

**INTERVIEW WITH SurLK**

**AUGUST 7, 1996**

**Transcending Trauma Project  
Council for Relationships  
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## INTERVIEW WITH SurLK

**INT:** August 7th, and I'm beginning to speak with SurLK. All right. Where were you born, Mrs. SurLK?

**SURLK:** I was born in a city adjacent, you would say, to Lemberg, Lvov. They used to call it Galicia. Now it's Russia.

**INT:** It's Russian. What was the name of the town?

**SURLK:** The name of the town was Chovorow, C-H-O-V-O-R-O-W. It was very famous because it's the biggest sugar factory in all Poland.

**INT:** Who was it owned by?

**SURLK:** It was owned privately by princes, you know, Polish princes.

**INT:** You were born around before the first war or during the war? Before the first war when-

**SURLK:** No. I was born in the twenties.

**INT:** In the twenties.

**SURLK:** The war was '14, ended '18.

**INT:** Did the war touch your town any, do you remember?

**SURLK:** Yeah, of course.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** We were occupied by-I only know the story of this-by the Russians during the war, and then they were liberated by the Germans. The Germans were the saviors in those times.

**INT:** So they remembered the Germans in good ways?

**SURLK:** My parents remembered them in good ways. They were very happy that the Germans entered our city. Everybody was very happy. It was like a liberation from the Czar, a liberation from the Russian army. So they lived there till the outbreak of the World War II.

**INT:** World War II. Can you tell me about your family, who you remember, and their names?

**SURLK:** Yeah, who I remember. I remember my father. His name was Aaron Aryeh Felker, F-E-L-K-E-R. I remember my mother. My mother's name was Liba, L-I-B-A Schein, S-C-H-E-I-N. My two sisters - I was the oldest. One was Perel and one was Devorah, the youngest one.

**INT:** And how much younger were they than you?

**SURLK:** A year.

**INT:** One was a year younger, one was-

**SURLK:** One was a year younger, one was two years younger.

**INT:** Okay. How about the bubbes and the zaidas?

**SURLK:** My grandparents, paternal side, were-I don't remember so good my grandfather, but my grandmother was Ita Felker, of course, and my maternal grandparents were Meir and Memmel Schein.

**INT:** Okay. They had lived in the town for a long time?

**SURLK:** They had lived for-for as long as I remember.

**INT:** What was the house like that you lived in?

**SURLK:** My house-my personal house where I was born was a normal size house consisting of two rooms, a kitchen. They had a summer kitchen, like a small kitchen for storage of groceries and other stuff and maybe another two rooms for washing like-they call it here a laundry. That's all what matters, but when I was a little girl, about four years old, my father built a beautiful house in the center of the town, which was called Rynek, R-Y-N-E-K, 57. I'm not sure about the number, either 57 or 59. More 57. Probably it was known under 57. 57. And this was a beautiful house. Stones, beautiful balcony, big windows like they have bay windows. It was already modern. Very beautiful. My parents were well off people.

**INT:** What did he do, your father?

**SURLK:** My father had actually more than a store. They used to call it in German lager. That's a concentration of materials. Lager means concentrated. L-A-G-E-R. These textiles, and we had, of course, all these goyim from the sugar factory starting from the director to the plain worker that used to buy by us, and we had the whole city-we had a very fine store, so selected-we had a selected clientele, like you'd say. And when my father was a rich person himself, an intelligent person. Liked music. My father played the fiddle. My mother went to Vienna a few times a year to buy some things, you know, for the house for instance. We had a beautiful bedroom set that my mother bought from Vienna. Gorgeous. They called it Blumen Asher. It consisted of wood. Like you take a big string, you cut it in the half, and then you make thin-like very thin pieces of wood and then you put paint over it and shellac it. This was very expensive, and they matched it with black wood, lacquer you say?

**INT:** Mm-hm. Lacquer.

**SURLK:** Lacquer. And it had mother of the pearl buttons, pink. It was gorgeous. We were the first ones that-when the Germans entered, they took-they were the first to come in and take our bedroom set. It was something to see.

**INT:** What did your father look like? Did he have a beard?

**SURLK:** No. No. My father had a moustache and he was medium height. My mother was a tall lady. Medium height. And he was very - in those times he was considered one of the intelligentsia, of the most intelligent people. He spoke a beautiful Russian. He learned some English and Hebrew. He wrote like Gothic, you know, German Gothic. I have letters which not everybody...he played fiddle. He was-

**INT:** He spoke Yiddish?

**SURLK:** He spoke Yiddish. He wore a short-

**INT:** Jacket?

**SURLK:** Jacket, but Friday and Shabbos he wore a black coat with a gartel.

**INT:** Did he learn in the yeshiva when he was young?

**SURLK:** Yeah, of course he learned. Who didn't learn in those times? Of course my father learned in the yeshiva, but he was also secular educated.

**INT:** Where did he get-

**SURLK:** You could see from his handwriting that I will show you.

**INT:** Where did he get that?

**SURLK:** We had schools. We had very good schools.

**INT:** Were his parents well to do also?

**SURLK:** No, no. My grandfather passed away young. My grandmother was left with several children. A few of them left for America. Two brothers, including my father, stayed in the same city and she didn't make a good living, but my father was-there are people who are born intelligent, even if they don't go to high schools or to higher institutions. They acquire their knowledge in different ways.

**INT:** He started the business? That was his business?

**SURLK:** Yeah. My father started the business, yeah, but my mother was considered in town as a business lady and it was on the-it was only a rumor because I know that my father was behind that.

**INT:** Was she in the store a lot?

**SURLK:** Yeah. She was a very outspoken lady, beautiful, tall.

**INT:** Was she from that town also?

**SURLK:** Yeah. Yeah. My mother was a few years older than my father, because during World War II...(SurLK says something to Rabbi Leizerowski in a foreign language) After the first World War, there were many girls and boys who were looking for shidduchim, respective partners, and after the war, some people came back that were deformed, some had some other deficiencies, so it was very hard for my mother since she was a nice, beautiful girl, to find somebody, but it was a shidduch and it was in the same town. They knew each other. It was a nice marriage, very good. I don't remember any quarrels or something like that.

**INT:** Were there aunts and uncles that you knew?

**SURLK:** Ya, of course.

**INT:** Say their names.

**SURLK:** My father's brother was Emanuel. He was married and he had three small children.

**INT:** He lived in the town?

**SURLK:** Yeah. They were small when I was small also. They lived in town.

**INT:** His wife's first name?

**SURLK:** His wife was Nechama.

**INT:** Nechama.

**SURLK:** His name was Emanuel, and the children-it's so hard by yizkor to remember now. I have such difficulties. His children-one was Ita; one was Memmel, after my grandmother, maternal side, and the oldest one was Sarah. My mother had a sister and a brother. Her name was Chaya, Chaya Haber, H-A-B-E-R. Her husband was Shulem Haber.

**INT:** They were older or younger than your mother?

**SURLK:** They were...the sister was older.

**INT:** They had children?

**SURLK:** (sighs) They had seven children. One, fortunately, left for Israel with her husband, after she got married, shortly in a few months she went to Israel, and six of them perished with my aunt. My uncle was already deceased during the war, and six of them-their names were Shmuel, Leib, like Aryeh in Hebrew and Moshe'le, they call him. And the girl's name was Perel. Gorgeous girl. And Devorah and Esther. They're all in one grave with my parents. My mother had also a brother, Rafael, and his wife was childless. His wife was Lipcha. Lipcha it means like COSBL.

**INT:** They were in the town?

**SURLK:** Ya.

**INT:** And you knew them? You saw them, they were there?

**SURLK:** We lived together and I went to sleep there a few times a week. Since he was childless, he put all his love into his sister's children, so we went there sometimes for Shabbos and they took us during the week.

**INT:** What are your earliest -

**SURLK:** He was a big Talmudist. He was a big Zionist. He was a terrific speaker. Was tall and handsome.

**INT:** What was his parnassah?

**SURLK:** His parnassah-they had grain, a warehouse with grain. They weren't wealthy but somehow they made us (?).

**INT:** And the other sisters' husbands?

**SURLK:** This was a sister's husband, and her sisters, her brother. My mother. My father's brother had also a store. My father's brother Emanuel had also a store. It's hard for me to remember now the details.

**INT:** What do you remember-

**SURLK:** His wife was very intelligent. Went to college in those years, I remember.

**INT:** Wow.

**SURLK:** She was much modern, but she wasn't a perky girl. I guess maybe that's why. We always wondered that she married him because he wasn't on the same level intellectually.

**INT:** What do you remember earliest years in that house?

**SURLK:** In my house?

**INT:** Yeah. What do you remember? The holidays or this/that. What do you remember?

**SURLK:** I remember Shabbosim, mostly Shabbosim.

**INT:** What were they like?

**SURLK:** Like any other Shabbos in the families in those times, in the thirties. Friday night was a festive meal, was zemiros, was visiting friends when the days were shorter and the evenings longer, visiting friends, reading, studying the Torah, the parshah of the week.

**INT:** What did your mother make on Friday night?

**SURLK:** My mother-you mean to eat?

**INT:** Yes.

**SURLK:** Like today. Fish, soup, chicken, compote, they call it, like dessert.

**INT:** She would make it herself in the morning?

**SURLK:** Only she herself. In fact she started Wednesday like to buy fish and she cooked the fish on Thursday. I do the same thing, and I prepare my desserts. She prepared her dessert on Thursday. She baked Thursday. Thursday evening she used to prepare everything and give it to the baker, like to make ready the dough. We brought it to the baker, and in the bakery, in the morning, they baked it for us. There were a few families that did that, more wealthy. So you have your own ingredients, you knew how much sugar, how many eggs, how much fat you want to put in and they baked it for you and they you picked up. You picked up the challah. You picked up the baked stuff.

**INT:** But the fish she chopped herself.

**SURLK:** My mother used to have a grinder. She never chopped. I never saw chopping fish. I always saw a grinder. She used to grind the fish and she used to make like plain fish and fill it in the middle, like they do it in Yerushalayim today, in Israel. Fill it, the opening in the middle was filled with chopped fish.

**INT:** And chrain? She had chrain?

**SURLK:** And chrain, ya. Chrain was a (?), side dish.

**INT:** And soup?

**SURLK:** Soup with luckshen. Mostly luckshen. My mother considered rice as a plain side dish. Luckshen was more Shabbosdik. Ya, luckshen was more Shabbosdik. (Somebody comes into the room. Tape shuts off)

**INT:** Did you go to shul on Shabbos morning?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Did any of the women?

**SURLK:** By us, ladies don't. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and other holidays. We had a special task, to take our grandmother, so that's why we stayed, but normally young people didn't go the shul. Young ladies, girls, not at all.

**INT:** The grandmother was your mother's mother?

**SURLK:** No, my father's mother.

**INT:** What was she like? Tell me about her.

**SURLK:** She was very-she was a tall beautiful lady, my father's mother. My mother's mother was less beautiful, less tall, but nice Jewish woman, but this one was special. She was an orphan. She came from a small town, Zurow, Z-U-R-O-W, in the vicinity of (?), and my grandfather married her and when he brought her down to Chovorow, that week they said that he just stood on the street and looked after her. It was a young girl...and she was in her nineties. She was ninety-two years.

**INT:** What did she wear? Like did they wear fur coats?

**SURLK:** No. She wore like a gathered skirt, a long skirt, and black shoes, laced, and she wore like a tight little jacket, a short, you know, to the waist, and she wore a sheitel, and on Shabbos she wore like a mantilla, they say in Spanish, a black scarf on her head, a long scarf, and made out of black lace. Mantilla I think it's called.

**INT:** And your mother's hair? What was that like?

**SURLK:** My mother's hair was dark blondish. She always wore a hat, a tichel or a hat. I didn't see her in a sheitel. Black. Always a hat.

**INT:** Your father went to shul alone then?

**SURLK:** My father went to shul since we didn't have boys, my father went to shul Friday night. My father davened every day in shul three times a day, in the morning with tallis and tefillin, and evening mincha and maariv.

**INT:** In the same shul?

**SURLK:** In the same shul.

**INT:** Because it was near the house?

**SURLK:** We had three shuls, three big shuls. It was like for more modern, they were more modern people, and there was a medium modern like Mizrachi today. And it was very, very orthodox, far right, as they called it a Klous. They call it here in Yerushalayim also a Klous. K-L-O-U-S. A Klous, it means, oy vey. So my father went to like Bais Medrash. Not to the shul, not to the Klous, but to the Bais Medrash, and they had a lot of people there. You had the people



with streimels also. They wore little spudiks. My father wore a black velvet hat and a dark coat, a longish coat, like a bekeshah, and a gartel.

**INT:** Now he worked most-when you remember the house, was he out of the house a lot?

**SURLK:** My father? No.

**INT:** Was he home a lot or what?

**SURLK:** No, he was in the store, but once a week, either on a Monday or-mostly it was Wednesday I think, he went to a big city, Lvov, like I mentioned before, to buy some things for our-that he needed for the store, and they sent it-like here, overnight express, something like that, with big, big bundles.

**INT:** So your mother was with the children most-

**SURLK:** No. My mother was in the store. I don't remember when we were small. I really don't. We had always a maid, but I don't remember my mother being at home when my father was away, and then my father came back in the evening and he brought us all this like-a little box of grapes, a big salami, you know, like three, four pounds, we should have all for the week, other foods that...

**INT:** Who-which one hugged you the most? Which one held you?

**SURLK:** My father.

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** I was my father's girl. I was more attached to my father than to my mother. I don't know why. I had the character of my father. I was humble. I was very honest. I was shy. I didn't show off. My father said always, me and my daughter, if we would have millions of zlotys nobody would see it on us, because we wouldn't even change an iota.

**INT:** Even though he was a successful businessman?

**SURLK:** Successful, very successful. In fact I have the jewelry today, my mother's jewelry that I didn't have what to eat, you know, I didn't have a piece of bread, but I didn't sell it. I wear every day my mother's engagement ring and my mother's marriage ring.

**INT:** So who raised the children between the two of them would you say?

**SURLK:** We had families. We had grandmother and grandfather. We had cousins, like for instance my aunt who had six children. They raised us. They were in the house. We went for two, three hours. They came to us. It was a small-it wasn't a big town. You didn't have to take long rides.

**INT:** Were you like the older sister that had to take care of the two others? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** No. I wasn't the oldest. No, I never wanted to do anything.

**INT:** You weren't the oldest?

**SURLK:** I was the oldest.

**INT:** That's what I mean. But you didn't have to take care of-

**SURLK:** No. No, I did not. I wasn't such a good child to be able to care for my others.

**INT:** They didn't say to you to watch the two of them?

**SURLK:** No. No. No, but I remember certain things when I was a small child and my father built the house and we transferred our store already to the house that was built, on the first floor, and my mother got sick sometimes during the night and it was snowing and my mother used to wake me and send me to bring the father home, you know. My father was very mad. How could you do that? To wake a child like that and send her out? She wasn't feeling well. She wasn't feeling well.

**INT:** Who made most of the decisions in the house, the mother or the father? Do you remember what-

**SURLK:** My father made the decisions, but openly it looked like my mother.

**INT:** But it was really him.

**SURLK:** It was really him. I had the same-the same example I had later when I lived with my aunt in Switzerland. My uncle was the chief rabbi. Papa, show Mr. Garfield-(tape closes)

**INT:** Did they ever have to holler at you?

**SURLK:** Oh yes. Sure.

**INT:** Or hit you?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** Who did it?

**SURLK:** Get a spanking.

**INT:** Who did it?

**SURLK:** My mother was the instigator. (Laughter)

**INT:** But she did it? She did it or she didn't do it? She would tell the father to do it?

**SURLK:** No, she would tell my father, and my...

**INT:** What kind of things did you do, do you remember?

**SURLK:** I was mischievous. I talked back. I said I don't want to do that. That was the biggest thing. I don't want to do this, and she said-my father said, you are not ashamed to say you don't want to do that? My mother said to me, and I said, ich vill dus nisht teen, I don't want to do that, so she said, you're not ashamed to say that to me? So I said, no, davka vill ich nisht. In spite of you. Oh, wait, your father will come home. Don't worry. You get yours.

**INT:** Would you say that to him, ich vill nisht?

**SURLK:** To my father, no. I don't think so. No, because my father understood me better than my mother, but a little edgy with my mother. She did some things that I didn't like and-

**INT:** To you?

**SURLK:** No, she did some things.

**INT:** Like what?

**SURLK:** Like she bought some things that were too expensive, or I have here silver that my mother bought, beautiful pieces, and in those days we built the house and we needed a lot of money, and my father said if he would have the cash he would go to the big city and buy for cash, and he would have ten percent off right away, and we were always private schools. You know, in those times to send a child fifty years ago to a private school was a lot of money. Nobody even heard of it. So-

**INT:** Did she listen to him though?

**SURLK:** My mother, yes, but she was always the one who wanted to be nicely dressed and have nice jewelry and had a beautiful carpet.

**INT:** Did he give in?

**SURLK:** My father-of course he wanted to-sure he didn't give in, but as a child, I was five, six years, seven years old, I understood this it's not right, and I was against it.

**INT:** And you told him.

**SURLK:** My mother bought me, when I was about eight, nine years old, a big beautiful bracelet, a gold something C, and I said I'm not going to wear it because you don't have the right to buy it. My father worked so hard and you could spare him some money and because of you, that you spend it, and I talked back, and my mother says that it's none of your business and that's why she didn't like me.

**INT:** And what happened when he came home with the bracelet? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** With the bracelet? No, it didn't help her because she took me to a wedding and she wanted very much I should wear that bracelet and she just punished me if I don't wear it, so I put on the bracelet. I didn't have any choice, and at the wedding, when she turned around, I took off the bracelet and I put it somewhere else in my pocket.

**INT:** Wow. Wow.

**SURLK:** It was like an anger, you know. I was angry at her.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She didn't tell me all these stories. I wouldn't decide so easy.  
(Laughter)

**INT:** So your mother never hit you. Your mother never hit you. It was only your father.

**SURLK:** She did hit me. Of course she did, but considering like hitting-a potch. It was hitting. He didn't spank me, my father, with a strap or...

**INT:** How did you get along with the sisters?

**SURLK:** My sisters? Like sisters, you know. Sometimes you argue, sometimes you're good, sometimes you're angry at them.

**INT:** Did they talk-

**SURLK:** In general, we were very devoted. Everybody was devoted in the family. It wasn't only our (?).

**INT:** Did they have a pisk (big mouth) like yours, your sisters?

**SURLK:** Less I think. Less. I didn't have such a pisk like I have now. (Laughter)

**INT:** So they didn't get in trouble as much as you did.

**SURLK:** No, they didn't get in trouble because my younger sister, she liked nice clothes and I didn't want to put on like silk stockings when I was a small girl. What do I need that for?

**INT:** Were the other cousins jealous?

**SURLK:** Ya. They weren't as wealthy as my parents.

**INT:** Do you remember anything about that?

**SURLK:** No. No.

**INT:** The children?

**SURLK:** No. No.

**INT:** How about when you-did you go on trips as little children? Did they take you anywhere?

**SURLK:** Oh yes. I went every summer. Trips.

**INT:** Where did you go?

**SURLK:** I went to a vacation.

**INT:** A vacation? Where did you go?

**SURLK:** Every-my mother went with us for a vacation to the mountains, like they go here. (End of tape 1, side 1)

**INT:** And she went with the three-

**SURLK:** And then she went with us three, and we rented a nice little house and we had a nice apartment there and we had-

**INT:** Did she take a maid with her?

**SURLK:** No. No. We had our-we have even our lounges that used. I didn't want to use somebody else's from the hotel, you know. Like it was-like-something like a motel.

**INT:** How about going to school? Do you remember the first-

**SURLK:** Of course I went to school.

**INT:** Tell me about-remember about what happened the first day.

**SURLK:** I don't remember everything. I remember I didn't know math, because it was a killer for me.

**INT:** But when you first went to school, do you remember when your mother took you-

**SURLK:** Yes. I was only five years and four months old, and my mother wanted me-to have a girl that goes to school already because she wasn't-and didn't have for four years children and she wasn't the youngest when she got married, so it was her ambition to send me to school quickly, so I remember I was for two days in school, and then the teacher asked me, how old are you, little girl? And I told her, and she said, take your school bag and go home.

**INT:** Did you want to go to school?

**SURLK:** What did I know? It was fun for me.

**INT:** What? She took you by the hand, your mother?

**SURLK:** No. She said-yeah, my mother. She took me to school, but-

**INT:** What kind of school was it?

**SURLK:** It was an elementary school, first grade.

**INT:** A Polish school or a Jewish school? A German school?

**SURLK:** No, a Polish school.

**INT:** A Polish school. And there were Jews?

**SURLK:** With Jews, of course.

**INT:** Only Jews?

**SURLK:** No, not only. Mixed. Jews and goyim together.

**INT:** And what did they speak there?

**SURLK:** Polish.

**INT:** Polish. And the teacher was what?

**SURLK:** Pole.

**INT:** Was a Pole.

**SURLK:** We had Jewish teachers. Mostly Polish.

**INT:** So you went there.

**SURLK:** So I went there.

**INT:** And you had a good time for two days.

**SURLK:** For two days I had a good time. She sent me home, and my mother was so angry she went to the director of the school, to the principal they call him now, and she went to the director and she started to cry and she said, if my child will not do the first grade like she is supposed to, I'm taking her out, and he said, but Mrs. Felker, it's forbidden for us to take a child under seven years old, and she cried so much that she had rachmonus on her and he let me go to school. (Laughter) And she already looked to it that I should be able to pass that year.

**INT:** You were the youngest person in the class. What was that like?

**SURLK:** Yaakov Meir was the youngest in his class also. It was hard. It was very hard. It was pride, on one hand, that I am the youngest, but I was a small girl. I was five years and four months old. And somehow I made it.

**INT:** Did you want to go after a while or you didn't want to go or what?

**SURLK:** I wanted to go. There wasn't something that you can accomplish without going to school. You had to go to school. It was obligatory. Elementary school was obligatory, and it was a plus for you if you started early.

**INT:** And then you went to first grade in that school?

**SURLK:** No, I went straight to first grade. There was not like kindergarten or something.

**INT:** Right into first grade?

**SURLK:** Right.

**INT:** And then you stayed in that school until-

**SURLK:** I stayed till sixth.

**INT:** Till sixth. And then two sisters came into the school?

**SURLK:** My sisters came. A year later, two years later, my sister came and three years later my other sister came.

**INT:** Do you remember your father or mother helping you with schoolwork?

**SURLK:** Yes, of course. Sure.

**INT:** How about cheder kinds of things?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** It was every day we went to cheder. We went-we had a Rebbe and we went-

**INT:** Where was it-in a shul, in a house?

**SURLK:** No. No. It was in his house. We went to his house and he started with alef, bais, like the boys. He started-I remember I was with a group of children my age, younger, older a year or half a year or a year and a half older, and we started from alef and bais and I remember when I was a year or two older, we started Chumash, and since my mother didn't have sons, my father's-she took my father's watch, his chain, and she put it on me on Shabbos when I started that Chumash. I still have the watch and the chain. Miraculously, but that's it.

**INT:** So this was just a rabbi who was a teacher, or he was the Rav in a shul?

**SURLK:** No, he was not a Rav. He was just an exclusive teacher for children.

**INT:** I see. Did he have a-

**SURLK:** A Rebbe in a cheder. Oh, he had. He had like a-

**INT:** The katchke, or whatever he had.

**SURLK:** No, he had a conchik. No, he didn't have a conchik for girls. He wouldn't have a conchik, but he got a linear-it's like a measurement.

**INT:** Yeah, ruler.

**SURLK:** A ruler from wood. He gave you over the fingers.

**INT:** So you went to elementary school from when to when? Till one o'clock, two o'clock?

**SURLK:** No. We went from eight o'clock in the morning, I think, till two o'clock in the afternoon.

**INT:** And from two in the afternoon?

**SURLK:** From two in the afternoon we had like an intermission, and then we went three o'clock to the Rebbe's.

**INT:** And stayed until when?

**SURLK:** We stayed till about an hour, an hour and a half. An hour, an hour and a half, and then we came home. We had homework.

**INT:** And Sunday? What did you do on Sunday?

**SURLK:** Sunday-Sunday was the only day that we were free.

**INT:** Yeah. So what did you do?

**SURLK:** What did we do? Socialized. We went for a trip. We went to play.

**INT:** Did your father close the business on Sunday?

**SURLK:** No. It wasn't officially opened, but it wasn't closed.

**INT:** Did you have much to do with goyim during this time?

**SURLK:** I went with goyim to school. Of course I had to do.

**INT:** What were they like?

**SURLK:** Every day. Anti-Semite.



**INT:** Even the little even the little kids?

**SURLK:** Even the little kids. Zhid. Zhid.

**INT:** They said that?

**SURLK:** Yes. (Some words in Polish)

**INT:** And the teacher? How about the teacher?

**SURLK:** He was an anti-Semite also, but was she better?

**INT:** How about in the town outside of school? Did you have much to do with them? On Sunday?

**SURLK:** Especially we had that store, so we saw them daily coming and going, besides the school. Sunday-Sunday was-you could see the most anti-Semites go to Church and they didn't look at you. (Words in Yiddish)

**INT:** Did you have friends who were goyim in the school?

**SURLK:** Goyim?

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** You sit on one bench.

**INT:** Did you ever ask them to come back to the house?

**SURLK:** No. This was something that we never did.

**INT:** You never went to their house?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Did you ever play with them in the street?

**SURLK:** No. Only with Jewish children.

**INT:** Did they live near you, the goyim?

**SURLK:** Yeah. Not this close, I mean. A street farther up or two streets. No. Never in their houses. Never.

**INT:** Did your father ever say anything about in the business that he had trouble with-

**SURLK:** Sure he did. Sure he did. If they could [Yiddish word], what do you say? If they could find something bad-they bought the material and it had a spot or it had a rip. Of course.

**INT:** So after you went to sixth grade-and then what happened?

**SURLK:** After the sixth grade...sixth grade were-this was the elementary school, and then you started a gymnasium. Gymnasium was four years.

**INT:** Poles and Jews.

**SURLK:** Poles and Jews. This was already private, completely private. None of the Jews-a poor Jews, none of the poor gentiles could enter this school. It was like a prep school.

**INT:** I see. And what was the percentage Jews and goyim in a school like that?

**SURLK:** Less Jews than goyim. Much less. It was already a highly accredited school.

**INT:** I see. Did you want to go?

**SURLK:** With a separate principal.

**INT:** Did you want to go?

**SURLK:** Of course. I was seeking a higher education. Of course I wanted to go.

**INT:** So as a woman, as a girl-

**SURLK:** It cost a lot of money, about-it cost eighty dollars-eighty zlotys a month. It was a lot.

**INT:** If your father would have had boys, do you think it would have been different in how he-they pushed you to go to such a private school and to-do you think it would have been different?

**SURLK:** Maybe they would have thought about giving him a more thorough Hebrew education, combined with a Yeshiva style, you know, but everybody was looking. In those days, it wasn't middle age. It was already modern times. Everybody was looking for an existence, to be able-

**INT:** Women too?

**SURLK:** Women too. You have a lot of students in medical school.

**INT:** Women.

**SURLK:** In pharmacy school. Yes. Law school.

**INT:** Did you actually know women who were lawyers and pharmacists?

**SURLK:** Of course.

**INT:** Jewish women?

**SURLK:** Sure. I have a cousin now that I visited. She was a-she's a pharmacist in Tel Aviv.

**INT:** Okay. We're going to finish soon. In the gymnasium, what was it like?

**SURLK:** Anti-Semitic. Very anti-Semitic. You could feel it.

**INT:** Did they know that before they sent you there, that the school was like that?

**SURLK:** Yes, but this was the only school. (Some aside here with Rabbi Leizerowski speaking)

**INT:** So there was much more anti-Semite than in the other school.

**SURLK:** Yeah. They were already older. Here you dealt with children, with six, seven-year-old children. Here you dealt already six years later, twelve years old.

**INT:** How did you handle it? How did you deal with it?

**SURLK:** I hated it.

**INT:** Did you say anything to them?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** When they would say things, you didn't say.

**SURLK:** They would. I didn't. We didn't. We just kept quiet.

**INT:** And the boys too?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** How about the teachers?

**SURLK:** They told them to be that way. Even openly they didn't show it [words in Yiddish]

**INT:** So you went how many years in school there?

**SURLK:** Four.

**INT:** Four years. You didn't find any Polish girls that you talked to and were nice and became a friend with in the time or you did?

