was around the corner. In fact, I've never been back there yet, and I hope in July to go back. Of course, I don't know what I'm going back to. There aren't even ashes left. But I do want to go back.

INT: Your mother, what was she like?

DOROTHY: My mother was a lady. She read Schiller, she did a lot of reading. But she had a bad heart, and every summer she would go to a Kurehaus, or to a spa, in the city named Krenitza (?) for her heart. And I don't know why there weren't any more children, but my mother's siblings only also had one or two children. Even though they came from families of seven or eight, or ten, probably, but some died in childbirth. My mother's generation, who were already educated, who probably knew more about birth control than their parents did, had small families.

INT: So your mother was a lady. She had a heart condition.

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: How did she treat you?

DOROTHY: Oh, I don't know. I was probably spoiled.

INT: Being the only child. You got a lot of gifts, and a lot of...

DOROTHY: I don't think it's much material things. I'm not sure. Probably for that milieu. It wasn't like today. We didn't have "Toys 'R' Us." (laughs)

INT: Was she an affectionate person?

DOROTHY: Yes, she was an affectionate person. She was also a disciplinarian.

INT: Strict in some ways?

DOROTHY: Well, she wanted me to, with manners, it was very important that I curtsy, and that I use the right spoon, and the manners and behaviors and attitudes were very, very

important. And when I came to the United States, I was quite disappointed. Of course now I'm an American, but in the beginning, you know, the impoliteness of some people, but it's a different culture. But in those days...I had grandparents who were very lovely. My mother had an aunt whom I adored. And I'm supposed to look like she did. And when my mother used to bathe me, it was her younger sister, she would always by mistake call me by her sister's name, because I resembled her. And my aunt, that's my mother's younger sister, had a little girl who was seven years younger than I and I adored her. And I remember when my aunt was killed, I said, "Well, if they kill my niece, my cousin, I'm going to commit suicide." Because I loved her so much.

INT: So you were very close to her.

DOROTHY: We did not live in the same city, but I would spend some times with her...and I spoke yesterday in the high school and they asked me about my family and I said, and my life at the present time, and I said when holidays come, it's very hard, because my children never had grandparents on my side. They never had any aunts or uncles or cousins. And I get very depressed around holidays.

INT: Sure. So you spent some time at your grandparents' too? What were they like?

DOROTHY: Oh, they were great. They had a big farm, and there were horses, and there were cows and there were dogs, and I came from a small city, but a city life, and the great belief, of course, in Europe was that you had to be in the mountains in the summertime, or you had to live with nature. I think I had more freedom there, and I could get away with more.

INT: Did you go there by yourself, or did you go there with your parents?

DOROTHY: No, I was there by myself. My cousin, my other cousin from Warsaw would come sometimes. I never, I don't remember being there with my parents. In fact, I had the measles there, and I was sick with the measles there.

INT: So your parents might go on a vacation or something?

DOROTHY: Well, my mother went to that spa in the summer, and my father would be in the store, and I would be with my grandparents, or with my younger aunt. I don't think we had summer camps like you do here. Or at least the part of Poland that I came from.

INT: So you remember it as a place where you had fun.

DOROTHY: Wonderful.

INT: A lot of freedom, and being around nature and...

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: And your grandparents? What were they like?

DOROTHY: Well, you know, they were like a Bubbe and a Zayde. My grandfather had a little beard, and there was, like an inn, and my grandmother did a lot of cooking, and baking. They had help, too, but they worked hard. I have a picture of them, I'll show you. Luckily I had an uncle here in Wilmington, and he had a picture. I don't have anything from...I couldn't save anything, but I have a few pictures left which are my treasures, because there is nothing physical that I have left from my youth, or from my family.

INT: So your grandmother cooked. Your grandfather was...

DOROTHY: We played. He would have me on his knees and put me up and down, and I remember he mispronounced a Polish word once and I made fun, I teased him about it. Because being the older generation, you know, his Polish wasn't as fluent as my parents' or mine. Because they spoke Yiddish. He was one of eleven. He was one sister and all these brothers. My grandfather. But my two grandfathers were brothers. My mother and my father were first cousins. They both had the same last name. Which of course in this country, according to genetics, you can't do it. But in Europe they didn't know genetics in those days.

INT: So your grandparents had this farm. Did your grandfather work the farm?

DOROTHY: No, they had workers. I mean, they worked, they did things. But you had help to run farms.

INT: But he stayed there. He didn't go out somewhere else to work.

DOROTHY: No. In fact, he was in Arizona, I understand, before, right after the First World War, because he has asthma, and he came back, because after all, who was he going to be in America? Not that he was an affluent person, but still, there was his home. During the First World War, he was shot. He had a little spot on his nose here, the bullet went through.

INT: So were they your mother's parents or...

DOROTHY: They were my mother's parents, yes. My father's parents, even though he was a brother to my mother's parent, I did not know them that well, his wife was, my grandmother was very ill, and I did not know them that well. But I knew my mother's. And none of them lived, of course. They lived two hours away by train. I remember I used to take a train, and then I don't know, some kind of horse and buggy to the farm.

INT: And your father, what was he like?

DOROTHY: My father was a tall man, a big man. My father was quite modern, and I remember he played cards, and my mother was not happy about it. It was not a nice thing for a gentleman to do. And he was the buyer for the store. He would travel and order the things for our store. And like to have fun. My mother was more of an intellectual, serious person. She read a lot. And my father was more of a happy-go-lucky person.

INT: And how did he treat you?

DOROTHY: Oh!

INT: You were real special? When he would come home he would make a big fuss over you?

DOROTHY: Again, he would have me on his knees, typical.

INT: Did the family go places together?

DOROTHY: We didn't travel to other cities together. I never remember that. We just didn't go to other cities, except to my grandparents'. And, but we would, yes, we would go visit the other people, we would go to the park, we would go to have a picnic. Every Shabbat we would pack a picnic basket and go. We were not far from the forest where many of us were killed later on. That's where they shot the Jews, and I remember we would all go into the forest, and put the blanket on and have a picnic.

INT: How did your parents decide, if they would have a disagreement?

DOROTHY: I don't remember. The only thing I remember them disagreeing with my mother, my father was playing bridge, I think. And in Europe, it was thought the Jewish people wasn't supposed to play cards. It wasn't played for money.

INT: So that they might disagree about.

DOROTHY: Right. That's the only thing I remember. And you have to remember, that's about the age of ten, and your memory starts probably about five, six.

INT: But it sounds like you remember it as...

DOROTHY: I was envious of my friends who had a sister and brother. I remembered that. How I envied them!

INT: Did you feel lonely sometimes, being an only child?

DOROTHY: Probably. Probably. I just thought it was fun to have somebody else in the house.

INT: Did you have friends that you brought home?

DOROTHY: Oh yes, I had friends, yes.

INT: So you went to school...

DOROTHY: I went to school, and in the afternoon, you would go to Hebrew school. I forget if it was twice a week or something like this. But it was a Chaim Nachman Bialik, and it was a Zionist school. Nothing to do with religion.

INT: So what were they teaching you there?

DOROTHY: Oh, to sing, you know, how to sing, how to dance the hora, how to things like this.

INT: So it was more Jewish tradition rather than spiritual.

DOROTHY: Right. It was not religious.

INT: Did your parents belong to any Zionist groups?

DOROTHY: I don't think. Probably, but it was a very small, small town. I know that we had the white and blue box, you know, for Eretz Yisrael. And I had three cousins who left to Palestine in 1936 or '37.

INT: How did people treat Jews in the town, do you remember?

DOROTHY: Well, yes, I remember. We were supposed to be already the upper class. We were like the assimilated Jew there. I mean we were not, but as you would think here. Because our Polish was good, and we were comfortable, and we had a maid, so, and they treated Jews according to class. The poor people were sort of the ones that the anti-Semitism was vented against. But I do remember an incident going to school, and we used to like promenade, at eleven o'clock or something. It was a break, like you play in playground, we used to promenade. And when we promenaded, I was promenading with a very prominent Christian girl, and another girl came over to her and said, "Why are you friendly with her? She's Jewish." And I was just shocked, and I remember reporting that to the teacher, and the teacher didn't do anything about it. And I didn't understand why. But now I understand why. There was anti-Semitism.

I also remember playing, when I was on the farm with my grandparents, playing with the child of a helper. And the girl said, and I wore some kind of beads. They were some ivory beads, I think, they were sort of carved. And the girl said to me, "Oh, these are from dead Jews' teeth." And that, again, I was like six, seven years old, and I wasn't used to talk like that. So there was anti-Semitism, but I didn't feel it. These were the two incidents in my life, until Hitler came.

INT: Were there many Jewish people in your town? You said it was a small town.

DOROTHY: It was a small town. I've been trying to find out. I think somebody said 1800 or something like this, but I'm not sure. But where we lived, the Jews lived around the marketplace, and it was all Jewish. It was like a Jewish town. All the stores were owned by the Jewish people, you know.

INT: So it sounds like up to the age of ten, it sounds like, anyway, that you felt pretty happy.

DOROTHY: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I had a very healthy, happy, normal, the only thing missing was a sibling. (laughs) As far as I was concerned, you know.

INT: Any bad times that you remember?

DOROTHY: I don't remember. Oh, yes! Oh, yes. My bad times with my parents. I wouldn't eat. And I would be, and I would sit, either my mother or our maid with me and feed me. Up until the age of ten. With a teaspoon. Or tablespoon. And it was this spoon for the health of your grandmother. And this one for the health of your, and I had ninety people, and then I would keep it all in my mouth, and then I would vomit at the end of the meal. And then I would get a spanking for that. "If you don't eat," that was the biggest struggle with my mother. Because she, for some reason, I guess I was named after two cousins of my mother's, both died of TB. And in those days they believed that consumption had something to do with lack of food, or, I don't know, people I guess who died of TB lost weight or something. So here I was the only child, so they wanted to be sure that I was going to be healthy and fat. And I was chubby, and this food business was awful. And I used to say, if I ever have children, I'll never make them eat. And I didn't. And some of them were lousy eaters, but that's it. That was my struggle. That was my unhappiness, was the food. Then I would go to neighbors and eat dry bread.

INT: Was that an every day thing, this struggle with the food?

DOROTHY: Probably not. But you know, when you think about it, when you're a child, you know, now that I think about it, but it was often enough to make me angry about it all the time.

INT: What were you like as a little girl? Were you kind of quiet, or were you...

DOROTHY: I don't know. I have nobody to tell me.

INT: You don't remember.

DOROTHY: You know...

INT: Well, did you do well in school, or did you have trouble?

DOROTHY: Oh yeah. No, I didn't have any trouble. I did well in school, it was only three grades, you know. This is what I miss. I have no way, you know, it's very difficult to be objective, you know, to look into yourself.

INT: You have no one to share the history. Like a sibling.

DOROTHY: Or a parent, or an aunt, or a grandmother. In a normal situation, we do lose parents, but not as young. But we have somebody left. It's not like you're taken out and dropped somewhere, and this is the situation of the Holocaust survivors, or some of us, or most of us.

INT: But you had some friends.

DOROTHY: Yes. I had a lot of friends.

INT: Do you remember being real quiet, or...

DOROTHY: I don't know. I never thought about that. I probably was bashful. But I, all I know I was a lousy eater and it was not really my fault.

INT: Do you remember anything that you were particularly proud of?

DOROTHY: No. I remember I used to love going to my grandparents' farm. And I guess they didn't, you know, they let me be freer there. And nobody cared if I ate or I didn't, so I did eat.

INT: Because no one forced you. When did you notice, or when did the people in the town notice that things were changing?

DOROTHY: Well, it was very sudden. I mean, the minute Hitler walked in, that was it. When the Nazis marched in, life changed. Well, first the Russians marched in, and that was a big shock.

INT: What happened to your family then, when the Russians came?

DOROTHY: Well, the Russians, what I told you, is they took our store away and my father had to work, but I don't know what he did, I can't even remember, and we were scared because we were going to go to Siberia.

INT: So everybody knew something bad was happening.

DOROTHY: Well, there was a war. And war is bad.

INT: That you had to leave, and...

DOROTHY: Things were not normal, but they were still, compared to what came later on when the Germans came...

INT: So that's when things started happening, when the Russians...

DOROTHY: Well, they started on September 1, 1939. And they really got worse in 1941, in June. And from that time, it became worse and worse.

INT: OK. So from that point on, is that when you talk about on the tape about what happens after the Russians came?

DOROTHY: Right, up until the time I came to the United States.

INT: OK. Before the war, do you remember any kind of family losses, or...

DOROTHY: My grandmother, my father's mother, died during the war. I remember, and my father sat shiva, and you know, but she died, and I don't remember her funeral, but I remember we were told she died. And I guess I didn't go to the funeral, or something. But I remember they sat shiva in our, because they lived in a little village. In our home, my father sat shiva. So that was the only loss. But she was very old. My father was the youngest of eleven children, and she was quite sick for a long time. I think I saw her only once, in bed. So it wasn't, that much of a trauma. It was a sadness. And that was the only death that I remember.

INT: Did people talk about it? You had the shiva period, but did people discuss it?

DOROTHY: I guess so. It didn't affect me emotionally, that much.

INT: How did people in your family talk about feelings, affection?

DOROTHY: I don't know.

INT: Anger, or anything like that.

DOROTHY: I don't know if that was discussed much. I remember that occasionally my father would kiss my mother on the cheek, you know, and I would sort of, but I don't think in those days people, I think the psychologic orientation wasn't that developed among East European Jews.

INT: You're not talking about feelings, right? They just acted, they didn't talk about...

DOROTHY: Well, the feelings was, how can you do such a thing? You can't behave that way. Or, that was a nice thing you did, but I don't know, it was not as open. At least I don't remember. Maybe I don't want to remember, maybe it's in my subconscious.

INT: So it sounded like from your memory people referred to what you did or did not do, rather than how they felt about it.

DOROTHY: How they felt.

INT: Was Judaism important in your home?

DOROTHY: Oh, well! I was Jewish, there was no question about that.

INT: Did your family observe a lot of rituals?

DOROTHY: Yes. We had a Seder. My mother lit candles. My father went to synagogue every Friday night. My mother went to synagogue and read very well. But she wouldn't go to

synagogue. Friday night the women didn't go to synagogue. We made the dinner. And even I remember Erev Pesach my father would go to the synagogue, and we would have the pillow and all the traditions.

INT: Was there much talk that you remember about G-d, and the role of G-d in people's lives, or in your life, your family's life?

DOROTHY: I don't think there was much talk. When they talked, I was playing. I remember before Passover, my goodness. The kitchen was roped off, and the sauerkraut machine made wine, and it was, oh yes, it was a big thing. There wasn't much company. The interesting thing was, there wasn't that much entertaining on holidays. On other times, people would come, but it was more like just the family.

INT: OK. Do you have some idea of what they wanted for you?

DOROTHY: Oh, yes. Big aspirations. I don't know, but I remember, at least I thought there was pressure on me to perform, to be the lady, education was very, very important.

INT: Do you think they wanted you to go to what the equivalent of college was?

DOROTHY: Oh, absolutely! There was, I got, somewhere I got it that certain things are very important, which carried with me.

INT: Like education?

DOROTHY: Like education, like behavior, like classes. These are the better people, these aren't. You associated with these people, and...

INT: That was a lesson you remember...

DOROTHY: Not verbally. It was never verbally communicated. I think it was communicated in, "Well, look what this one has achieved. Or look how this one is behaving." So you assume from that example, that this is what is expected for you.

INT: Any other lessons you remember learning about like, how to deal with life, or how to deal with problems, if you had problems?

DOROTHY: I don't think at that age. I was ten, and then the war broke out. I don't think I've done any more verbalizing with my kids at that age.

INT: If you had a problem at school or something...

DOROTHY: Oh! My father sat with me, and I remember even reading, I had to sit with the letters and Oh, G-d, there was...

INT: But if you had a problem with a friend or a teacher or something would you tell your parents?

DOROTHY: I don't remember. That problem I had. I think I told my parents when I told the teacher what the other girl said, as the first girl looked and said why is she walking with you because I am Jewish. But living in Europe, you didn't make any waves. You know, that'll pass. But I don't remember. I wish I did. I don't remember the communication. The only thing that stays with me is this eating business.

INT: So there wasn't much discussion that you remember about, if you had a problem, what do you do to get over the problem, to fix it, or...

DOROTHY: No. I don't know if there were no problems, or if there was no talking about the problems. Or both. There probably were problems, and they probably were discussed, I just don't remember.

INT: What might a typical day be like before the war started?

DOROTHY: You had breakfast, and you walked to school. And you came from school, and you did your homework, you went to Hebrew school, and you played with a ball, or you played with your friends, or...

[TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE ENDS]

[TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

DOROTHY: Maybe once a week, or I don't know, maybe, whenever we went.

INT: And the circus?

DOROTHY: And the circus was the big. And I haven't been to the circus since. I was thinking driving here, Gee, maybe in my old age it would be fun to go to compare.

INT: And dinnertime, what was that like? Did everyone sit down and eat together?

DOROTHY: I think so. Dinnertime was at two o'clock. See, we had the breakfast, we had five meals. We had breakfast, and at school we had the second breakfast. That's when we promenaded. We had canapés or something. I don't know if you brought it from home. Light, something light. And then your meal was at two o'clock. And then you had like a light supper in the evening, at 5 o'clock. And then a snack. You ate five meals, and my mother was a good baker. Oh! I remember. The maid would sit on the floor with a big stone thing with poppy seeds and she would mix. And to this day, I'm addicted. I love anything that has poppy seeds. Bagels with poppy seeds. Everything I eat with poppy seeds. And my mother baked a lot. That I remember. And that was very good.

INT: Were there times when everybody sat down together?

DOROTHY: Everybody together? There were the three of us.

INT: Yes. The three of you. Like that two o'clock meal. Was that when you got together?

DOROTHY: Yes. They would come from the store and, you know.

INT: And bed time?

DOROTHY: I don't remember any bedtime stories. I don't know if I had any.

INT: So who would put you to bed?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I guess my mother.

INT: But it's hard to remember.

DOROTHY: I can't remember. Never thought of it until you brought it up. It's funny how...You know, I did not dwell on my past, on my pre-war experiences.

INT: Because...Do you know why?

DOROTHY: I guess I was so busy for surviving. And then being on myself from the age of thirteen. My parents were killed. My father right after 13, my mother 13 and a half or so, and I was on my own. So I guess I had other things to really occupy me.

INT: You didn't have the luxury to think about...

DOROTHY: Exactly.

INT: Well, one of the reasons we're doing this study is...

DOROTHY: Yes, to see the adjustment before and after, of course. But this is the first time when I've spoken, but never, it always starts in September, 1939. Maybe like three sentences from before. And then from then on. But not going back. Maybe if I were hypnotized, maybe I would remember. That would be interesting.

INT: Do you think there was anything from back there that did help you live through this whole experience?

DOROTHY: Maybe. I don't know. But maybe.

INT: But nothing sticks out.

DOROTHY: Well, there was one thing that I talk about in the movie. My mother had thrown me a message that I must survive, and if I survive, rather, to tell the world what those beasts did to the Jews. And that sort of helped me go public, when I started speaking at schools and wherever I go. Because I feel that that was the message from my mother. And I find that more and more people have told me the same thing. Some parents said, Look, one of us has to survive, and one of us has to tell the world.

INT: Did your father give you a message, too?

DOROTHY: No, my father was killed so fast there was nothing. No, but the night before he was caught and killed, he had me on his knees, and I was already a thirteen-year-old girl. And I was very tall for that age. I'm not tall now, but for Poland, I was. I stopped growing then. So I was a big girl. And he put me on his knees and he hugged me and he kissed me, and he held me, and it was the last time. It was like a premonition that that was going to be the end. And maybe he felt, you know, because the next day something was going to happen. And it happened, and that's when he was killed.

INT: Well, how about between ten and thirteen, that was when the Russians were there?

DOROTHY: Right. The Russians were there. It wasn't between ten and thirteen, really. It was between ten and twelve, twelve and a half, almost thirteen. Well, I wasn't as much affected, because they had the, the Communists and the party, and I wanted to belong to it. It's like Brownies. And you wore a red scarf. And they wouldn't take me because they said my parents were too rich. And I was so heartbroken, I wanted to be part of the Girl Scouts. And finally, you know, they allowed me to be part of it. The Russians did have things for the young people. They established like a coffee house, and there was a chess set and a piano, and we all went there, and they were oriented towards the youth.

INT: So for your parents, life changed because they couldn't work in the store anymore. But they did have some things for the kids.

DOROTHY: But they were still in their own home. I mean, the beginning we had to hide, but then they allowed us to be in our own house. And I don't even remember what my father did for the first two and a half years, or three, almost three years.

INT: Did you have to leave school or anything at that time?

DOROTHY: Oh, they changed the school system completely. They put all the Jewish kids into a Yiddish speaking school. So we had to write in Yiddish, and everything was taught in Yiddish. They segregated us. During the Polish regime we were all in one school. But the boys were together. It was male and female in those days. The girls, we used to wear uniforms. We used to have a navy blue uniform with a big, big bow here. We used to call it the airplane. White stuff at the bow, and the uniform would have a white collar. And it sort of made you all equal, you know, like a parochial school. It was not a parochial school. There was no religion taught in the school. But when the Russians came, they separated us. They put the Polish kids into a Polish

school, the Ukrainian kids into a Ukrainian school, and the Jewish kids into a Jewish school. No religion, but the basic, suddenly I had to learn Yiddish. Although I had already been learning Hebrew in my Hebrew school, you know, at least the alphabet. And then when the Russians came I had to learn the Yiddish alphabet and to write in Yiddish. Now why they, the philosophy behind that, I don't know. I still don't know why. But in their paranoiac suspicious way, they wanted to keep the people separated.

INT: Well, what did you think about it, having to change schools?

DOROTHY: Oh, I liked it. Because suddenly now you had boys in your class. You know, they made it co-ed, but they were all the Jewish kids. We had a good time because there were more Jewish kids. You know, I knew, without verbally talking about it, that I was not going to intermarry. I mean, that was something that was not done. Even if they thought I was getting ready to get married. So that part was sort of nice. And all the teachers were Jewish, too. Now, I didn't have anti-Semitism at that point.

INT: Everybody was the same.

DOROTHY: And of course it was different in each city. It was, I don't know. I don't know who made the decision, where it emanated from. Soccer was the big game. We didn't have any football. When I first saw football, I thought it was a brutal game. I still think so!

INT: I agree.

DOROTHY: We had, you know, I think soccer was the thing. And ice skating. Oh! I loved to ice skate, and my father would go with me on the pond because we ice-skated on the streets, and I wanted to ride a bicycle so badly. No! Too dangerous. Typical Jewish overprotection. When you get bigger, we'll get you a bicycle. But I did have ice skates. And once or twice I got skis, but I don't think I owned a pair of skis. But ice skating. That was fun. So that was the winter sport.

INT: And in the summer?

DOROTHY: In the summertime I was on the farm.

INT: Or picnics with your parents.

DOROTHY: So that was the summer recreation. And played ball. And all kinds of games.

INT: Did you play soccer?

DOROTHY: No! Soccer was only for, but I could see it. Where we lived, across from the place we could watch soccer from the balcony.

INT: So this was a change for you, but it sounded like you kind of enjoyed it.

DOROTHY: Under the Russian regime?

INT: Yes, well at least the school situation.

DOROTHY: The school situation. Well, I felt it was not a good change for my parents, certainly. I mean, suddenly they were not owners of the store anymore. No, I would have preferred not to have had the change, but considering to what came, it was...

INT: It was not so bad.

DOROTHY: Right. Everything is relative.

INT: Did your family's status change economically?

DOROTHY: When the store was taken away, sure.

INT: So you had...

DOROTHY: We didn't have a maid anymore, first of all. First of all, we weren't allowed to have maids. You know, that would be the class system. So that stopped. And we didn't have the same source of income, I assume. I didn't feel any hardship, I don't think so, that I remember, but if I think of it now, I'm sure that my parents didn't buy me clothes anymore at that time because the Russians nationalized everything, and they would take our silk nightgowns, and wear them to balls. They didn't know anything. Russia was quite backward. So, you know, the type of life changed. But it was still...

INT: There was still some stability. You stayed in the same house.

DOROTHY: Nobody was being murdered. OK. They would grab a few people once in awhile and send them to Siberia. So you were scared, because you didn't know exactly where you were going. Later on, we found out where.

INT: So did people anticipate Hitler's coming, or was it like any day...

DOROTHY: I don't know. I don't know. There was a fear. Not until probably just before, because we were involved with Russian, and somehow or other, things will improve. But then...

INT: Were you hearing other things, that you remember, or did the family talk about other parts of the world?

DOROTHY: Not much. I remember my father saying, Oh, my. What am I going to do in America? Why should I go to America? Here I am comfortable in my way. And I remember, also, 1939, there was a young girl came to our class from Vienna. She was a German Jewess. And we sort of made fun of her and called her "Vienna-yecke," that means naive. Because she

couldn't speak Polish. But now I know what happened. That was after Kristallnacht, and they fled. Fled, or were thrown out. But I didn't understand her predicament. You know, I was less than ten years old, and there was this strange kid that couldn't speak Polish in class.

INT: Do you remember people talking about maybe they should leave? Like your father saying, What am I going to do in America?

DOROTHY: That's all I remember. Or, who am I going to be in America. You know, here he was forty years old, and he had the store, and what's he doing starting all over. And I guess in those days in Poland, forty years old was like being sixty today. People didn't live as long, and...

INT: OK. Anything else you remember that you want to talk about?

DOROTHY: No. This is the first time in fifty years that I've gone that far. It's very interesting, because I...

INT: How does it feel to talk about it?

DOROTHY: Well, it's sad.

INT: OK. Would you like to talk a little bit about what happened after?

DOROTHY: After the war?

INT: Yes. The liberation.

DOROTHY: Well, I was liberated.

INT: Where were you?

DOROTHY: I was in the forest.

INT: You were in the forest?

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: Hiding in the forest?

DOROTHY: Yes. And I was liberated by the Russian armies, again. And I lived under the Russian regime. Not in my city, but in another city, because that's where I was liberated. For a year, and I went to school. I don't know where I got new clothes. But they had schools. But of course, the schools had no books, because a war was going on. But educational wise, Russia was very, very interested. You know, they wanted not to lose any time. And I remember we used to write on pieces of paper because there were no books. So the teacher used to read from the history books, in Russian. Everything was in Russian. It was all Russian now. It's a new

alphabet again. You know, first the alphabet was Polish, which is Latin. Then it was, during the war, then the Russians came and it became Russian and Yiddish. And that was a different alphabet again. The Cyrillic and the Yiddish. Now it was back to Russian again. Everything was in Russian. And I remember my wrist hurt so much. Because for six or seven hours you had to write fast. And they would go through the history of the communism, this and that, and then you'd have to go home and study from these notes. Of course, I was by myself at that point. I lived in a room.

INT: How old were you then?

DOROTHY: I was then fourteen, almost fifteen.

INT: And you lived by yourself in a room?

DOROTHY: Right. There was a room, with one of these Jewish homes, you know. And first of all, I did have, one of my second cousins survived in the forest with me. And she lived for awhile, but she was bigger and older, and she went to another city, to a bigger city, so I was left there alone by myself. And there was a gentile couple living there, too. I mean, not in the same room. But I had the room. And then they had like a central kitchen. You went and you got your meals. So you had something to eat. Where I got some clothes, I don't know. Because, I was in the forest, and I had one dress for a whole year. And I went, I stayed there for a year. And then I went back to my own city. And since there was hardly anybody there, a few people whom I found were leaving. And I went to some of the Christian homes and asked them for our things, and of course they didn't give them back to me. We had given some stuff to hide. And I did get one, one schoolteacher gave me back a few things, and I still have a piece of material. And I made a suit out of it here, many years ago, which I regret. So that's the only physical thing that I have from my family.

And then I lived in another city with some other people, and then the Russian government told those of us who were originally Polish citizens, we could go back to Poland further, which is Poland now, and they provided some trains, and they transported us. And I forget, it was in '45. It was like in the winter of '45. So I went. What happens when you have no family, you form families. And a lot of people start eating together. It's not a normal life, but it's the best you can, like communes, you know. So there was a whole transport of us. And we went to the new part of Poland where they resettled us. Somewhere on a farm. And then we lived there until the springtime. And the springtime I went to Cracow, which is already a big city.