**SURLK:** I didn't believe in being friends with them. I was sitting in the class because I had to go to school. I had to acquire that knowledge. I had to make a mensch out of me, and look what's going to be in the future, what I can make the best for me, for the Jewish people, for our Jewish nation. The rest didn't interest me. I knew a goy is a goy and a Yid is a Yid. That's it. I never

went to play with them. I never went to their houses. I just associated with them as much as I needed.

**INT:** And after school what did you do, when you came home?

**SURLK:** I had so much work, over the head. Over my head. We had a high curriculum. We had German, Polish literature and German, and we had Latin. We had to prepare-if you wanted to go- I wanted to go to a pharmacy in Lvov, I had to prepare lessons. It was very hard in those days. Here they make a-they give you with a little leffeleh (spoon). In those days you had to learn all the things by heart.

**INT:** And Jewish studies stopped?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** When did you do that?

**SURLK:** We went. We went to a Hebrew school about three, four times a week. Maybe every day for an hour. To a Hebrew school.

**INT:** And what was it like there? What did you learn?

**SURLK:** A Hebrew school was a special building in the center of the city, maybe a little bit-a block or two off the rink, off the main plaza, and we had a school principal. We had a few teachers. My uncle that I told you, Rafael, he was one of the overseers. He oversaw the school, if they had a good curriculum, if they teach enough, and we had a principal, Mr. Sternbuch, Dr. Sternbuch was the principal of the Hebrew school, and we had a few teachers. And we had literature, Hebrew literature. We had the poets, you know.

**INT:** Was there anything mentioned about Israel at that time? About Eretz Yisroel?

**SURLK:** Oh, this was implanted in every Jewish child, was implanted the love and ahavah to Eretz Yisroel. We were born with that mind. We prayed three times a day with the thought of Yerushalayim, of being redeemed, of awaiting Moshiach. This was implanted. The love for Eretz Yisroel was implanted in every Jewish child. Every Jewish child dreamed about Eretz Yisroel.

**INT:** So how about practically, about thinking about going there?

**SURLK:** Practically-practically, before the war, beginning in 1935, which I faintly remember, we had already a big Zionist movement. We had organized youth who went on Hachshara. It means a preparation before you go to Eretz Yisroel. It was before you go to Israel, and this youth already realized that there is no tomorrow for us in Poland.

**INT:** You understood that?

**SURLK:** Oh, we understood that.

**INT:** Even though your father had a good business?

**SURLK:** Even my father was good off. Of course we understood. We knew that the situation for the Jews is becoming worse and worse in Poland. More Yiddin, less work, less schools, less quarters in the university. There was brilliant Jews who didn't have-who didn't-who looked up for tomorrow and didn't know what to do with themselves. Very talented people. Talented.

**INT:** So you saw your future in Poland or not in Poland?

**SURLK:** We saw...we didn't see a future in these little towns. We knew something had to change. The Jugen, the youth, understood. Why did they go on Hachsharah? Why did they want to go to Eretz Yisroel, even it was-Eretz Yisroel wasn't in a situation like it is now and not even like it was fifty years ago. It was in a bad situation with the Turks, you know. With the British tzorus.

**INT:** Did you ever talk to your parents about it? About leaving the town, about going to-as a teenager. Do you remember?

**SURLK:** Even the most orthodox, the strictly observant people who belonged to that Klous, that davened in the Klous I told you, knew that something must come from Eretz Yisroel.

**INT:** Your parents knew that too?

**SURLK:** Yeah. They wouldn't have the courage to pick up themselves and go, but other people did.

**INT:** You didn't see yourself taking over the business then.

**SURLK:** No, I wasn't a business girl at all. I didn't know how it started and to be involved.

**INT:** Now when you talk back to your mother as a little child, did it get worse as you got older or did you have luck?

**SURLK:** I don't think so.

**INT:** What happened as you got older with her?

**SURLK:** We remained on the same level. She didn't mean good-She didn't mean bad for me. She was a good mother. She was a devoted-maybe she was too good for me.

**INT:** Did you help her in the kitchen?

**SURLK:** Oh no.

**INT:** You didn't. Why? She'd ask you to do it or she didn't?

**SURLK:** Yeah, she did.

**INT:** And why didn't you do it.

**SURLK:** I didn't want to with the dishes and the cooking. I didn't know a thing.

**INT:** You weren't interested?

**SURLK:** No, I hated it.

**INT:** How about the sisters?

**SURLK:** Also not too much.

**INT:** Did the sisters...

**SURLK:** But my mother was very conscious. She knew that our future is not to wash the dishes. She wanted each child should choose something to be in it in the future.

**INT:** Did your sisters go to the prep school too?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** The same one you did?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** So you were there tzuzamen (together) the three of you?

**SURLK:** Yah. The youngest wasn't even ready yet, but we both, my sister and me. She had a better head even than me.

**INT:** When did you first hear about Hitler, yimach shemo (may his name be erased), and all that kind of business with war and this? How old were-what were the years? When was it that you heard about it?

**SURLK:** In the thirties, when the refugees-late thirties, when they started to come to Poland. They evacuated them from Germany. They came as refugees to the east, so families started to stream from the German occupied country to Poland, and Poland was divided into two. One half belonged-till (?). It's not far from Lvov, was Russian. The second one was German. So we were practically having one border.

**INT:** But that was already in 1939. I'm talking about earlier.

**SURLK:** Before that?

**INT:** Oh, when Hitler came in '32. What did you hear about that?

**SURLK:** '32 I was too young to understand.

**INT:** All right. But the '30's...

**SURLK:** But we heard Hitler, the name Hitler was mentioned very, very often, not only by me. Every Jew knew about Hitler. We knew that he's bad, he's an anti-Semite, that he persecuted the Jews, that he's going to do bad things to us, and we were very much afraid. (Rabbi Leizerowski starts speaking and the tape shuts) We saw anti-Semitism is advancing in east, in western Germany very fast, and we knew about the speeches that he held-not in the Reichstag, he wasn't the Reichstag yet, but he heard what he's going to do to the Jews, and in each speech his main theme was the Juden, so we knew, and in fact, I knew my friend's father, Herr Dr. Walmut, he was (words in Yiddish). He was the head of a big lumber factory in Chovorow, and he was in Posen. It's a Polish city called Lenk who also had a German name, Posen. It was half-German, half-Polish, and he used to go on business, and he came home once and I heard him say when I was in their house, that he was standing near Hitler like I'm standing near you, and he heard him speak from a podium, and it was just like fire on Jews, that he's going to consume them, he's going to farnishten them, he's going to persecute them and they will disappear from the earth, and he said-I remember like the day he said, it is so easy to take out a gun and shoot him now than to let him pick up his head. It was easy. It was very easy. But this was from above.

**INT:** Now, did you think the Polish Army would protect from the Germans?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Did people think?

**SURLK:** No. No. We knew they are going to help them. No. Ukrainians, we knew that they are going to be worse than the Germans.

**INT:** So you thought war may have come?

**SURLK:** No, we didn't think war may have come. Efsher (perhaps) maybe yes, maybe. But in the meanwhile we were pretty much afraid.

**INT:** Okay. Now the next thing is September of 1939. Tell me about-

**SURLK:** This is outbreak of the war.

**INT:** Tell me, do you remember the day when it happened?

**SURLK:** Yes, I remember.

**INT:** Tell me about the day.

**SURLK:** It was unexpected. It was unexpected.

**INT:** What were you doing?

**SURLK:** We got up in the morning and I remember-was it midday or was it morning, but they said the war broke out between Poland and between Germany, and it was a sad day for the Jews, very sad day. Some were praying, some were saying Tehillim, some were crying. It was bad. We were very, very much afraid.

**INT:** Okay. And did anybody want to run away or they stayed?

**SURLK:** Yah. We didn't talk about it yet, but in the next two days, when we heard that the Polish Army is almost in shambles because they said they opened their ammunition boxes, there was practically nothing in it, so either sabotage or neglect. Who knows? So we started to be afraid because we saw them coming closer and closer.

**INT:** But you didn't hear shissen (shooting)?

**SURLK:** Oh yeh, yeh. Bombs. Bombs. Shissen. Sure. A few people fell from the bombs. We had a few casualties. Victims.

**INT:** So when actually did something happen to the town? What was the next thing? When did the Germans come?

**SURLK:** Bombardment.

**INT:** Bombardment from the air.

**SURLK:** Yeh. It was I think a matter of two weeks. Something like that.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** By us in Lodz, Thursday night they announced war, and Friday morning they were in our-

**SURLK:** I think by us it took a nice few days.

**INT:** When do you remember?

**SURLK:** They came in, I remember-

**INT:** Where were you when they came in?

**SURLK:** We were in our city, and I remember very vividly that my father-that my mother said to my father, according to her opinion, my mind, she said. According to my mind, we should leave everything and we should run away with the children. So he said, where would we run? She said, we will run with the Russians, and she said a Polish sentence. [Words in Polish] Vus vet zein mit de anderer, vet geshain mit unz. (What will happen to them, will happen to us). First let's run away from the fire. So my father didn't say yes, didn't say no, but we realized, oy, to leave everything. To leave a house. To leave everything. I personally wasn't so sad because when the Russian Army was by us from 1939-oh, the Russians. We were occupied 1939 till 1941 by the Russians when the war broke out, you understand?



**INT:** Yeah. The Russians came into your side, not the Germans.

**SURLK:** The Russians came into our side, not the Germans.

**INT:** Not the Germans. You were in the eastern side.

**SURLK:** Eastern side, so when the Russians came in we were persecuted by the Russians. We received a passport number eleven. It means a capitalistic passport. They could do-they could take you away to Siberia any night, so we didn't sleep in our houses. We went to the poor people's houses and we slept there.

**INT:** And he didn't open the business up or he did open the business?

**SURLK:** He did. We did open. We didn't open. We were under surveillance. The Russians took away a lot. They came in the morning and they-there were some Jews of the city that were Communists, and they tore our drapes down and they took away a lot of things from our house. So for us it was like a humiliation and a loss already of the things and they closed the store.

**INT:** Did people say it's better the Russians than the Germans though?

**SURLK:** No. I thought the Germans will be better. So after-after about two years, 1939 and '40, '40, '41. They came in '41.

**INT:** And what did you do yourself during those two years? Did you go to school? What did you do?

**SURLK:** Yeah, I went to school.

**INT:** The same gymnasium.

**SURLK:** No. I finished already gymnasium. I went to the university. Pharmacy school. Not in our city, but I went to Lvov, to this big city and I entered the pharmacy school.

**INT:** And the Russians let you do that? You could go to school?

**SURLK:** They didn't. They let. I had this passport with the number eleven. They could take me away anytime and in case they wanted with my parents. They couldn't take me away but with my parents together, but when I entered the university I was very bitter. Oh Russians. Get rid of them. So when the Germans came in, I felt that (?) sad. It wasn't...I figured, oh, what could they do to us?

**INT:** Let me ask you about the other Poles. Did they see the Russians the way the Yidden did too? Did you combine with the Poles like? Were they friendlier now?

**SURLK:** No. They said Jews are communists. They said right away Jews are communists. They make an alliance with the Russians. They're the same.

**INT:** Were some of the Russians that came Jews?

**SURLK:** It wouldn't have been so bad for the Russians. It wouldn't have been so bad for us under the Russian occupation, me personally, and another group of people that were more wealthy felt it, felt the pressure on us more than anybody else because if you don't have anything they don't bother you.

**INT:** Right.

**SURLK:** If you are wealthy, if you have a house, if you have possessions, if you...oh, they say, no more capitalist.

**INT:** What happened to your house under the Russians?

**SURLK:** To my house? They wanted to throw us out, we should move out, but they had Russian commissars, which means like supervisors, and they were bribed. My mother bribed them.

**INT:** To stay in the house? So you stayed in the house.

**SURLK:** So we stayed in the house but at night, in the evening, we went away to sleep because mostly they took away-(end of tape 1, side 2)

**INT:** All right. Today is October 22, and I'm continuing to talk with SurLK. I wanted to go back to the family before we continue. I wanted to ask you some questions about the family. The first one was about your bubbe and your mother, how they got along. Your bubbe from your father's side.

**SURLK:** They were on a friendly basis. I think on a friendly basis more or less. There are arguments between parents and children. It doesn't go smooth like in life, but as far as I can remember, bubbe was an authority in our house.

**INT:** Your mother listened to her?

**SURLK:** My mother-she didn't stay with us. She stayed with my younger uncle, Emmanuel. I told you about a brother that my father had. She stayed in their house, but all the older people were very honored and taken care of.

**INT:** Were they different, your mother and your bubbe?

**SURLK:** Of course they were different.

**INT:** How were they different?

**SURLK:** First the age difference, was a big age difference, and my mother especially was like-my bubbe was like a narrow-minded person from a small town, but my mother was already a lady who went to Vienna, who went to different cities, so she was-

**INT:** So was there any-

**SURLK:** So it must have been a difference.

**INT:** But you don't remember.

**SURLK:** They were differently dressed. The dress was different. My mother more or less was dressed like today, in suits and turtlenecks and beautiful shoes, hats. My bubbe had a sheitel till, you know, till the eyes, and on the top Shabbos and Yom Tov a big black shawl, like a mantilla they call it in Spanish and long dresses up to the ankles.

**INT:** How about the bubbes? How did they get along? The bubbes?

**SURLK:** Both bubbes. It would be far in my childhood. Machatenastes (laughter). Good, good.

**INT:** We were talking about, when we left off, the two years that the Russians were there before the Germans came and you were in the university. But I wanted to ask you what your relationship was like with your sisters.

**SURLK:** With me?

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** It was a good relationship. Like siblings. A good relationship. We all were in school.

**INT:** With the Russians there and a lot of decisions that you had to make, should you leave, should you go-

**SURLK:** They were young children. They were young. What could a girl from thirteen years old have to say? They obeyed my father, my mother. Whatever they decided they did. They told us to go to hide during the first action, like during the (?).

**INT:** This is already when the Germans came. I'm talking about with the Russians.

**SURLK:** With the Russians. We despised the Russians. We didn't like the Russians. We were above the middle class. The Russians were more with the workers, the lower class people. We were above this average. My father was a rich person, and they treated us very badly. They gave us a passport number eleven which was for the capitalist people. We didn't sleep in our houses many times because we were afraid they might take us to Siberia. Halivi (if only) it would have happened. They took away many furnishings from our house. We were persecuted by them.

**INT:** When you were in the gymnasium, the high school, what were your dreams to be?

**SURLK:** A pharmacist.

**INT:** How early did you know you wanted to be a pharmacist?

**SURLK:** I wanted to be a pharmacist since I remember.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because this was something, a profession that I liked. How does anybody want to be a doctor?

**INT:** Who did you know that was a pharmacist?

**SURLK:** My cousin who lives now in-I told you she's in that home in Israel, (?) they call it, near Tel Aviv.

**INT:** But she wasn't a pharmacist in Europe.

**SURLK:** Of course she was.

**INT:** She was. She's older than you?

**SURLK:** Oh, much older.

**INT:** And you knew her then as a pharmacist.

**SURLK:** Yes. Of course. I knew her when she went to the university. I knew her as a pharmacist, and then she decided to go to Israel just to look around and she liked the country. I think her boyfriend was there too, and then she came over. Life was very hard. So she had to be a waitress in this one's restaurant, but then she came back to Europe for a visit and my uncle, my grandmother's brother, his name was Sashya Gimpel Pesach, Gimpel, he took away her passport and didn't want her to go back to Israel, because life was so hard, but she said Papa, I can't stay here. I look around. Terrible here the anti-Semitism and the goyim all around. I want to go back, even if I have sparingly, and she went back.

**INT:** Did you know about that then?

**SURLK:** Of course I knew.

**INT:** And what did you think about it?

**SURLK:** I myself had a fairly select life, but Israel wasn't as developed as today. It was more desert.

**INT:** Did she ever talk to you about it, about going yourself?

**SURLK:** Me? No, I was too young. No. I wouldn't have gone to Israel before the war. I wasn't so idealistic about Israel. Now I am because I see that we need a country, but then, we were used to that kind of life.

**INT:** Can you think of anything-

**SURLK:** Only a few people foresaw was going to be in the near future. The rest didn't know.

**INT:** Is there anything you really wanted as a young person? Do you remember any time in your life that you really wanted something?

**SURLK:** Yeah, I wanted to go-I wanted to be a pharmacist. I wanted to marry somebody who is also in that field, and I figured we could make a nice living and that's what a young girl dreams of.

**INT:** Before the Russians came, when the life was normal, was there anything frustrating about life that bothered you in the high school?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** What?

**SURLK:** They were anti-Semites. They let you know that you are Jewish. They cursed you out. The teachers were very antagonistic. The directors-even I went to a private school and my parents paid a lot of money, but you felt you're a Jew.

**INT:** Did you have any girlfriends in the gymnasium?

**SURLK:** Of course I did.

**INT:** Do you remember their names?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Do you want to say them?

**SURLK:** Batsheva Diamenstein, Sylvia Rothberg, Susie Gladzer.

**INT:** How about any boys?

**SURLK:** Jewish boys?

**INT:** Yeah, that you knew.

**SURLK:** One was not from Philadelphia. Himmelstein. Oh, excuse me, Himmelfarb. Not too many. People couldn't afford to go to that school.

**INT:** Most of the friends that you had were from the school?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** What did you do with them? What kind of...with the girls?

**SURLK:** We went to school together. We came home. We did our homework. One talked to the other about the homework. If you didn't know how to do it they helped you out. One was better in math, the other was better in Polish, the third was better in foreign language.

**INT:** Can you describe how you were as a person different than now?

**SURLK:** How I was different than now?

**INT:** Than them.

**SURLK:** Than them. I was the most affluent. I mean I was the most-from the most affluent house, so it looked like-it seemed that they looked up to me, you know, like a rich girl, but I was very plain in nature.

**INT:** Were there any problems in being looked-

**SURLK:** Can you put that for a moment?

**INT:** Shut it off?

**SURLK:** Shut it off. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Did the money make you feel any different from the other girls?

**SURLK:** Yeh.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** We were differently dressed. Our house was nicely furnished with silver, with crystal, with carpets, with expensive furniture. Of course we were different.

**INT:** Did people make comments about? The girls made comments?

**SURLK:** No, but it was a lot of envy.

**INT:** How did you know?

**SURLK:** I know. You know it. Unless you're very idealistic and you have some goal in life that you are concentrating on, otherwise-in today's world, for a moment, you also have it, no. Somebody is very wealthy. Just for a moment. Oh, oy, he's a millionaire. He's a millionaire. What would I do if I would have a million? You ask yourself. I said to the rabbi and to my children, I already wouldn't know what to do with the money. I really wouldn't know. I would give it today. Get rid of it.

**INT:** Did they think you were a millionaire, the other girls?

**SURLK:** We were rich in that time. We didn't have a million dollars but it was-

**INT:** It was a lot of money. But personally, what were you like compared to the other girls, your friends? If I were to ask them to describe-

**SURLK:** I was a little snobbish. I was a little bit snobbish. Not because of the money, but this is my character. I don't have too much with people, even today. I am like an outsider. They call it like a loner, and more of a loner. I don't know who lives-I know the two houses of my neighbors. The third I don't even know and I don't care to know. I don't go out too much. To affairs when I was younger, but I would rather have a house, a quiet house, read, write, have music, think about the past, about the future, about my children. That's my nature.

**INT:** Was it then the same?

**SURLK:** The same. The same. You're born with it that way. You're born. I said to the rabbi on a Shabbos that my aunt used to come over Friday night to us with her children, so I was out already, on my way out with my book. We had an eruv in our...I went to their house and my uncle was sitting and learning and I was sitting and reading, and he always asked me what are you reading? What are you learning? What is the schedule for next week? So I liked-taking an apple, he peeled an apple for me, gave me a cookie, and then when they came back I was back home. I ran back home. Didn't like to-I'm not a big talker. I just became a talker the last few years, since we are here in our shul. You have to talk to people, you know. If you don't talk-

**INT:** You would rather talk or not talk?

**SURLK:** Not.

**INT:** Not.

**SURLK:** Not.

**INT:** And as a young girl?

**SURLK:** As a young girl even more. Very quiet. Just a few words. The rabbi was like that. Once he said you just talk what we need to say.

**INT:** Do you wish you were different?

**SURLK:** He?

**INT:** You.

**SURLK:** Me? No. A big talker, a babbler, vus. I don't see anything nice in it. People are coming to me, you know, each one talks and they won't let me show off. They have plans. I don't-they have plans. I don't think that-I'm not a show off. A very shy person. Even if I don't act like that, I'm very, very shy.

**INT:** How about the need to talk about feelings you have or tzorus that you have to somebody?

**SURLK:** I like to somebody to talk the events through it. We have instructions from other survivors to talk about it, let people know what happened to us. Tell your children what Embolic did to us. It's hard for you to understand what I went through. Even I, who wasn't as the kid very shy to people, other people, to me it was a big strain to leave that. I read that on Thursday night with the rabbi and I felt that it's not good for him because he was just getting-he got lost in his thinking and I thought if I became so dark and I figure, why do I do that to him? This actually is (?), so I stopped. And then he said its genug (enough) after, so Shabbos you're not supposed to read these things. You shouldn't cry on Shabbos, but I couldn't help myself. Friday night I went upstairs, I sat down, I was reading these till the light went out around twelve o'clock, then I was standing near the window and thinking. (Pause) I was crying half the night and the rabbi saw something, getting up, and he said, vus is duh? And I said, I can't understand what happened to us. He said, we cannot understand. So you see, I was there and I read the literature about this goy who took part in the murder of ninety thousand Jews, and I couldn't understand. Could you understand that women had to dig their own graves? I gave away the picture from (?). I didn't want him to see the other two pictures. Can you understand? I can't understand because I wasn't there. You have to be, you have to experience it on your own body just to understand what it is because you think it happened in Poland, it happened in Russia, it happened in Lithuania, it can't happen in America. It can. It can.

**INT:** Why do you say that?

**SURLK:** It can because there is a division between goyim and Yidden and as long as this division exists, it will be forever a battle.

**INT:** Why is there a difference between goyim and Yidden?

**SURLK:** There is, because they are goyim and we are Jews. They hate us. Maybe we don't like them so much, but after what they did to us, but we don't have these murderous souls in us and we don't have these instincts. A Jew would never be able. The soldiers of Israel would never be able today to shot one thousand Arabs. They would not. They shot an Arab after they see they are in danger themselves. Their life is in danger. A Rotzeich. (Murderer). Rotzeich. It means somebody who has a temper to kill.

**INT:** Where does it come from?

**SURLK:** Different. We are different. The Jews are different. Jews sell you some-you have that on tape?

**INT:** Mm-hm.

**SURLK:** They sell you some materials, some wares, some whatever they have and they will make another few cents profit. Material things. But goyim kill you. They don't even feel guilty. Look what happened after the war when forty-two people fell in (?) after the war. Why did they do us? Why did they do this to us? Because they were afraid you will come and you will take away your own-you will claim your own property, so that's why they killed us.



**INT:** We were talking about the Russians and how you had to go away at night to sleep somewhere else.

**SURLK:** Yeah, especially. We were only a handful of people in that town, because the most prosperous, the business people went away and maybe intelligentsia like professors. Maybe they were afraid they will take them away to Siberia. A doctor was afraid that they will take him away. Because he is already in a position, and if you're in a position you have a nice-you belong already to the capitalistic class.

**INT:** And meanwhile you went to the university?

**SURLK:** Yah. Because my mother-it was already while the Russians came. Because there was a big corruption and they knew they could expect a big bribe from a rich person, so they took you.

**INT:** So you lived at the university away from home?

**SURLK:** Yah. I was. I think almost every day. By friends.

**INT:** What was it like to live away? You slept overnight?

**SURLK:** No, I came home. It was only like an hour.

**INT:** Oh, I see. Did you have any girlfriends at the university?

**SURLK:** Of course. Of course.

**INT:** Did they live in your town or other places?

**SURLK:** No, they lived in other places. They were from the same city, from Lemberg, Lvov. They were from the same cities. They came from out of town, but from parts of town.

**INT:** Was Shabbos any different when the Russians were there?

**SURLK:** We had to go to school before the war also.

**INT:** On Shabbos.

**SURLK:** In private school on Shabbos. No writing, no doing nothing. Just to sit at the main session. That's it. It was a rule of private schools.

**INT:** In the Polish school, the private school.

**SURLK:** Yeah, but we didn't desecrate Shabbos. I remember my mother-I used to run after my mother when she went to the Rebbes, you know, like a Rebbe came, let's say a Bostoner Rebbe, (?) came in town, so everybody ran to the Rebbe to take a brocha. So my mother used to go, of course. So she didn't want to take me. And I ran after her. She didn't want to take me. She said, why should you go? Because in those towns, when you went to a Rebbe you must have been sick, something was wrong with you, and I said I like to have a brocha from the Rebbe. Myself,

yeah. Ask the rabbi. When I was a little girl, still I remember since I was five, six years old, when my mother rented this little wagon-not horse and buggy. Like they have in-I forgot how you call it in English. At Independence Hall with the horses.

**INT:** Carriage.

**SURLK:** The carriages. And she rented that carriage. I ran after her and people who were sitting there said please take her. She's crying so much. And she always had to take me. And I came in to the Rebbe's house, he asked me to come over. Come here, little girl, and he put his hands on my kup (head) and he said a brocha. Then he said-he asked me, are you going to school? Yes. And when I was older already he asked me, are you going to school on Shabbos? And I said, I'm going to school on Shabbos but I don't desecrate Shabbos. I'm not mechallel Shabbos. I just sit and hear what my professor tells me, and then I come home in the evening, I write it down. Sundays I do my homework and then he said, very good, very good. And he gave me the brocha. Not one, maybe ten of them. I went all over.

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

**SURLK:** The Bolochoy. He came from Bolochoy. Bolochoy was the name of the city and it had a big grand rabbi, and also (?). They have a dynasty here in America.

**INT:** Where?

**SURLK:** A Rabbi Eichenstein in St. Louis used to be from (?).

**INT:** What did he look like?

**SURLK:** The Rebbe?

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** The one from Bolochoy was short, stout, nice beautiful like housecoat, a silver housecoat I remember with a black-a yarmulke on his head. The (?) was already tall, slim, you know. I'm going now to the Rebbes-my Rebbe is the Skverer Rabbi in Square Town in Monsey, so I go to New York. I go twice a year, before Pesach and before Rosh Hashanah, and I spoke to him this Rosh Hashanah. He gave me such a nice brocha. And then I went out. I didn't feel right. I don't know why. So I go to Boro Park, I take the bus from twelve o'clock noon from between 49 and 50 Avenue, 50 Street, 18th Avenue. I catch the Monsey bus. I first go to Monsey and this bus also goes to New Square Town. It's about ten minutes. A lot of people see the Rebbe, and I go for years. I knew his father. And I go there and I go the cemetery for my old Rebbe, to his father, then I come here. Of course I am treated very friendly because I am already an old Chassidista, for years and years I go, and I tell him my problems. I sit down, I tell him all these. He asks me how everybody is. Asks me how the Ruv is. He was a few months there. Never went-if the Rebbe needed somebody to advise so he just took a few selected people from America and he took Rabbi Leizerowski take the plane, come down to-a private plane to come down to Square and then he will take him home.

**INT:** And he did.

**SURLK:** My son took him. He didn't take the plane. He was very impressed because for so many years, for thirty-five years, I'm coming back-for fourteen years and tell him about the experiences and I go in and then I have a bus back to Boro Park.

**INT:** Did your father ever go to the Rebbe?

**SURLK:** My father? My mother used to go. My father also, but my mother more.

**INT:** Where did she get this shtickel chassidus?

**SURLK:** I don't know. We were chassidim. Our grandparents used to wear a shtreimel and a kapote.

**INT:** Did they have a rebbe?

**SURLK:** My father also wore a long frock on Shabbos. Yes, I told you. The (?).

**INT:** Oh, that was their rebbe. The bubbes and the zaidas rebbe. So with the Russians living there, the Russians-you were in the university.

**SURLK:** When the Russians were there it was 1939, so 1941.

**INT:** And you were in the university.

**SURLK:** Yah. Our life, I told you, was-was afflicted already but the children, the youth didn't suffer so much because the schools were open to everybody, especially the working class people. This went on for two years, till 1941.

**INT:** Then what happened?

**SURLK:** 1941 the war broke out.

**INT:** In the summer.

**SURLK:** Poland. Czechoslovakia. With Russia and Germany, then to war. You see, I have to divide these two periods, 1939 was the war with Poland and I forgot myself already. This was the war between German-Prussia, United States and England. And the allies.