INT: How old were you then?

DOROTHY: I was, April... '46? Yes. And I was born in August '29, so I was about 16, 16 and a half. And then I joined there I found out there were a lot they called themselves kibbutzim. What happened they were mostly young people who would form and occupy a house like, and have a leader there, and there were different movements from Palestine. And they were to be shipped to Palestine. Of course, there was the Mandate. You couldn't get into Palestine. So first they had to be smuggled out from Poland to Germany. To the DP camps. And then from the DP

camps they were transported to Palestine. And most of these people ended up in Cyprus, because the boats were either intercepted leaving. I don't know, maybe you went through Italy, there were all kind of ways. But that was already organized by the people in Palestine. Young people. And there are books written on the subject. And I was in a DP camp in Germany. Waiting to go to Cyprus. I mean, to Palestine, but ending up probably in Cyprus. There was an American soldier came. They would come with food and things like this. And I remember that my mother said she had a brother in the United States. I didn't remember his name, I didn't remember where or what, but in America. So I wrote a letter, and I said, could you put that in New York in a Jewish newspaper, that I've survived, and I'm looking for relatives. And he took that letter, and he mailed, he had it published in the Forward, I think, one of the Jewish newspapers in New York, and another distant cousin of my mother who was living in New York, saw it. And he got in touch with my uncle here in Wilmington. And my uncle had a son, who was a captain in the air force, in Germany, stationed not far from where I was in the DP camp. And he came there and found me there. And took me, and I lived with him. His wife came from the States, too. So it was after the war. And it took a little bit over a year. My uncle sent papers for me. And it wasn't easy. The government did not want to let me in. Even though I was an orphan, I was a child, I lost everybody, I had no country to go back, but it was a hard time until I managed to come here. And I came to Wilmington. I was eighteen. And then I came to live with my aunt and uncle. And I went to school here. First I went to high school, and then I went to nursing school. And then I graduated and I got married. So that's the transition from the time the war ended until I finally had some sort of a stability.

INT: What did you think about everything that was going on?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I don't even know if I thought. Everything was fast automatic. You were thinking what you were going to eat tomorrow or today, and where you're going.

INT: The kind of basic, day-to-day survival. Rather than...

DOROTHY: Right. You didn't have the luxury of thinking. Thinking is a, you know, it's something that's a luxury. It's a...

INT: How did you find out what happened to the rest of your family?

DOROTHY: I really haven't. I know that my father was killed and I talk about it in there. I know how my mother was killed. I remember we got a letter from my grandparents were killed. And I don't know really about the rest of the family, how it went. Because they didn't live with us. All I know is they're gone. Except for one little cousin who was supposed to have been given away to a Christian family, and to this day, Oh! do I suffer. I always think maybe she's alive somewhere, and I have tried and tried, and in Israel I've done research, and now I'm hoping to go back to my home city. Of course, she didn't live in my city, but maybe to go back to that little, they are all little, very, very small cities that I'm talking about. Maybe 3,000 people or 4,000 people. They are shtetlach. And I'm still thinking maybe she's alive, and then I'm thinking she's alive and raised as a Christian today in some form, which is probably, would it be more disturbing to her to find her roots. She was like five years old. She was that cousin that I loved

so much. But my mind is still. This is what I'm preoccupied with. Is she alive somewhere or isn't she alive somewhere. And if she's alive somewhere, does she know she's Jewish, or doesn't she know she's Jewish? And if she's alive, which will be a miracle, would it be more disturbing to her to find out where she came from? But they're all fantasies.

INT: But you think about them a lot.

DOROTHY: Oh! Because I know everybody else is not alive. But her, I don't know if she is or she's not. She probably is not, but...occasionally I have these things and I'm thinking: maybe if I go back to my city they'll find somebody. Or maybe one of my friends survived and maybe she's living in Australia under a different name. You know, they didn't have the computers. I go to all the Holocaust conferences, and I read, and I pin notes, and I'm looking. I'm searching, but I know the answers before I look, but this is my need. My need is to look. I will never find her.

INT: So you found out about your grandparents from a letter?

DOROTHY: Well, yeah, there was a letter sent to our city, but my mother was still alive. And talk about feelings. I have no one but feelings. A friend of mine said to me once, during the war, you know I understand your grandparents were killed, and your uncle. And I said, what do you mean? I never heard of...My father would not tell my mother that her parents were killed. That was the way you dealt with things.

INT: So he knew about your mother's parents.

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: Just didn't talk about it.

DOROTHY: Well, now I know a little bit better, how you deal with grief. That you don't hide it. You don't put it under a carpet. Because it comes up somewhere else. Regardless of how painful it is. But you know, this is a very contemporary. We're talking about fifty years ago.

INT: People weren't psychologically...

DOROTHY: You didn't discuss. Illness you didn't discuss. If you didn't mention that word, then you didn't have it.

INT: So after a hard time, you got here. And you went to nursing school?

DOROTHY: I went to high school first.

INT: Where did you go?

DOROTHY: Wilmington high school. I was already eighteen, at that time, when I came here. And that was another shock, culturally. Oh! I mean, everything was so different. I went down to

the cafeteria, and we used to have dancing, cheek to cheek. I wrote to somebody about how immoral it was. There were different, and how rude, and how loud, and how everything was different. But I had a very good teacher. She was wonderful. She made me something special. She, I sat with her at her desk, and she put me up as an example, and I graduated, and then I got a scholarship to go to nursing school. My aunt and uncle were middle class people, they were not wealthy people.

INT: You lived with them...

DOROTHY: I lived with them.

INT: Well, what was that like, living with them, and being a new person...

DOROTHY: Well, it was, they did what they could, you know, but it was different. They had already raised children.

INT: How old were they?

DOROTHY: Probably not that old. I don't know, because my uncle died, he was I think 59 or 60. And that was maybe six years after I came to the United States. Maybe seven, I don't know.

INT: So their children were out of the...

DOROTHY: Well, their son was the one who found me. He lives in California, and their daughter is in Wilmington. She's the only first cousin that I have.

INT: But they weren't living there when you came?

DOROTHY: They were living in Wilmington.

INT: Right. But were they living in a house with you, with your aunt and uncle, or were they already grown?

DOROTHY: Oh, no, they were gone. My cousin was married, both of them were married. My first cousin who lives here was married shortly after.

INT: So you were like again an only child.

DOROTHY: Right! That's right. But I was really a child. I sort of led my own life very much. And I was there not that long, a year and a half, and then I went to nursing school, and that's where you slept, so...

INT: Where did you go to nursing school?

DOROTHY: Here in Wilmington.

INT: What made you decide to be a nurse?

DOROTHY: I don't know. That's where I could get a scholarship. I could get a scholarship to go to nursing school. And their daughter is a nurse. And I guess that's why. It's not that I always wanted to be a nurse. It was just I knew that I wanted to do something. They didn't know enough about colleges, and how to go about, they were not, they didn't counsel too well in my school, and tell me what to do. But that nice teacher took me to the nursing school and introduced me and told them what a good student I am, so I got that scholarship to go to that nursing school.

INT: So she was really, she treated you like you were really special.

DOROTHY: Oh yeah. She was the only one really who understood. I mean, we didn't even really talk. She didn't ask me about things, but she took a liking to me. She even brought a Jewish boy for me.

INT: Was she Jewish herself?

DOROTHY: No. Just said, "I knew somebody," and I dated him, a very nice guy. I didn't marry that guy, but that was a person, she was never married, and a very sensitive person. And of course you also have to remember that in those days people didn't even ask us. Nobody ever asked me, How was it, what did you do? I was a closed book, too.

INT: Nobody talked to you about it, about your experience?

DOROTHY: No.

INT: How about your aunt and uncle, did they ask you?

DOROTHY: Not much either. They were afraid that it would hurt me. What I found out now that American Jews, you know, after all, these people have suffered so much, why bring it up?

INT: So people weren't asking what was that like?

DOROTHY: No. It was hard, not only that I was a nurse, but it was hard to become an American. You know?

INT: What was the hardest part for you?

DOROTHY: The language. To this day. The language. Am I doing the right thing? Do I pronounce this the right way, do I know the history, there was so much. You're a foreigner, and you're a foreigner also without any kind of, with a void, without a background for all these years. These very developmental years of puberty, and years of, I never went through puberty. I mean, physiologically I went. But I never went through that rebellious stage in my life. Nobody to

rebel against. I was never a teenager. And you know I've had cancer, and I went to a psychologist. We talked, and he said to me, "You know, you should go to the library, get the book on rebelliousness. You've missed that stage." And I never did. I stopped going. But he says, "This is what you need. You've always been good."

INT: Did you find that experience helpful, talking to someone? Who did you talk to?

DOROTHY: Yeah. Two years ago, after I had breast cancer, they recommended that it would help me to counsel. I went about six times. How to cope with living, on top of everything, with cancer, you know, and all the other things. So I went to see this psychologist for a few times, and you know...

INT: But before that you never went to talk to anybody?

DOROTHY: No.

INT: Who did you talk to way back about how hard this was for you? How about the other kids in the high school? How did they treat you?

DOROTHY: Well, I was pretty much of a loner, I guess. I was older than they were. I just remembered what I lived through, and it was two different worlds.

INT: Did you have any friends?

DOROTHY: I had friends. Not as many in high school. Then in nursing school I had friends. And, because already there was one girl who was older. But I really developed friends after I was married. I had another friend whose son is being married, who was my best friend. She was also a survivor. And she was older than I, several years older, and she was a lecturer, and she was a brilliant woman, and she and I didn't talk about our experiences. We were talking about raising children. The struggle of raising children.

INT: So you met your husband, you know, how, where?

DOROTHY: At a mutual friend, a mutual friend had an open house, and my husband was there. I was in nursing school, and in those days we were not allowed to get married. It's like being in a nunnery. So we dated for about two years until I graduated. I was 21 when I met him. And then my husband is a third generation Wilmingtonian. So, and I was very fortunate. He had a mother who embraced me. She was, she gave me all the love and attention, and you name it, that I missed, and I was very fortunate.

INT: So his family welcomed you...

DOROTHY: Yes, they were wonderful.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

[TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE]

DOROTHY: You asked me before why I think...you remind me of my father, physically.

INT: He was tall and big?

DOROTHY: He was tall and big.

INT: So then you got married...

DOROTHY: Then I got married. I was 23 and a half, and my husband is eight and a half years older than I. And that was another thing. I had to have people, all my friends were always older than me, than I was. Because of my experiences. So we were married in 1953. 1953. Because we just celebrated last Sunday our 39th wedding in our shul.

INT: So was he a lawyer then?

DOROTHY: Yes. Yes, he was a lawyer. His father was a lawyer. The ...judge, the first Jewish judge in Wilmington. A very prominent family in Wilmington, and they were just wonderful to me.

INT: And then, did you work as a nurse for a while, or...

DOROTHY: No, I graduated from, I was sick when I graduated, I had hepatitis, it was very old at that time, and at that time I started being pregnant and having children, and I was sick all the time. You name it, I've had it. I've been operated eleven times now, so I've sort of had post-Holocaust Holocausts, too!

INT: You've certainly had your share.

DOROTHY: Right. But I regret today very much, I regret that I did not, that I wasn't a modern woman. I should have done what they do today and continued a career. It's very important for your self-identity. And I realize it today. But in those days you didn't do that. You stayed home and you raised your children. And I had five pregnancies, I had three children.

INT: And the other two? Did you have miscarriages?

DOROTHY: Miscarriages.

INT: Early on, or...

DOROTHY: First trimester. But I was sort of like, pregnant all the time, the first five, six years.

INT: So how old were you when your first child was born?

DOROTHY: My first child was born on my 25th birthday. And of course, again, the pressure that was put on, that I put, conscious or not conscious -- after all, it was my mother, he's named after my father -- it was my mother, my father, my grandfather, and all the ninety people I lost. And he had to carry that burden. And even on a conscious level.

INT: Well, I guess it is on a conscious level, for you, anyway. Well, how did you think of that? How was he going to...

DOROTHY: He was going to be perfect. A boy. And that was the worst thing I could do.

INT: So you told him a lot, what to do, how to be and...

DOROTHY: (?)

INT: (?)

DOROTHY: And then I would say, "How could you do that to me? How can you not eat when ninety people in my family starved," or...and all the things that I know one shouldn't do. It's very interesting the difference between the theory and practice. But when, at the heat of the moment, you know?

[phone rings, break]

INT: It never ends. So your first child, your son was going to be perfect.

DOROTHY: Beautiful. And I put so much pressure on him that he is today an atheist. Because, you know...

INT: What does he do today?

DOROTHY: He's a theoretical physicist. But he is, he doesn't own a pair of shoes or a tie. You know, everything that meant so much to me. You know, that you have to be, you have to be dressed neatly, and you have to, you have to have proper manners, because my mother, so he's rebelled against all these conventional things.

INT: So he did read the book on rebelling, huh? You didn't get it.

DOROTHY: He made it!

INT: He made it! (laughs)

DOROTHY: He wrote it.

INT: He wrote the book.

DOROTHY: He's a wonderful person. He's honest. Dignity, integrity and everything you want, as a human being, he is beautiful. And he's not married, and he probably never will be married.

INT: Well, what makes you say that?

DOROTHY: I think he's afraid of women. I think I beat the hell out of him.

INT: So he's how old now?

DOROTHY: 38. He's going to be 38.

INT: And your next child?

DOROTHY: My next child is a 34-year-old guy in Wilmington, and he's also not married. He's looking. But thank G-d he's looking for a Jewish girl. And my youngest, my daughter is married.

INT: So your daughter's married.

DOROTHY: She lives in Maclean, Virginia.

INT: She has children?

DOROTHY: No.

INT: That's right, you said you had no grandchildren yet.

How do you think your experience influenced how you raised your children? Your son, you said...

DOROTHY: All of them suffered from my, from my tragedy. Absolutely.

INT: Well, the first one you tried to make him perfect. Then what happened to the next child? Was it the same?

DOROTHY: He had his own accidents, you know, so he had his own...all my kids were quite rebellious. But none of them really, as Jonathan said, my oldest one, "We don't drink, we don't smoke, we don't ride in cars." They say, "You've done a good job." He says, "Stop blaming yourself." But I happen to be a perfectionist, and it's very tough, you know. And I realize it's a very unhealthy. I can get up and straighten the pictures of somebody else. I'm very compulsive. Everything has to be in the proper thing.

INT: Do you think that was part of your early upbringing, that your mother was like that?

DOROTHY: I say I must have been toilet trained at the age of three days. I think that was...

INT: That's something that's always been with you, not something that happened after the war?

DOROTHY: I don't know, but, I'm very critical. I try not to be, but "Why don't you comb your hair." I try not to. As I get older, I realize. Years ago I didn't even notice my behavior, my pattern. Now I've achieved enough of the knowledge, introspection to see how damaging my behavior is. Because the nice things I accept and I expect them. But the others I'm critical of. But that's a typical Jewish thing, too.

INT: Was it any different with your daughter because she was a girl and the youngest? Did you treat her in any other way?

DOROTHY: She says, "You were too, too strict with Jonathan, too lenient with David and just perfect with me." That's what she said. Well, David being sick, and almost died, you know, I've always given into him from the other. So that's what she says. It's interesting. That's the way she...and she's involved in Psychology. That's her major, so...I'm a frustrated psychologist. I'm sorry I never became a psychologist. But that's my interest. I have no interest in math and the scientific things as much, but in human behavior.

INT: Well what do you think stirred your interest in that?

DOROTHY: I don't know. Maybe my experiences. Thinking: how can people do what they did and still be human?

INT: Do you remember thinking that then, or was that something you thought about...

DOROTHY: I was thinking, why, why, why do people behave like that? How can they murder people and still go home and eat dinner? But now I'm beginning to see it. How people have different compartments in their lives. You know, how you live. This is your job, and this is your family.

INT: So now you're able to understand how people can just put that...away?

DOROTHY: I'm beginning to see how -- we have a guy who's supposed to be executed today. He chopped up seven women. I don't know if he raped them or not. There are terrible things. How can human beings do that? But the more you read, you see how. And the question is, is he insane or is he not insane? Does he know what he's doing or doesn't he know what he's doing?

INT: So it affected how you thought about people?

DOROTHY: I'm very good with people. I'm very understanding with everybody else. Everybody comes to me with their problems. I'm very wise, and I advise them right. Someone comes to me.

INT: So when you say everybody else, you mean you, not you, you're not as understanding of yourself.

DOROTHY: Exactly. I'm very critical of me and people in my family.

INT: How do you think that affected your marriage and your experiences?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I guess it made it tough to live with me. Nobody ever complained.

INT: So does your husband ever complain?

DOROTHY: My husband happens not to be a complainer. He's never critical. He's very understanding, and very uncritical.

INT: Do you think because of your experience you worry more about your children, that they be safe, and...

DOROTHY: Probably. Not as much safe...

INT: What did you worry about?

DOROTHY: I worried about the impression they will make. My insecurity. That the opinion of others is very important to me, not the feelings of my son. Who is a little bit different. I am not secure enough to have my son come to this wedding next week in two sneakers. And maybe one will be red and one will be....

INT: I know what you're talking about.

DOROTHY: You know? But I'm being very honest with you. And it just dawned on me. Only at my daughter's wedding, that I don't care about his feelings. There is a reason he's doing these things. And maybe if they didn't, I don't know if he'll ever change. But is it that important? There are some people who are very well dressed and who are S.O.B.s, but they play by the game.

INT: So you've been concerned about how they impress people, what they do, what they look like. Are there other things that you worry about?

DOROTHY: Worry about? Oh, I worry about everything. You name it, I worry about it. My older son is unmarried, and he probably never will. He says he'll never get married, and I can see it, because he's brilliant. That's another thing. And it's very hard to live with these type of people. He goes to bed at 4 o'clock in the morning. He reads in bed. He's completely nonconventional, and who's going to be with someone like that? I worry he's by himself. He lives in Boston. He folkdances. He plays Bulgarian bagpipes, he has all kinds of charming, there isn't a subject you can't discuss with him, and he tells you the way it is, not the way you

want to hear it. I worry. I worry my son 34 isn't married, he can't find anybody. My daughter doesn't have any children, she's 32 now. So, of course I worry. If my husband says, if you say it's raining, I will say I didn't make it. I feel guilty over everything.

INT: Did you ever talk to them about your Holocaust experience?

DOROTHY: It's very interesting. Yesterday in school they asked me that. But they've read. I've written things. And they've read, and one or two of them have seen the tape. I think David said, "I'll see it when it's in a movie." They know everything. But we never sat down. As Susan said to me, and of course Susan is my best admirer. She says, "Mother you did it right. You only told us a little bit the way we could absorb it at the right time." It was never an interview. It was, you know. And of course I've been involved in education, Holocaust things all the time, so they've always seen me on the phone with these subjects and projects. So they know everything. But not in a complete segment of events. Except I think that they did read, when I went to Israel to one of the conferences, they asked to bring anything, so I translated my writings. I had written it at the DP camp, in Polish. So I translated it into English. I was going to do a book. I never did that. So I think I've given them to read that.

INT: But as far as sitting down and talking...

DOROTHY: Right. Or they've never asked me, now what was it like. Again, they are probably afraid to hurt me. They've never said to me, can you tell us this, or can you tell us that? They've never said that to me.

INT: Do you wish they would?

DOROTHY: I don't know. Until you said that. At this point, you know, I mean I've talked about it enough. At schools. It's not that I've held it. It's been out and out and out. To me, in fact, it's getting to be, I went yesterday to speak on Wednesday, I'm getting, it's repetitious. I need a new angle to my speech. You know what I mean. But I speak extemporaneously, from what I remember sometimes. I used to come home and I would say, Oh, I meant to say this and I forgot! You know me, the perfectionist. And my husband said, "Whatever you remember. They don't know what you forgot. The students heard. They've learned. They know the tortures the Jews went through. So if you didn't tell them this or this episode, that doesn't matter." And I finally realized he's right. I mean to me, I had to, you know, it had to be perfect. But it's not perfect. Life isn't perfect. I'm not perfect. Nobody's perfect. And if I had come to that conclusion thirty, forty years ago, my life would have been much easier.

Now I don't know if this perfectionism is part of that Holocaust, because my friend was even more perfect than I. And more guilty than I. I mean, not guilty, but feeling guilty. I don't know. I haven't compared it with other survivors. But I have second cousins in New York, two of them who've survived, and they are in a worse mess than I am. The same thing. And they're warm people and everything, but, first of all they lived through the children's lives completely, which I don't, thank G-d. And their life is so intertwined with their kids, it's just...

INT: Too much?

DOROTHY: Too much. Not healthy for both. I probably am more than I should, too.

INT: What do you think about, what in your mind, how did you get through this experience? You look back, like you said at the time it was day to day.

DOROTHY: Well, today I think how I didn't become crazy, number one, how we sort of have adjusted, probably, I'm sure we're all neurotic in some way. And everybody worked out their experiences probably in their own way. And I think they'll be studying us and studying us and I don't know if there will ever be an answer. But is there an answer to any problem?

INT: But what do you think? How did you...

DOROTHY: I don't know. I was busy. I was always busy. Either going to school or getting married, having children, decorating a house. I'm always, to this day I never have time. Do you understand Hebrew? "Ein li zeman." There's no time.

INT: So it wasn't something where you sat down and thought, "How did I ever get through that?" Well, maybe one way you got through it was you were always busy. You didn't stop to think.

DOROTHY: That's probably true. That's probably what makes Henry run. That's probably the reason. Now I cannot take a book and read it in the daytime.

INT: What are you doing?

DOROTHY: I'm busy. When I go to read, it's night, and my eyes are half...or on vacation. Now far away, there is no busy-ness. You know, I can do on vacation. So that's when I read. But I feel guilty reading. I know people who say two o'clock is naptime, or reading time. I get up in the morning and there are the talks. And I'm always late, and I'm always over, I have four more things on my agenda which I didn't get to. Now that probably I think is the result of the running.

INT: Of constantly running, yes.

DOROTHY: That may be the way of not focusing.

INT: During the time you were in the woods, how did you get through that? I mean did they ask you that on the tape? Did you talk about that?

DOROTHY: No, but all your day, you didn't have time to worry. You had to survive. And you had to run from place to place. You were hungry, you were starved. We were, that's a luxury. You know, this type of emotional thing is a luxury. Compared to survival. After you survive, well, then. Even after I was liberated, everybody had, those of us who were in the same boat,

you said, Well, what am I going to eat today? Where am I going to get some food on my body? Where am I going to put my head down? You had more important things than to worry about your psyche.

INT: Well, how about now, as you look back?

DOROTHY: I have plenty moments now. Every time I clean my chicken. Every time I throw the fat out. I think, every Friday. I cook a lot of chicken soup. To Boston, and to my atheist son, he loves it with the matzoh balls, he comes here with a thing like that, and I'm thinking: How many Jews could I have saved with all the fat we throw out? Well, I'm sure that the average American doesn't think that way.

INT: I'm sure they don't.

DOROTHY: Every time I see food thrown out, and to this day, I'm always afraid I'll be hungry. Now, I'm overweight, and it's bad for me in my condition. And I can't lose. Because I have to finish everything. Because somewhere in my subconscious, I think tomorrow there won't be enough to eat. I know that there will be enough to eat. But I also know why I am always sort of eyeing the biggest piece, you know? Which I should be eyeing the smallest piece. And I do. But still, there's this conflict with me. Because I probably still think that I will not have enough food to eat. Now, my friend who survived the Holocaust, she was slim. She didn't have that. So that doesn't mean that, everybody's different.

Every time I see chimneys with smoke from factories. What do I think? I think of my family going up in smoke. Every time I see railroad tracks. I think of the people on the trains going to extermination camp. These are the associations.

INT: Sure.

DOROTHY: But I didn't years ago, when I was busy raising children, you know.

INT: Were there any other things that remind you?

DOROTHY: Well, these are predominantly, you know.

INT: How do you feel about G-d, and religion now?

DOROTHY: I don't know. The students always ask me, are you more religious now, or less religious? I don't know. I'll never be religious. Only when I need it. "Gottenyu, please give me a grandchild." You know, then I talk to G-d. Or, "Gottenyu, please let my husband be well." But this is it. My philosophy really is that man needs G-d more than G-d needs man. But that is a philosophical type of thing. And I envy people who are religious. I could really feel that strongly. As my son said, "Why did your G-d get you? What did he do with your father?" We were in front of Christians and Jews, and there were a lot of ministers, and one of the ministers said to me, "Well, why do you think you survived?" And I said, "I survived because I was young

and healthy and strong and could run fast. Because they used to come in the woods with the machine guns, and you started running. If you were lucky, the bullet didn't hit you." And he said, "Well, don't you think that the good Lord had anything to do with it?"

INT: Well, do you?

DOROTHY: No. I wasn't that much of a better person than any kid. My cousins and my friends who died. What did He have against them? You know, philosophers debate that and debate that, and they can't come out with an answer. I don't know. But I can't think that I was singled out. I don't feel that. I was lucky. And most of the Holocaust survivors. You ask them, how did they survive? Unless they are the really frumest. They will tell you that they were lucky.

INT: So you were young, you could run fast, you were strong.

DOROTHY: I feel all people survived. I wish I could say that the Lord singled me out, but then I would be mad at Him for not singling the others out. But, and yet when I'm in trouble I need that G-d. You know, it's something that we, we, I feel that G-d is man-made. We need something. Because we are all, what is the word I am trying to find? Mortal. And we know that eventually we will all die. And if Kant and Nietzsche and all the other philosophers can't come to a final agreement...

INT: So it's not anything that...

DOROTHY: But I envy people who are religious. I envy. Now, if I had, if I were raising my family today, I'd probably do a little bit different. I told my oldest son Jonathan, "Jonathan, G-d is love, G-d is trees, G-d is sunshine, G-d is flowers." I couldn't say to him, "G-d sits there on a throne." I just couldn't do that. And I think I would have given him a more concrete G-d, for his sake. It's a security to have. This cousin of mine, whose parents had lived, she has two children, she became very frum. Zeh geshriben. I don't know if you understand Yiddish. You know, you don't question it. This is G-d's will. It's G-d's will. That's wonderful. Then you don't have that torment in you.

INT: And your torment is...

DOROTHY: My torment is: How can G-d do these things? You have leukemia, and you have children crippled, polio, and besides the Holocaust. All the other awful things. I mean, if you're going to talk in a broad sense.

INT: How about your faith in your fellow man?

DOROTHY: Oh! Well, I'm learning much more about my fellow man. We're all born with good and bad. And that's what it is. It just depends which way you go. The human instinct is, well, when I see the Neo-Nazis...I'll tell you what's very upsetting lately. Is the rise of anti-Semitism, the Neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Revisionists. And I have here, my book,

about Revisionists, well, I said I lived too long. If the Holocaust survivors are still alive, not all of them, but some of us, and if their people are going to tell me that there were no gas chambers, they were disinfecting chambers, you know, and after all, there was a war, and Jews get killed in a war, but, you know, for me, who's lived through and saw it with my own eyes. Today, not a hundred years from now. It's not twenty years from now, when most of the survivors will be gone. Or even ten years. Today still. That is very upsetting to me.

INT: So those are some of the changes in the modern world.

DOROTHY: After the war, I thought, well, man has learned. I was sixteen, eighteen. Now we'll have a wonderful world. We'll each love each other. And on my way was the flower child. Far from the flower children, but there will really be peace. Man has learned how brutal he can be. It's getting worse. The instruments of death are worse. They can torture better, they can kill with one bomb more. What did Saddam Hussein do in Kuwait? Not that I love Kuwait, you know. They haven't changed their position on Israel. But they're human beings. And he did the same type of beastly things to the children, the women, and, and that's already a fellow Arab doing it to a fellow Arab. His cousin!

INT: So your faith in your fellow man is...