**INT:** Right. The summer of 1941.

**SURLK:** In the summer-May, June, July was also. August.

**INT:** August?

**SURLK:** Something like that.

**INT:** What do you remember first about it happening? First memories of the Germans.

**SURLK:** First memories? The war broke out and the Russian front started to go back and the German Army approached our city and the Jews were in a terrible fear what might happen to them. What I remember most is the meeting between my mother and my father in our house, what to do. My mother was a very smart lady. She foresaw things that normally people couldn't see. She foresaw that the most important thing in an era where war breaks out is life, to preserve life. She told my father there's a seichel, there's a sense, common sense, that if we survives, no matter what we lose in material things, we will get it back. The most important thing to have was just to save our skin. My father also understood this, but for him the accumulation-(end of tape 2, side 1) ...decision. She put everything away. This is a very good observation what you said, because she was the one who wanted nice things and bought nice things. My father was on the quiet side, but when it came she said, [words in Yiddish]. These were her words. Let's run away. Let's take the children, our life, and let's run away. And she plainly said to him, I don't know if we will all survive, but at least we have hope that one of us will survive.

**INT:** How about your opinion? Did they ask you?

**SURLK:** My opinion?

**INT:** You were already in university.

**SURLK:** I was very afraid of the Germans.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I don't know. I have like a intuition that something terrible is going-is weighing over our heads. I knew a catastrophe. I felt a catastrophe is coming. I also am very, very intuitive, you say, you feel that something is coming. Very often in my life I felt that. Like I feel now we were afraid because of this money that they took, so I was very much afraid, but I took a passive role.

**INT:** Did they ask you?

**SURLK:** No, they didn't ask me, but I was right away like in a state of shock. I didn't-I didn't react to things that were happening. I was sitting always quiet in the corner, waiting for something to come. I didn't-I only was afraid of-of the bullet. Of that I was afraid. But other than that, I didn't even have the energy to battle this life. It's very interesting. When I speak to survivors, most of the people who showed so little energy and so little determination in saving their lives, those saved their lives, and those the smart ones.

**INT:** Why do you think that?

**SURLK:** Because I see who survived.

**INT:** You were a young girl with plenty of koach (energy). Why?

**SURLK:** I didn't. Ask the rabbi what I do now. I sit. When there is something happening, I sit, I don't react. I should take part, a different part in life. Whatever will happen. You send me during the first action when it was right away, a few weeks after that they started to shoot people. On the streets.

**INT:** Okay. But let's go back. The parents were talking about what to do. What did they decide?

**SURLK:** They decided-they decide to stay, because who ran away? A few people ran away. Most of them are alive. There's a distant, distant, distant cousin, maybe older than me a few years. She ran away with her brother. I don't know how (?). They are both alive.

**INT:** Did your father and mother talk to their brothers and their sisters?

**SURLK:** Yah, yah.

**INT:** About what to do and-

**SURLK:** Yeah. Yeah. Everybody talked.

**INT:** And what did they-

**SURLK:** They didn't-nobody in their wildest dreams would expect something terrible what happened, and you know, thinking back, I don't even know if the Germans had this plan right in the beginning. I don't even know, because taking under consideration what they did to the German Jews, this is a zero comparing what they did with the eastern Jews. They told them-they give them twenty-five hours, they gave them to leave the country. They took away all the factories and the jewelry and the money. They left them poor. The disabled they interred in camps. But never-they didn't dig graves to shoot a hundred thousand western Jews in Germany. No. It came gradually.

**INT:** So your parents decided to stay.

**SURLK:** My parents decided to stay and they stayed.

**INT:** Okay. When do you remember first seeing the Germans?

**SURLK:** A day later.

**INT:** Explain that.

**SURLK:** My mother was very-people were standing in the streets. The German Army came in. Goyim, all the goyim, without exception, one hundred percent goyim greeted them with flowers, with sweets, with everything. The soldiers.

**INT:** They just fought them. Why would they-you mean because they got rid of the Russians?

**SURLK:** The Ukrainians. I'm talking-I lived in Lvov, is Ukrainians. Not Poland, Warsaw, Lublin, Katavic. It's Ukrainians. The Ukrainians and the Poles were always enemies because

Ukrainians wanted an independent state. Half of the Ukraine belongs to Poland. They were their sovereigns, so they were enemies, so the Ukrainians-and a lot of Poles. What do they care if this goy comes or the other goy. They didn't bother. They didn't bother-

**INT:** Where were you when the Germans came in that day?

**SURLK:** We were standing outside. We were standing outside. Not in front. They came in mighty army, mighty-very impressive.

**INT:** On horses or on-

**SURLK:** On tanks, on horses. I don't even know. Maybe a few-mostly tanks. Tanks, cars, trucks.

**INT:** Did they make you nervous when you saw them?

**SURLK:** Of course. Of course.

**INT:** And then what happened?

**SURLK:** Each soldiers had a murderous face. And then what happened? A few days later they started to put up on poles different announcements. Jews are supposed to get registered separately. Jews have to assemble in that and that place, and later, a week or two, maybe they formed committees. They choose a chairman. They choose Jewish police. They made like a state within a state.

**INT:** And what was your father thinking about all this and your mother?

**SURLK:** Bad. They never had a minute's rest.

**INT:** Were they involved in the committees?

**SURLK:** No. My father stayed away. Never. Took only one part, when they shot him. I remember they took him to the forest and shot him. That was his part.

**INT:** But what happened with the business now? This was the beginning.

**SURLK:** The business was open and it was closed. You opened it for an hour. You closed it for five hours or six hours. They started to loot also the stores.

**INT:** Who was looting?

**SURLK:** The goyim. The goyim, the Germans. Collaborators. Every goy was a collaborator to the Germans.

**INT:** Did your father have neighbors who were friends before the Germans came who would try-

**SURLK:** Goyim? Yeah, we had a lot of-not neighbors but we had a very big acquaintances, and the biggest acquaintance was the Russian orthodox priest from our city and his wife and children. In fact, I went with his daughter to one school.

**INT:** Why did your family connect with them? What was the connection?

**SURLK:** Because we had a big store and they were our customers, and she went with me to school and we came to them just once in a while. They came to us to buy stuff and we had all the goyim. Of course.

**INT:** So what happened when the Germans came with these goyim?

**SURLK:** What happened? They pretended that they don't like this, what they are doing to us, but they didn't do a thing. They didn't lift a finger.

**INT:** Did your father try to get in touch with him?

**SURLK:** Yeah. My mother got in touch with him. This is how I survived. My mother talked to them. She right away-my mother was thinking of hiding, of a hiding place.

**INT:** So what-what did they do? What happened then?

**SURLK:** A few weeks later, they published an announcement quietly and secretly that tomorrow, starting six o'clock till-six a.m. till six p.m.-(Tape shuts off)

**INT:** Yeah, what happened?

**SURLK:** And anybody who met a Jew on that day could do whatever he wants. You could stab him, you could kill him, and the Germans started to run around the houses and taking out the Jews. We knew about it because in the beginning you could bribe the German authorities with money, with jewelry, to tell you what's going to happen, so one of the German police who later was meshuga because he did so many bad things to us, he told us-His name was Kreiger. I remember like today. A tall-built fellow. Murder face. I see it now. He told the chairman of the Judenrat, of his committee, that tomorrow or a day later is going to be an aktion. Aktion, that means...so my mother went to the priest, to that orthodox priest, and she said, please, do me a favor. Save my two children, me and my sister.

**INT:** But there were two sisters?

**SURLK:** Yeah, she wanted me and my sister. My mother was very clever. She didn't want to have the family in one place. She said I have to divide because I don't know. Like they shot my aunt-they have six children. They were all together. She-she-from the beginning she said no. She's going to divide her children. So when the Germans came everybody made like a little hiding place. We had a hiding place in our cellar. We picked up some boards, you know, from the floor, put it exactly in how it was and went there, downstairs. We knew it will not take too long, but then it was twelve hours and then twelve hours they would calm down, like twenty-four hours. So we said okay. So in the evening, when we knew that tomorrow it's going to be, me and

my sister went to a stable in his house and the boy who take care of it-very fine fellow. Older already, without a wife, without children, he put us in the hay. You say hay?

**INT:** Hay.

**SURLK:** We went-he put a ladder. We went up very high, and he hid there and he put bundles of hay on us.

**INT:** This is in the priest's house?

**SURLK:** In his property. Not in his house.

**INT:** In his property.

**SURLK:** In his-in his-(SurLK talks to Rabbi Leizerowski here in Yiddish, trying to figure out the word for the building that they hid in). It was a barn. But not a stable. A barn.

**INT:** A barn. I understand.

**SURLK:** Then he took away this ladder, and he himself-and it started to happen in the morning, shooting. It was near a Jewish cemetery. They took them there to the cemetery.

**INT:** Your parents were hiding meanwhile.

**SURLK:** No. My parents and my sister-and I don't remember who else were hiding in our house.

**INT:** In the basement.

**SURLK:** In the basement. We were hidden, me and my younger sister, my middle sister, in the barn, and we heard the screams from the cemetery and the boy was very much afraid, the servant was very much afraid that they might come and look for Jews, because some of them tried to run away, so he opened the doors of the barn and you know how you prepare the wood for the fireplace in winter? He started to chop that wood in the front of that barn and we heard them come in, the Germans, and they asked in German, [Germans words]. Are there any Jews? So he said, no, no, no. A few times they came in.

**INT:** You heard it?

**SURLK:** I heard it. You have an ulcer, huh? (Laughter) We were-our teeth were chattering.

**INT:** And then what happened? After, in the morning?

**SURLK:** (sigh) Not in the morning, in the evening, when everything quieted down, my sister, who was a year younger, said to me, you know...she was such a beautiful girl. Dark hair. Tall. She said to me, you know, I feel my hair is gray. So I said, why? She said, from fear. If I only would know that my parents are alive. So very late in the evening he came up to us, closed the barn, came up, brought us something to eat, milk, I think, and bread, and then he said to us,



everything is over. It's quiet now. So we said-his name was Yoseph, Joseph. Joseph, if we only-if we only knew that our parents are alive. So what could be done, he said. I said, quietly go over to a few places and also to my parents. Maybe you will see somebody. I don't want from you a thing. Just bring me on a piece of paper the signature of my father. (Crying) What do you want from me, Mr. Garfield, huh?

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** So he went over late and he took a piece of paper and he gave it to my father. I don't remember in Polish, in Yiddish, everybody is okay. So I remember she embraced me (crying). Oy. Oy. And she started to cry. And then we came out to a desert. People lost husbands, people lost wives, children, grandchildren, old people, young people, and now we are stopping. I can't do it. (Tape shuts) What helps us survive is an expression in Hebrew that tzorus rabim is chatzi nechama. If it happens to the majority, it's a big help to you. It's like a half a feeling because it happened-it happened to our nation as a whole, we as individuals can survive, because there wasn't a person, an individual person that it happened. It would happen to them, but it happened to us. We wouldn't be able to survive, and yet anything that comes along our way that has a connection with aggravation, with children, with parnassah, with health...We are going to the doctor last week. We were congested from head. So I said to the rabbi-so he said, we are crumbling. We are crumbling. Of course. Age and what we went through didn't help to maintain our health. So I said, what do you mean we are crumbling? We are having here the best doctors. We are taking a vacation. We have a house. It doesn't rain in. We have light. We have air conditioning. We have heat. We have what to eat. What will happen will happen. We are not in Auschwitz. (Crying) Believe me, if my mother would come into my house she would be ashamed how I live, that everything is so dear to me. I appreciate and I am grateful for what I have (crying) because I know that you can lose anything and everything in one minute.

**INT:** As you get older, do you think about the war more?

**SURLK:** More. Oh, more. It affected me.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I don't know. When you are young you have children, you send them to school. Boruch Hashem we have a family. You have your work. Each one is assigned to a different department, to the shul, this one has a house, this one has school. It's hectic. You don't have even the time. You eat better, you sleep better. Now as we approach our old age and we see what happened, we look back and we see what we went through. I said to myself before, in the kitchen, without any reason, I said in Yiddish to myself, [words in Yiddish], it's already closer than...(crying). I wasn't like that. I'm very, very-how will we call that. The rabbi also. He never cries. Never. I saw his pain and I saw what he goes through but he never cries. No. He can take any little thing he can take. If you would read this literature then you will see. (Crying) This is a nothing. I didn't read this like page one, two three. I hopped. Page five, page six. Because I couldn't read one after the other. It would be too much to comprehend.

**INT:** Did you read those things before when you were younger?

**SURLK:** Of course. Yah. There is a book To Vanquish to Dragon written by a Mrs. Beinisch, Pearl Beinisch, in Polish and it was translated into English. I couldn't take it. It was about four, five years ago. Maybe four years ago. I couldn't take it. It was impossible. I didn't read the whole day. I was in bed and I didn't read. I was fasting like on Yom Kippur.

**INT:** Even though you know it's going to bother you, you still read it?

**SURLK:** I think the rabbi put it away because I (?) each time I got this book and I read to him not the whole book but certain pages and he couldn't take it. He was crying. There I've seen...you cannot imagine. About a little boy four years old. (Crying) Two different names. How his mother had him in a concentration camp with her, how the Germans discovered them, how they looked for ways to persecute her because she brought him in in a knapsack and how she was a very elegant lady, very rich, and how they took her for a ride in that carriage and she knew what they are going to do to her, but because she did that-for that sin she deserved the death sentence and how this officer was riding with her in carriage and he was also young, like a bride and a groom. You would think they are going to get married and they came to the cemetery. There is a goyishe driver whose wife-no, even a Yiddish, I think, and how he gave her the hand she should go out, and he took her out and the grave was dug and how he shot her without any regrets. And then he went and took this little boy and he gave him candy. For a few months I think he was like his children. Oy. But they took him to the children's group. They took him. They always say, if Auschwitz, where the rabbi was, comparing to what happened in the beginning was Paradise. The facilities and the process of gassing people was improved. In the beginning when they took them to Belzec-Belzec is a concentration camp that they took them with trucks and they gassed them in the trucks, and it was not a perfect process and people were suffering for hours till they died. In Auschwitz it took like in ten, fifteen minutes, but there it took hours, so they were working on the perfection. This was also a blessing. Imagine what these people went through. Oy.

**INT:** It bothers you, but you still read about it?

**SURLK:** I read. You know, the rabbi also. You know, there is the Jewish Press with Hebrew-Jewish Press, the English-the only actually English weekly that in his entirety concerned-so they have like different parts of books, continuation each week. It was also this book, To Vanquish the Dragon. Now I read another story. So I opened the paper Friday. When it comes Friday or Thursday I quickly turn page after page, turn it, maybe I will see something about the Holocaust. Maybe. It's like an obsession.

**INT:** Even though it will upset you.

**SURLK:** I know. I knew Friday. When they went up it was already a quarter after ten and I figured-it was raining and it was...and I didn't know. I couldn't make up my mind, shall I take the Jewish Press or shall I take this. No, I took the Jewish Press. I couldn't read it. I couldn't understand even what I read and I said to myself, no, I better take it because...and I knew and I was crying.

**INT:** Did you read those books when you were younger, those kind of books?

**SURLK:** I stayed away. I stayed away. Mostly I stayed away because I couldn't be upset like I am now. I'm going to sleep. When I'm younger-when I was younger, I couldn't lay down for an hour or two. I didn't have the time. My schedule was filled. Shut it. Today is enough. (Tape shuts) Levi saved me.

**INT:** Yoseph's son.

**SURLK:** No. No. No. Joseph is a servant from the goy. He saved me only this one time. This one time he saved me. Next time, when there was (?) I wasn't already in town. I was already away. I will tell you. From that Joseph, remind me, I will tell you farther, but even the people who saved me, I felt very grateful to them. I still feel. But there is something that they don't like Jews.

**INT:** So why did they risk their lives?

**SURLK:** Each goy has his Moishke, you know. His Moshe that he likes. I don't want them to tell me I like you but I don't like the Jews. I don't want that. Either you like us. A goy doesn't like us. Forget about it.

**INT:** Even the ones that saved you?

**SURLK:** Eh, no. Of course not. I speak to him. He's an engineer. They both are engineers. The son-last time I was-last time he called me or I called him and he said to me two expressions. He said, you know, I'm looking for the little Jew, for the Jews who have stayed here still. (End of tape 2, side 2) ...cemetery there. Har Menuchot. I go to Givat Shaul and then I take a little taxi, sometimes a car, sometimes a bus, but a taxi doesn't cost too much.

**INT:** Okay. This is November 11 and this is Norman Garfield continuing with SurLK. We left off you going to Joseph's. Joseph took care of you one night in the galach-(priest)

**SURLK:** Oh, you mean in the galach's stable darten (there).

**INT:** In the stable. Now I wanted to ask you-

**SURLK:** Not a stable. It's-

**INT:** A barn.

**SURLK:** A barn.

**INT:** Can you remember when you left, when your parents said goodbye to you that night? What it was like with you and your sister?

**SURLK:** I came back to them, you know. This was not the last time.

**INT:** No. But I want-when you left though that night-

**SURLK:** For the night.

**INT:** Just for the night. Can you remember what that was like? Can you tell me about what it was like when you left them and took your sister?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** Were you afraid? Were you not afraid?

**SURLK:** Of course we were very afraid. We didn't know if we will see each other. She said goodbye. They went to that cellar where they made the fronic. Vi zugt min de Fronic, Papa? (How do you say Fronic?) (Words in Yiddish between rabbi and SurLK, discussing how to say the word Fronic in English.)

**SURLK:** Yah, a little bunker.

**INT:** A bunker. That they made in the cellar.

**SURLK:** It was a cellar and it was like a wall in the cellar.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Oh, they built in the cellar.

**SURLK:** In the cellar it was a big hole, you know. We had three rooms in the cellar. And something that fit in that you could go in and stay there.

**INT:** I understand. For how many people? How many could fit in there?

**SURLK:** I think about ten.

**INT:** About ten. Who built it?

**SURLK:** My father. I don't remember, maybe my uncle helped.

**INT:** I see. And who was going to stay there?

**SURLK:** Most of the Jews had something like that in their houses built, but they found them.

**INT:** But in your family, who was going to stay there?

**SURLK:** In my family? My father-

**INT:** Who was it built for?

**SURLK:** It was built for our family.

**INT:** Just for your family.

**SURLK:** In case we hear some commotion in the street or we hear shooting.

**INT:** Going back to leaving the parents that time, when they said goodbye to you, was it in the house?

**SURLK:** In the house.

**INT:** And Joseph came and took you?

**SURLK:** No. No.

**INT:** Explain how you left.

**SURLK:** We said goodbye. We knew that we are going to the priest's house. The priest-I don't remember if he knew. He probably knew. Yes, she knew. His wife. The priest's wife. He's a Greek Orthodox priest, Doughy was his name.

**INT:** What was a Greek Orthodox priest doing in the town?

**SURLK:** They have a big church, orthodox church. We were Ukrainian. This is Ukraine.

**INT:** Ah, okay.

**SURLK:** So we decided-they decided that two people from our family could come, so my mother said that my younger sister and her and my father will stay home, and me and my middle sister will go, but you have-you couldn't go in just like that you go in. You had to wait till it's dark, very dark. Maybe it was-it was autumn already. By five, six o'clock it was dark. We went maybe ten o'clock, very carefully went into that stable.

**INT:** Joseph came for you?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** How did you get there?

**SURLK:** Joseph was already in the barn waiting for us outside or-no, outside probably, and the door was open. We slowly just-

**INT:** Who took you there?

**SURLK:** I don't think anybody took us. We went by ourselves. It was not far. It was maybe a few-two, three blocks from us.

**INT:** Ah. Did your father give him money for this?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Then why did he do it?

**SURLK:** He wouldn't-he wouldn't take money, but my mother said that she's going to-Papa, how do you say [Yiddish word].

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Reward you. I am the English man, eh? (Laughter)

**SURLK:** See, I speak better than him but he knows better the words. And my mother said that she would reward him.

**INT:** I see. Were you afraid?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** And your sister?

**SURLK:** Also.

**INT:** How younger was your sister?

**SURLK:** A year younger.

**INT:** Did she look to you for koach (strength) or you looked to her for koach?

**SURLK:** No, I was the weak one. Normally in life, I go through troubled times better, but when it comes to running away or hiding, I am the weak one.

**INT:** Why do you think that is?

**SURLK:** I just sit and wait for the tzorus to come. Now in life I am also like that. We had last week aggravation and I didn't move even. I just was sitting at the table like there was a genavah (robbery), you know?

**INT:** Yes.

**SURLK:** I was sitting at the table. I knew something is wrong. I knew deep down, but I was sitting just like a piece of clay. Glued. And all my life, anything knocks me out. She was the strong one.

**INT:** How about usually in the house?

**SURLK:** Also, I was the weakest.

**INT:** Of the three sisters?

**SURLK:** Yah. Not physically, but when it comes to aggravation, when it comes to tzorus, when it comes to solving some problems, I am the weak one.

**INT:** And what do you do when tzorus comes? As a child even in these times. What do you do?

**SURLK:** I have good ideas. See, I have very good ideas. I did a lot of things now later in life. I have very good ideas. I know what to do, but I don't do it.

**INT:** Do you know why?

**SURLK:** No. I don't know why. (Conversation between Rabbi and SurLK. Rabbi Leizerowski says that SurLK spoke English in Germany but he didn't know a word. SurLK says that he did know, he also took some lessons a few weeks before they went. SurLK tells Rabbi Leizerowski that interviewer asked her who was the strong one, who lifted up the spirits, so I said I'm no good. When aggravation comes now...Rabbi Leizerowski says this is not true. "You are all right." SurLK says she told him, I have good ideas. I know what to do, but I don't do it. You understand? Comes an aggravation I sit like clay.)

**INT:** But even before the war-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Her belief is so strong, she sees a situation, a bad one, goes to him.

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** Take it over.

**INT:** Take it over.

**SURLK:** Ich ken nisht. (I can't)

**INT:** But even after what you've been through, where it didn't work, it didn't work out, still?

**SURLK:** Come away. Do something. [Yiddish words] That's why Hashem-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** (?).

**SURLK:** ...didn't put me into ghettos, into camps, because he knew that I will not survive. I would not be able to go to work. Anybody who was as good as I am, I mean was young, could survive. I couldn't. I wouldn't have gone even one day. I would sit and wait. Let them do what they want. I can't do it. So he sent me people they should save me on a different basis.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** So for the parents, her father especially said they should hide her.

**SURLK:** There was a question later on if this family, this goyishe family, wants to save somebody, who would they send? So my father said that I should be the one to be sent away, so my mother said, why her? Why not the other two children? What is she, a big Moreinu? So my father said because she will not survive ghetto, camps, labor, hard labor, aggravation, tzorus. She is not going to survive.

**INT:** Your mother didn't know that?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She didn't understand so much like her father.

**SURLK:** She didn't understand.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Her father was an intelligent man.

**SURLK:** She didn't understand. Why her? What miyuchus is she?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The Mama was the smart one. Sharp.

**SURLK:** And I didn't know to go or not to go. I didn't know. I didn't even want to go, to tell you the truth. I didn't want to go.

**INT:** But even as a little girl you were like that?

**SURLK:** Yah, yah. My father saw aggravation that we had in the house. We had a bug business, you know. There were problems with paying debts, like January, February were slow months, so I took part. I took the calendar. I was a little girl, maybe I was six, seven years old, and I took and I knew exactly when my father had these months to pay bills. Checks. And my father was very mad at me, and I said to my mother, she likes nice things to buy, don't buy now. Wait these two, three months what my father will pay up his debts, but she didn't pay attention so much. She bought it anyway, so there was a little [Yiddish word]. It was a little bit like-

**INT:** But you talked back? Not talked back, but you said to your mother?

**SURLK:** Yah, yah, yah.

**INT:** So you did have in you-

**SURLK:** My reason, my seichel-see, by reasoning, by the seichel, I understood to help out my father. My mother...and she went and bought two silver candlesticks, and we had a beautiful candelabra and other silver and sets, so I said, why do you do that? It's now...it's a modern style so she wants it. And I said wait these few months. You don't need the jewelry she liked. And I said wait these two months. I was a little girl. I understood. But my father never argued with my mother because this wouldn't have broken if she would, but it would be a little bit harder. If you had-in Poland if you had cash and you went from a small town to a bigger town to buy merchandise, so you didn't buy for a hundred zlotys, you bought for a lot every week. So they-if you pay cash, if you paid cash-today it's almost the same thing. They gave you a discount like ten percent. If you bought let's say for five hundred zlotys, which was a big amount before the war, you got already fifty dollars in your pocket. For the fifty dollars a week my father could pay our private schools.

**INT:** I see. But you would talk to the Mama.

**SURLK:** Yah. I would talk back a little bit.



**INT:** More than the sisters?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** But yet when it came to other things? You're shaking your head no.

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** What's the difference?

**SURLK:** It's-this is how a person-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Every child is feeling another nature. I'm not (?).

**SURLK:** Why do people spend money if they are not able to pay for it? They have to squeeze themselves-the honest people have to squeeze themselves very hard to pay money for things that they normally wouldn't buy, but they have wives or children who spend it. This is a nature. Why are people that are very rich and are stingy? I just heard a nice story yesterday. Someday said they have a landsman in Los Angeles who is a big millionaire. So he says, I am not putting out my money just like that. I go into a store and I buy and I pay, he said. I am looking for the stores that are cheaper on the same merchandise. I'm working for my penny. So she said, Leon, you're such a millionaire. What would it make...he said uh, uh. This is not the way you do it. See? People are very rich and are very stingy.

**INT:** Do you remember that night in the barn?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** What did you talk to your sister about? What happened? Did you stay up, did you sleep? Describe the night.

**SURLK:** I was never a big talker. I became a talker. Twenty-five years ago maybe I became a talker.

**INT:** What was it like that night?

**SURLK:** It was terrible. We were laying in hay and in front of us you had bundles of hay a lot, just to make us invisible and he put-Joseph put a ladder. We went up to that barn, you know, and he covered us with hay. We had openings, little openings, so we were able to breathe, and we had-we had some bread or I don't know what my mother gave us. We had some food, maybe some bottles with water, and he looked around how it's nicely set up, took away the ladder and just put the ladders very far somewhere that you couldn't see it.

**INT:** Did you know him before?

**SURLK:** Yeah, of course.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** We knew him because-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He was a customer in the store.

**SURLK:** The priest was a customer. A boy, a stable boy, I mean a boy in a barn didn't make so much money that he could have custom made suits, you know, buy the material. He was-but he came to pick up the bundles for the priest, for the priest's wife, for the priest's children.

**INT:** Do you remember talking to your sister about what would happen if the Germans came?

**SURLK:** When?

**INT:** When you were that night in the barn.

**SURLK:** Of course. We were afraid because this-actually it's like an estate that the priest lived in. This was near a Jewish cemetery, not far, so a whole day, the next day in the morning when they started to shoot, we started-we heard screams and we heard crying and we heard-and a lot, not a lot but a few people ran away and where did they run? They came to the estate of this priest.

**INT:** Jewish came to there. Jewish people.

**SURLK:** But he couldn't help them because they knew. The police, the Ukrainian police, together with the Gestapo, they saw and they shot them.

**INT:** These Ukrainian police were from the town or not from the town?

**SURLK:** Militia, yeah.

**INT:** Born in the town though? People from the town. Then you said you wanted to go back, I remember, on the last tape. You wanted to go back to your parents.

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** In the morning.

**SURLK:** No, it was in the night. A night before we came. He hid us. In the morning the shooting started, and when stayed till the next night. The next night. The next night. It's hard to recall. In the evening, when everything was quiet and relaxed already a little bit, we begged Yoseph to go over to my parents and somehow look for them to-what kind of sign would we have that they are still alive. There was no telephone, no messengers. I mean he is the only one that could bring us, but we decided both that he should - my father should write a few words, either in Polish or in Yiddish or in ich vais, Hebrew, a few words that everything is okay. We would see our father's signature so we would know.

**INT:** He was willing to do that?

**SURLK:** He was. He was.

**INT:** And he went?

**SURLK:** He went, yah.

**INT:** And he came back?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** And what happened?

**SURLK:** He came back and he brought us this paper with the father's signature and he said everything is quiet. I am not sure if it was in the evening or if it was next day in the morning. I don't remember exactly.