DOROTHY: It's funny, I'm sort of, it went up and now I see, no, man is going to be a beast all the time. And yet, I'm against capital punishment. I don't know if this guy is being executed today in Delaware or not, it's...what he did was hideous, I mean, carving up bodies...but at the same time, I wouldn't want to be the one saying that he's, you know, electrocuted. And I can see, there's no point keeping him in jail either for life. But I wouldn't want to be the one to make the final decision. Just in case he's innocent, you know?

INT: Let me see what else. How do you think you got through all the losses that you experienced, your grandparents, your...

DOROTHY: "Ein breirah." I had no choice. What could I do? The only thing I could do was hang myself or kill myself. I couldn't bring them back.

INT: So how did you handle it, finding they were gone and...

DOROTHY: In those days you were running from day to day.

INT: So it was again, you were just running.

DOROTHY: When your life is threatened from day to day, from minute to minute, you can't, you weep for a second, and then you run. It's like when my father was killed, oh, I was devastated. I used to cry every night. Every night. Go to bed with my mother. But then when my mother was killed, I didn't have time already. I was in the forest. And I didn't, I did really mourn my father, but I never really mourned my mother, when I look at it now. I mean, through the years, of course, I have. But at that time...

INT: When you did have the time to mourn for your mother...

DOROTHY: Oh, I've gone to Yad Vashem and screamed and cried, I've gone everywhere and cried and cried and cried. But I don't cry at the sad things. When I hear the Hatikvah, and the flag of Israel flies, I start crying. More than because, had there been an Israel, had there been a Jewish homeland, as I said to these students yesterday, because they don't understand how important Israel is to Jews or to me. I mean, I'll give my life for Israel. Not on the religious aspect of it, but on the nationalistic aspect.

INT: So you think it might have been very different...

DOROTHY: Oh! Of course.

INT: If people had somewhere to go.

DOROTHY: Right. As I said to them, during the war, before the war started, half of the nations wouldn't let the Jews out, and the other half of the nations wouldn't let the Jews in. The kids don't understand. Why didn't you leave the ghetto? They think the ghetto is like the ghetto here, where the Blacks and poor live. And I have to explain to them what a ghetto is.

INT: Have any of your children talked to anybody about...

DOROTHY: Oh, my daughter, yes. Yes. (?). But I think, my daughter more than the boys. She's very loquacious, she's very psychologically oriented. The boys are more bland.

INT: As part of the study sometimes, we interview your parents, sometimes the children. I don't know how you would...

[TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE ENDS]

[TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO]

INT: I would like them to.

DOROTHY: I would love them to. But that's not... You can say, "I interviewed your mother," and...I would like to hear.

INT: What it was like for him to grow up with you.

DOROTHY: Right. Or his feelings. He's such a...

INT: How have you and your husband dealt with it?

DOROTHY: Well, my husband has been very supportive. Because he was shot down over Yugoslavia. He was a bombardier. And he was missing in action, and he's been wonderful on

that subject. As I told you, he's non-critical, and he's very supportive. He's schlepped me to any conference I want to go. Israel, he went, to Washington he went, to Philadelphia he went, wherever there was, I think, last summer in New York there was a conference, and he'll go with me.

INT: Does he ask you about your experience, what it was like?

DOROTHY: No. Well, he's heard it. Again, when you're living together...he knows it. He's read the book. He saw the tapes. My in-laws never asked me. And I used to be hurt that they didn't. And they were afraid. They were protecting me. Again, it's that old-fashioned thing. They didn't want to mention it because it'll upset me. And I always used to think: Well, why didn't they ask me? But now I understand this process.

INT: Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about how...

DOROTHY: No, I really think I told more than I ever thought of the before and after. Usually I deal with the in-between. This is what I'm good at. The in-between.

INT: Well, let me see if I've forgotten. How have you and your husband made decisions over the years in your marriage? Would you describe your marriage as traditional, or is it...

DOROTHY: Yeah, I guess it's traditional.

INT: I mean, you stayed home with the kids, he went to work.

DOROTHY: Right, right.

INT: How do you decide things?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I think we don't decide things. We just wait until things happen. (Laughs).

INT: Well, if he wants one thing, and you want another thing, how do you...

DOROTHY: I'm usually the one who decides. No, my father-in-law used to say: He makes the big decisions, I make the little decisions. My father-in-law used to say: He made the decision should we go to Vietnam, and I make all the little decisions.

INT: Like what's for dinner.

DOROTHY: Like what's for dinner, and everything else, what we're doing tonight, where we're going. So I sort of run the show.

INT: OK. How do you feel about your kids and having fun? I mean, is that important?

DOROTHY: Oh, I'm a great believer in having fun. Except I'm not well now. I've had surgery on my feet, so I can't wear any shoes. Oh, I love fun, and I love parties, and I love to have a good time.

INT: And for your children?

DOROTHY: I would like them to have the same thing I had. They like fun, too..

INT: And how important is their schooling to you, or...

DOROTHY: Always very important. I saw to it that they went to private schools. Now I don't think it was worth it. I was very upset because my daughter wouldn't apply to fancy Ivy League schools, because she was rebellious. These things are very important to me. But I see that I'm not right.

INT: Well, how are you wrong?

DOROTHY: I'm wrong because, you should judge the people on the basis of what kind of human being they are. And not if you went to Yale, Harvard, and not what type of a house you live, or what type of a car you drive.

INT: So that's where you think you've changed your view on...

DOROTHY: I'm maturing very slowly.

INT: How do you feel about possessions? How important are things?

DOROTHY: They were important, until I got cancer. And now they're not important.

INT: Why do you think that's changed you?

DOROTHY: Well, because, you know, you get that bored and it's like a loop around your neck. Like I have tons of silver. My mother-in-law loved silver, and she gave it to me. And you have to polish it. I don't have the maids today. I did have a little bit of maid when my kids were small. I don't have any help today. I don't want to be polishing. I've got arthritis, you know? So what? I think, my daughter doesn't want it. Younger people are smarter. And the times are different, too. You know, some people are still, and they have, but as I see, you know, it's a different life. And I don't know. The younger people have their pressures. I don't know if I could cope. Dropping off two children at a nursery, or a babysitter's or something, and running. People do it.

INT: How do you think you'd feel about that, when you had grandchildren, if that's what happened?

DOROTHY: Well, that's my children's decision. That is not my decision. I think if they can afford to stay home, I think that would be...now probably my older son would have been better

off if I had worked. Because I wouldn't have picked on him so much. Really, as I look back to it. And maybe I would have had my gratification coming from my accomplishments, and not trying to live through him and raising a perfect human being.

INT: Do you think what happened to you before helped you with your cancer experience, or is that a whole different thing?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I mean, I've had radiation, I'm right now OK. But I'm 62 years old, and it's not like it hit me at thirty. And I know people who have, so, I don't want to die, but if I have to go, I'll go. Now, it's funny, now I don't want to die because my children will need me. It's a good excuse, you know?

INT: Well, they probably will.

DOROTHY: But it's a shock when you get that word. Suddenly it changes your whole, what is important.

INT: Your priorities change.

DOROTHY: And then I think it's not fair for G-d to do that to me. To test me so many times. To almost take my child away from me, you know, when I went through that terrible time with my son, and first my whole family, and now again with me. It's a little too much. Enough is enough. But I'm sure everybody, whatever happens, you say, Why me? And it's enough.

INT: You sure have been tested a lot.

DOROTHY: Yes. I've been over-tested (laughs).

INT: Do you think you passed?

DOROTHY: Who knows?

INT: How hard do you judge yourself?

DOROTHY: Oh, I've very tough on myself. My only thinkg is that I don't know how to relax. I've taken yoga, and I'm supposed to be exercising. But I always find an excuse not going. And it's part of this, really.

INT: How do you think it's connected?

DOROTHY: How it's connected to...

INT: You say it's part of this...

DOROTHY: I guess I'm running. I'm still running away from things.

INT: Like in the woods.

DOROTHY: Again, not on a conscious level. Probably if I went on a couch in analysis for twenty years, then maybe I would find. I have a friend, one of my best friends who's been in analysis for eight years, and she's been wonderful. She's helped me. Because she identifies my things. First she always says I should have gone into analysis, and I guess I should have gone, but I'm very psychiatrically oriented, and it probably would have helped me a lot.

INT: How would you feel about your children getting help?

DOROTHY: Oh! I'd love it! When my older son, he got some help. Yes, I think that we all benefit. I'm a great believer in, but it will only help you if you believe in it. You know, if you're willing to reveal and to unload yourself. I think a good friend sometimes, he's not a psychiatrist, but somebody you can really open up, and debate these things on that level.

INT: To just listen.

DOROTHY: Right. My daughter called me a few weeks ago. She was very upset. She was giving her husband a surprise birthday party, so she couldn't talk to him about things, and she just, oh! She was all worked up. And I said, "Susan, how can I help you? I'll come to the party, I'll bring some cakes." She said, "Oh, no, no, no. She says, "You've helped me. You've listened. That's all I needed. I just needed that ten minutes, being able to unload, because I couldn't talk to Jeffrey about it, you know worrying about the party, this and this." And this is why that's a very important thing.

INT: How do you want your children, and your grandchildren someday, to view you, and to remember you?

DOROTHY: Well, not as a hero. They think I'm a hero. And I'm not. Or a heroine. I'm just a victim of circumstances. I think probably as a nice human being, with my faults.

INT: But not as someone to whom something tragic happened.

DOROTHY: Well, something tragic did happen.

INT: But you don't see yourself as a heroine, or overcome something insurmountable odds...

DOROTHY: No. Anybody in my situation...I think what probably, after probably we all reacted differently. It's like after any tragedy. You see people losing a dear one, a husband, or a child, which is the worst thing, and some people can't cope, and crumble, and some cope very well, and build their life and continue. Not that they forget, but they, but you can't change. It's how you cope with the things you can't change.

INT: And you coped...

DOROTHY: I guess I coped the best I could.

INT: Did you ever think you'd never be able to cope, and you'd never be able to get...

DOROTHY: No, never.

INT: Even when you were in the forest, you never thought: Oh, I'll never survive.

DOROTHY: No, the only thing I ever thought was I would be crippled, because if you watch my tape, after I had typhus in the forest, and I lost all the hair, and first of all, I never thought I was going to live. But then I couldn't walk, because some kind of, this part, like a cartilage evolved here, so I crawled. And I thought, Oh, G-d, if I survive, I'll be crippled for the rest of my life. That was the only time that I thought that I wasn't going to be functional in some way, physically. I think, Oh, I'm not going to survive a dinner party, you know? The soufflé won't rise. But such stupid things. But now I'm getting much better. So what! Who in the hell cares if it's perfect or it's not, so my tablecloth isn't ironed. I'll still try to iron it. That doesn't mean that I'm giving up. Or if the color isn't so, or if the flowers aren't just the way I like them. Does it really matter? How many places have you said the flowers were pretty or not pretty. Do you remember? I don't remember what I ate at any wedding or things. I remember if I had a good time or not. But I don't remember if they had almonds, or if they didn't have almonds, even the nicest was, I remember the spirit of the occasion, but not the details. And I think if I had thought of these things when I was much younger, I would have saved a lot of energy. But maybe I would have wasted it on others. You know, So...[break in tape] you define more a philosophy of what's important in life.

INT: It sounds like you have.

DOROTHY: I haven't yet. I'm still working at it.

INT: Do you think you ever adapted to living here?

DOROTHY: I think so. I think so.

INT: In the beginning it was a shock.

DOROTHY: It was tough, but it was paradise you know? Nobody was trying to kill you. You always had something to wear. Something to eat. I mean, it's a haven. It's still the best country in the world.

INT: You still feel that way, too?

DOROTHY: Yes!

INT: What do you think of all the changes, in addition to the Neo-Nazis, about the other changes, in Europe, with Russia, and Germany reunifying?

DOROTHY: I'm not thrilled with Germany. It won't be in my time, but I wouldn't be so sure that in fifty years, they're not going to start something else. Or maybe before. I hope I'm wrong.

INT: Do you think this could ever happen again?

DOROTHY: What?

INT: The Holocaust?

DOROTHY: Yes.

INT: Here, or?

DOROTHY: It's happening on a mini-basis. What did Saddam do to the Kurds? You have the genocide in Cambodia. The only thing that I think maybe it would not happen because now the world is smaller. You see, you have a TV and you see what goes on. Where in those days you didn't. So maybe in one way, that will save.

INT: People know more what's happening.

DOROTHY: Right. But there are still parts of the world we know so little about and some awful things are going on. It may not be the Jews. Usually we're the first ones when something bad happens. It may not be necessarily the Jews. It's always a minority.

INT: What did you think of the rest of the world in those times?

DOROTHY: Oh! I remember lying in the forest and looking up and saying: How can the world let...And I remember thinking, Gee, somewhere in America there are some Jewish people today who are dancing. I may be at the wedding dancing, and other people are being slaughtered tomorrow. And of course, you know, I was a child, and in fact yesterday, before I went to speak, a young lady picked me up. She's a wonderful Irish Catholic. The sweetest kid. And she's very much involved in Holocaust education. And I gave her my writing, so she put it on computer, and she brought it back to me and I started reading. And I saw the writing of a sixteen-year-old saying that nobody will ever understand how I suffered, and nobody ever will. But that is a sixteen-year-old writing. Now I'm 62. And people, you know, it's like I'm the only one it happened to, and people will never understand the great hurt that I went through. But now I understand that there are people going through great hurts in different ways.

INT: And as far as the rest of the world, you were wondering where were they? Why didn't they save you?

DOROTHY: Yeah. How can you allow such a thing to happen?

INT: It's scary. What do you see as the successes in your life?