**INT:** But what happened next?

**SURLK:** He wouldn't-because it's a little town, a small town. He wouldn't get going by nacht around mir zul im zein (they will see him). Du farshtes? (Do you understand?) Zi hut gemus zan de next day. (It had to be the next day). During the day, when the goyim started to come and see who is left and what happened, they looked already for looting, so then-that I think the next, after the night, and maybe not. Maybe takeh. No. We wouldn't have stayed. We wouldn't have been able to survive the other night. No. It was takeh by nacht. He went by nacht and he brought us the tzetel (paper), so you can imagine.

**INT:** And then what did you do?

**SURLK:** Then he brought us something to eat that the priest's wife gave him. He brought us up eppes I don't remember. I remember a little shissel of what it was and milk or something. I think milk.

**INT:** Because you decided to stay.

**SURLK:** Milk, potatoes maybe.

**INT:** You were going to stay or not stay?

**SURLK:** No, no. My father said we should stay. They would let us know when to come home. So the next day. So we stayed two nights, one before and one after.

**INT:** And then what?

**SURLK:** And the next day, we slowly-

**INT:** How did he get in touch with you to come back?

**SURLK:** Who?

**INT:** Your father.

**SURLK:** Because he told Yoseph.

**INT:** Oh, he told. So he came back with another note.

**SURLK:** No. With one note. So we knew our father is okay and our mother.

**INT:** But how did you know when to go back? How did you know?

**SURLK:** We knew. We knew. Everybody was already on the streets again like nothing happened.

**INT:** Oh, Yidden too.

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** Okay. So you walked back.

**SURLK:** It was like for twelve hours, from morning till evening. Six to six, I think. It was from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night.

**INT:** That the Germans were there.

**SURLK:** I don't know what [Yiddish words]. The last time I was very sick after that.

**INT:** All right. So what happened next? Just what happened after that?

**SURLK:** Well, we went home. So we came home so you can imagine how glad we were.

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** We came home.

**INT:** Did they tell you what happened, how they were saved?

**SURLK:** They were saved in that bunk.

**INT:** In the bunk. Then what happened?

**SURLK:** Then we heard who was missing.

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** Who is missing.

**INT:** How did it happen that people were missing? Did the Germans have names or did they just find people on the streets?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** No, not names. They know that their neighbor is no more here.

**INT:** No, but how did they pick out Yidden.

**SURLK:** Militia.

**INT:** Just came and-

**SURLK:** Ukrainians.

**INT:** Okay. Well then what happened. You went back-

**SURLK:** They would pick up every Jew in America, G-d forbid, if the time would come. They would pick up exactly. They know exact. They will know exactly where to go in.

**INT:** Because the Ukrainians knew.

**SURLK:** Because any goy will tell you, there is the Zhid.

**INT:** Okay. What happened after that when you came back now with your parents and your sisters? What happened next?

**SURLK:** [Says in Yiddish-this was '41. They were a whole year there].

**INT:** But what happened during that year?

**SURLK:** During that year we lived still in the house. Of course whatever they could they took away. They took away our (pause)-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The Russians took also.

**INT:** But now we're talking about the Germans, the Deutschen.

**SURLK:** The Russians also took away a lot of our stuff, possessions.

**INT:** But what happened during-

**SURLK:** During that year it was no life, no death and no life. We had, I think, two of these actions, aktionin they called it, till they started to take away the Jews. I must ask Mrs. Deitel. She knows [in Yiddish-if by the first action they took away Jews. No.] The first action they shot them. They all were shot.

**INT:** So tell me what-let me ask you. What was a day like there? Did your father go to his business during the year? Did he stay in the house? What did you do with your sisters? What was it like?

**SURLK:** It was like a vegetation. It was nothing. It was nothing. Every day was a different decree. They did choose a Jundenrat, like a chairman of the Jewish body.

**INT:** Did your father know-

**SURLK:** German, Jewish police. Besides the Ukrainians, they formed in the city a staff of a chairman of a committee of five, six people who took care of Jewish-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Today you should bring the gold.

**SURLK:** Every day was a different decree. First they said bring your gold, bring your silver. The next day was bring your furs, bring your expensive furniture, bring this. Every day was a different decree.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** To keep them busy.

**SURLK:** To keep them busy. They formed little camps, like you went in the morning and you came back at night, so you will not have even time to occupy your-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** To think what to do.

**SURLK:** To think what to do. You were so occupied. For instance, they assigned my father to work in a forest in Katrice. Did he know how to cut trees? They gave him something that's very hard, heavy work.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Not used to.

**SURLK:** And not used to that, and they assigned two hundred people, three hundred people, so if they went in the morning they took a piece of bread, a little bit water, whatever they had, and then they came home at night they were dead tired. You went to sleep. Early in the morning you have to get up.

**INT:** And what did you do?

**SURLK:** Me?

**INT:** During that time. You and your sisters and mother?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** To find what to eat.

**SURLK:** No, no.

**INT:** What did you do?

**SURLK:** No, I wasn't. [Yiddish words-I worked and typed Russian]

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Oh, you yourself you mean?

**SURLK:** Sure. So my mother started to think what to do with us. We had to do something; otherwise they would give us to peel the potatoes or *ich veis vus*. So she talked to the priest and his-he had a very good friend, a priest, in another little town, and this priest had a son-in-law who was a lawyer, and he worked in a Ukrainian cooperative, and this was like a legal office, but I was a little girl. I didn't know how to type. So my mother bribed him and I didn't look very Jewish. I had blond hair, blue eyes, light skin. I was more Aryan than Jewish-looking, so for me it was easier for them. My sister was dark already, dark hair, dark eyes. This was easier for them to keep me in the office, because the Germans came in and out. So they started to teach me how to type. You had to type German and you had to type Ukrainian. German I had in school so I knew and Ukrainian I also had in school, so these two languages were familiar to me. So I started to type. You know, when you're in a dangerous situation you learn quickly. You learn so quickly because this is what's going to-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Save you.

**SURLK:** To determine your survival, so you do it quickly, just like an animal knows in the forest when to run away when they feel somebody is after them. So I typed. And went in the morning, I took a little piece of bread, whatever I had, and I came back in the evening.

**INT:** Who took you and how did you go?

**SURLK:** I went by myself, but I didn't go-I didn't go with the main streets. I went through like little gardens. You know, in Europe everybody had a garden, like they plant now vegetables and little...I went through these little gardens, and this is going to determine my staying alive later. Why? Because when I went through these little gardens, I passed a family, a Polish family who also had a beautiful house, little garden, and this was my future gentile family who took me in.

**INT:** All right. We'll come back and we'll go through that. Now who did you work for there? Did you work for Jews? Did you work for the Germans?

**SURLK:** No, I worked for Ukrainians. No Jews, no Germans. Germans had a supervision over the work, over the Ukrainian work, over the Polish work, over the Jewish work. This was a Ukrainian corporation.

**INT:** I see. Now they knew you were Jewish, the Ukrainians.

**SURLK:** They knew. Of course they knew. He knew this, Klufus. His name was Klufus, this advocate. He was a lawyer, and the other staff knew.

**INT:** How did they treat you?

**SURLK:** Politely.

**INT:** Were there any other Jews working there?

**SURLK:** Yes. One boy. Shtaut. Mordechai Shtaut. Imagine, I didn't say that. Mordechai Shtaut.

**INT:** How did he get the job?

**SURLK:** How? I don't know. He was married to a rich person. She was a photographer, but he came from a very wealthy family, physicians, and he was married to the daughter and they lived in the vicinity of these people so protectia, you know.

**INT:** And your two sisters, what did they do?

**SURLK:** My two sisters I really don't know. I don't remember.

**INT:** What did you mother do during the day?

**SURLK:** My mother, what did she do? Nothing.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** Nothing. She stayed at home.

**INT:** Now, when you got this job, your father went to the priest to get you this job.

**SURLK:** My mother smeared a lot. I know she gave a lot of bribes to the people, you know, they shouldn't bother us so much.

**INT:** Okay. Who was in control though, the Jews from the Judenrat or the-(end of tape 3, side 1)

**SURLK:** The Judenrat.

**INT:** I see. Did your father and mother know who the president was?

**SURLK:** Of course. He later lived in our house. He was a lawyer, Dr. Teichman was his name. Leo Teichman.

**INT:** Was he an honorable person to get such a job?

**SURLK:** All the Jews were good.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They didn't have a choice.

**SURLK:** They didn't have any choice. Yeah, listen, they were good. Everybody was good. He forced them to be bad.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They gave him a list-



**SURLK:** They didn't have rachmonus (pity)? I wouldn't have, G-d forbid, if it happens to you? I would see they beat you up, I wouldn't have rachmonus? I would, but they will tell you if you don't beat this person, you are going to be shot.

**INT:** Okay. Who gave your father the shver (hard) job, the Judenrat or-who did that?

**SURLK:** Oh, they had to put together a contingent, so my father was a young person. My father was, ich veis-

**INT:** But he didn't attempt to-

**SURLK:** Not fifty years old.

**INT:** He didn't attempt to smear to get a different kind of job?

**SURLK:** We did, but this was already a good job, instead of peeling potatoes in the kitchen and this was like beyond his dignity. He rather would be in the forest and cut the trees.

**INT:** How about Jewish life? What went on with the shul, with Shabbos, with the rabbi? What went on that year? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** Yeah, everything. It was very-

**INT:** Did people go to shul like they did before?

**SURLK:** Very secretly. No, I don't think so. In the beginning maybe yes, the little shuls, and later on they mostly had minyanim in their houses. Ten Jews, they davened quickly and that's it.

**INT:** Do you remember what the rabbi was doing during that time or the rebbes? What was-

**SURLK:** They didn't take any part. They just-they just let it happen the way it was. They didn't do.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** You couldn't do nothing.

**SURLK:** They couldn't.

**INT:** Now did your father and the family, the three sisters and your mother, talk about what's going to be or should we run away or should we stay?

**SURLK:** Yah, yah.

**INT:** Tell me about that.

**SURLK:** Run away, you couldn't run away. It was too late already. We regretted very much that we didn't go with the Russians to Siberia, whatever, wherever.

**INT:** Did you see many Germans during that year's time?

**SURLK:** Yeah, we saw them all the time. They were in town. They had big offices. We saw them every day. They came to the Judenrat. They came to a private house. They ran around like meshuga, like meshugana hint, like mad dogs.

**INT:** When you had to turn over the diamonds and all the business there, who did they turn them over to, the Judenrat or to the Ukrainian or to the German?

**SURLK:** No. To the Judenrat. By us, yeah. It was Judenrat.

**INT:** Everybody brought to them.

**SURLK:** Yeah. They didn't give them. We didn't give them.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** If you can hide something, you hide it.

**SURLK:** We hid a lot.

**INT:** Did most people hide?

**SURLK:** We hid a lot most in the dresses. We made double seams, you know. My mother, when they shot her, I heard she threw away a lot of jewelry. It was like? so instead of leaving that for the Germans she threw it away in the snow. So who got it? Even worse than Germans. The Ukrainians got it.

**INT:** Did it change the relationship-?

**SURLK:** There wasn't good-there wasn't good or better. There was very, very bad and at the moment when you saw what they are going to do with you you just didn't want to have it with you, so you threw it away, but you knew exactly who was...another enemy is going to have it.

**INT:** Did it change the relationships between the Jews and the Ukrainians during that time?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** Where they any different?

**SURLK:** Yah, yah.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** How it changed? It changed enormously.

**INT:** Explain that.

**SURLK:** Because we saw what they are doing to us.

**INT:** The Ukrainians?

**SURLK:** Yes, and they show their-their showed their two-face. Most of the goyim said it's because we spilt Jesus' blood. This is what the first excuse.

**INT:** Now what were they actually doing? The Judenrat was collecting the stuff.

**SURLK:** What the Ukrainians did?

**INT:** Yeah, what did they do?

**SURLK:** The Ukrainians had the supervision over the forest work and the kitchens and the brick factories and lumber factories. Whatever you-all the life-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Industries.

**SURLK:** Industries. It was concentrated before in Jewish hands. They took over and they had the supervision. They were so busy stealing and taking away from the people.

**INT:** Did you have much contact with that priest, that family?

**SURLK:** Yah. I know how-I don't know how good they were. They probably [Yiddish words]. They weren't friends. They were goyim. They weren't friends, but-

**INT:** Your father trusted the life of you with him?

**SURLK:** Yes. It was the beginning. He later trusted-also my younger sister was hidden. I will tell you later.

**INT:** Okay. Did you see? Were they harming Jews during that year?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** The Ukrainians, the Germans?

**SURLK:** Of course.

**INT:** What were they doing?

**SURLK:** There was a big starvation, a famine. (Put it away on the floor. Don't bother.)

**INT:** Go ahead. A starvation.

**SURLK:** A big famine. You had rations. Everything was rationed. For us it was not a problem because my mother-we were rich. We could buy bread. We had everything. We didn't know what it means to starve or to have less. We had the same thing as before the war, but other people, not us, didn't have bread, so you got like a half a bread a day, half a small bread a day. It was a big (sighs)-it was such a suffering. Such a suffering. Imagine. A town was left without a

livelihood, without nothing. People didn't have money. People were almost naked, torn shoes, (sighs) hungry children.

**INT:** Did your father think about what was going to be?

**SURLK:** We didn't know-

**INT:** At that point. Yeah.

**SURLK:** Then came-

**INT:** But I'm saying when he came back from the fields, did he say I talked to all the men there and we're thinking about doing this or that?

**SURLK:** Everybody was helpless. This was such a systemic...Americans say now, they sing again, they sing a song, never again. It's not true. It is not true. Laugh at them.

**INT:** Because?

**SURLK:** Because everything is possible and a person becomes so apathetic, so resigned and so helpless that they don't know what to do. Each one had a plan. Each one had a sketch where to run, where to come from, nothing realized. Ir frieght nuch (I ask you), Mr. Garfield, [Yiddish words-if the father was in the forest and he spoke with people, would they know what to do? Tell me, in America they also won't know what to do] Because in such a situation-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** You cannot do nothing. What can you do?

**INT:** Did they know then about Auschwitz and-?

**SURLK:** No. Auschwitz was not-

**INT:** Nobody knew?

**SURLK:** No.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Till the last minute they covered up so much that people didn't know. We in Lodz, I know. When the first transport was taken to Auschwitz, then they came back; the wagons came back, prepared the other part. People walked in the station, they saw on the walls, so the people wrote, *dus is tzu shissen*. [Yiddish-they knew where they were going].

**INT:** But in their town, in your town they didn't know from this kind of business.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Before we didn't know. Till the last year we didn't know.

**SURLK:** At least a year later, like they came in August, in October, and a year later, when there was an action, they took away the Jews in wagons.

**INT:** Now this is a year later now. We're saying the first thing that happened. There wasn't an action for the whole year.

**SURLK:** Yes. Of course.

**INT:** During that year?

**SURLK:** Shooting was always. Either they shoot three or two or ten or twenty. We had, I think, two actions, that they shot people on the street. They had the permission for the twelve hours. But a year later, in October I think, there was already an action where they took away Jews, our Jews, to the wagons and they put them like cattle. It was very warm. Maybe it was not even October, maybe it was September. It was very warm, that I remember.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** In the cattle wagon.

**SURLK:** In the cattle wagons. They put in like you put in ten horses or fifteen, they put in two hundred people.

**INT:** Explain to me how it happened? Was it sudden? Did you know?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They gave out to the Judenrat-tomorrow everybody should be on the market eight o'clock. Wives, children. If they are in their beds, bring them with their beds.

**INT:** That's what happened?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Yeah. Everywhere the same system.

**INT:** You remember this, that the Judenrat told your parents they should come to the market.

**SURLK:** I didn't see it, but I remember that they took away this-who converted, the family, the lawyer that I told you she married this professor, the goy, so they were sitting in the marketplace with their bundles, so I know already from that, I figured that they took them to the marketplace.

**INT:** But explain to me how it happened. You were telling me about the year. Now explain when one of these actions was going to come about. The Judenrat told your parents-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A paper, in the shul, in the streets, was an announcement, tomorrow everybody from this year and this year should gather here in this place, in the marketplace.

**INT:** So your father said-your father said we have to go and told you-

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** That's what I want you to explain.

**SURLK:** We didn't go.

**INT:** You didn't go?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Why didn't you go?

**SURLK:** We didn't go because we knew that something is wrong.

**INT:** So your father said we're not going to go. How many yidden didn't go, do you think?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Who could to hide.

**SURLK:** Who could hide, but they found them.

**INT:** Wait a minute. So they-

**SURLK:** They found a lot of Jews.

**INT:** All right. So your father, instead of going out, hid down in the bunker with you and the sisters, yeah, and then you heard what?

**SURLK:** Then we didn't hear a thing. Then the Jews were in the marketplace and they took them-ich gedenkt nisht (I don't remember)-in trucks to the-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Gegangen by fus (They went by foot).

**SURLK:** By foot, maybe.

**INT:** So they walked.

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** All right. So that was one. Now how about another one? Another action came?

**SURLK:** This was the one action.

**INT:** During the year.

**SURLK:** This was after the year, maybe eleven months, ten months after they came in. So they put the Jews into the-(tape shuts). Can you imagine that after fifty years, a few weeks ago I didn't know where they took them. I didn't want to know. I was thinking maybe to Auschwitz, maybe it was too early to Auschwitz. It was 1942. So I talked to a girl. If you would go to her...who was in that transport, and she ran away through these little windows, you know. They broke the two bars. She and another girl. She-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Jumped out from the window. From the train when it was in motion.

**SURLK:** And they shot her. There were three, a boy also, from our city. I knew him. She told me...so I said to her, you know, we were talking. Now, at the end of our lives, we try to talk, and I says, could you tell me where they took the first transport with you? She said to me, to Belzec. Belzec was an extermination-not camp. It was a preliminary stage to Auschwitz. They had trucks with Cyclon B, but it was not perfected like Auschwitz, and they put the Jews into the truck and they let-

**INT:** Exhaust.

**SURLK:** Yes. But it was not perfected, so she said it was terrible. Maybe took them a half an hour by the time they were dead, and this is where they took this transport. She knew in the wagons, she knew that they are taking them to Belzec, but she didn't know what they are doing with them. She knew they are shooting them. So she and a girl-she was maybe...small, a little girl, they decided to jump out. They both jumped out. Three of them jumped out, and a boy. The boy they shot and she had a little bit skin off from the bullet.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A scratch from the bullet.

**SURLK:** Scratched a little bit her forehead, and she is alive. It was in the middle-it was in the during the day. And she went-all bloody, you know, so she went almost naked she said. So she went to a field with the other, with the? Her name is now Mrs. Haber. Her father was a rich man. They had a lumber yard. Her name was Hella, Helena David. David was the last name. And the other one Reisha Hass. It was the last name, Hass. So they went, and a goya saw them, a goya, and she said-and she started to [Yiddish word]-what are you doing here? She knew that-she said we run away, so they took them in. She took them in, she gave them a little water to wash up, and they stayed-I don't remember-they went-shoen-they're alive, both.

**INT:** They're alive, okay. What happened after the first action? You hid?

**SURLK:** We hid. We came out.

**INT:** You came out.

**SURLK:** Maybe one fourth of the city or maybe more was gone already, so we decided-so they started to talk now what shall we do? Like I said before, my mother was very, very smart. She saw the situation and she said to us, we are not going to survive as we are, a family. We have to divide. We have to divide. We have to go into hiding, and maybe one of us survive, maybe two. Imagine a mother would say that. So yah-I have to come back. When I went to work, to type, I met a lady in the garden who was not Polish. She was from Czechoslovakia. She was married to a Polish person, and they had two small children. Goyim. And he was a Polish patriot, so during the war he went to London with the army of General Cherkorski, a big Polish general, who went underground and lived in London and they prepared to come back to Poland when everything will settle and they will take over the government, so she was left with the two children. They were our customers and when she was left with the children and with his mother, with his mother in that house, everybody started to tell her, Mrs. Stipolova, give me some money, this. So she didn't have. So my father said to my mother once, maybe you would approach her. Maybe she has something to give you. She owes us a lot of money. So my mother said, don't ask her. She's

such a fine person. If she would be able to pay her debt she would, so why should you hurt her and demand money and not get money and make her only mad at us. This is my mother. She was very...imagine how the other ones reciprocated to save a family member with-only with that politeness, so when she saw me and she knew me and she said, so how are you doing? I said, all right. Are you scared? Yes. So she once told me, you know...and then he came back. When the Germans occupied Ukraine and Poland, he came back from London. I don't know. Probably it was a plan. So she said to me, I talked to my husband. Maybe we will be able to save one of you. Since you look more Polish than Jewish, maybe we should save you. I didn't pay much attention because every goy that saw me would say, oh, to my father, Mr. Felkur, where is your daughter that doesn't look Jewish? They were anti-Semites but just to make him feel...so oh, she could be saved easily. But nobody did something. They just talked. So I figured she was one of the talkers. But once she met my mother and she talked to her very seriously and she said, we have a friend in a big city, Lvov, and we will take your daughter and we will put her to that lady's house. Has a beautiful house and her husband was an officer in the army also, from an emblem family, you know, that the family they have their own emblems. One has a donkey, one has a lion, one...

**INT:** Big yichus.

**SURLK:** With yichus, Polish yichus. Nobility. So my mother came home and she said to my father, Mrs. Stipolova told me that she would hide one of our children, so my father says me, so my mother said, what's a matter a little bit. Why her? Because our relationship was a little bit strained, you know, of the buying business.

**INT:** Yes. Yes.

**SURLK:** So she said, why her? He said, first of all, she doesn't look so Jewish and secondly, I am the biggest one so I would be able to survive maybe if I would have a little bit to eat and where to sleep. The other ones are stronger than me mentally. So it was decided very quickly that I would be the one, and I didn't go because I wanted to shield myself from my family or I had in mind to survive. I didn't. I just felt that-it just happened that I have to go so I will go.

**INT:** The lady only wanted you.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Or she would have taken anybody?

**SURLK:** Maybe she would have taken my sister.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** Maybe. I don't know. My third sister was also blondish a little bit. But I saw like the gorel, you know, it fell on me. So I went just to-I just went because my father, my mother, should have peace of mind, that one of them is...I didn't want to save myself. I just was very



much afraid of shooting. I don't know why. To this day, very much. I don't know why. But I was afraid.

**INT:** How did you leave them? What happened when you left them?

**SURLK:** Oy, how I left them.

**INT:** Can you describe that?

**SURLK:** Terrible.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** We said goodbye.

**INT:** In the house?

**SURLK:** Mm-hm.

**INT:** And you walked alone to the-

**SURLK:** I walked alone. No, I didn't walk alone.

**INT:** How did you go there?

**SURLK:** My mother probably took me. I had to find out how to change my appearance. It was December. It was very cold. 1942. And it was so bad in town, oy. They ran around with dogs, you know, sniffing around. Don't know how they taught these dogs to find out Jews. And I had to-it's in the same town. You imagine everybody knows you. So I put on-I remember a brown dress with a little-with-my mother especially bought me-with a little orange application, and a brown little beret. I looked different. We had to try it out because by the time I went, the German of the Judenrat, this Dr. Teichman, lived by us upstairs. We had to squeeze already in the houses, to make-to give them over the other houses, so he lived by us upstairs. We had a beautiful house, so he and his wife and a little boy, beautiful boy, five years old, maybe six years old, and his friend, a physician, Dr. Sheinfeld. They all lived upstairs, so my mother wanted to know if somebody of our acquaintances will open the door in the evening and they would know who it is. So he knocked at the door, the main door, and I went out dressed already to go away, before two, three nights. Not the same night that I went but a few nights before, and I opened the door. My mother dressed me up and I opened the door and he said, good evening, and he wanted to go up the steps. And then he stopped downstairs, and he said to my mother, Mrs. Felker, who is this who opened the door. So my mother knew that-

**INT:** It worked.

**SURLK:** Imagined that it worked. That he didn't know me. So if he didn't know me, he saw me twice a day, three times a day, then I could already go, because we had to board the train in

Chovorow, in the same city where I was born. There was no other choice. I had to board the train with this family. I remember it was very, very cold and I was dressed in a coat and I had-

**INT:** She took you into the train station, your mother?

**SURLK:** No, no.

**INT:** How did it happen?

**SURLK:** My mother probably took me to their house. I am not sure. I think that they came for me. They came for me, and from their house and we started-we came to the train. The train was a little bit late.

**INT:** But the people who came for you or dropped off were the Czechoslovakian woman?

**SURLK:** No, the Czechoslovakian lady and the Polish husband.

**INT:** They were the ones that came. Why do you think they would do such a thing? The Germans would kill them in a minute if they found out what they were doing? Why would they go out of their way to do such a thing?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Because they were friends. She owes him a lot of money and she saw they are handling this-

**SURLK:** When he came home-when he came home-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** And she didn't have a daughter. They have two sons. A woman has sympathy for a girl.

**SURLK:** Little things can do big, big deeds. Because my mother didn't-never asked her to pay something, to give her, she just said, Mrs. Stipolova, I hope your husband will come home and you will resume your life like before. She gave her a little chizuk, you know, strength. She supported her, and because of that-they are both...later on I heard that there was also-a choice between another girl and me. She told me, I think, Lola. There was-years later she told me there was another choice. The other one also didn't look Jewish. She had blond braids, blue eyes. Her husband had a shoe store. There was. Rivkala Harber. I remember like...she was maybe a year, a half a year older than I, maybe a half a year younger. Something like that. There was a choice that they talked about in the house. Maybe this, maybe that. And the gorel, you know, it fell on me.

**INT:** Do you know the other Jewish girl?

**SURLK:** Of course I knew her. I didn't know that-years later she told me that we considered you and this Regina.

**INT:** Do you remember what you took with you?

**SURLK:** Oh, I didn't take-

**INT:** Was there anything that you thought valuable or something that was old?

**SURLK:** No. I had maybe a little ring, an aquamarine ring, and I had a gold watch and I had a little bracelet. You know, like you buy for little girls. No. I had some money. I had money.

**INT:** You had some money.

**SURLK:** Yeah, sure. How the things came to me- (end of tape 3, side 2)

**INT:** ...get together again or when you would meet-do you remember what they said to you? Can you remember anything about what they said?

**SURLK:** I don't-I remember crying. That's all I remember.

**INT:** Yeah, when you got on the train, the people, that Czechoslovakian woman and the Polish-

**SURLK:** They felt they would not see me any more. Sure they did.

**INT:** You got on the train.

**SURLK:** We came to-

**INT:** Who were you with? Still them? Still that couple?

**SURLK:** Both.

**INT:** Both. And their children? Their two sons? Just them?

**SURLK:** They stayed with the grandmother.

**INT:** And you got on the train.

**SURLK:** And I got off the train and I came to this beautiful house that the other lady had and there I had a room for myself.

**INT:** This lady was Ukrainian or Polish?

**SURLK:** No, a Polish, whose husband, I told you, was an officer by Charkorsky's army in London, and she was left with the two children and there's an old mother. They had a beautiful house but, you know; when the Germans came they didn't have enough [asks Rabbi Leizerowski how to say something in English]-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They didn't have coal to warm up the house.

**SURLK:** To warm up the house, to heat the house, so we had electric heaters.

**INT:** Do you remember meeting her for the first time? Walking into the house?

**SURLK:** I met her. When I came in I met her.

**INT:** She was friendly? She wasn't friendly?

**SURLK:** I didn't think I will survive.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** (pause) you take a young girl; you put her in a stranger's house. This lady-these people knew me, so they knew a mother, a father, they knew my mishpocha. The other lady didn't know anybody. They brought her a young girl here, tzurus on her kup.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** (?)

**SURLK:** Don't know takeh. This was also a miracle from Heaven, thinking back.

**INT:** The Czechoslovakian lady left.

**SURLK:** No, no, no. They stayed with me overnight and then Lvov, the city, was under also-was under German siege. I mean it was very, very bad already, but this was a residential neighborhood. They didn't touch yet. So I stayed there from end of December. I stayed there from the end of December till May. I stayed about five months.

**INT:** What did the lady say to you when you first met her? Are you going to stay here, you're not? What did she say?

**SURLK:** Yes. She said to this Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova are very good friends of mine and they ask me I should-they weren't even such good friends, later I discovered. They asked me I should give you here a room and I know you are Jewish but I cannot call you by your name so I will call you Marisha, Mary is Marisha in Polish, and my children don't know about it. Only my old mother knows that you are Jewish so be careful. Don't talk about it.

**INT:** And what were you going to be, a cousin? What were you doing there?

**SURLK:** To them?

**INT:** Yeah. What were you doing there?

**SURLK:** She had two small children, two little girls. One was maybe four years old, one was three.

**INT:** How were they going to explain you being there, that's what I'm asking. You're a cousin? You're-what-who are you?