DOROTHY: I never thought of it. Well, my success in my life has been that I'm very well liked. Because I'm a neutral person. I'm not one to instigate problems. I only criticize myself and my family and defend everybody else. So I have a reputation as being a very nice person. And that makes me feel good. Because I don't have enemies. Not that I know of. I probably could have achieved something more professionally, or...I'm sort of sorry because, but it's the times. I should have been able to have an income of my own. You know, that I went out and work. And on top of it, I didn't accept reparation from the Germans. And I'm so sorry today. My father-in-law was very dignified, like the dean of the Jewish community here said, You're not going to take money for murders. And, well, who says I couldn't? My cousins in New York, they've given it to their children and grandchildren. OK. Even if I didn't touch it. Or to Israel. I could use it myself, too, but that's besides the point. You know, even if I, I regret, I have this great regret that I did not apply for reparations. Not that they, I mean, how could they pay me for all the murders? But it's only they're paying you of your health. And I certainly lost health. I have constant bronchitis from being on the ice. I have this crippling arthritis, of course people who haven't been sleeping on the ice and it's worse, I'm always in pain. And I feel it more as I age, of course. And I'm sure that my life did not contribute to health. You know, I went into the forest, and that month I stopped menstruating. Never menstruated the whole year. The month after I came out of the forest, I started menstruating. So it shows you that nature takes care. Because there was no nutrition. You know, I lived on trees, and raw berries, and sometimes I would steal a potatoe. So I was emaciated. And cold. So to tell me that my health has not been affected, living worse than an animal? And why should the Germans have the money?

INT: So you're sorry now.

DOROTHY: I was too proud then. I didn't want anything. They can't, you know, repay me. Of course they can't repay me. But I should have taken some of that, and given to my children, or even if I could not use that, you know, mentally I couldn't use, even if I needed it, unless I didn't have bread. So that's my regret. I don't feel that I've accomplished anything. I hope that I leave someday three nice children.

INT: They already sound like they're three nice children. People like you. It's no small thing. Not everybody gets liked.

DOROTHY: No. My friend who died used to say, "Dorothy, you'll be the first one in heaven." Because to me, I'm always looking at if people are good. I still to this day...

INT: Even though this happened, how do you think you've held on to that belief when things are so awful?

DOROTHY: I don't know. Not that I don't get angry.

INT: You do get angry.

DOROTHY: Oh, sure. But then somewhere I'll find good in everybody.

INT: That's a very good quality. There's a lot of bitter people who didn't live through what you did.

DOROTHY: Right. That's true. Somebody asked me yesterday if I'm bitter, and I said, "I'm hurt. I've been very hurt."

INT: Is there anything you wish I'd asked you that I didn't ask you?

DOROTHY: No. I don't...I just wish I remembered more from my youth, from my childhood.

INT: Well, your childhood was only ten years long. What would you consider your happiest moments since the war?

DOROTHY: I would say my son's bar mitzvah and my daughter's wedding. Not my own, because I cried.

INT: Why did you cry?

DOROTHY: Well, not having a mother and father to give you away. I was thinking of that. It's very hard for me.

INT: So those were some of your more difficult times.

DOROTHY: Right. I mean I was happy I was getting married, you know, but...but then my son that he survived, because my older son couldn't be bar mitzvah because he didn't go to Hebrew school. He's an atheist. So when David...so that was, he survived, and of course, Susan got married to a Jewish boy.

INT: When did your son quit Hebrew school?

DOROTHY: When he was nine.

INT: He decided to be an atheist then? How did you feel about it?

DOROTHY: Don't ask. Don't ask. (laughs).

INT: It was very upsetting, no doubt.

DOROTHY: And it's not that I'm so religious. It's not from the religious point. We had a hard time of it. He was an independent thinker when he was four years old.

INT: Well, how did you handle it, that he was so different from what you wanted him to be?

DOROTHY: I beat on him.

INT: Verbally, physically?

DOROTHY: Both. You name it. And I have terrible guilt feelings today about it.

INT: Does he ever talk to you about it?

DOROTHY: Well, he said to me once, "Stop blaming yourself. You did the best you could. We're all alright." And it's true. I mean, they never got in trouble with the law, or you know.

INT: So he wants you to forgive yourself.

DOROTHY: Yes. But I'm not.

INT: It's hard. I think you've answered most of my questions.

DOROTHY: I'll tell you what. What time is it? Oh, it's not bad. Let me make a fruit salad and a cup of coffee before you leave.

[break in tape.]

INT: Thank you very much Dorothy. These two tapes were made at Dorothy Finger's home covering the period before the war (phone rings) and after the war. The following tape, tape number three, is made from an audio transcript of a videotape which Dorothy was kind enough to lend me, and it covers the period during the war.

[END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO]

DOROTHY: ...December, 1947. I am married, and the mother of three grown children. I am a retired nurse, but one piece of paper, a little document which I hold so dear, is my American citizenship. Because without that, I still in forest. I appreciate freedom and I cherish it.

INT: And where do you live now?

DOROTHY: At the present time I live in Wilmington, Delaware, where I have lived since I came to the United States.

INT: And today is...

DOROTHY: Today is Wednesday...

INT: Tuesday.

DOROTHY: Tuesday, August 5, 1986.

INT: OK. And you were not born in this country?

DOROTHY: No. I was born in Poland. I was born in the eastern part of Poland, which was Poland up until 1939. In 1939 when Hitler declared the war on Poland, Hitler and Stalin made a pact, and they split Poland into two parts. The eastern part of Poland, where I was born, was occupied by the Russian army. The western part of Poland was occupied by the Germans.

When the Russians came, life for us was changed completely. My parents owned a small department store, and then they were declared bourgeois, and they were planning to send us to Siberia.

INT: (inaudible)

DOROTHY: Anybody who had some property was bourgeois supposedly rich.

INT: So the Russians said that.

DOROTHY: Right. And they made life pretty difficult for us. We had to hide because at night there would be war planes, and they would come, with their secret police, and round everybody up to be sent to Siberia. Having known then what we know now, we would have gone to Siberia. Because those that went to Siberia, although they suffered and many died, but proportionately many more survived than those of us who stayed in Poland, in the eastern part of Poland.

INT: What year are we talking about?

DOROTHY: We're talking now 1939. The Russians came in September 1939. But in 1941, in June, Stalin did not hold this pact with Hitler, and Hitler attacked the eastern part of Poland and the German troops occupied our territory. Then our hell really started. We as Jews lost any right as human beings. There are rights, protection for animals -- we had no protection. We had to abandon and give up any possessions. First it was jewelry, and then it was furs. Anything personal, they came without any warning, with their bayonet, or the SS men would enter your home. The Germans came.

INT: The Germans came in June of 1941.

DOROTHY: In June of 1941, and we became, we were treated subhuman.

INT: "We" meaning...

DOROTHY: The Jews.

INT: OK. Tell me now a little bit about your town Stanislaw.

DOROTHY: I was born in Stanislaw, but I lived in another city named Chodorow.

INT: (?).

DOROTHY: It was a small city. I can't tell you the amount of people. I think there were maybe 1500 Jewish population. There was a big sugar factory.

INT: And you were born in 1929. In Stanislaw.

DOROTHY: Correct.

INT: And lived there for approximately...

DOROTHY: I was born there, in the hospital there.

INT: So basically you were...

DOROTHY: I was raised in Chodorow.

INT: Which is located where?

DOROTHY: Which is located between two larger cities: Lvov (?) or Lemberg, and Stanislaw. In Galicia.

INT: In Galicia. OK. Stanislaw now is called...

DOROTHY: Is (?). It has been changed, correct.

INT: And Chodorow, is halfway between Lvov and that city, and it's in the Ukraine.

DOROTHY: It's at the present time in the Ukraine part of Russia.

INT: And what sort of region is it? A mountainous region?

DOROTHY: It's a mountainous region, and mostly farming. It's sort of the bread basket. And mainly a highway like, between Germany and Russia.

INT: OK. And it's sort of in the foothills of the Carpathians.

DOROTHY: Of the Carpathian mountains.

INT: Can you describe a little bit about your childhood?

DOROTHY: Yes. I had a very happy childhood. I had a very large family. My parents were each one of eleven or twelve children. My grandparents were one of twelve again, and we had a very large and a very close happy family. And my grandparents had a farm, and I would spend

the summers in their farm, play with the dogs, and in the hay, and watch the butter making, cheese making and had a wonderful summer.

INT: Could you show us in this picture, some members of your family?

DOROTHY: Yes. These are my grandparents. And they were killed. This is my mother with my father. My mother was pregnant with me. My parents were killed. My aunt and my uncle, my aunt was pregnant. They both and their child was killed. This is my uncle, he was married and had two children. They were killed. This is my mother's youngest brother, he was married (cries), and he had two children, and they were killed. And this is my mother's younger sister who was married who had a daughter, and they were all killed. This is my cousin who survived. But he survived in Russia. And he's now living in Australia. This is my mother's youngest brother and his wife, and of course they were all killed. All in all, there was close to a hundred people. I am the only close survivor, besides him who was not really. He was a survivor, but did not survive in Germany. This is my mother and father.

INT: And what was their name?

DOROTHY: My mother's name was Sabta and my father's name was Nathan.

INT: And the last name?

DOROTHY: Kraushar.

INT: OK. Kraushar. How would you spell that?

DOROTHY: K-r-a-u-s-h-a-r.

INT: OK. So this picture would have been taken...

DOROTHY: This picture was taken in 1929.

INT: And where?

DOROTHY: This was taken on my grandparents' farm.

INT: Which was where?

DOROTHY: Which was (?), it was small.

INT: Near Stanislaw. So you had a very happy childhood.

DOROTHY: I had a very happy childhood. Unfortunately, it only lasted till my tenth birthday, because a month, or a few weeks after my tenth birthday was when the Second World War began.

INT: OK. We'll talk about that in one second. Remember if you would, other aspects of your growing up. In that region. Were you friendly with non-Jews?

DOROTHY: Yes, yes. I was friendly with Jews and non-Jews. And there was slight anti-Semitism, but I personally did not experience it.

INT: Why not?

DOROTHY: Maybe because we were middle class, or, I don't know why not. But I did not. I heard about it from others, but I myself did not suffer from it.

INT: In Chodorow, was this primarily a Jewish town, or was it...

DOROTHY: No. But the Jews in most small cities lived around the marketplace, in the heart of the cities. And the Christian population, the Polish population, lived on the periphery, and the Ukrainian population lived in the villages.

INT: But you went to school with Jews and non-Jews?

DOROTHY: Right. I went to school. We only had one school, and everybody went to school. I did go to a Zionist Hebrew school after school.

INT: What language was spoken in public school?

DOROTHY: In public school, it was Polish, but you did have to take a class in Ukrainian, so you could communicate with most of the people.

INT: And most of the people that you came into contact with spoke...

DOROTHY: Polish. And spoke Jewish.

INT: "Jewish" is Yiddish, right?

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: And your family?

DOROTHY: We spoke Polish.

INT: Polish. Was this uncommon, or was it a common thing in a Jewish household?

DOROTHY: Some, it depended. Some spoke Yiddish, and some...my parents spoke Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand what they were speaking about.

INT: You said your father was in a small business.

DOROTHY: They had a small department store.

INT: And so he certainly dealt with all sorts of people.

DOROTHY: I don't think we had friends who were. We had acquaintances. I think most of our friends were Jews.

INT: The Germans came in June of 1941, and you were ten years old.

DOROTHY: No. I was already twelve. When the Russians came in '39 I was ten. In June, I was twelve, almost twelve.

INT: And what do you remember from that?

DOROTHY: I remember nothing but horrors. I remember that my father had to go to work, physical, menial work, and he was beaten. And he used to come home with lashes, and with bleeding shoulders, and we had to put cold compresses on him. And the next morning he had to go again, because if he didn't report for work, he would be shot. So he did it as long as he could.

INT: He was beaten by Germans.

DOROTHY: By the Germans. And the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians were very helping, willing, helping accomplices.

INT: But before June of 1941, had he ever been beaten by an...

DOROTHY: No, no. Not the Russians.

INT: And were you aware of any pogroms prior to the Germans coming?

DOROTHY: No. No.

INT: So life for the Jews was relatively good.

DOROTHY: It was fair.

INT: It was fair.

DOROTHY: It depended on the class.

INT: For you and your family...

DOROTHY: It was very good. It was a very normal, happy, healthy life.

INT: And your father was beaten from this work.

DOROTHY: And then when he could work no more, one day we had our first Aktion, which is in Polish is called "Aktsia." An Aktsia was a time when the Germans would bring a long train at the station, which was usually on the outside of town, and in the morning, the Russians, the Germans (did I say the Russians?) the Germans would surround the city, with the help of local police, they had Ukrainian police, and they would go from home to home, and collect all the people they could find and take them to the train. But of course everybody was aware of it, more or less, and we all built hiding places. And some people would hide and survive and some wouldn't.

During the first Aktion, my mother and I hid on the farm. We went out to a few miles we walked, and we were there all night, and we couldn't, all day and all night, and we were under some hay, and we couldn't, it was very hot, and we couldn't even turn or breathe, because the farmers would notice us. I remember not being able to even turn, or even go to the bathroom. You know, it was a horrible day, and we could hear the screams all day long, and they came, and they took my father, and they put him on the train, and they took him to the concentration camp where they shot him.

INT: What was the name of the camp, do you remember?

DOROTHY: I think it was Belzec. I'm not sure. We did, some people used to jump out of the trains. And somebody did jump out and told me that my father suffocated on the train, because they used to put the people so close together there was no breathing space.

INT: (?).

DOROTHY: No.

INT: And you were how old the last time your father...?

DOROTHY: Twelve. I was a little bit over thirteen. It happened in September. September 4, 1942. And I was thirteen.

INT: Do you remember the last time you saw your father?

DOROTHY: Yes. It was before that happened. A night or two before, my father took me on his lap, which he had done during the war, and he sort of held me close and, as if he had a premonition, that this would be the last time we would see each other.

INT: What did he say to you?

DOROTHY: I can't remember. (inaudible) After this my mother and I returned from the farm, we went back to our house, and I remember crying every night when I go to sleep. I would cry

every night. It was very difficult for me to accept that. But life had to go on, and the Germans didn't give you much time. Immediately they decided that our city should move into a ghetto. So those who remained had to move.

INT: The Jews should move.

DOROTHY: The Jews who remained. I am talking mostly about the Jews. Who remained should be moved into a very small ghetto, and everybody has to be employed. You had to be employed at the age of fourteen. I wasn't fourteen yet, but I was tall for my age, they got me a working card, and my mother and I worked. We lived with two or three other families in one bedroom. Everything was taken away from us. We had no possessions -- maybe two pots and a sweater and a coat and something like this. And I worked in the public bath, carrying the water for the bath. We had no running water in our city. We had electricity, but there was no running water. And my mother worked in a hospital. I don't know what she did. Cleaning. And we stayed there until March.