**SURLK:** Yeah, cousin. I don't remember.

**INT:** Did she say anything about money?

**SURLK:** I think they-yah. I paid her. We paid her.

**INT:** Your mother did or you did?

**SURLK:** No, my mother didn't know her.

**INT:** You paid her. Do you remember?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** She asked for money or what?

**SURLK:** Of course she did it for money.

**INT:** That's why she did it.

**SURLK:** She did it and they are friends and-she didn't do because she is-she was an idealist. No. She did it for money, but she was a fine person.

**INT:** She risked their life.

**SURLK:** She risked the life, but listen what later happened. When I was about six weeks there-

**INT:** What was it like being there, before you get to the story?

**SURLK:** Very good. Very good. Nice house. I had what to eat. I had a little oven in my room. I was sitting with their family together and I was-I stuck to myself because I am a loner like this is a nature, but very nice.

**INT:** Do you remember how you felt when you thought about the family? Your own family. Thinking. Did you cry, you didn't cry?

**SURLK:** They came very other week, this Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova came and they brought me money and they brought me also letters from my parents, so I knew what the situation is there. I heard that they are in the ghetto. They formed a ghetto. When I went away I was only one night in that ghetto. We didn't have where to sleep so me and my sister, we slept on the floor. It was very tiring because a whole day you had to shlep your belongings and it was in my aunt's house, a distant aunt. Everybody was sleeping. I didn't sleep, so my father went down and he asked me, are you sleeping, because he knew that the next day I am going away. So I said, no. So he said to my mother, you see, everybody is fast asleep but her. I didn't sleep. First of all I knew it's my last night here, and then I-the gravity of the situation was on my shoulders so big that I was resigned. I didn't want to fight.

**INT:** Did you argue why should you go?

**SURLK:** No. Go, I will go. If not, I will not go.

**INT:** Okay. So back to the house. You were getting letters.

**SURLK:** I was getting letters.

**INT:** What happened on Sunday when they had their day? Did they all go to church on Sunday?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** No?

**SURLK:** And after I was-after I was about a few weeks there, two, three weeks there, and maybe two weeks, maybe three weeks, I saw in the morning when I got up, one morning earlier, I saw the door opened, the fence door. Somebody opened the fence door and left the house. Nice person. Tall. A six footer. Young person in his thirties. So I was wondering where was he, what did he do here? I didn't see him. Big house. I didn't see what is he doing here, so I started to be suspicious already. See, I knew in my head-I was working. My head was working with a full deck, but physically I couldn't do a lot, so I started to think oh, what is he doing? I figured maybe he's a boy friend.

**INT:** You never saw him before?

**SURLK:** No. I started the next day and the day after that, and I see this person is leaving the house, and once I saw him come in. I didn't see him. So I knew something is cooking here and I was very suspicious, and then I started little by little to ask her, to put some questions there, here, there. I was afraid. She was a stranger to me. She could open the door and tell go. And the ground was very hot in that neighborhood already. They caught here a Jew and there a Jew and the German police pressed on the Piekarska-it was a fashionable neighborhood, pressed on that neighborhood, and I heard what's going on in the city. They told me. I saw a paper. So something told me that this is a Jew. So the question was what to do now-go back to my city, go back to my little city.

**INT:** You said this told you it was a Jew. You mean the tall person who was coming to the house was a Jew?

**SURLK:** Yeah, I felt he's a Jew.

**INT:** Why was this threatening to you?

**SURLK:** I don't know him. This person goes out and comes in. They will come looking for him and they will find me.

**INT:** Ah. Okay.

**SURLK:** This was what...

**INT:** Did you want to talk to him?

**SURLK:** No. I don't want-I didn't want to see his face, but why should I talk to him. I saw it's somebody special. I didn't have to-

**INT:** Who may have been living there.

**SURLK:** Who may have been living there. Maybe he left for a day or two, maybe not.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** Then I started to talk to her little by little and I found out that he's Jewish. Hugo Viller. I know the name today.

**INT:** Huger?

**SURLK:** Hugo. Hugo. It's a German name. Hugo. Viller.

**INT:** He was a Deutsch?

**SURLK:** German Jew. So I found out.

**INT:** How did he get there? Did she explain to you?

**SURLK:** Yah. Her father was a big millionaire in Germany. He had connections with a big factory; I think a fish factory or something. The people in that factory knew some of the people, knew the director, knew that he is Jewish, because he knew his father. The father probably and mother disappeared already. They were killed. And he gave him because he knew the family, he gave him a big position as an executive, and he worked there and he looked for an apartment or for a room, he found the room in that Polish house of the? And they pressed on him he should be [Yiddish words] they should transfer him. Transfer him to a big city. But in meanwhile, she fell in love with that boy. This lady with the two children whose husband was in London liked him very much. He was a very impressive person. A personality. A something. I tell you later how I knew him. I saw him only once. And she didn't want him to go away. So I figured like that. The ground is very, very dangerous. They-from the factory, some nice day they will come to look for him. Maybe they will take him away from the office or they will come to look for him, and in the meanwhile they will find me, so anyway, my passport was for 1942 and this was already 1943, so I knew I'm doomed anyway, so the question is what shall I do? Tell these people that I am-there's a Jew in the house or just ignore it.

**INT:** Tell which people?

**SURLK:** Stipolova. Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova who came to meet-to see me from my city.

**INT:** Oh, oh, oh. To say get me out of here.

**SURLK:** They will not be able to allow to stay with them, with him, because they would have the same mind. So there was a big question presented to me. What shall I do? So I decided in my little head not to say anything because it will break my parents, see? If they would bring me home, there would be no hope anymore. So I decided-so it means that I sacrificed my life because I didn't want to hurt them, so I decided to be quiet and I figured what I was going to be-I was going to...In the meanwhile, six weeks later, on February 13, 1943, they shot my parents. One of the children, one of the-my younger sister was sent away to that Yoseph. The priest didn't know. He took her. He put her in the same barn. He hid her. And my parents bought a truck from Ukrainian people and together with the other members of the family and maybe strangers they wanted to run away from my city to a bigger city, which is about an hour and a half away, because they have still a ghetto, and they declared our city Judenfrei. Then it was already Auschwitz in full operation. So when they-the Ukrainian who sold them the truck told the police. In the morning, when they boarded the truck with all the other people, they came, they took them out. They took them out. They send them to the police station-they took them to the police station, they kept them Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning, it was on a Thursday morning they shot them. They took them to the forest. Was already graves dug, and they shot them.

**INT:** And one sister was with them or no?

**SURLK:** The youngest.

**INT:** The youngest.

**SURLK:** I had an aunt with six children, my mother's sister with six...everybody went. That's it. So I remained in Lvov.

**INT:** Did you know this?

**SURLK:** No.

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

**SURLK:** They didn't tell me. For six weeks they covered up.

**INT:** So you didn't get letters.

**SURLK:** I said where is the letter, Mr. Stipolova? Oh, I didn't have time to go and then this. Where is the letters? The next week and two weeks again. They came rarely. Once I pressed them, pushed them to the wall and I said tell me the truth. They didn't say a thing, so I knew. When I knew, of course I cried and I went to that bedroom to wash my face later. He came out from another room, Mr. Weiler. He just confronted me and he said-then I saw. Then I saw him.

**INT:** A yiddishe ponim?

**SURLK:** Oh, yeah. What a personality. What a noble person. So broad shoulders, more than six feet tall. Black hair. And he said to me something. I was so scared that I didn't even know what



he said. I ran to the bedroom, washed my face, went back to the Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova. Two weeks later they came again and he said, this Mr. Stipolova said, you stop crying. Where will it lead to? You cannot have face like that. Stop crying. Everybody went. We will try-I don't have money. I didn't have too much money. I had to make a little jewelry. I don't have what my mother gave them or not because it was so very, very dumb. We thought that this connection is going to be like forever till we will be liberated. So she said, I think, Mrs. Stipolova, that you should be very grateful. You're in a warm house, you have what to eat, we come to you every other week, sometimes every week and we keep an eye on you and you should be very happy because it's burning all over Lvov. Jews went already, so many of them. It's only a little bit left, a handful. So I said to her...and you're safe here. We know you are safe here. I said to her, I'm not so safe like you think. Imagine, I didn't say all these months to them. What made me to keep quiet, keep it a secret?

**INT:** About this other Jew.

**SURLK:** Why? Because I knew what-my mother would never have allowed me to stay with another Jew in the house. She wanted to give me to goyim. So she said, so what happened, Marissa? What is it? So I said it's not so good, it's not so safe here. What is it? So I said to her, this gentleman-a gentleman lives here and I hear what she tells me, you know, like a puzzle, you put one word to the other, you know the whole situation. I knew already exactly what's going around. So she said, so what? So I said, he's a Jew. (Gasp) Oy. He's a Jew and he works? Oh, it's no good. It's no good. And he came in. He was talking to the mother and to her in the other room. He came in. She said to him, Vladzu, it's no good. She says, what is it? She said, a person lives here and he is Jewish. Oh, no. Now what shall we do.

**INT:** He didn't know you were a Yid?

**SURLK:** Who?

**INT:** The Deutschen Yid.

**SURLK:** Oh, Mr. Weiler. Of course he knew. Of course. Listen, she wouldn't have told him? Of course he knew? And why was I crying? Of course he knew. He knew everything. I think he wanted maybe to say something to me just to make me feel better but I didn't want, and he said he also didn't like, Mr. Stipolova, that I'm together with a Jew. No. So he said to her, oh, we have to think about something. No. She has to come out from here. Here we will stop. Six weeks later, they came for him. Everything was six weeks. Six weeks till my parents, six weeks I kept-till my parents from my running away till the death of my parents six weeks, six weeks later happened that they came for him, after I went. After they took me away from...six weeks later they came for him from the place. They went to the director; they pushed him to the wall. Probably somebody else knew, and he told them where he lives and they came to him and they ransacked the whole house. They took her to Auschwitz.

**INT:** The lady who owned the house.

**SURLK:** Him they shot. They took him away. He never came back. Who knows what how they tortured him. Her they took to Auschwitz. They put-they had probably separate-

**INT:** What happened to her?

**SURLK:** She's alive. They put her in a bunk with Reds. She had eaten up the whole forehead. I didn't see her later. I didn't want to see her. She paid for this.

**INT:** Did you think in some way she harmed you?

**SURLK:** No. No. She harmed me? She kept me. [Tells Rabbi Leizerowski that he asks if Mrs. Lischiska harmed her] No. She gave me shelter. She wanted to keep me further on even. I ran away. They took me out from there.

**INT:** They came and told you that you had to go someplace-

**SURLK:** She was in Auschwitz. [Yiddish words]

**INT:** They took you somewhere else.

**SURLK:** They took me...I tell you; this is a story for itself. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Today is November 17 and I'm continuing with SurLK. We left off talking about you deciding to leave the house that you were in in Lvov. I wanted to ask you. How long did you stay in the house with the lady?

**SURLK:** I stayed from the end of December 1942, February 13, 1943 they shot my parents, till May 1943. December '42, end of December, like the Xmas time, till May 1943.

**INT:** Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about what you did during the day during that time?

**SURLK:** Mostly I read.

**INT:** Where did you find books?

**SURLK:** Oh, they had libraries. In the house they had a big library. I didn't do a thing.

**INT:** And how about in talking with the lady there?

**SURLK:** With her mother. With the lady during the day, she went away. She didn't work. I don't recall. But she had a sister, she had friends, she had relatives.

**INT:** Did they come to the house?

**SURLK:** No. No. Only her sister knew about me. That's all.

**INT:** Were you worried about who she would tell?

**SURLK:** Yah. Yah.

**INT:** Did you talk to her about that?

**SURLK:** To the Mrs. Lischiska, to the lady that I was at. Yah, I was. She said she's very reliable, her sister, her younger sister. She was married. She's very reliable and I shouldn't be afraid. The whole thing was very, very shaky.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** In those times, if somebody knew, one person knew, it was okay, but if two people knew, this was not reliable anymore. The security was in danger.

**INT:** During that period of time you had Shabbosim, for instance. What did you do when it came to Shabbos?

**SURLK:** Shabbos? Same thing that every day. Same thing. I, first of all with food was a problem because they are goyim, so I didn't eat anything forbidden. I had eggs. I had vegetables. I had crackers, like dry cookies, you know. Fruit. Milk. I didn't eat meat.

**INT:** Did you know if anyone was paying her for the food that you were eating?

**SURLK:** Yes, of course. My parents paid. I don't remember exactly, but these people who came to visit me every other week, the Stipolovas, who took the responsibility of me, they brought me money also.

**INT:** And you gave it to the lady?

**SURLK:** Yah. Yah. I gave it or they gave it, but probably they gave it, these people gave it, because they didn't want me in between. I knew that they gave and I knew when they gave.

**INT:** Do you know whether or not the lady did it for the money or not?

**SURLK:** Of course she did it for the money. She did it for the money and she was also inclined to do a good thing. I mean you can't take away her good sort of her-

**INT:** The lady you lived with we're talking about.

**SURLK:** Yes. Yes. She must have been a good person.

**INT:** Her name was what again?

**SURLK:** Her name was Danuta, it's like Danielle, Leschinska. It's a real Polish nobility name.

**INT:** And there were children in the house also?

**SURLK:** Yah. Two girls.

**INT:** And what were their names?

**SURLK:** Their names? I don't remember.

**INT:** What did you have to do with them?

**SURLK:** Nothing. They went-I think the older one went to school and the younger one maybe also was in school already. Maybe she was about six, seven years old, and I tried not to talk too much. I try not to be involved in conversations, and I tried to stay away they shouldn't ask me questions.

**INT:** Did you eat with them?

**SURLK:** Eat? No. No. I knew where the kitchen is. I went in. I took-I don't remember if I ever ate, believe me. Just survive.

**INT:** Now from February to the time you left-

**SURLK:** When I discovered that February my parents were shot, six weeks before, I discovered already in January that there is somebody in that house.

**INT:** Yes, you mentioned the fellow.

**SURLK:** I think in January, but it was only a suspicion, so I tried to spy on him, to look who goes out, when the fence opened. It was like an iron, beautiful black fence. When it closed. And I saw him a few times. He was also many times away for two, three days on business, and then I saw him again and I saw him again and again. Then I was already convinced that he is staying here, and I knew he's Jewish. You didn't have to have a lot of knowledge. You smelled that-

**INT:** And he was staying there because why? (End of tape 4, side 1)

**SURLK:** A goy was the director of the store in Lvov, who had a branch. And he took him under his wing.

**INT:** Was she doing it for money also or another reason?

**SURLK:** It was another reason. The money wasn't enough. I mean she didn't do that for profit with him.

**INT:** With him.

**SURLK:** Yah. She probably loved him. That's what I suspect of her. And why he didn't-they wanted to transfer him to a different place. The director saw it's not so good. He should go to Germany. He would have survived.

**INT:** Your parents only survived until February, as you said.

**SURLK:** 1943.

**INT:** 1943.

**SURLK:** The 13th of February.

**INT:** And yet she kept you after that.

**SURLK:** Yes. They probably must have had money, and I probably had also money. I stayed by her-as long as I stayed there it was paid.

**INT:** Do you remember exactly-and you described it last time, how you found out that your mother and father were killed?

**SURLK:** How I found out? They used to bring me every other week when they came a little note that everything was all right. A little paper. Not too much mentioned about the situation, nothing. Just everything is all right, my father's signature, and that was enough for me, but after February, I didn't get any more signatures, I didn't get any more little papers notifying me that he's all right, so after three, four weeks-two, three weeks, I started to be suspicious, and then a month went by I already knew something is cooking, so I asked them again and again and they told me that it's hard to get into the ghetto. It's very hard. And no telephone connection. They can't get the signature. So once I confronted them. February. February-the other half of February-it was already March. March went by and it was in April. That's six weeks after they shot them. I confronted them. I said, I demand the truth. I want to know what happened to them. Why don't I get my father's little letters? They didn't answer. Something happened? No answer. So I knew. I started to cry.

**INT:** But they didn't tell you?

**SURLK:** And this is when I went to the bedroom to wash my face, to the sink to wash my face, because I didn't want the children, the two girls should notice, and that's when I saw this Hugo Weiler that I told you. I came out from the room and he saw me in such a distress. I can't remember if he said something. I think he said something. It's okay or something like I shouldn't make such a big deal out of it because it happens every day here, but I just turned my face to the side, pretending not to see him, and I kept it a secret later on.

**INT:** About what happened.

**SURLK:** About this person that is in the house. It was very clever, but something made me tell them because they tried to comfort, after I had this (pause) news about my-about the death of my parents and my sister, my uncles and my cousins, they tried to comfort me, so what did they tell me? You live in a nice house. It's warm. It's clean. You have what to eat. You have your own room. You should be grateful, except for what happened. And he said it's very, very bad all over. It seems that nobody will survive, one in a million they told me, and you are the lucky one. So what I wanted to live, you know. I saw all this terrible churban, and I still wanted to live. I don't know. Maybe everybody enough has that feeling. And they told me-[talks to someone in Yiddish]. So when they told me that I live in such a good-in a comfortable house and have

everything, I told her, not him. I said, it's not so rosy the way you see it. There are obstacles here also. "What is the matter? Tell me. I said, I'm afraid here also to stay. Why? They are not good to you? You don't have enough food? You don't...they do something? They ask you?" No, but there is somebody also in that house living. "Who is living here? We don't see anybody?" I said, there is a person who goes in the morning and comes in the evening. I don't know what's what. I don't know his name. To me it seems like he's Jewish. "Oh." She ran in right away to the other room. She told her husband. She said, "Vladzu, it's not good here." Why? "We must take her away. It's not good here." He said, why, and she was a very clever, intelligent person and she said to him that I said also, because we talked about it, in case they will come to look for him they will find her. Let's run away from here. Oh, then it's a different story. Okay. Let's go home. Let's think what we can do. Let's make a plan what to do. They came back with the plan.

**INT:** How much later?

**SURLK:** Not long. A few days. They came back with a plan.

**INT:** I wanted to ask you. After you found out that your parents and the whole mishpocha were killed, did it change you in any way? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** Like you take a stick and beat a stone, you know. Can you get emotions out of a stone? We were all so resigned and we knew after 1941 till 1943, we knew already and we saw so many things what happened to our nation, what's happening, that of course I cried. Of course. I cried a long time. Cried a nice few weeks. I cried day and night. I'm a big crier, as it is. I express my pain, my sadness, in crying. Some people keep it like bottled up in themselves. They are worse than the ones who cry. I cried a lot, and this came out of my system slowly, but I also had one sister in another place.

**INT:** Did you know that then?

**SURLK:** I knew.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** I knew because they knew, the people, the Stipolovas, the people from my town that gave me away to Lemberg, to Lvov, knew, so I knew that one of my sisters is still in danger, but like I said, with Yoseph, I believed in him like you believe in somebody very good, very beautiful, very nice, very honest. I believed that he is not going to do any harm to her.

**INT:** And your sister was with her.

**SURLK:** My middle sister was with him.

**INT:** With him.

**SURLK:** With him. My parents somehow got the news. No. My parents, when they bought this truck, my mother was a very clever person. She didn't want them all to go, my father, my two sisters. She knew I am hidden. She wanted to hide my other sister, because she never believed

that the family could survive, so she wanted to rescue at least one, two of the family, so she went to that Yoseph and the priest didn't know about it, and she talked to him. How it happened, I wasn't there. And she begged him he should hide her. So he hid her in the stable, and here comes a big, big dilemma of my sister. That's what the rabbi always said, that it's amazing how we, as youth, were trained and taught. She was afraid of him. She didn't know him so well. We were only children then.

**INT:** How old was she?

**SURLK:** A teenager, but she was afraid that he might do something to her. So she was reluctant to go, but she went because my mother said that's the way it should be. Maybe one of us will survive besides me. So she said, go to Yoseph. I talked to him. He is going to...and then we are already in the other place, with the truck, when we arrive, we will send for you, you should come to us. So it was a temporary...but as I told you before, the small children and the teenagers and the old children, and the older children, they knew already. They were afraid of the next step. She probably thought who knows if my parents survived? Who knows if they reached their destination? Who knows if they will be able to get me to their place? But she went. And here comes the big dilemma, because I am convinced today and I was convinced then that she would have survived and he would have been so nice to her, as long as it could be, because later, after I came out and I talked to Yoseph, he was very, very sad. He said, if only she would listen to me and have faith in me and stayed in the barn.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** What happened? He didn't have any choice after that. After she didn't want to stay and she wanted to go to a bigger town where I had an uncle still, my father's brother who went away with his two children. He had three. He lost one.

**INT:** How long did she stay with Yoseph?

**SURLK:** She must have stayed a few weeks.

**INT:** A few weeks.

**SURLK:** That's what I figure out, because they shot them later. Not in our town, but in Stree, and Stree is a big city.

**INT:** Now she-when she left, she thought your parents were still alive or she knew-

**SURLK:** No, she knew already that they are dead. She knew. But she had only one hope, that my uncle is in Stree. It was only-you prolonged it for the time being. Who knows what miracle could come? We don't know. We counted every day a miracle. Miracle never came.

**INT:** What did she do?

**SURLK:** Yoseph went to the priest and told him that she is hidden in the barn, and he said, the priest said, but we must get her out because...so they talked to her and she says that she has an uncle in Stree.

**INT:** Why did the priest say we must get her out?

**SURLK:** Because it was already Judenfrei. The city didn't have any Jews. He couldn't. It was a big danger for him also. It was dangerous. Can you imagine if they would find in his house a Jewish girl? They would shot him. Maybe not shot him but to Auschwitz. That's the best that they could do for him. So one morning, on one nice morning, later a few days, he arranged for her to be taken to Stree. Who did that, I don't know. Maybe I knew. Maybe this person told me, I don't remember, but she went to my uncle.

**INT:** And this was something she wanted to do, not that he wanted to do?

**SURLK:** No, he wanted to hide her they shouldn't even know. The priest would have never known, and can you imagine, from February, from February, after February till-it's another few months. No, it's not another few months. Excuse me. This was the whole 1943 till 1944. It was a long time. It was a year and about five months, six months, a year and a half. 1943.

**INT:** You're talking about until liberation.

**SURLK:** Until liberation. She could have stayed there.

**INT:** Joseph would not have told the priest is what you're saying, if she wouldn't have bothered him?

**SURLK:** No. She said to Joseph that she doesn't want to stay, she wants to go, and he was very, very-she was afraid maybe that he'll want her to convert, you know, maybe he will want to marry her. Who knows? But such a fine fellow, you know. I'm so sorry that she didn't stay.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** I knew that. How do I know exactly what? Because this Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova-first I must finish with Lvov, what happened to me in Lvov, and then I will come back to my sister.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** When they saw that the place is not for me, they said to me we must think of a plan, like I mentioned previously, and they went home. A few days they came back with a plan. He was like a-(MRS. L tells Berel to say hello). He was like a director of a railroad station. Let's say Philadelphia, in that city, where I was born, where I lived, where they had taken me in 1942 to Lemberg, to even a bigger city like New York. He wrote a little form out that he would prefer to be a director of a smaller station in Camden, and he probably had protectia, because they signed it for him. Why shouldn't you be in Philadelphia but in Camden? And in one day they took only the few necessary things and they moved to Camden. And then they came to me and they said-she said, my husband has a transfer to Camden. For instance, it was called [Polish name]. This is



a name where they got the transition to. From Chovorow, from my city. And we are going to take you now and we are going to [Polish name of town to where he was transferred] and we are going to live there. Meshugana plan. There was no other choice. What will they do with me?

**INT:** They were going to change their whole life for you?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** They did. I don't know. But I was an exception. You could look in Poland, in Germany, all over, you would find cases like my case maybe ten. Either a boyfriend rescued a girlfriend, a girlfriend rescued a boyfriend, but without any reason, with two small children, a happy couple should break their life just for me, because this was her desire to rescue somebody. She couldn't see the suffering. She couldn't see the destruction. She was so-she was from Czechoslovakia, born in Prague. Prague is different than Poland. Czechoslovakia was different than Poland. They had very fine people, noble people. They didn't do that to Jews what the Polish did.

**INT:** Was he a Pole?

**SURLK:** He was a Pole. Without her I wouldn't survive. Absolutely not.

**INT:** What was his name?

**SURLK:** His name was Vladislov Stypula, S-T-Y-P-U-L-A.

**INT:** And the two childrens' names were?

**SURLK:** Two children were-one was also Vladislov, like they have father and son, senior or junior, but they called him junior, whom I am staying in contact with. The younger one was Romuald, R-O-M-U-A-L-D. They called him like a nickname Romish. They came and they said, get dressed. We are going now to take you in the afternoon to Camden. I'm giving you just an example Camden because you should understand.

**INT:** Yes. How far was it from where you were?

**SURLK:** One station from Philadelphia-Camden. This was Chovorow, and from [Polish name of place]. One stop.

**INT:** Okay. Now, you at the time were not in Chovorow.

**SURLK:** I was in Lvov.

**INT:** You were in Lvov.

**SURLK:** By this family, Leschinskas.

**INT:** Yes. So how far from-

**SURLK:** It's not the question. It now comes the big, big question. How to take me to Camden? I must pass Philadelphians. Our city was in Philadelphia. Our city was a small town. Everybody knew me. I cannot go to Camden. I have to go to New York. From New York I have to go to Philadelphia and stop one stop before Philadelphia, Camden, we must leave the train. My passport needed a renewal, because it was only good in December, 1942. This was May 1943.

**INT:** This passport had your real name on it?

**SURLK:** No. Somehow I got a birth certificate. That's why my birth certificate, my real birth is not-is famished (mixed up) with the other one.

**INT:** How did you do that? How did you manage that?

**SURLK:** I don't remember. I don't know. I don't know. Probably my mother got it from like City Hall.

**INT:** It had a different name on it.

**SURLK:** Because she was...of course it was a different name. It was like-it was a bought thing. She was with me in one class. She was a little maybe older a few months, so I had her name and I had my photo and I had a passport.

**INT:** But it was expired.

**SURLK:** Expired. How do we go? She said we are in the hands of our Lord. Whatever will happen will happen, but you should know, if they take you away, I go with you, and I said, you have a husband, you have two children. You can't do that. No. So I got dressed. There was probably a preparation to it, that they came maybe a day or two later. I got dressed. I prepared myself to go, washed up, dressed nicely, and we went to the station. We passed-

**INT:** Do you remember saying goodbye to the people you lived with?

**SURLK:** Yah. Very, very cordial, but nothing emotional.

**INT:** Did you feel-

**SURLK:** I didn't have anything with them. I only stayed a few months. I was afraid there. Her sister knew. They-the children probably were suspicious, even they didn't understand. I had a Jew in my house. I wasn't comfortable there. I was under constant worry what will happen, so I was glad when I came out of the house.

**INT:** How did they take you from the house, in a car?

**SURLK:** No, I don't remember exactly. We probably went by a trolley car to the station. We bought a ticket to [Polish name of place].

**INT:** Do you remember when you went out looking around? After all, now you were out.

**SURLK:** No, I mean I was in a house. I looked out all the time. I wasn't hidden.

**INT:** You saw German soldiers?

**SURLK:** No, this I didn't see because this was a very residential, fine neighborhood.

**INT:** That's what I mean, yeah.

**SURLK:** So they didn't. After I left, a week, two later, it started to go one after the other, houses. They found out Jewish people lived by goyim and they found out (?) was there. They started-you know, and all these in a war, in bad times, proletariat goes. Poor people go. And after that they start to the upper class, because they know that they will not run away.

**INT:** So you were going with them?

**SURLK:** So we went to the station. We bought three tickets and we went through a big town. We had to change trains only once. We came from Lvov to Tarnapol. Tarnapol was a big, big junction. We had to change trains, and we had about an hour to the other train, so the question is what will we do in the meanwhile? Oh, we will go to a coffee shop. We will buy a coffee. We sit down, we will talk. We will go for a walk. And we bought the tickets and we came to Tarnapol, to the big city, and we had to change trains. The minute we came down the train that was running from for instance Philadelphia, from Lvov, to Tarnapol, there was a big line of passengers who had to show their passports, passports or (tape shuts off)...talk about war, you talk about the front. We were close to the Russian front. Everybody had to be checked.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** You didn't have any rights.

**SURLK:** Animals had bigger rights than we.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Any right what was, we are excepted. We don't have right. We cannot walk on the pavement.