And then March the Germans decided that our city would be "Judenrein", which means clean of Jews. And again we hid. My mother and I and a few other people, in a barn, and it was very cold, because I came from a very cold climate, again, we just had our clothes on us, and we were locked in there through the night, and we heard a terrible, terrible screams of children. To this day when I wake up at night sometimes I hear this. Especially the infants and the children screaming as they were being shot. They had dug a big ditch, and killed everybody in our city.

INT: And you could hear that through the...

DOROTHY: I could hear that. Because it was a very small place.

INT: OK. You planted a tree in honor of...

DOROTHY: The righteous gentile who locked my mother and a few other people and me.

INT: And that tree has a plaque for an unknown person.

DOROTHY: Right. Because I don't remember his name, and I don't know him. My mother knew him, but I...

INT: You were a young girl, but you owe your life to...

DOROTHY: To this man.

INT: And why is that?

DOROTHY: Because had we not hid there, we would have been shot with everybody else. And that experience I will never forget, because they finally came to our, it was like a barn, it was outside the building, and they were looking very hard, and they finally came, and in

Ukrainian, they were trying to open the door, but it was a heavy door that we locked, and they couldn't, and they tried in the worst way, and then one of them said to the other one in Ukrainian: "(?)" which means "Give me the axe." And we knew if they opened the door with the axe it was the end, that our heads were going to be chopped off right there. And of course, you know, nobody wants to die. But at least if you died with dignity, it was a little different than if you die being chopped up. But they could not open the door, so they left one man with a gun to watch us, to see if somebody was there. They weren't sure but they thought, they were going to make an impression of the lock, and they were going to come back next day and see if they could open it. But luckily, it was so freezing. Of course, we were petrified. We didn't know if we were going to die from the frost or being axed up. So he left, because he got too cold, and he was dressed in a fur, with a fur hat, and our savior noticed that nobody was there, so he ran with a knife and he opened the door, and he said, "Run or the (?) will take you."

So we waited in the next city, there was still a ghetto. So we ran from our city at night. But we had to tiptoe, because we were running through some (?), and we knew if they would catch us, our fate wouldn't be much better. And on first, we were caught by a German who was going to shoot us, but then he asked us if we had any valuables. And we gave him some things, and he let us go. And then on the way we were beaten three times by the (?) groups of these Ukrainians at night.

INT: OK. Before we get to that stage, this man who hid you in the attic of the barn, is he a young man?

DOROTHY: He was not an old man. Maybe he was thirty-five, or maybe he was forty.

INT: And your mother was with you. Because you were an only child, right? And there were a few other people with you, is that correct?

DOROTHY: There were twelve of us.

INT: Twelve altogether. So he kept locked in the barn for...

DOROTHY: Two days, I think. One night.

INT: Two days.

DOROTHY: Several days.

INT: I believe you said it was about three days.

DOROTHY: Maybe three days.

INT: And this was in March, 1941.

DOROTHY: I'm not sure.

INT: Was he paid?

DOROTHY: I think he was paid, yes.

INT: Nevertheless, if you hadn't been hidden there...

DOROTHY: We would not have survived.

INT: And you say that the Germans that kill the Jews during the time you were hidden, were assisted by...

DOROTHY: By the local, we had these Ukrainian police. There were some Poles, but mostly Ukrainians.

INT: So this enabled you to survive this big Aktion, final Aktion in your city. Then you escaped at night to another small city which had, still had a ghetto.

DOROTHY: On the way I was beaten by the Ukrainians. We were running on ice. And at one point they stopped us in order to search us and asked all of us to undress. I was the first one, so I got undressed. And on the ice they searched the clothes, and found a few things on each one of us and then they let us get dressed, and humiliated us. We ran to the next ghetto which was in the city named Rochakin. We tried to sneak in early in the morning, and luckily we found a break in the fence, and they were not killing people that day, so my mother and I with the only shirts on our backs, came into the city of Rochakin. We found somebody there to take us in, and again, there were eight or ten people in one room. And the way we slept is somebody let us sleep on the cot, but the cot was very narrow, and so we shared it. My mother would sleep a half a night and I would sit on a chair, and I would sleep a half a night and she would sit in the chair. You couldn't sleep on the floor, because the homes were not heated, and it was very cold. There was nothing to eat. And of course, we were just the two of us. There were no man with us. It was a little bit easier if you had a father or a husband, but two women, or a woman or a child.

And we stayed there, and there was a very bad typhus epidemic. And my mother remembered she still had some cousins in the next ghetto who were still alive, and in a way she got in touch with them, she communicated with them. And they had a thirteen-year-old son, who was just the most wonderful young man, and he bribed the German soldier, and the German soldier came into the ghetto and smuggled us out of the ghetto. Now he was allowed to come into the ghetto, but we were not allowed to leave. And he hid us in a truck, which he covered us up with potatoes and hay, and all kinds of things, and said they were transporting some produce, or some food, and brought us to a safe destination, somewhere in the field where our Aryan cousin met us. And took us to the ghetto where they were living. And they were still living in their own home, which was unusual. At least each family had a bedroom, or a room, which was a luxury. And for awhile our, at least we ate, and we had a bath, and we got some clean clothes, and it was like being in heaven. But since I was new in town, this is his mother, his father was killed already, and it was decided that perhaps I would survive if I was taken to a nunnery, if I was put with the

nuns. And they were very much for it....And I couldn't even go out on the streets of the ghetto because they didn't want anybody to recognize me. But I was very stubborn, and I felt that I had to be with my mother. Not that I was afraid to leave. Because as a child I always used to spend summers away from home, but I thought that my mother, I should be with her. I should protect her. And I refused. And then they wanted to get Aryan papers for me. I was not Semitic, I was light and blue eyes, and my Polish was fluent, so I could have passed on the Aryan side.

INT: Not Semitic looking.

DOROTHY: Looking, right. (?). So, and I refused to do that, too. Any kind of device they devised to help me, save me, I refused. Because I did not want to leave my mother. I just felt that I should be with her, whatever happened to her. But finally they bribed, there was a labor camp, not far from where we were now. The name of the city that we were now was Przemyslney. It was another small city.

INT: Was it near Psemesc (?)?

DOROTHY: No. It's another city. Psemesc is on the border. I have it on my map. I have all these cities marked. And my cousin again bribed the Germans, and he sent my mother and me to this camp, and in this camp, they would not accept us. My mother was too old, she was forty or forty-one, and I was too young, I wasn't fourteen yet. They made us work one day, and they beat us terribly. We had no food, and in the evening they put us on a truck and sent us back into the ghetto. But my cousin didn't give up. He negotiated again, and the next time my aunt and I were sent. I didn't want to go, but at that point they forced me to go. And my aunt and I worked there for awhile. And then my aunt got a job as a carder, or housekeeper, or something, for the commandant of the camp. So we did not have to live right in the camp. And we lived in the basement again with six or eight families there, and my mother was still in the ghetto with another aunt. And there were two male cousins who used to work in the labor camp, but sleep in the ghetto, so we could keep in touch.

And then they, the Germans decided to make Przemyslney Judenrein. Their plan was very systematic. It was well planned. They had very bright people working systematically, methodically, how to each city in succession would become Judenrein. And (?) Przemyslney was next.

INT: And this town is spelled P-r-z-

DOROTHY: e-m-y-s-l-n-e-y.

INT: And this is in Galicia.

DOROTHY: That's in Galicia. And at that point, my aunt, who was quite a wealthy lady, paid a neighbor, a Christian neighbor, they gave them everything they had, and he promised that he would hide my aunt and my mother in his attic when the city would be Judenrein. And what happened? They went there, and after a few days he told them to leave. He had taken

everything. So they ran into the fields. At that point everyone was killed in Przemyslney, too. And my mother and my other aunt, my mother's cousin, were in the fields, and it was May, it was pouring, and they had nothing to eat. And after a few days they started moving around, looking to find something to eat.

INT: This was May of 194-

DOROTHY: And the farmers spotted them, and reported to the Germans that there were Jews hiding. And they were caught, and they were shot.

INT: Your mother...

DOROTHY: My mother and my other aunt, my mother's cousin.

INT: Did you see them shot?

DOROTHY: No. I was in the labor camp. But before my mother was shot, she was detained someplace for a day or two. Somehow or other she managed to scribble on a little piece of paper, a note, and I don't know how I got it, but I wish I had it. And she said to me, "My dear child. You are young. Hopefully you will survive. But when you survive, remember to tell the world how the Germans treated the Jews and how we suffered." And I think, if it weren't for that note, I couldn't speak today about it. It's almost as if I had a message from her. As much as it hurts, as painful as it is, you must tell them, hopefully to prevent another genocide.

When they shot my mother, I nearly went out of my mind. I had no choice. Life goes on. So I was in the labor camp with my aunt. I used to carry stones, and hammer the stones, and pour tar over the stones. We had no protection from the labor. Today when people work on the road, they have all kinds of covers and I thought I was going blind. And if I wasn't going blind, enough for a little longer. But of course at that time the Germans decided it was time to liquidate that labor camp. So one night we heard shooting. It was in July 27, 1943. In the night. My other aunt, and there were two second cousins and I started running. We were lucky, because we were not confined in the wires. We were sort of up, and not far from the forest. And we ran into the forest, and everything I have described until now was paradise to the life that was to come for me. Living in the forest and first we on wild raspberries and nuts.

INT: "We" meaning...

DOROTHY: My aunt and myself, my two cousins and a few other people whom we found. We formed groups, and if some were shot and killed, two other people would come. Sometimes a Russian soldier would join us. But mostly Jews from around surrounding areas who run into the forest.

INT: You were still a young girl, and you were basically under the protection of your aunt...

DOROTHY: No, I was basically on my own. There was no protection. As a matter of fact my aunt at that time had gone crazy because her son was shot. So at that point she lost complete...she just sat and she couldn't move. She sort of went into depression.

INT: You were responsible for her at that point...

DOROTHY: Everybody, you could not, because they used to come with their dogs and their machine guns after you. And they would start shooting like this. You couldn't. You just got on your two feet and ran. Those who were lucky were not shot. Those who were not lucky were shot.

INT: Did you encounter the partisans in the forest?

DOROTHY: I encountered Russian soldiers. Now our group called ourselves partisans. If they did anything, I don't know. I don't think so. I don't think so, but again, since I was the youngest in the forest in my group, that went through this, there was no "group" really. There were eight people, then six people, then three would get killed, then two would come, so it was nothing.

INT: So it changed.

DOROTHY: It changed. Some people were killed and started running. The first time when they came up to us and they shot my aunt and it was sort of like they relieved her of her misery. They also shot another young man and boy. And the bullet as I was running in my ear, and sort of scraped my ear, and I fell, and I lost consciousness, and I was sure I was killed. And I remember thinking, sort of feeling like my soul is going into heaven. And I was thinking, G-d, I'm not 41. What have I done? Why? Why? I sort of almost understand now when people say they've died and they came back. Of course, I was not in a conscious state, because of the explosion.

INT: This was during the summer.

DOROTHY: This was during the summer. It was in the beginning. It was still not bad. I was hungry and scared all the time, but not cold. As a matter of fact, I'm from a climate like Canada, like Toronto.

[TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE ENDS]

[TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO]

DOROTHY: But when I came to, I thought, My G-d, it's even worse. Because now I'll die of starvation. I'm by myself. I don't know which way to go. I'm all alone. It would have been better to have been killed. But luckily, shortly after I heard some footsteps, and somebody else survived. And again, we had to, because every time we wanted to light a fire, and boil some water, and the smoke came up. And when the smoke came up, the farmers were watching for it.

So they would come with the Germans and the dogs after us. So we had to be nomads even there.

INT: The Aktions, the farmers, that's where it came out?

DOROTHY: The Germans were afraid of the forest. The farmers were compensated. They would get loaves of bread or some sugar for killing Jews. It was an incentive. There were always an incentive. But there were also good people. I don't want to say that everybody was bad. There were some farmers who at night, some of the people, I never went out, would get out, and they would steal some potatoes from the field, and maybe the farmers gave them something.

INT: And you lived in the forest. Did you have a bunker there?

DOROTHY: We, we didn't have. We slept on the ground in the summertime. And in the wintertime, we had no tools. It would have to be done with your fingers, and with pieces of wood. We did build like a hole, and we put some kind of leaves on top of it, so when we went to sleep -- I think there were eight of us -- there was just enough room, and everybody of course weighed what, eighty, ninety pounds at that point. So you couldn't turn. Because if one person turned, everybody would have to turn. So it was, if you went on the right side, you slept on the right side. If you went on the left side, you slept on the left side.

INT: And you were hungry, also.

DOROTHY: Oh, hunger was terrible. But even worse, the lice. At that point, I mean, in the summertime, you could take your clothes off, and the occupation of the day was delousing yourself. But in the wintertime, I don't know how we didn't freeze to death. I do not understand. I do have frostbitten fingers. And my toes were frozen. But how we were there in the cold weather without any coats and things, I had lice on my feet at that point. But I didn't freeze. But I did develop from the lice.

INT: You moved from place to place, or primarily stayed...

DOROTHY: We moved from place to place. We had to move, because they came after us.

INT: Tell us about the typhus.

DOROTHY: The typhus was at that time. Again, sometimes I believe in miracles, because I was in bed for two weeks, three weeks, and I was delirious, and my temperature went up as high as it could. We had no thermometers. And all I subsided on was some melted ice which someone would melt on their finger, so I wasn't dehydrated, and then finally started getting a little bit better, or became conscious again, I could not walk. I developed some sort of cartilage under my knees, and I was crawling. And I lost all my hair. I was completely bald from the high temperature. And when I was crawling I thought, Oh, for the rest of my life I will be a cripple. I will never walk again. I'll just crawl.

But there is a lot to be said about heroism. About resistance. I would like to say heroism is not only fighting. It's easy to be a hero when you have something to fight with. But when we had to run, they would tie on some rags to me and drag me. They wouldn't leave me behind. Everyone was for himself but yet not only for himself. Because I would not have survived two or three times if they had not tied things on and pulled me. Because I couldn't walk. And it slowed them down. As they were running.

INT: In your condition, the mere act of...

DOROTHY: Of giving me the water.