**INT:** Did the Poles need papers too?

**SURLK:** Everybody had something. That was a nothing. You went to the City Hall, they put a stamp and you were all right, but I didn't. My passport was 1942, December 31, 1942, and this was May, May '43. I didn't have a thing.

**INT:** So what?

**SURLK:** And they took away mostly a lot of Jewish girls, ladies, wore like little black hats with these veils, like they are mourning, so this was out and they took them. They right away knew. They didn't have to ask. You were so [Yiddish word], you were so scared to death, so they

looked you in the eye they knew right away. They had experts. Nisht, papa? Experts who knew who is Jewish.

**INT:** Did you seem to yourself afraid?

**SURLK:** Oh, what's the question.

**INT:** Or were you shtarker (stronger)?

**SURLK:** What kind of shtarker? I didn't have a-(end of tape 4, side 2) A miracle happened, takeh. A miracle. What was the miracle? There was a big line, a line, endless line. They saw themselves, the German soldiers with these big helmets and bayonets, took away a lot of people, you know. Goyim. They let them later on go, but they didn't have maybe the papers. Left, right, left, right, left, right. When it came to me and she, this lady with her husband, were behind me, and she just [Yiddish word] in the back. She said, you should know that I go with you. I said, don't you dare, because I was afraid. So maybe five, six, seven, eight people before me he said, Laus, quick, laus, laus, laus. You have a passport, good. You have a passport, good. You have a passport. He didn't have the time to look the passport expired in 1942. He didn't have, because he saw himself standing here for twenty-four hours, so many hundreds of people. If you check. In the beginning it was okay, but when he saw that there are-an hour passed, two hours passed. He wanted to get rid of his duties. Laus, laus, laus, laus, laus. Passports? Laus.

**INT:** So you went by.

**SURLK:** Went by and she went by and he went by and we went by maybe about five-five steps farther, ten steps farther, she just touched my coat and she said, thank G-d we have you again. She was speechless. She was so [Yiddish word]. And then he said to her, don't make any meanness. Don't make any faces. Just pretend, smile to her, he said. Mostly she was...and then we went into a coffee shop. We bought a coffee and we sat there. By the time we finished our coffee we had to board the other train. We boarded the other train. We left in Camden. We left in Camden. We went to the apartment, and then she fell on the floor and she-oh, my gosh. She was crying. She was so osgemutchered from a whole day, you know, and her nerves were so bad.

**INT:** How about yours?

**SURLK:** No. I was stoic. (Laughter) I tried to keep myself. Of course, you want to feel-to know how I felt? I felt very good. What's the question? Leaving off here, I will take you back to my sister. My sister would have survived, like I mentioned a few times, if she would have stayed with Joseph, and like I said the rabbi, here comes the big moral question, why she didn't stay? She was afraid that he would convert her maybe. My sister Perel, Pepa, why didn't she stay with this Joseph? Because she was afraid he might convert her. She was afraid that he will marry her that she will have to be his girlfriend? Ich vais what thoughts went through her kup (head)? I don't know, but this was one of the reasons the people told me. When they took her to Stree with somebody that the priest arranged, to my uncle, my father's surviving brother whose wife came from that city Stree, with two children, so there still was a ghetto there with a few Jews. Not a few, a few thousand, and Mr. and Mrs. Stypula went to see her, and they started to plan how to bring her to be with me. I was already in [Polish name of town], in [name of town], like Camden.

We wouldn't have survived, both. It's no question. Two is different than one. One you can calculate where to put her, two is a problem. They went to see her, and he said to her, we want to take you to your sister. Maybe we will be able to-I don't know what she said yes or no. I can imagine how she felt. And he said, let us work out a plan.

**INT:** Where is she now that he is-

**SURLK:** In Stree.

**INT:** With the uncle?

**SURLK:** Mm-hm.

**INT:** She made it there.

**SURLK:** Yah, she made it there. Somebody went to Stree and she got dressed and they took her.

**INT:** Okay. She was in the ghetto.

**SURLK:** And dressed I mean usguputzed, you know, like nicely dressed. She was in the ghetto, and by the time they started to work out a plan and by the time they went to see her again, it required a few visits, was already Judenfrei.

**INT:** They took all the Jews from-

**SURLK:** Oh. Where I don't know. I don't even want to know. Like I told you, they took away from our city and for forty-five years I didn't want to know. For fifty years I didn't know, want to know where they took them, till a lady a few weeks ago told me that Belzec. The lady who jumped from the train told me where they took them.

**INT:** Now when did you find out about what happened?

**SURLK:** When the two weeks passed and they came back and they said they have another plan and they didn't go and I knew.

**INT:** How did you react to that?

**SURLK:** Gornisht. Nothing. Nothing. You didn't have-all emotions were dead already. So now I'm the only one of the whole family.

**INT:** Did that change you in any way, knowing you were the last one left?

**SURLK:** No. I was very much afraid. I don't know. Maybe everybody was afraid, but I was so much afraid of shooting. I don't know why.

**INT:** Did you think you were going to survive or not, at this point?

**SURLK:** Yah. Oh yeah. I wanted to survive. Of course I wanted.

**INT:** Were you optimistic though about it or pessimistic?

**SURLK:** No. I had like an intuition that told me that-I know in all these “es tzorus” (times of trouble), like they say, in the moments of desperation, you have an intuition, you know. They call it a [Germans word] in German. You have it. I knew that I will survive. It was very hard, but I knew.

**INT:** Why you?

**SURLK:** I don’t know. What was I, a chosen person to survive? What was I better than them? I don’t know. It’s not in my merit anyway.

**INT:** Did you think about it?

**SURLK:** Sure. I always think about it, even now.

**INT:** And the answer?

**SURLK:** We don’t know many things. We don’t know the ways of Hashem, why he does it. It’s not given to us to know.

**INT:** Where was your relationship with Hashem now, up until now?

**SURLK:** I was a believer. I was a believer. I’m a very strong believer. I’m such a believer. I don’t know. I could be compared to the most faithful people in the world. I’m such a believer. If not for the belief, I wouldn’t be able to survive. (Repeats the question and answer to Rabbi Leizerowski.)

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Only because-

**SURLK:** Only because.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** ...the strong belief.

**SURLK:** I often ask the rabbi, with all the problems that he have, visible problems, invisible that he has problems, I said, I can’t imagine how I can go on, so he says always, when I am in desperation, depressed, he says, you’re such a believer. You’re such a frummer. How come you ask me these questions. I don’t know. I don’t know the answers. (Repeats this to Rabbi Leizerowski in Yiddish) He always says, ask him. Ich veis nisht. (I don’t know). Zis emes. (It’s true)

**INT:** But the death of your parents and sisters?

**SURLK:** Three quarters of the city was gone. Look at my mother’s belief. She was a believer, but I was optimistic and she was pessimistic, and I knew more than her, because when I saw in this little office what went on, I saw the anti-Semitism when I worked in Chovorow that I

mentioned, typing German. I probably had a merit. You know what I consider my biggest thing, my merit? It's my zchus to survive. Because when I went in the morning through these little gardens, I met Jewish people, and they knew that I am in this cooperative, that I see them and I wasn't down. They knew that, that I observe them. Maybe I can give them something that makes them think it will be better, like hope, and it was bad, bad, and I knew it's bad, and they always said-ask me-Chayala was my name. Chayala, what do you see there? I remember meeting a Mrs. Goldschmidt. They lost two children. And she says to me, not in the war-before the war they lost these children. And she said to me, what is happening? What is going to become of us? And I said, Mrs. Goldschmidt, it's such a wonderful thing. I hear that the front is coming closer and closer and I hear that they have such a mapalah (defeat) in Russia and it's only a matter of days, of weeks, that we will survive. I see she always looked at me and she said, oh, mein kind, you should not know from bad things in your life. You give me such hope. And then I came home, I also said good things. And my mother said, no. Nothing good will come out. By the time we will be liberated, none of us will survive, and I was antagonistic with my mother from before, like relationship was estranged, so I said, why are you looking like a crow, like these black birds? Why do you say only these bad besuros (tidings), these bad news? Can't you see that a miracle can happen? She didn't believe. She knew we are doomed. She was a realistic person. She said look, it happened in Lvov. It happened in Stanislov. It happened in Stree. It happens in Stanislov, in a town...why will not happen? Why will it not happen here? I said we will be an exception. [Yiddish words]. It didn't have any basis. But I told them, everybody I told a good word, and in those times, when people are [Yiddish word], when they are desperate and isolated from the world, no radio, no newspapers, nothing, it means a lot. So I always count these berachos to my merit and to an act of saying something.

**INT:** Did you know it wasn't true, that the Russians weren't-

**SURLK:** Of course I knew it wasn't true. I worked with these own enemies in one place. I saw there-each goy had his own Moishke, like they say. They say, Moshe, you are good, but the rest of you are not good. They told me, you're a nice girl. You don't look Jewish. You talk a beautiful language. You speak German. You speak Polish. You're an intelligent person. You know what you mean. We like you but we don't like.

**INT:** Then why did-why did you make up those maaselich (stories)?

**SURLK:** Because I wanted-I made up the maaselich because I knew-they say in Yiddish [Yiddish words]. You give them a little thread to hold on. Everything is lost, so must we go to our grave-efshar, maybe in the last minute...Look. I knew a person, a professor, a math professor, who was a big, big in his field, a big expert in Stanislav. I knew him after the war, who was shot, in the grave. He wasn't properly shot. They didn't shoot-they shot at random. And he was on the top of that. And at night, when the night fell, he came out, crawled out of the grave. He was alive.

**INT:** Where did you see him?

**SURLK:** I met him after the liberation. A young person, thirty-some years old. I met him on the street. He was a main bookkeeper in Stanislav, on the street, and I went into a store and he said

to me, excuse me. I had these braids around my head and I didn't look Jewish. And he said to me, he came out and he said to me, excuse me, are you Jewish? It was after the liberation, of course. So I said to him-I didn't know him. I said, why do you have to know that? And I-

**INT:** He didn't look like a Jew to you?

**SURLK:** No and yes. No and yes. He was nicely dressed. He (?) like an acquaintance used to come to our city, and then in the evening he started to look up people, to find out if there is a Jewish girl amongst them who looked like-described me and they said, we know who it is and they brought him where I stayed with the two girls. One lady still survived. And he opened the door and he said to me, are you Jewish? So I said yes. And now I saw in the street...(tape shuts)

**INT:** This optimism that you had, were you like that as a child?

**SURLK:** Yah. I'm like it today also. I like it today. I cry a lot when I have aggravation. I cry a lot. I don't sleep well. I look out of the window, but somewhere, somewhere in the corner of that horizon I see a light. They say in English you see a light in the tunnel. I see always a light. Hashem will help. Things are getting-getting worse. We are getting older. It's very hard for us to take aging, the rabbi especially. He's an active person. And for me even worse. They say I need a psychiatrist. I really do. I really do. It's my biggest obstacle.

**INT:** Because why?

**SURLK:** Because I see myself aging and I did not imagine something should happen to me. So you'll stay forever young? So the rabbi says, they will tell you you look younger ten years? (Yiddish words) You're afraid of that.

**INT:** Of what age will do?

**SURLK:** Yah. Something aches me. Oh, maybe I will not see so well. Maybe I will not be able to move around so well. No, it shouldn't happen to me. I slow down. I can't take it. I used to run down these steps, zoom down. Now I said, oh, I have to hold onto a bannister. The rabbi says, [in Yiddish-I'm scared you're getting older]. It's the biggest thing that he can tell me.

**INT:** Okay. So we were back at the house, in the little town.

**SURLK:** This also will be on the tape, this maaselah?

**INT:** Yeah.

**SURLK:** Oy vey. Everybody will know my emotional approach.

**INT:** Go ahead. You're in the little town.

**SURLK:** Okay. How long are you going to keep me here? It's an hour now.

**INT:** Whenever you feel you want to stop.



**SURLK:** We will stop soon. My sister is already shot in Stree. I'm staying in the little town, [name of town]. It was a big problem, because the apartment was in the building of the station. They couldn't find anything. They didn't want to go to a village. In case somebody comes up, what do you do?

**INT:** Who were you supposed to be in relation to the mishpocha (family)?

**SURLK:** We had only one excuse. We had an excuse what to tell the children. That was our excuse. That was our problem. Anybody else out of my-of our house would be a big danger.

**INT:** But who would they tell them you would be?

**SURLK:** Oh, I am a cousin, a tchtcha, they call it, aunt. Aunt Maryisa.

**INT:** I see. And the children were how old, their children?

**SURLK:** Nine and four.

**INT:** And what did they tell them?

**SURLK:** They told them that this is our Aunt Maryisa, and the Germans, the soldiers, want to take her away to work, to the camp. They want everybody to work and she cannot work. She cannot do hard work. So we have to keep her here till it passes.

**INT:** They didn't recognize you from the past?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** I didn't see the children so many times. No.

**INT:** So you were living in this-

**SURLK:** So I was living in this apartment on the top of the building, on the second floor of the building, and the problem is if somebody would come in, where do I come here? Where do I stand? So the plan was to put-in Europe they have closets, big closets. Sometimes maybe in Israel, Eretz Yisroel, you see them. Shafers, the closet. Today they have built in closets, but if you go to an apartment that was built ten years, fifteen years ago, you don't have that. You have a big, big closet, built, that stands in the middle of the room, in the side of the room, in the corner of the room. This is called a shafer, a closet, and in Europe you didn't have sliding doors and built-in closets. I'm sure you didn't have that here either years ago. It just comes with the modern times. Maybe in Poland they had that too if they built a new house. So we had a closet, not such enormous like in Eretz Yisroel but smaller ones. One's for clothes. One shafer was for linen and lingerie and underwear and socks, and we put one shafer, one closet, we put in the corner at the triangle, like that. This is the shafer. The space is empty.

**INT:** It filled the triangle.

**SURLK:** Not filled. The triangle must have been open.

**INT:** In the corner.

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** Oh, it was open.

**SURLK:** In my bedroom I show it to you. The triangle is open, but the shafer is in the front, so we pushed away the shafer, the closet, I went into that triangle, I filled out the triangle. I had a little, little benkeleh, a little stool, and I was sitting there.

**INT:** This would be in times of danger.

**SURLK:** Danger.

**INT:** Okay. How many times did you have to go?

**SURLK:** Many times.

**INT:** What had happened? (Phone rings, tape shuts) What was life like in that apartment?

**SURLK:** Good.

**INT:** Did you have your own room?

**SURLK:** No. We had two bedrooms, I think two bedrooms, and we had a kitchen and a bathroom, and they left the house there, in my city. His mother was-his mother was there in that house. Unbelievable. Unbelievable.

**INT:** Did his mother know?

**SURLK:** Yah. They later brought her here for a short while, a few weeks, and she died in this apartment. She had pneumonia and died.

**INT:** What was it like living? What did you do every day?

**SURLK:** I didn't do a thing. I didn't do a thing. I am thinking how long I stayed-how long we stayed there.

**INT:** You were there from May of '43-

**SURLK:** May '43. A year. A year.

**INT:** What did you do?

**SURLK:** How I looked, my gosh. I wore a little-a little housecoat, a warm housecoat. Even if you don't move you feel very cold, even when it's very warm outside. When you sit under that closet, you are so cold. Later I will tell you how I felt cold. Here I...very careful.

**INT:** In what ways?

**SURLK:** Somebody shouldn't see you. Somebody shouldn't look up the window and see somebody, a strange person. Somebody shouldn't look in. You never knew what's what. I looked out and I saw a cat, I remember, a little cat, and I said, Hashem, why am I not a cat? I can stroll just carefree, and then I saw a dog and I said, how I envy that dog. And this lady said, a dog? Everybody screams at him. Oh, I would like to be a dog, a cat, a dog, a faygaleh (bird). Free. Free. I couldn't believe that you could walk the street like a free person. Everything was forbidden for us. Oh vey is mir. You make my memories stir up in such a way that maybe that's why I'm so sick the last week. When you left I was so sick, a whole day.

**INT:** What did you do all day there in that apartment?

**SURLK:** I read. Mostly I read. Here I had books, I had already papers. They brought newspapers, books, and she was-she didn't work. We could talk quietly, very quietly. We could talk. The children were in the house.

**INT:** What kind of person was she like?

**SURLK:** She was very intelligent, very fine, with such an aidele punim, such a noble face, such a good-hearted person with so many good words. She was my comfort. She said, you will survive. You will see. And I said, what's the reason of surviving? Whom will I have? I will be an orphan? I didn't talk much.

**INT:** Was she a religious person?

**SURLK:** She believed in G-d. She crossed herself. But not so much.

**INT:** Did she go to church on Sunday?

**SURLK:** Yes and no. They celebrated their Xmas, their Easter. They made a Christmas tree. They made-(SurLK asks Rabbi Leizerowski who is on the phone-tape shuts) (End of tape 5, side 1)

**INT:** ...and I'm continuing with SurLK. My name is Norman Garfield, and we are talking about picking up on the place over the railroad station. Can you say the name of the village where this railroad station.

**SURLK:** Yeah, [name of place]

**INT:** And when did you come there? What month and what year?

**SURLK:** I came May, middle of May, 1943.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** And I stayed till maybe April.

**INT:** Of what year?

**SURLK:** 1944.

**INT:** Okay. So you were almost a year.

**SURLK:** Almost a year.

**INT:** Okay. Can you describe what that year was like?

**SURLK:** It was terrible, because in Lemberg I was not in hiding. I didn't hide because the Germans come in and out. I was sitting in the house and bemoaning my mazal, but here it was a different problem that presented itself. Here was a problem with the Germans supervising the railroad station. They did not believe completely the Ukrainians or the Polacks. They wanted to have overview, what's going on.

**INT:** To check their papers?

**SURLK:** Yah. So any time they wanted, they could come up to the director and ask him something, so I couldn't walk around already. I had to be-it had to be a place where I could sit, so it was-

**INT:** Where was that place where you sat?

**SURLK:** The place was in the living room. The apartment wasn't too big. It was a kitchen and it was a big room, one side was like a combination dining room-living room and there was another room. I was sitting in the middle in a closet. The closet was like an ordinary-you would now know because you're from Israel so you would have an idea what a closet is. Sometimes a closet in Israel, before they built these built-in closets, were like in a triangle in a corner of two walls. You put the shafer they called it. Closet was a shafer in Poland. And in the morning I had to go under that shafer, sit there on a very little bench. A bench, very small. Sometimes when they say kinus on Tisha B'av they sit on such little chairs. I was sitting on that bench, on that little benkele they call it, and waiting. What did I wait for? The shafer was-between the shafer and the floor it was like a ten inch space, fifteen inch space, because in Israel they go up till the floor, the shafers. Here they were standing on such a special round pieces. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Okay. So how long-

**SURLK:** I stayed in [name of town] from May 1943 till around February, maybe beginning of March 1944. (Discussion between Rabbi and SurLK in Yiddish. Tape shuts) Sitting was-sitting was bad already. In the evening when you put on the lights you couldn't walk around because the

windows. We were on a second floor. The windows were-even with curtains it wasn't closed like here with shades. Somebody could see you. You were afraid of your own shadow. The real fear began in [name of town]. During the day I was sitting behind that closet, behind that shafer, and they put me something to eat.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Under the shafer.

**SURLK:** I told you this was around ten, fifteen inches.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Ten inches.

**SURLK:** Ten inches.

**INT:** Did they lady work?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** So what? She was there with you all day?

**SURLK:** Mostly.

**INT:** And what happened? Did you talk or she left you alone or how?

**SURLK:** No, we talked. We talked. Quietly and of course not too much and we could not arouse a suspicion that somebody is there.

**INT:** Was there a plan if the Germans came?

**SURLK:** In [name of town] there was no more plan, because you couldn't plan how it will develop the next day. The danger was enormous. Downstairs there were offices for the railroad station. There were Deutschen. Every day German commanders came to look over the papers, how many trains left, how many trains came in, what kind of people. It was a tight, a tight supervision, so the tzorus were-there was a fear of somebody coming up and many times they came up.

**INT:** They walked into the apartment?

**SURLK:** Yah. Of course you couldn't walk in. It wasn't open, but you knew that somebody came in.

**INT:** You knew that somebody came in to the door, opened the door?

**SURLK:** I heard. I heard somebody came in.

**INT:** While you were behind-that was your hiding place?

**SURLK:** This was my hiding place. I didn't have anything more secure. (Yiddish words) They came to visit the family.

**INT:** Who came to visit the family?

**SURLK:** The German officers came up.

**INT:** Did you know they were coming? Did they tell you ahead of time?

**SURLK:** No. They probably said, I'm coming up or they knocked on the door and she let them in. He was in. But once, there was an incident-I was maybe stayed there till the end of the war, but once they came in and they played cards and they played in money. It's minimal. It's change.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Pennies.

**SURLK:** Not pennies. Ten cents, a quarter.

**INT:** Who were they, soldiers?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** What were they?

**SURLK:** They were Wehrmacht. They were military officers. And they played, but once they came in and they played and the name was Mr. Beck.

**INT:** Who was Mr. Beck?

**SURLK:** Mr. Beck, one of the officers, of the German officers. She made him a coffee, a tea, and she knew less than I knew because she was so afraid any minute was eternity, and they played, and ten cents fell down. Where did it fall? (Laughter)

**INT:** Under?

**SURLK:** No, G-d forbid. In the direction of the shafer, of the closet. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** He had a name Mister if he was in the military?

**SURLK:** Yah. Maybe they called him Mr. Beck.

**INT:** Yeah, all right.

**SURLK:** They didn't give him the big name.

**INT:** Captain or lieutenant.

**SURLK:** Captain, major, ich veis. And ten cents fell down. I give you for an instance the little change fell down and he wanted to pick it up. It was in the direction of my shafer where I was

sitting. He didn't have to see me. If he would have picked up the ten cents he would have seen my shoes.

**INT:** How much from the floor up was it?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Ten inches.

**SURLK:** No, more, more, more. This much. Efsher a bissele mer. This must be around twelve inches. A bissele mer. (A little more) Azo (like this), Papa?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Yeah.

**INT:** Why didn't they block it off?

**SURLK:** It's a closet. After you finished, I take you to my bedroom, because my bedroom-our bedroom has an armoire that stands on these four legs, and this was similar where I was sitting. You wonder...

**INT:** Okay. So what happened?

**SURLK:** I didn't see it. She said, Mr. Beck, Herr Beck, what are you-she spoke a nice German. I told you she's from Czechoslovakia. [Words in German-what are you doing?] She laid down on the floor and gave him the dime.

**INT:** Were you afraid then?

**SURLK:** Afraid? I was always afraid. I don't know how I survived.

**INT:** You were listening to them talk about it?

**SURLK:** Yes. Like I talk to you.

**INT:** And you heard this-

**SURLK:** In the same room. Yeah, I heard. I heard.

**INT:** And there were other times when people came in?

**SURLK:** And when he left-when he left, she laid down on that floor, her hair-she had stripes of gray hair. I would never have believed that people with tzorus could get gray, they say, overnight. It was over an hour, over ten seconds. (Sigh) She couldn't recover from that.

**INT:** What did she do when she laid down on the floor?

**SURLK:** She cried. She cried bitterly. I lived because of her, not so much because of him. Not that he was a bad person after all, but what would he gain of rescuing a little Jewish girl?

**INT:** And what would she gain?

**SURLK:** For her it was eppes (like) a call from heaven. This was her aim. This was her goal.

**INT:** What did she think of the Germans?

**SURLK:** You're asking me? Terrible.

**INT:** When you were living there during that time, what did you think about as far as how long this war was going to go on? Did you know anything about any of that? When the allies were going to land or anything? What were you thinking about?

**SURLK:** I just heard an expression today on the radio-even with so much pessimism that was happening during that time, somehow along the line, looking further, I was optimistic.

**INT:** What did you base it on?

**SURLK:** On emunah, on faith. I could not picture myself being taken to that pit and being shot. It happened to so many millions of people. Why should you be an exception? Hashem will help. What will help? When will help? Millions of people, six million were finished and maybe they talk about seven million now.

**INT:** When you were in...what did you sleep on?

**SURLK:** I slept in a regular bed.

**INT:** And at night, when you were-

**SURLK:** At night they pushed away this closet and even during the day sometimes, I didn't want myself. I just didn't want. I didn't want to-to expose them to the danger so much, so I was happy sitting there, but it was-the problems were bigger than that human imagination. How will I use the facilities? How will I-how will I cough? How will I sneeze? Be angelic. We tried out a few tricks. Sneezing was not a problem as big as coughing. Sneezing-you close your lips tightly, you hold them with the two fingers and the nose. Coughing was a problem, but I didn't cough. I didn't have a cold. I didn't have a headache. I didn't take aspirin or something else that she had these little remedies. I didn't. I was cold. I was always cold. Sitting in a place, even in June and July, in one place like I sat on a little bench was cold, and it was dark. I couldn't read. It was dark under a shafer. If you have a light, we were afraid of the light. At night they pushed away the shafer and I went to sleep.

**INT:** What did you think about all day?

**SURLK:** I was-once I was crying. Once I was crying because they said-I wasn't such an open-minded person. I wasn't so talkative. (Laughter) Yitzchok, the other day, spoke to somebody and he said, I'm not a talker like my father. I'm not a talker in his marriage. My father wasn't a talker, but he was lucky because he got my mother, my mother the talker, so the rabbi was sitting (?). She wasn't even a talker. Just as life goes on and different problems present themselves and



you're in a community, you have to deal with people, so you start to talk, but normally I was a loner, you say. Not a talker, no. But when I was to them a little bit-I wanted to play this religious role and it wasn't good because I didn't want to eat treif and she tear her hair out because she said, if you get a cold, if you get pneumonia, what will I do with you? What you want, to kill us all, you know. You have to eat. You have to-she pressed me I should eat. I ate. I don't know what I ate. I ate as much as I needed to dehalten the neshama (to stay alive), you know, just to survive. So one day, it was snow. Now I remember. I tell this always to the rabbi. It was a big snow. It was very cold and she said, you are not so grateful to us what we are doing to you. We are not doing that for money. We are not doing...the parents are not here. We are doing just "leshaim shamayim". So he said, come on. I like to show you something. He called me to the window and he showed me-see there, very far, the building. Yeah. You see somebody walking around there on the grounds. I said, I see something, yeah. Like a lady. Like a young girl. And he said, yeah, she is in that neighborhood. Her is better than you? Imagine if she would be in your place, what she would give for that, and we have to ask you you should eat or you should be more grateful. I said, I am grateful, but I can't express myself. I am grateful. You will see later in life I am, but I cannot express myself with friendliness, you know. That girl they caught a few days later.

**INT:** She was a Jewish girl?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** And he knew it, he knew it?

**SURLK:** He couldn't do a thing.

**INT:** No. I didn't mean that he could do, but he knew she was Jewish.

**SURLK:** Yeah, they talked around in the office. They waited, they let her go a day, two around, three, and then they caught her. They shot her.

**INT:** What did you do sitting there all day?

**SURLK:** Nothing.

**INT:** How did you pass the time?

**SURLK:** I passed the time thinking.

**INT:** About?

**SURLK:** Mostly of the past, because the future I didn't even have the slightest idea what the future will bring, and then I couldn't imagine a future without my parents. I didn't want even to be-to be near that thought that I would be alone. What will I do? What will I do? Where will I go? I don't have a thing. I don't know if I will go to my house. I don't know if they took out the

things where my father put them away, some money and gold. I found it later, but I didn't know what will I do and who knows? I was afraid of the Ukrainians, they will kill me.

**INT:** Did you know where he hid the gold?

**SURLK:** Yeah. We had eleven places, so I found in about six, seven places, I found. And the rest they found probably in one place, so they were looking. It was like bricks. Our cellar was with bricks all around, so they started to take out jewelry and money and they looked around. They took out in a nice few places.

**INT:** When you remembered-when you sat and thought about the past, what was the kind of things you thought about?

**SURLK:** Shabbos I was singing zemiros. I knew what date it is because I knew. I didn't know about the holidays, but I knew March, end February, March is Purim, so I figured it out approximately. Even if it wasn't in the same day, but it was in the vicinity of the weeks. Then I knew Pesach. I was singing the melodies of my father. Oy, what do you want from me? (Starts crying)

**INT:** You sang to yourself?

**SURLK:** Yah. I am so depressed. I am lately not myself. Since this robbery, you know, just morally it hit me so much. I didn't even want to go to this wedding, you know. Rabbi Muller davened here for nine years and Mrs. Muller was very, very anxious to have us at the wedding, so the rabbi says, go out. Go out. Mostly I don't go. The last years I don't go. So he said, go out a little bit. You will see people. You will talk.

**INT:** Were you happy you went afterwards?

**SURLK:** Yah. Yah. Oh, she was so-she called my daughter. She said, oh, what an honor. At least one came. My grandchild was also there. Yaakov Meir was there. But it was a big problem. What will we do now? If they came and play cards, maybe he noticed something. Maybe he saw the expression on her face, on his face, that they were so distraught. What shall we do?

**INT:** Who was saying all this, what you just told me now? You were saying it or they were saying it or who?

**SURLK:** They were talking and I recognized that it's very serious. I mean I couldn't tell them it's nothing. I had to make clear to them that it's a danger, because after all, I didn't want them to get killed. It's a danger if Mr. Beck and the company will come again. What will we do? And if it really falls down and he picks it up? Can you imagine such a miracle? Can you imagine yourself in such a situation? It's very hard. You have to be-you have to be in that situation to feel what it means, like I can't feel what it means to be shot, and lately, I don't know. Hashem doesn't spare me either, because this week I was sitting and I was reading till about eleven o'clock. Eleven o'clock is my time that I go upstairs. By the time I wash up...so and it wasn't

such a good article about-it was an article, maybe you heard, from the Enquirer Magazine, not last Sunday's. Today is two weeks. About the Swiss connection.

**INT:** Yeah. Yes.

**SURLK:** Did you see that article? It's gevaldik. And I was sitting and I was reading and I looked it over again, the names, and I was already walking upstairs. On the way, the lamp was still on because the rabbi just about ten, fifteen minutes he left. There is a Yiddishe Journal, the Yiddishe Vort maybe you heard of. A very, very good paper. (Tape shuts) ...in the past.

**INT:** And the future? How did you deal with that?

**SURLK:** The future-I wasn't thinking about the future. It was so foggy. It was so shady. It was-you couldn't. You could make plans for tomorrow or an hour later?

**INT:** You were talking about the conversation they were having after Mr. Beck left.

**SURLK:** Yah. After Mr. Beck left we realized all together that this cannot go on farther. We must look for a solution, because if they come in and they play again...it will come out. Eventually it will.

**INT:** Did you have any idea about how long the war would go on?

**SURLK:** No. No.

**INT:** Neither did he-or did he?

**SURLK:** Listen, all the Jews, when the war broke up, were standing with the maps. I took the rabbi six years, from 1939 to 1945, so-

**INT:** But you didn't know about they landed in June of '44 or any of that. You had no idea, or you did?

**SURLK:** We were under German occupation. They didn't tell you that. To have a radio, telephone can has, with who has connections to a foreign country was thought a dead sentence, so what could you...you heard the marches on the radio and who had in those days big radios? We had a telephone but they took it away.

**INT:** Did you think the Germans were winning the war or you didn't know at all?

**SURLK:** No, we knew. We knew. They said that they are coming back from the front and it's no good. They will probably lose the war. We never thought that they will be victorious in that war. We knew that sooner or later, but how long will it take? The Jews in Auschwitz also knew that it's not going to take too long, but who knew it?

**INT:** Okay. So what happened from the conversation?

**SURLK:** So from that conversation we started to make a plan. We have to leave that place. We have to leave that place. Where shall we go? The only place that was open to us was the villa that they had in Chovorow, in my city.

**INT:** Now it's interesting. They didn't say you have to leave. They said-

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** ...we have to leave.

**SURLK:** We have to leave. They never considered me going away without them.

**INT:** Did you think maybe they would have after that?

**SURLK:** There was a plan that she had a friend near the big city Lvov, in the suburbs. She had a friend, a childhood friend, who was married and had children. And she didn't tell her that she has somebody, but she said, maybe I talk to her and not about you but in general. She seems like a very fine lady. Maybe I should go over to her, I should take the-with a train and talk to her. Maybe they will take you in for a little while till we see what the situation is here. So I was a young girl then and I did not understand what I was asking but it's very tragic. I asked, do they have boys? So she said to me, one boy and one daughter. One son, one daughter. Do they stay with the parents? Yeah. How old is the daughter? How old is the boy? The boy was nineteen, twenty, *ich veis*. The daughter was younger. I said it's not for me. You know what I was afraid? I was afraid that they will demand from-(end of tape 5, side 2) You had in hundreds and hundreds of cases young little girls they took and they converted them without even their knowledge. They didn't understand. I was afraid. First of all, I was afraid it was a male, a son. If you see a husband, a wife, children, it's something else, but they don't know me. They didn't know my parents. To them I am a stranger, a Jewish girl, *ich veis*. Something else happened in that apartment. While I was sitting till March, he had a mother who lived with them before the war. She came over to visit them. She knew about me. She knew my parents. She got sick. What was it? Pneumonia. It wasn't so serious. One day she died in the same place.

**INT:** In the apartment where you were?

**SURLK:** Yeah. Yeah. On that station.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** Pneumonia.

**INT:** So what did they do?

**SURLK:** What did they do? I was under the closet. They called an undertaker, I don't remember. They took her away to that Chovorow, to that city and they made a funeral. So he was crying. He was a son and he was crying so she said to him, this lady, this Mrs. Stipolova said to

him, “Oh, Vladivo,” she said. His name was Vladivo. “But your mother was in her eighties, over eighty years old. Maybe G-d took her instead of saving her.” Do you understand what...

**INT:** Mmm.

**SURLK:** And he was listening to her and he was a strong person, he wasn’t such a lemeleh, you know. He said, “What do we understand how G-d leads the world?”

**INT:** How did that make you feel when you heard that?

**SURLK:** I thought I am the angel. I am not this human being. Angels. Mammesh angels. Plain angels. To give a sacrifice of his mother for me. He had already right away the excuses, why she died. So it was geshlossen. It was-help me out.

**INT:** Tied up?

**SURLK:** Nein, nein. They came to an agreement. No. They came to an agreement that we must leave, leave that place. Oh, the tzorus. How will I come to Chovorow?

**INT:** Were you afraid that people would know you there?

**SURLK:** Oh, depends whom I will meet on the station.

**INT:** Did you argue with them about that?

**SURLK:** No. I was afraid, very afraid. And they too. So you had the town. (Tape shuts)...because there you were riding in a different direction, different part of Poland. Here you-

**INT:** They were going to go with you?

**SURLK:** Yeah. And this is-this is when I actually started to get scared.

**INT:** Scared now? Why was this different? Now that you were afraid?

**SURLK:** Going back after 42, ’43, it was ’44. We were hoping- we had heard already in 1944, we heard already that the front got a big beating, that the soldiers are running away, that some of them are still near Moscow, Leningrad, that it probably will take us a month or two and we will be liberated.

**INT:** If you stayed where you were.

**SURLK:** No. If I would go there. If I would go back to Chovorow.

**INT:** Oh, Chovorow was farther east then.

**SURLK:** It was Philadelphia, and this was Camden. If I would stay...but I couldn’t stay in Camden.

**INT:** Okay, okay.

**SURLK:** They were suspicious already. Maybe the other people weren't suspicious. Maybe these thoughts that they think about it.

**INT:** But you agreed.

**SURLK:** I agreed and she said like this. She said, twilight, when it's darkish a little bit, we will wait for the train, for the last train that leaves to Philadelphia, to Chovorow. We take the train and we have to go only half an hour. And then we get off in Chovorow and from the station-they were not too far from the station. It was very complicated, what can I tell you.

**INT:** Now you had a problem with papers the first time.

**SURLK:** Yes. That was in 1943.

**INT:** What was the plan with papers now?

**SURLK:** No. There was no possibility. There was no possibility. This was just pure mercy. No possibility of papers. Who would give you papers today?

**INT:** So if they would have asked for the papers-

**SURLK:** No, no. In my own city I could pretend that I am Kashinska or-

**INT:** But I mean when you got on the train.

**SURLK:** No. On the train everybody knows me.

**INT:** Okay. So what happened.

**SURLK:** There was no other way.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** I got dressed. I disguised myself as much as possible. I put on lipstick, ich vais. They had powder, makeup. They didn't have this makeup from today. I put my hair-I had like little braids so I put them in. I put on a beret. Put on a different dress, ich vais. I trusted in Ribono shel Olam (G-d). I figured I have to do it and we have to try. And we took the last train.

**INT:** Was it in the morning?

**SURLK:** Evening.

**INT:** In the evening. Do you remember leaving the apartment?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** What was that like walking down the steps and by the station.

**SURLK:** Second floor, then wait for the station. We knew exactly when the train is arriving. This we knew. But in the train, I didn't want to be close to them. They insisted they want to be close and we stayed not far.

**INT:** Why didn't you want to be close to them?

**SURLK:** I was afraid they might catch me. I didn't want to have anything to do with them. They would have talked with me, and I wouldn't have been able to resist. They would know the whole truth. She came over, I remember. She stood with me and he was on one side and I was in the middle, looking down.

**INT:** Who was the on the train?

**SURLK:** It was still cold. People.

**INT:** Soldiers, people?

**SURLK:** Soldiers, people. When I came in and I took one look, he was our customer in the store and there was a big sugar factory. He had the biggest sugar factory in all Poland, something that they came from all over the world to look how it was-how they make the sugar there. And I looked at him, Pietchecka was his name. Right away I took a look at him. He didn't know who I am. No.

**INT:** You took a chance looking at him?

**SURLK:** Just like that. I didn't look at him. He didn't know who I was. Maybe if he knew he wouldn't say, but no, no. It was visible that he didn't know.

**INT:** So you sat on a train.

**SURLK:** I sat on a train and I was-I think it was crowded. I was standing. I remember we were standing and I looked out the window and the train stopped in Chovorow and we left the station and we came to the house.

**INT:** How did you get to the house, you walked?

**SURLK:** We walked. It was fifteen minutes, maybe. Not even that. Yeah, maybe fifteen minutes.

**INT:** What did you notice in the walk about your town?

**SURLK:** I didn't see it.

**INT:** It was dark?

**SURLK:** Yeah. We had electricity but I didn't see-

**INT:** Now these people lived in your town but you didn't know them.

**SURLK:** Yah. I told you the whole story how we knew them. They were customers of my parents.

**INT:** I don't mean the people you were with. I mean the people you were going to.

**SURLK:** I went to their house, their villa. I went to where they lived.

**INT:** Wait a minute. They were taking you to somebody's family.

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Oh, they were taking you to the villa. You didn't want to go to the person's house. You were now going to an empty house?

**SURLK:** When it happened with Mr. Beck and we realized we had to leave, there were ten different plans where to go, maybe to his friends, maybe to her friends. One of the plans was maybe to go for a month, two, to her friend. But because she had a son-

**INT:** You didn't want to go.

**SURLK:** ...and because they are Catholics and they might maybe force me to convert or to go to cloister, I didn't want. I figured let it-

**INT:** So you went to their villa which was empty?

**SURLK:** No, not empty. It was a normal, beautiful villa where they lived. They took the most necessary things with them to go to the station, to the station's apartment to live there because of me, but everything remained.

**INT:** But nobody lived in the house is what I mean.

**SURLK:** His mother lived there. But later on, when she died-

**INT:** Right. So when you came to it now it was an empty house.

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** For people, I mean.

**SURLK:** Oh, for people. Nobody was in. It would be too good if nobody was in. In one room there lived four Gestapo who supervised the station in Chovorow.

**INT:** Did he know they were there?



**SURLK:** Yah. They took by people the houses who lived close to the station.

**INT:** Did you know they were there before you left? Was that part of the chesbon when they explained it to you?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** You knew there were four Gestapo people in the villa?

**SURLK:** But we had already that plan with the shafer (bookcase) so it was decided, geschlossen is decided, that I will sit under the closet the same way I sat there but spend more hours under the closet in their house and in the morning, early in the morning, I would get up, I will go under the closet, sit till night and before they go to sleep they will push away the closet very lightly and I will come out. It required such engineering. And I would sleep in a bed. And in the morning, early, early in the morning...but it was not a good plan because two of the Whermacht were always in the house. Two went, the other two came. The two went-one during the night, during the day.

**INT:** How about when you went in the first time?

**SURLK:** No, the first time I didn't-they had a separate entrance. I didn't have anything to do with them. It was a separate entrance. From one room to the other it was a key. It was locked. They came in from the other entrance and stayed in their room and if they had to take something they went around the house. Sometimes, later, when I stayed there, yah...

**INT:** All right. You stayed in the bedroom in this house?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** One bedroom in the house.

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** You were alone in that bedroom in the house?

**SURLK:** No. With them.

**INT:** They were all in one bedroom.

**SURLK:** A big, big bedroom, enormous bedroom, and the children were in a bedroom more to the kitchen.

**INT:** And the parents? Where did they sleep?

**SURLK:** The parents slept in their bedroom in two beds, in two single beds.

**INT:** In this room?

**SURLK:** Yes. Two single beds they had, and I had, I think, a little like ottoman.

**INT:** So you slept in the same room with the parents.

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** And the daughters, the two daughters?

**SURLK:** Two sons.

**INT:** Two young little sons slept where? Somewhere?

**SURLK:** Next room.

**INT:** In the next room.

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** From our room, the door went into the Gestapo room.

**INT:** You could hear them through the wall?

**SURLK:** Sure. It was very bad. If it was bad in [name of town] it was even worse here. Some people told me just to be in this attitude, to be such in a place where I was, was even mentally worse than to be in a camp. I had to think about the plans what to do in case, ich vais in case. I stayed there for about March, April, May, June, July, a few months, until something happened that we had to go away.

**INT:** What was it like living there different than the other place?

**SURLK:** Hell. This was real hell. This was real hell. You sit behind a closet, you listen to Germans talk, you listen to their language, you don't know where to go, what to do.

**INT:** Do you remember what they talked about?

**SURLK:** They talked about their schedules and plans.

**INT:** Could you tell anything about the war by listening to them? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** If they said something? No, they were not permitted. Maybe they talked so quietly. If it comes to politics, even if they knew, one was afraid to talk to the other.

**INT:** Did the man go to work every day?

**SURLK:** Two went? Two came in the morning, two came from the night shift in the morning. Went to sleep, ate something, the other two left. They came in the late evening, the other ones. They always changed.

**INT:** How about the man in the house with you? Did he go to work in the morning?

**SURLK:** He went to [name of town] every day. He took the train every day and came back four o'clock whenever he could.

**INT:** And the wife was there. (Tape interrupted by phone)

**SURLK:** Eating very little I lost so much weight there. It was very bad. The children brought me the food in such little bowls. They pushed it into the shafer, and I finished it and pushed it back. I couldn't even finish it.

**INT:** Did they go to school, the children?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** So they left every day.

**SURLK:** Yah. By two o'clock, three, they were back.

**INT:** Were you fearful there?

**SURLK:** Yah. The bigger one understood already. The little one didn't understand. Four years old, what can he know?

**INT:** Could you sleep those nights in that apartment?

**SURLK:** Yah. I'm tired.

**INT:** Did the Germans ever come into the room?

**SURLK:** No. The door was open. We didn't want the door to be closed, you understand, because they passed that room to go to the kitchen, so the door was always open. Maybe they wouldn't even have been suspicious, but we didn't want to take the chance to give them an idea, so we left the door open. It was closed but not locked. So they came in for milk perhaps or to make something warm. They probably had these little gadgets there that warmed up, but sometimes they came in for the kitchen. They never saw me. And towards the end, about a month before, she was sure that they all were out in the station

**INT:** I don't understand.

**SURLK:** About a month before the liberation, a month, and we knew already it was bad for them. She had the impression that nobody was in their room, that they all went to the station, to the train station, because sometimes they went for conferences.

**INT:** All four at one time.

**SURLK:** She pushed away the closet and I came out and there was a very little table-higher than that and maybe a little longer and maybe a little narrower-and she said to me...mostly we didn't talk but sit down. I was complaining my back or my feet. I was so cold. Summer and I was cold. But I was dressed, you know. I had a pair of shoes. I was sitting in house shoes because I was with warm woolen socks. It was so cold. I remember even what I had on. I had a navy blue housecoat, a shirt. I wore one and a second on the top. My father gave it to me. And I had on my head a little tichele. And the door opens. No knocking. No nothing. One of them came in and she was sitting and she was talking with me, pretending, and he smiled. He said, I'm going to the kitchen to warm up some milk and she said why not? Then he came back into the room, we didn't speak to each other. We just looked now at the end.

**INT:** What was going on inside of you?

**SURLK:** Oh, my gosh. Afraid.

**INT:** Did you act regular?

**SURLK:** No, I acted very...today I am meshuga. But very controlled.

**INT:** What did she say to you? You never talked about it or did she say anything to you? She held your hand?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** She held her hands?

**SURLK:** When he came home we told him that because it's no good. It's no good. Why did he come to see a young girl here? It's no good. But what is there to do? We have a plan. I figured maybe my plan was good. In the morning she should open all the windows-it was summer-all the windows and at night I should go to a shed and they should close it up and I should stay in that shed. In the morning she should make general cleaning, open the windows, take the beds apart, take the promicha and scrub outside.

**INT:** To show them nobody was there.

**SURLK:** To show them that there was somebody who came and talked and went away.

**INT:** Did you know of this shack or they knew of this shack?

**SURLK:** Yeah, I knew of the shack. They knew of the shack too. He didn't like the idea. He said the ground is very hard. He said it's no good. We spend our lives, our three years, just planning from one minute to the other how to survive the hour, the two hours. He said to her, no good. Let's think of something else. And here I will stop. (Tape shuts). Continuing Tape 6, side 1.

**INT:** This is Norman Garfield with SurLK. It's Sunday, February 2, 1997. We are continuing with the return to Chovorow.

**SURLK:** So finally we came back to the city where I was born and raised all my life. Their house was a more modern house. It was like a single home, like a villa. There's a nice little garden in the front. There's a nice-

**INT:** Is this the house that you passed on the way to work?

**SURLK:** Yah. This is where she saw me a few times, this lady, and somehow it wasn't his idea because he practically didn't know me but it was her idea. It was between me and another Jewish girl. Also blonde, also braids-she looked a little bit like me, but they decided on me.

**INT:** What was her name, the other girl?

**SURLK:** Her name was Haber. The last name was Haber. Rifka. Rifka Haber. Rivka'le they called her.

**INT:** Do you know anything about her family? What happened to her?

**SURLK:** I don't know. I was away.

**INT:** Okay. Go ahead.

**SURLK:** Her father had one son from his first marriage who went to Israel on aliyah before the war. He just passed away a year ago. He is the only one that remained.

**INT:** How do you know that he passed away a year ago?

**SURLK:** Because I was in Israel. The rabbi went to a convention so I met some people from my landsleit and they told me.

**INT:** And you saw him, you met him, or you just found out that he died?

**SURLK:** I've met him-when Yitzchok was in Israel I met him at a gathering of our city, the city's former Jewish people.

**INT:** Had you seen him back in Chovorow when you were little or you don't remember?

**SURLK:** I would hardly remember him. But I saw him. And they told me later that his name was Hirsch. This was her stepbrother. Anyway, nobody remained. So when we came in, this house was like set on a nice tree-lined street. It was in the so-called private section. Most of the people were goyim. There were here and there Jewish families, but most were goyim. It was nicely furnished, comparing to the status of the other year. Nice furniture. They had about four, five, six rooms, the most.

**INT:** On one floor?

**SURLK:** One floor. Maybe it was an attic. In Europe, most houses had attics, so it was probably an attic. When the German army came into us-(end of tape 6, side 1)...they made sure that if they would need some quarters for their people for officers, for the police staff, for Wehrmacht who supervised the junction train station, they would have where to put them up, so later a few months, when they needed the Wehrmacht, the supervision, of the train station, they confiscated one room, one big room with a separate entrance from outside from Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova, and they said we are taking this room for our people. When I had to come to their house, I knew that I'm going into the fire. How can you live in one room with a door that opens to those rooms? How could you live in such an environment?

**INT:** Now the last place you were at also had the Deutschens close.

**SURLK:** Yah, also, but not on the same flat. We were only ones on the same flat, because this building belonged to the train station.

**INT:** The rest of the house was empty up until now. Is that right?

**SURLK:** His mother lived in that house. She came to us to visit and then went back home. Actually, I saw her maybe twice.

**INT:** But she knew about you.

**SURLK:** She probably knew. She had to know. But she never asked me anything. She knew my parents.

**INT:** This is her mother?

**SURLK:** His.

**INT:** Okay. Do you remember when yoyu came in?

**SURLK:** Now the risk was bigger than it was up till now. It was a risk before to cough or to sneeze but here was the risk twenty-four hours, because from these four people, the German Wehrmacht supervisors, two were constantly in the room. I didn't tell you about this yet?

**INT:** You said all this...

**SURLK:** In that room two steady, and they didn't go out because they came from a night shift and they went to sleep. The other guards changed. These were here. They got up only to eat something and they left.

**INT:** What was their job?

**SURLK:** Their job-we don't know. It was a secret. They watched the trains. They supervised how many trains leave, how many trains go out.

**INT:** Where they in uniform or were they in regular clothes?

**SURLK:** In the uniform.

**INT:** The Gestapo uniform?

**SURLK:** They had dark blue-Wehrmacht had a dark blue uniform. I don't remember. I know exactly how it was by us but I don't...the Whermacht had dark blue uniforms. Uniforms. Like police. By us it was dark blue, navy blue. These fellows were in the uniform.

**INT:** The dark blue. Okay.

**SURLK:** Yah. It wasn't like a military khaki color. No, it was dark blue. So it means I had to sit from early morning till late at night under this closet. In the other place was also a closet in the corner, but it was somehow easier because I could have walked out a little bit during the day and walk and stand up. Here I couldn't. Here I had to sit on a little chair and sit twenty-four hours in that chair. I don't know. (Tape shuts) It was a big problem.

**INT:** So where did you sleep?

**SURLK:** In the evening, late in the evening, we pushed away this closet, like I told you, shafer, we pushed away. They pushed away. I came out. I stretched my legs a little bit and I laid down on a bed, on the couch, whatever was there. I laid down and I slept. This shafer, I told you, had like an empty space. I told you in my bedroom is something.

**INT:** I saw it. It's about a foot of empty space.

**SURLK:** You saw it. Not a foot. A foot is too much. By us it was like twenty-five centimeters, something like that. It wasn't a foot. A half a foot. Yah, maybe a half a foot. A foot is about twelve inches. Yeah. Something like that. Twelve inches is more than twelve centimeters.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** Sixteen inches is a foot.

**INT:** Twelve inches is a foot.

**SURLK:** Twelve inches is a foot.

**INT:** What did you do by day?

**SURLK:** They pushed something to eat for me.

**INT:** Under.

**SURLK:** A shissele, yeah, a plate with something. They pushed it out when it was ready to go. Whatever I ate, I was under hundred twenty pounds efsher (maybe). Not a hundred twenty, maybe a hundred and five.

**INT:** Was it dark in there?

**SURLK:** Dark? It was always dark under the closet. Even if the sun shone it was dark there and I was sitting. Sitting. What I did I don't know. Chattering. (Laugh)

**INT:** Was the wife home during the day?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** Did she talk or say anything to you?

**SURLK:** No. She came in many, many times during the day and it was an apartment. She went in, how are you, what are you doing, how do you feel?

**INT:** She would say to you.

**SURLK:** Yah. Are you hungry? Do you want something to eat? And we pushed the days, we pushed the days forward.

**INT:** And when he came home?

**SURLK:** When he came home the same thing. He was also good to me but...he was also very good to me. The children. Hello, how are you. I should know that they are in the house.

**INT:** Did you hear loшон Deutschen (German language) through the wall?

**SURLK:** What do you mean? We didn't even lock the door.

**INT:** So you heard them.

**SURLK:** We were afraid to lock the door because it would be suspicious. We wanted to show that we are not afraid of anybody.

**INT:** Did they ever come in?

**SURLK:** Yah, once.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** Once it was during the day. I think it was summertime, but I had always a heavy housecoat. It was cold. She wanted to make it more comfortable for me so she said to me, I'm going to push away a little the shafer and you will come out and you will sit a little bit and you will feel better. So I foolishly did that and was a little table and she was sitting at the table and I was sitting opposite her and we were talking and suddenly, once only, suddenly the door opens and he didn't say nothing. I remember how he even looked. I was afraid to look at him. And he went into the kitchen to warm up some milk or to take some milk. Something had to do with the milk. And he took the milk and he went back. He said hello to her. And she was looking at me



and I was looking at her. We couldn't talk. I was sure that I told you because how is it that I come to that shack. It's a repetition of what I told you. But anyway, you will know it's not a lie.

**INT:** Okay. Okay.

**SURLK:** We then decided in the evening when he came home, we decided that we must leave that place. What to do we didn't know. We were waiting for some miracle. Hashem should tell us what to do. I couldn't even be so smart and think of an idea what to do. So what he had in mind is they had a little shack outside. He had an idea that outside was a shack, like you buy today these little houses, a shack. He had something there. So he decided that in the morning, early in the morning or maybe not in the morning, in the evening when it's very dark, during the night, they should take me to that shack. Like he was around during the night and to take something, you know, to put in things. They should take me, they should close the shack like it was before and she should pretend that she makes a general cleaning, open all the windows, you understand, make the house open to them. So maybe he has a suspicion, maybe not, but we didn't know. We couldn't make up our minds what to do. She didn't like the idea. She said, the only way that they could save me is to go back to the old place, like Camden, [name of town], but how? How would you go back? How would you, in your community, go out in the morning, early in the morning and everybody sees. Maybe somebody is up. Maybe somebody-

**INT:** But you came. You came there to the community.

**SURLK:** I came by train, I told you.

**INT:** And going back? You would go by train or what?

**SURLK:** I cannot go by train. Mr. Garfield, what's the matter with you? Can I go by train in my own...

**INT:** I'm just saying you came through the train station in your own town.

**SURLK:** First of all, I didn't take the train from Camden to Philadelphia. I took from [name of town] to Chovorow. It was already evening. It was already night. I couldn't go in the train in the city. Every little hintele (dog) knew me. Every ketzele (cat) knew me. How could I show my face openly?

**INT:** Couldn't do it.

**SURLK:** No. So many people at this train station. No. This way I get off the station, you go quickly to your house.

**INT:** But there you had to wait.

**SURLK:** You had to wait for the train. You had to buy a ticket. Everything is supervised. And it was very hard already. The German army pulled back already from the Russian front. Everything

was very, very strict. No, don't think about it. I would have to walk from here to Camden. Maybe it was a little closer.

**INT:** So what did you decide?

**SURLK:** They decided. I didn't decide. They decided that we should get up early in the morning. She should take the train. I should have my passport from 1942. This was 1944. I should take this passport and we both, with him, would go to Camden. But with the railtrack where the train goes. Since he had this uniform of a supervisor, all the navy blue with gold buttons, you know, he spoke a little German. I shouldn't talk one word. I don't know.

**INT:** Who would have gone?

**SURLK:** Mr. Stipolova with me. The husband. She would take the train to [name of city], to Camden.

**INT:** With the children.

**SURLK:** No. By herself. It was such a tzimishinisht, you know. And she would wait for us to call.

**INT:** How long a time went by that you were in this villa?

**SURLK:** How long? I tell you exactly.

**INT:** From February-

**SURLK:** From February and March, April, May, June, July, August. No. About May because May, June and July, August, about a few months, I was in Chovorow.

**INT:** So it was May, the weather was May, and you were going to-

**SURLK:** It was May. It was already nice, spring, and I put on a dress and I remember a little brownish coat, like salt and pepper, and I put on a little beret, navy blue, and I did the one thing that wasn't good. I put on a pair of shoes. I couldn't walk in house slippers.

**INT:** Why was that not good?

**SURLK:** Because I had to be presentable. I couldn't go like somebody that you're hiding under the shafer. I put on a pair of shoes, brown shoes, leather pumps, and they were uncomfortable, but after so many months sitting...we walked such a distance.

**INT:** When you mentioned your passport of 1942-

**SURLK:** It wasn't worth a thing.

**INT:** Did it have your original name on there?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** What was on the passport?

**SURLK:** I told you. I explained it to you in the beginning. It was from a friend, a goya, a shiksa, from the same city. It was like a little passport and she was maybe younger five months or older six months.

**INT:** If somebody would have caught you with that passport, it wouldn't have been...okay. All right. You're saying it wouldn't have been a good thing. Okay.

**SURLK:** And we started to walk but I had difficulty walking because walking with-

**INT:** The heels?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** The track?

**SURLK:** On the track was terrible. It wasn't on the track. I was beside the track, but they had these rocks, pebbles. He was permitted to walk because he was like an officer of the-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He was the head of the station.

**SURLK:** The head of the station, so he could. And we started to walk and we left the city Chovorow and we walked. We didn't talk. When we walked maybe a half an hour I sat down on these tracks and I said to him I'm not walking farther. I'm staying here. I'll remain here.

**INT:** Why did you do that?

**SURLK:** I couldn't. It was the end of the line. I couldn't. I didn't want anymore. The leg was swollen and I couldn't walk and I was stressed and I didn't believe that...I believed that I'll survive but I couldn't fight anymore. I was resigned to my mazel already. Let me finish. But he took one look and he told me, listen. My wife and me and my two small children give my life for you and we already see a shine. It's a matter of a few weeks. So you say now that you don't want to make it? You cannot make it? We can make it, you cannot make it? Get up. Don't talk. Don't say anything. Get up. Let's finish. Let's come to the destination. So I got up and I walked. It was hard, very hard to walk, and when I see already other buildings of that station...like you go to Media or you go to Chester, you see these little...this was not a little. This was a nice building, bricks building, these offices. When I see from far, he said we have to walk another few minutes. Do you realize that we are there? I forgot the main thing. When we passed the city-you ask me why I sat down. Now I will tell you. When we passed the city, from far we see two or three German soldiers in uniform. They were not plain soldiers because the coat that they wore, you know, with the boots, you could see it's already a higher madrega (level). It was an officer. They put a binoculars and they were looking who is coming. Everything was now very supervised. Each little station because of sabotage and people who put some dynamite under the tracks, people who broke the tracks. Not only Jewish people. You didn't have too many Jews. They

were in the forest maybe a few but also the Poles and also the Ukrainians. They were all against Germany now in the last stages of the war. And he said to me, some German soldiers are there supervising the bridge and they are standing and seeing us. They are able to see us and we are coming to them closer. Don't say a thing. You just laugh like you don't understand. I will do the talking. And we came to them and they took a look at us and they said-I don't know what they said. He said to them, good morning. They didn't ask us for passports, nothing. I think he showed them the passport. They didn't ask me, but they said in German to me...it was like a little river, you know, so he said, the older soldier, [German words]. As they spoke you saw they were not plain people. You recognized an educated person. Here people are bathing in the summer, so he said to them, Mr. Stipolova, my savior, said to them, she doesn't understand German. She's just laughing. He said okay and we passed and we left. We didn't know who was going to be farther up but we knew that there is a bridge. This was that bridge that we passed. So when we passed that bridge and we were a little farther that nobody could see us I sat down on the tracks and I said I'm not going any farther.

**INT:** What was it like when you looked at a German, when you were near a German?

**SURLK:** Oy. Don't ask me. Please don't ask me.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** [Words in Yiddish] the neshama (soul) was in the hands.

**SURLK:** There was no heart, no life in you. Nothing. Like everything was on a little thread just to fall down.

**INT:** Do you remember being afraid?

**SURLK:** Yah. Afraid I was all the time.

**INT:** But when you were near German soldiers?

**SURLK:** This was something like...you were so far. They are making now movies-I hear on the radio some talk shows. They want to know that people were in car accidents, they are very close to death so they are painting pictures that you see a tunnel. Once, that meshugana, he sees at the end of the tunnel...(tape shuts)

**INT:** ...cry. You didn't go to people.

**SURLK:** I couldn't cry. I couldn't cry. How much can a person take?

**INT:** Did you look in the eyes to the German?

**SURLK:** Yah. I looked at them, sure. I looked at them. Nu, you see a miracle. Is this a miracle? Can you believe in Hashem after you go through? I believed before, but you can imagine how it...

**INT:** But it took something out of you and that's why you wanted to sit down?

**SURLK:** Oh please. Of course it took.

**INT:** But after you met the German, you felt-what did you feel?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Some people gave up hope. What it will be will be. Like myself. I never was caught. You don't see this picture. You have hope.

**SURLK:** How could I have hope? Can you imagine that from our city and the vicinity, seventeen people were alive. We are five maybe now. How could you have hope?

**INT:** Did you know that at the time?

**SURLK:** No, but I knew that whoever...nobody was in.

**INT:** But you didn't know exactly where they were, did you?

**SURLK:** I knew. People came from other cities and they say what they did to them, so our city will be an exception? My mother-I was hoping always maybe, maybe, so he said why should you say maybe? So many went. From that city they came and from that city they come and they say nobody is left, it's Judenrein, so we will survive? I was mad at my mother. It was in some way I felt that in the beginning, that I had it very good. It was a special good from Ribono Shel Olam that I had it so good. I was in a house. I had a bed where to sleep. I had what to eat. I had who to talk to. I could have hope. But on the other hand, it was a big disadvantage. Living in a camp with your people, with Jews, waiting for the end, is a little bit easier than to go alone. They say in Hebrew, [Hebrew words], if the tzorus are collectively taken, it's half of the tzorus when you take it as an individual. An individual cannot fight. Why I did it? Ich vais nisht (I don't know). I told you I was the weakest. I was physically the weakest. But it probably made a big impression on me the picture of the Germans looking at us and not knowing what they will ask me and what will I do without anything in my hand. So I saw myself already at the end of the rope. That's it. Farther I cannot go. But he talked to me, like I said before, sensibly. My wife and me, my poor children, are losing their lives. Look at us. We went such a long way. We are almost seeing, he said, the sun and we want to take you out of the darkness. So you will sit here?

**INT:** You were ready to die when you sat there? You were ready to...what were you thinking about when you sat there?

**SURLK:** It was probably so overwhelming on me. You must understand, you are talking about a young teenage girl. It was so overwhelming and it was so fearful. I didn't want. I couldn't. But I calmed down. I had one big midah (trait) in my neshama (soul), in my seichel (mind), that I am influenced by other people. I let myself influenced. What he said to me made sense. How could you do that to people, to a whole family and he lost his mother. She is gray, a young woman, thirty-some years old. They didn't live. They didn't sleep. They didn't eat.

**INT:** Did you think about that when he told you?

**SURLK:** Yah. He presented the problem. He presented the situation like it is and I saw he's right. Somebody didn't save me for their convenience. They didn't save me because they wanted

to save me, maybe they will have money. They knew I had zero now. They had to give me food for nothing. (End of tape 6, side 2)

**INT:** Okay. So you got up from the walk and you continued.

**SURLK:** I got up from the walk and I continued and as I walked in that building I saw a boy, a Ukrainian boy, a short fellow with blond hair. He was with me in one class. Can you imagine? In gymnasia.

**INT:** This building was what, the train station?

**SURLK:** This was the train station. We lived upstairs.

**INT:** So you walked into the train station.

**SURLK:** No, I walked into the building, not into the train station. They had separate entrances. But as I walked in, as I walked near to that building, I said to him-I don't remember the name but I said this and this went in. He didn't talk. You think he could talk? And then we came into the house and she was already there.

**INT:** Who is she?

**SURLK:** Mrs. Stipolova. She was laying on the floor. She was so geshrusen, she was so fearful. She thought we are not going to make it.

**INT:** Why did she think that?

**SURLK:** It was a very big risk. It was the biggest risk in my whole procedure. The risk was big to come from Tarnapol, remember, all alone, to reach [name of town] was enough. Here was bigger. Here, from your own city, you go out early, five o'clock in the morning.

**INT:** How long did you walk, by the way? How many hours did you walk?

**SURLK:** Maybe two hours.

**INT:** So you came into the room.

**SURLK:** I came into the apartment. She was laying on the floor crying and she fell over me. And she said, now we have you again. (Crying) She couldn't believe. She touched me like that. She is in Gan Eden. And by the time I recovered with my swollen feet and I had already the thrombosis, the blood clot. I didn't know. I didn't look.

**INT:** Did it hurt?

**SURLK:** No. Nothing hurt. I never caught a cold. I never coughed. I never sneezed. I didn't know what it means to sneeze or to cough. I was not permitted.

**INT:** When she cried over you did you cry too or you didn't cry? How did you react to that, do you remember?

**SURLK:** No, I didn't cry. By me it comes later, later. By me it comes later.

**INT:** What did you feel when she did that?

**SURLK:** I thought that Hashem has rachmonus (mercy) on me, that this is not a human being. This is an angel. This is an angel's neshama and a human being body. Boruch Hashem. See from that that the person who individually went, who rescued herself, who survived, was worse than a person in a camp. It has big advantages, but it has big disadvantages because you are among Jews. You go in the gas chamber, you have somebody with you. They take you to shoot, you have somebody you see. Here I was by myself. I didn't know what to do, where to go. I don't think I even prayed. I just said, Hashem, it's Your will and do with me what You want and that's it. But my mother was a very determined woman, and I knew that if she couldn't do something for me, she will accomplish something there because she never asked G-d that we survive. She always said to my father it's only one of us will survive, just to know that we existed. That there were some people like that. I have yahrtzeit now. Next Friday and Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh and I have six days in order. (Crying) February it was. The 13th of February 1943. It was cold, very cold. Snow and cold. My parents bought like a truck.

**INT:** You told me.

**SURLK:** They caught them. My mother threw away a lot of money, a lot of jewelry on the way but who got it? The Ukrainians, the Poles. Even that that remained I don't have now. They stole from me.

**INT:** Did you think much that your mother was having influence in shomayim (heaven)?

**SURLK:** Oh yeah.

**INT:** You thought about that?

**SURLK:** Oh yeah. Because as I told you, when they shot my parents, six weeks after that I was crying. I was still crying. And one night I dreamed that my father came and he said to me, he had like a gold crown. When he left you could see at the end and he was like smiling and dancing. He said to me-he was very, very angry and he said stop crying. Stop already crying. We don't have menucha (peace) because of you. And I woke up and from that day on I didn't cry. (Crying) Sure they had influence. They even have now influence. I need so many things now. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** This is February 23 and this is Norman Garfield continuing with SurLK. Okay. You had mentioned a dream, which wasn't chronological. Can you tell me, before we pick up where we were, exactly where in this whole time that dream came about?

**SURLK:** The dream goes back when I went, when they sent me away from my house and when we came to that big city Lemberg and I was hidden from about December, end of December till May. My parents were shot February 13, 1943 in the same city where I was born with my aunt

and her six children, with my uncle, with my cousins, with everybody. It was Judenrein. No more Jews. But these people, this Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova that brought me there didn't want to disturb my peace. I shouldn't be occupied with thinking about them. So each time they used to bring me letters from my house, but after a few weeks, two, three weeks passed and they looked for excuses and I accepted them. Once I confronted them and I said it's already six weeks I don't have a letter from my parents, so they kept quiet and then I knew. Of course I couldn't stop crying. After they left I cried day and night, day and night and after a few weeks, it was like April, I cried bitterly. I didn't know what to do with myself, where shall I go, who will take me, will they continue to do these good things to me that they did now if I don't have parents. Who am I? They don't have any more responsibility. So one night I cried very, very much. I cried myself to sleep and then I had a dream and I saw my father and my father came to me and he was angry. He was very angry. And he opened his mouth and he had like a golden cap, like in Europe they used to have. Today they make it out of white plastic or porcelain, a golden...very deep in his mouth. I even remember it was the left side and he opened his mouth and I saw it. He was very angry and he said to me, stop crying. We don't have peace here. We don't have menucha here. Stop crying. And then I woke up. When I woke up I felt like a little easier. He didn't say anything but stop crying. We don't have menucha here. We don't have peace. From that day on I stopped crying.

**INT:** When you were going to cry, did you think of this dream?

**SURLK:** No, never. I cried for them. And from that day on I just stopped crying. It came like a natural thing. I was more peaceful.

**INT:** Did you feel they were in a good place?

**SURLK:** Of course. But my father and my mother were disturbed. Why did he say Klorale, we don't have menucha here. He didn't say I don't have peace here but we don't have peace here. Stop crying.

**INT:** Is that a source of menucha for you?

**SURLK:** Yes. Sure. They are in a better place.

**INT:** Okay. Let's go now to where you left me off. You came into the house after the long walk-

**SURLK:** After the long walk and after the tracks and after the tzorus, seeing German soldiers, being afraid because not having the passport. I came to the house and she was crying. She was laying on the floor and crying. And she was very happy to see me. So the story started from Berishis, from the beginning because as I told you, when we came from Lemberg to that city, like I gave you an example of Camden and Philadelphia, when I came to that and when we were sitting, I was sitting there for a long period. The last time I gave you the dates approximately, and then come back to my city. I told you I went with him and she was waiting in the house and sitting there for two, three months, maybe even longer, till about April, May. No, till about maybe longer than that. Maybe two, three months before the end of the war. The war ended around 1944 by us. It was longer. By him it took till Pesach, 1945. It's a new story. It's the same repetition. They put me under the shafer, under the closet in the corner. They had a deal with



these Gestapo downstairs which wasn't so bad as in their house in Chovorow, because there I was practically under one roof with them with an open door, not even closed. Maybe sometimes, once in a while, she closed the door but ninety-nine percent it was open.

**INT:** Did she give you instructions how to act?

**SURLK:** No, I was in the morning, early in the morning, when they were still asleep, the two of them who were constantly on their service at the railroad station. She didn't give me instructions, no. I knew everything by myself. I was so smart then. I wish I would be today. Everything was like an engineer, you know, every little move, every little wink had to be calculated over and over. But when they caught me sitting with her, this was unexpected. This was something, and maybe this was a good omen. Later on I will tell you why. So it started the same thing with the shafer, with the closet. In Chovorow I was sitting under the closet from early morning until late in the evening, but here I could move around a little bit because it was like a railroad station. You didn't have any houses vis-a-vis. The building was standing by itself, like a big building.

**INT:** And where was the Gestapo?

**SURLK:** They were downstairs with their offices. They had the offices. The controlled-it was a big junction.

**INT:** So you weren't concerned that they would hear you walking around or two people walking around?

**SURLK:** How did I walk? They couldn't know if one walked or two walked. First of all, European houses are differently built. They are more solid. They were standing for hundreds of years, and especially a public building like that was even more heavily constructed. No. And then I had house shoes. You think I had big heels or leather shoes? No. I was walking with little house shoes.

**INT:** Did you look out the window?

**SURLK:** Not through the window. No. I was standing from the window maybe five feet.

**INT:** And you looked out.

**SURLK:** A little bit. When I was sitting here and the window was there it was already too close. I was afraid that somebody might from far...you never know. You were afraid to breathe.

**INT:** And what did you talk to her about? Anything different? What kind of mood was she in? What was it like dealing with her?

**SURLK:** She was already tired. She was tired. He was tired. The children were tired. Nothing was working according to a plan. I don't even remember how the children went to school. Today I don't even remember how they went to school because the boy was nine years old.

**INT:** Was there enough to eat?

**SURLK:** For me it was always enough. Like bread and milk and piece of cheese. This we all had. And a piece of chicken or meat, but meat is cheaper in Europe. I didn't want to eat. In the beginning I was striking. I didn't eat meat. I didn't eat anything that was cooked, but after a while she cried to me and she said-you are giving the verdict for us yourself because if you are not eating you will be undernourished. We cannot go to a doctor. We cannot take a medicine. We cannot do with you if you get pneumonia from sitting. She was afraid that I might get pneumonia. So I had to eat, but I ate sparingly. What was I? A hundred and ten pounds, a hundred and fifteen pounds.

**INT:** Did they have ration cards?

**SURLK:** No. He didn't have ration cards. It wasn't rationed then. It was before the German army entered we had rations, but not by the Germans, no. They didn't have time for that. It was not-you couldn't buy for money period. But somehow, on the black market, if you had the money you had everything, and I knew my parents are so rich and I knew the places where they hid the money, gold mostly, the currency was in gold like gold dollars. I took out a lot of twenty dollars in gold, rubles, Russian rubles, French francs. We had a lot. So I knew, but I couldn't have that. I couldn't buy, and they didn't even count on that.

**INT:** But you had it in your dress or somewhere?

**SURLK:** No, no. It was in our house in the other place.

**INT:** Oh, back there.

**SURLK:** But I knew exactly where it was.

**INT:** The husband was in the train station and he saw soldiers coming up and back and he listened to news, was he hopeful or not hopeful?

**SURLK:** Yeah, he knew. Yeah. Yeah. At the end. We knew the war was on our side. We knew that we will be victorious. The question was when. If we will survive till the end. That was the question. But we knew. Of course we knew that it's not going right. They saw the soldiers coming from the front. He saw the military taking back the artillery and everything. They knew it. Not everything could be put on the train. There were infantry. It was only a question when.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** So I was sitting behind that closet again and as I told you before, you were waiting for a miracle, and this was shlepping a nice few months until about...in the middle of August we notice a big change. We notice politically that it didn't go like they wished. Soldiers were coming, I didn't see it. They were hungry. They were dirty. They flew them back. The heavy, bandaged injured soldiers they took back. The officers were going around with rifles like without a kup (head). They didn't know. So we thought now is the end.

**INT:** What was his reaction to Germans, to Deutschen?

**SURLK:** Oh terrible. They didn't like them.

**INT:** Why do you think that was?

**SURLK:** Why should they like them? They didn't do anything good for them. What did they accomplish? What did they have more by the Germans than by the Russians? Nothing. Shlepped away a lot of Poles to the concentration camps. Not Auschwitz, but labor camps, to Germany to work in factories. Now was the question what shall they do with me in case we have to run.

**INT:** From whom?

**SURLK:** They bombarded.

**INT:** The Allies were bombing.

**SURLK:** The Allies from one side and the Germans were defending themselves, so they shoot up the missiles, whatever. Bombardment.

**INT:** You may have to move out of the way, move back, because the Russians were coming.

**SURLK:** No, there was no back. I couldn't go back. Where shall I go, from Camden to Philadelphia? It was a little town.

**INT:** No, but if the Russians were coming and-

**SURLK:** Oh, they were pushing. They were pushing.

**INT:** That's what I mean.

**SURLK:** We heard that they came already very close and then they pushed them back again, but the question is if we will have to run from that building. Where shall we go? They were not afraid, but what will be with me? If they see a new face...The time was very hard. Every hour counted. And one day, it was a few days before the Russians came in again, he came in and he said we have to run from here. We cannot stay in that building. Downstairs these officers are meshuga, completely meshuga. Scared. Scared. What shall we do? We have to go. We cannot go back to my city. We cannot stay here. We have to go to a village. And while we were making these plans how to go, the army was prepared-everybody of the German army was prepared to leave the place. It was like an anarchy almost. One day he came in and he said let's go. All of us. He had to wait, of course, downstairs, because in case some Germans will come in and ask him for a few things, but Mrs. Stipolova, the children and me, we had to go. So I got dressed and she got dressed and the children, whatever we took, I don't remember. We came out of the house. They didn't have already in their kup (head) to look for Jews. This problem was over. On the contrary, later we heard that there was an order not to shoot any more Jews, but if they did it they did it. Who would know?

**INT:** Did you know that when you were leaving?

**SURLK:** No. No. We heard it later, weeks later.

**INT:** You were still afraid when you left.

**SURLK:** Of course. I was Jewish. So we left. We left the building in a hurry with her and the children and we went to the first village.

**INT:** Did she tell you what she was going to do?

**SURLK:** We didn't talk. Let's go. Let's run.

**INT:** And how did you get there?

**SURLK:** We walked.

**INT:** Do you remember the walk? Tell me about the walk. Do you remember the walk?

**SURLK:** The walk-it was a terrible thing the walk. It's a nice few kilometers, you know.

**INT:** Did you see German soldiers? What did you see-do you remember?

**SURLK:** No, I can't recall now. When we came to the village we entered a house and we told them-she told them that her husband is a director of a station, the railroad station, and we would like to stay like a day over here till it will be settled.

**INT:** Why did she pick that house?

**SURLK:** We didn't have any addresses. We didn't know people. We just went into a house. Just like that. You must remember, I wasn't looking like a Jewish kid. I was blond, blue eyes. So when we came in, the lady said we should like hide. They will be in a room. We will be in a room. But suddenly the German soldiers started to run around with guns in their hands. What they were looking for was a deserter, deserters of the army, because some of them were afraid so maybe they are hidden. As I was sitting with this lady, we were sitting on a bed with the children-(end of tape 7, side 1) They were looking-didn't say nothing, but Mrs. Stipolova knew German and she said, [words in German] Nobody from your people is here. And they were looking under the closets, under here, they were looking all over. And they just disappeared. It took a nice few hours. I cannot recall today if we stayed overnight. Sometimes I think we stayed overnight. Sometimes I think it was like in the morning we ran and it was towards evening. I cannot remember how long we stayed.

**INT:** When you said she wanted to hide you, why would she want to hide you?

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

**INT:** You were Poles as far as she knew, right?

**SURLK:** Who?

**INT:** When you went to this lady's house.

**SURLK:** Oh no. She didn't want to hide us. She wanted to hide our family, not me.

**INT:** Even the family. Why?

**SURLK:** There wasn't why because the front is on the station, because we saw already in the next village, she said other Russian soldiers. The Russian army is very close. It was fire. It was an anarchy. It was a no man's zone. What will she accomplish not to let us in.

**INT:** No, but when you said hide I was wondering-

**SURLK:** She was afraid not to let us in because in case the army will come, the Russian people will say she didn't let us in. She had to let us in. And then it was towards like evening. Somebody came in from her family and they said the German army disappeared. They ran away. The Russians are on the outskirts of the village.

**INT:** How did you react to what happened? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** No, I did not react. I didn't say a thing. I knew that my problems will start from the moment the Russians will come in. I was afraid because the Russians were against the capitalists. I was afraid that I will come out and I will not see anybody, which took place, and I didn't have anybody. Nothing. I wasn't happy.

**INT:** You weren't happy?

**SURLK:** No. I knew that I will come home and I will see...I didn't even know that it was so bad that in our city only seventeen people will survive. This I couldn't imagine.

**INT:** But you didn't think the Russians will kill you like the Germans?

**SURLK:** They would not kill me, but I will tell you later, the next day what happened.

**INT:** Okay. Go ahead.

**SURLK:** He came also in, her husband, and we all went to my city, to Chovorow, but I was staying in the house. I didn't move freely around. I was waiting. We were waiting for twenty-four hours till everything will settle, till the army will open their offices. They'll make sure no Germans are in. The next day, after like twenty-four, thirty hours-

**INT:** In that house will those people?

**SURLK:** With my people. With the Stipolovas. With the children.

**INT:** Oh, you already left?

**SURLK:** We left the village.

**INT:** How did you go? How did you go back?

**SURLK:** He came in from the station and he said that the Russian army took over the station.

**INT:** So how did you go back, by the train?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** You took a train back to your town.

**SURLK:** They took me with the train to their house and we came into Chovorow.

**INT:** And you didn't look around? You went right to the house.

**SURLK:** We went to the house. No, they still kept me hidden. We went to the house. They were very happy, of course. We decided that the next day we will go out and see what's what, what's going on. In the meanwhile he went out. He came back and he said that he heard this family is alive, the Habers. He said that he heard that two people, two girls, older girls that were caught to be shot are also alive and this is the lady that I am in contact with still. Her sister passed away a few years ago but she is still...she comes to me for every holiday. Lately, the last year, she's a little bit sick. Not a little bit, she has arthritis. She cannot move so she's afraid of the steps. She lives in Borough Park.

**INT:** Was he looking for Yidden, Mr. Stipolova, to tell you?

**SURLK:** Yah. He came in and he said that these people came out and everybody is already in their houses. And I went also out with her. And we saw the Russian soldiers and of course we were very, very happy, and I knew how to talk Russian so I met an officer in the army, a soldier, an officer-do I remember today, and I said to him in Russian that you know, Hitler was very bad. He treated everybody bad and especially the Jews. This was the first Russian soldier that I talked to. And he said-Yivrei-in Russian, a Jew is a Yivrei-and he said, Yivrei, [Russian words]. Jews...in German you say (German words). It means is a very shrewd people they are. They don't want to work. They just want to eat. Can you imagine that impression that it made on me? He didn't know I am Jewish. That was after so many tears, after such tragedies, this was the first Russian soldier that I met.

**INT:** What did you say to him?

**SURLK:** Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. I was afraid to say a thing. I came back. We went back and I said so what's the use of staying alive? But you forget. You forget. Oh, he's an anti-Semite but the government is not like that.

**INT:** Did they have moreh (fear) from the Russian soldiers in any way?

**SURLK:** Us?

**INT:** Yes. The Poles. Was anybody afraid?

**SURLK:** The Poles and the Ukrainians weren't happy.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because they rather would like the Germans than the Russians. What do they need the Russians for?

**INT:** The Poles would rather have the Germans?

**SURLK:** Oh yeah. Sure. There is nobody to loot from, nobody to shoot. No matter how bad it was in Russia, it wasn't as bad like by Hitler. So slowly we got adjusted to the idea that we are freed. Next day I went out. I saw these two sisters. I saw the other family. People saw me. They cried. One girl thought that my parents are alive because my mother was such a smart woman and she said "are your parents alive? Your two sisters?" She couldn't believe it. And then I said, "So Ita, how did you survive the war?" She was with a family, the Haber family, who she married later. He was actually her chassan (fiancé) so he hid her with the whole family, so she said by Mr. Pietrzak. He saved us all in a cellar. They dug a hole.

**INT:** Did you know who he was?

**SURLK:** Yah, sure. She took me there. A grave is much more comfortable. This was a hell of a hole. Like here you have these materials, you have these tools, you build something. There you just dug a big hole in the earth.

**INT:** In the basement of their house?

**SURLK:** It wasn't even his house. To this day, I cannot imagine how they stayed there alive because he was a tenant in a house and a family lived-like a duplex-and a family lived above them. And when I see her, today she's still alive, and I say to her, I say Helu, how did you all survive? There was a mother, four brothers, Samuel, Naftoli, Mendel-five brothers and a mother. And a wife of the oldest brother with a little daughter and two, three other people. I said she and the other, how did you survive? She said I don't know. How did you breathe? She said we made like a hole in the wall and air came in. How did you use the facilities? They don't know. I don't know. Food-he brought them a piece of bread, a piece of potato.

**INT:** For all those people.

**SURLK:** Yah. A boy, he was single. He was a Pole. He was a friend of one of the Mr. Habers.

**INT:** Why did he do it?

**SURLK:** I don't know. They were very, very close and he was also close with that girl, with the lady that survived. He was a very good friend of her brother so he came into her house. The other

Mr. Haber-he's still alive. He was the best friend of him. So because of that. I don't know. There is a very interesting example and before I mention it, maybe I should talk it over with you. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Say his name please.

**SURLK:** No, I can't.

**INT:** Please say his name.

**SURLK:** His name is Henrik, like Henry, Henrik in Polish, Pietrzak.

**INT:** How old was he when he did this?

**SURLK:** He was maybe thirty years old, maybe thirty-two.

**INT:** He had a wife and children?

**SURLK:** No. He was single.

**INT:** And he lived by himself?

**SURLK:** He lived by himself. I told you. It was in a duplex. He was a tenant. Upstairs somebody lived. I knew who, somebody lived, and he was living on the first floor and he dug that hole with the other people, with the Habers, with the Jews, and this was according to a plan where they would sit because how I went in today, I imagine, she said, I just wanted you to see where we were and I didn't realize because I am like a fearful person, and she said "come with me." There was a big opening. They already opened it. And I went in on a ladder, like a man-made ladder, downstairs, down and I said "so where do I go from here" and she said "that's the place" and I said "that cannot be." And you know, one of their brothers, of the Habers brothers, not the oldest, this Munio, Mendel, second to the oldest died there. And he was laying-they dug deeper and they put him in and they covered him. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? To be a mother and the brothers and the three ladies and another girl, I remember, not from our city. She was related to them.

**INT:** How long were they in that hole?

**SURLK:** Oh, they were a long time. 1943 was Judenfrei. A year and a half maybe. So I said to her you lived here? And she said yes. I said how could you live here. She said I don't know.

**INT:** What happened to the Pole?

**SURLK:** A few times she went up, this Hela. She went up. She doesn't come here but I talk on the telephone. We just talked last week. And he also, her husband, Mr. Haber. They went up two, three times. They don't have children. They didn't want maybe children. They went through so



much. They wanted to stop with them. Not right either. Amram's mother, you know, Yocheved (Biblical reference to somebody who had children in Egypt even though the times were bad).

**INT:** Were they religious people?

**SURLK:** They are maybe not observant as I am or other frum people, but they are Yiddishe people. We all put on tefillin, kashrus, Shabbos. Who wasn't religious?

**INT:** Now, I mean.

**SURLK:** Now? As they get older...they have a kosher kitchen with Shabbos. I never was by them on Shabbos and when she talks to me she