INT: Of willing yourself to survive, was an act of resistance in itself.

DOROTHY: Yes, and I think that was again the note from my mother. I found that I have to survive. I have been asked when I speak, how come I survived and others didn't. And I said, I was young, and most of the people who survived were younger. Very few older people survived. And also, I had a mission. I had to survive, because of that letter that my mother had given me.

INT: That note came to you how?

DOROTHY: I don't know. Somehow or other, somebody she sent it out with somebody, and I received it.

INT: And do you know where it is now?

DOROTHY: I don't know, no.

INT: You said that you lived in the forest for exactly...

DOROTHY: One year.

INT: From July...

DOROTHY: 27, 1943 to July 27, 1944.

INT: And you said the area was...

DOROTHY: That part of it was. By the Russians. But I still have another encounter in the forest when they came after us. And they started shooting, of course, and we started running, and everybody, and I ran and I saw a pond, and I felt that I could run no further, so I jumped into the water. It was through the top, it was frozen, but it wasn't frozen too heavily. So, and I had the sense to grab some leaves since it was forest for cover, you know, dried up leaves and branches, and I jumped to my head so I could breathe, I was standing in the ice water, and I covered myself with the branches of the leaves or whatever, and the German was standing there with the Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian says, "I think I may see something here," and the German

says, "It's too cold." Again, he was dressed in boots and furs, and he says, "It's too cold. If there is somebody, we'll get him the next time." And when I came out of the water, again, I had the same clothes, and the temperature was freezing. The clothes froze on me. So my body temperature sort of defrosted. And then it took two or three days for it to dry on me. I had nothing to change to. And yet I survived. This was like the third miracle in my life. And of course standing in that water and hearing them say this, I think my heart stopped beating anyway.

I remember when I came back I found a little girl four years old. I can't remember how she got there, and who took care of her, but I remember she was smart enough she said, "I heard them so I hid." And then I don't know what happened to the child.

INT: You contracted typhus, when, in the winter?

DOROTHY: Winter, right. February, March.

INT: In the early part of 1944.

DOROTHY: Correct.

INT: You were essentially living like a nomad for that entire year.

DOROTHY: A nomad in fear. At least a nomad goes on his own volition. We were running because if you stayed there tomorrow they would be after you and kill you.

INT: Did you ever have an opportunity to bathe?

DOROTHY: No.

INT: I imagine the rain was a welcome thing.

DOROTHY: It was and it wasn't, because there was nothing to dry yourself with. And there was no place to bathe. Sometimes a little creek, some water to drink, if you came across a little puddle of water. We were in the forest, and there were no lakes or anything.

INT: You say there were occasionally farmers who came to your aid?

DOROTHY: No. They did not come to my aid directly, but I assume because some of the men would come back occasionally. They came back once with horsemeat. I don't know. They killed the horse, and stole the horse, or they were given some. But I know that in all my encounters, there were bad people and there were good people.

INT: You never were able to provide for your own food, and counted on the older people to...

DOROTHY: No. In the springtime and in the summertime, yes. Because I ate berries, and I ate nuts, and I used to climb the trees, and pull the nuts down. But not in the wintertime. Of course, I don't know. My diet may have been 200 calories a day, if that.

INT: You have some other pictures here. This is a picture, actually, this is a picture of you in camp.

DOROTHY: That is already...

INT: Afterwards. And...

DOROTHY: This is a picture of me in the ghetto. That was after my father was killed. We needed pictures for working papers, so this was my picture taken. But I had a small one. This is a blown up picture. 1943. This is a picture when I'm waiting for the boat to come over to the United States before I was free.

INT: OK. You were liberated in July of 1944.

DOROTHY: Correct.

INT: By the Russian army. And can you tell us about that?

DOROTHY: Well, of course it was a little bit better, because it was summer already, so we weren't hungry, I mean we weren't cold, we weren't freezing. We were still hungry, we were still full of lice, and we were still scared. But we were getting weaker everyday too. And everybody (?) at that point. In fact I had only bones with skin hanging here. There was no flesh left. As you've seen people in the concentration camps. I have had no picture, unfortunately, I wish I had, in the DP camp. And we heard terrible shooting, and bullets were flying, and we all fell to the ground and that's why we couldn't even run, so we were so sure that was it, you know, they surrounded us, they would come. And at that point we saw trucks, they were tanks, coming right into the forest. And Russian soldiers jumping out. And we said, "We surrender." "You're free." Of course, they couldn't trust us either. They didn't know if we were partisans, if we were, but they were not shooting. They were shooting at each other. The two armies were shooting, and we were caught in the crossfire.

INT: Was everyone in your group similarly emaciated?

DOROTHY: Yes.

INT: But certainly they were differentiated from partisans who might not have been so...

DOROTHY: Right.

INT: So where did you go after that?

DOROTHY: After that I went back to the city of Przemyslney, and I, one thing the Russian army used to do is they immediately established kitchens for people to give them something to eat. And I don't know how, but think I got some clothes, and they established schools, and I went to school. I would go in a room, and I would eat in that public kitchen, and I would go to school.

INT: What kind of school?

DOROTHY: A Russian school. Everything was in Russian. There were no books. The teacher would read off the Russian history, and all day long, all day in school you just wrote, because there were no books.

INT: (?).

DOROTHY: (?) Already in September.

INT: This was in...

DOROTHY: Przemyslney.

INT: How long did you stay there?

DOROTHY: I stayed there for a year. I finished that school year, and then the Russians announced that those of us who were Polish citizens, you know, I was a Polish citizen, they would provide some sort of transportation and allow us to go back to Poland, the new part of Poland. So again, those of us, you know you formed families. When you don't have a family, two, three people lived together and eat together, and formed a family. I can't remember who the family was, but we went to these trains, and they transported us to the new part of Poland which was Silesia, which is part of Germany next to Poland. The Russians took a part of Poland away from Poland, they gave a part of Germany, Silesia, to Poland. And they dumped us there somewhere in the winter on a farm. And we lived there. And then spring came I went to Cracow. And in Cracow there were already, they called themselves Kibbutzim. There were organizers, and they organized homes for young people with the idea of going to Palestine.

INT: Who among your group survived?

DOROTHY: Well, one cousin, one second cousin survived in the forest with me.

INT: What happened to your aunt?

DOROTHY: One of my aunts was shot with my mother, and one of my aunts was shot in the forest.

INT: The aunt, the one you said went crazy.

DOROTHY: She was shot in the forest.

INT: By?

DOROTHY: The Germans.

INT: You were nearby.

DOROTHY: We were all running.

INT: So there were many times when you were running from...

DOROTHY: The bullets.

INT: The bullets. So you ended up in a DP camp.

DOROTHY: I ended up in Cracow. From Cracow we went to Germany. Cracow is in Poland. From there we went to Germany, and that's where the DP camps were. And I was in a DP camp called (?) and I was on my way to Palestine. But most of the Jews could not get into Palestine, because as you remember, the British Mandate would not allow the Jews to go to Palestine, and most of them were interned again in Cyprus.

INT: This was in...

DOROTHY: '45, '46. They were again taken to camps and barbed wire. That's already the second, third time. Many of these people had returned from Siberia. Many of these people had returned from Russia, from the camps in Siberia, back to Poland, back to DP camps, and now they were again in camps in Cyprus. But as I was waiting to go to Cyprus, I had written a letter to an uncle of mine, Jacob Kraus, who lived in Wilmington, and I, I didn't have his address, but somehow or other I managed, somebody mailed the letter for me, and we got in contact. And he had a son who was a captain in the Air Force, Arthur Kraus, from Wilmington, and he was stationed not far from where I was in the DP camp. And he found me there. And I lived with him. And his wife came from the United States, and I lived with them for a year, in Germany, in (?), and then I came to the United States.

INT: Kraus is essentially abbreviated.

DOROTHY: It's abbreviated, some pronounce it Kraushar (with sh sound), so my uncle abbreviated his name, and I have abbreviated at this point. I'm sorry that I have.

INT: You basically adopted an abbreviated version of your maiden name.

DOROTHY: Correct.

INT: And you actually have an identification card from DP camp.

DOROTHY: DP camp. I have my fingerprint, and I have my name and my number, and I also have the UNRA thing, July, '52.

INT: And the camp again?

DOROTHY: The name of the camp was (?) camp.

INT: And this has your name on it. I see you were known as Doris.

DOROTHY: No, I was known as Bysia. It's a Polish name.

INT: OK. But your family called you...

DOROTHY: B-y-s-i-a.

INT: And we have a picture of you in the DP camp. I wonder who took that.

DOROTHY: I don't know.

INT: You look happy.

DOROTHY: Oh, yes.

INT: And that was where, now?

DOROTHY: That was in (?).

INT: In Germany.

DOROTHY: In Germany. In West Germany.

INT: OK. And you have another ID card.

DOROTHY: That was my happiest card. I had these documents, and that card is, my embarkation card. I sailed on the boat named "Ernie Pyle" on November 17, 1947. And that was one of the happiest days.

INT: That's a picture of you during that time.

DOROTHY: Right. That was when I was waiting.

INT: And this card says "SS Ernie Pyle Sailing Date:"

DOROTHY: November the 17th.

INT: 1947. And you came to the United States and entered through...

DOROTHY: I entered through New York.

INT: And then you came to Wilmington.

DOROTHY: And then I came to Wilmington.

INT: Where you've lived since.

DOROTHY: I went to high school, and then school of nursing.

INT: I wonder if we can focus in on (?). Can you tell us what this news article is here?

DOROTHY: They had asked me to write, I think an assignment for the whole class to write the happiest day of my life.

INT: This was a class where?

DOROTHY: At Wilmington high school.

INT: You were enrolled as a student.

DOROTHY: Student, right. And I wrote in my broken English how I was happy when I saw the lights of New York and the Statue of Liberty.

INT: And it says, "Now she's happy. Dorothy Kraus." And the headline says, "Polish girl here recalls horror of Nazi occupation." What happened to your knowledge, what happened to the righteous gentile who saved you by locking you...

DOROTHY: I don't know.

INT: Did you ever try to locate him?

DOROTHY: I don't know his name.

INT: You didn't really know where it was exactly, so, you owe your life to someone whom you'll never be able to thank properly.

DOROTHY: Well, I think my parents, my mother thanked him but, financially, we (re)imbursed him before. But of course, if I could, I would be very happy to thank him. I don't know if he's alive. I don't know his name or where he lives. I couldn't...

INT: What did he risk by hiding you?

DOROTHY: He risked his life.

INT: You know why. How did you know he risked his life?

DOROTHY: Because anybody who aided a Jew was exposed to the same thing.

INT: Did the Germans issue proclamations to that effect?

DOROTHY: I think so. And the city of Stanislaw where my grandparents and most of my mother's family lived, they announced a proclamation that all the intellectuals who wanted to get jobs, should report on a certain day at a certain place. Of course this was a way of fooling the people, because the Germans were very smart. They had planned the system of tricking people, of making people believe that it won't be as bad, so there would be no resistance in the beginning. And I had an uncle who was originally from Warsaw, and he came to Stanislaw, and he was a psychologist and a teacher. And the proclamations aid all the people working for the intelligentsia, the educated people should report, or the professionals. He was among them, and there were I believe 4,000 of them hoping to get jobs to get some bread to feed their family. And they had come to a big place which was covered with nails, broken glass, pointed wire, barbed wire, and any kind of pointed object which would make you bleed, and they had these people run back and forth on this broken up, on these broken up objects. And many of them just died and bled to death there, and those who didn't were put into, or made into trucks, and taken to the forest and they just were shot. And this was the way they treated human beings. I myself have seen babies taken by the feet and thrown against electric poles, big poles.

INT: Who did that?

DOROTHY: The Germans. And also, in the camp, when it didn't please them that the men didn't bow, or didn't do something, they would hang the people by the feet and let them hang there, and those of us who were there watch it. Right now I can't think of the name. It was called (?). But I will have to check.

INT: Where was that?

DOROTHY: That was near Przemysleny. That labor camp that my aunt paid to get me in there. So they would hang there just to let you know what's coming. So you'd better do what we tell you.

INT: To your knowledge, what percentage of the Jews from your town survived?

DOROTHY: I think maybe ten people survived.

INT: (?).

DOROTHY: I think there's somebody living in Miami, and I think there's somebody living in Israel.

INT: We're talking about ten Jews out of...

DOROTHY: 1700, 1800.

INT: Out of a total of 1800.

DOROTHY: I am not sure of the statistics, but...I tried at one time finding people from my city. I worked very hard. I found somebody who left right before the war. I had no connection with him.

INT: Did you subsequently ever go back there?

DOROTHY: No, I couldn't. I would like to. I am determined to go. I don't know why I want to go back there. There are not even graves. But I want to go back there. But I cannot because the Russian government will not allow you to go to the small cities. But the minute they open the door there, I am going. Before I die.

INT: This is a picture of you as a nurse, right?

DOROTHY: Correct.

INT: You worked as a nurse in Wilmington after graduating from Wilmington high school.

DOROTHY: After graduating from nursing school. Before I was married.

INT: And this is a picture of you. When was it taken? 1948?

DOROTHY: Right. After I came. These are my three happy pictures. This is my arrival a month or two, and this is before, and this is three years later.

I would like to say that I have been involved for the last seven years in Holocaust education. And I think it also is part of the note that my mother had given me. It was a small start for me, but now I feel like I'm obligated to do it. And it's very painful, regardless of what is said, that time heals things. Time does not heal. I had painful experiences and memories, and they hurt. They are with me. And they will remain with me.

INT: What would you like to impart to younger generations based on your experiences?

DOROTHY: Well, I would like to impart is to care. I think that people who care to help another human being, not to hurt people. There is so much hurting going on in this world. Especially when I survived, I thought, well, after this, there will never, never be another war. There will never be unkindness. But human nature evidently is not made that way. And when I speak to people in high schools, I always say, "If you see somebody being beaten up on the street, will you aid that person, or will you turn and run the other way?"

INT: Why is it important to you to talk about your past even though it's so painful?

DOROTHY: I think because of that note that I received from my mother. She said, You must tell the world.

INT: And what do you hope will emerge from such...

DOROTHY: Well, I hope that perhaps we will have a better world.

[END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO]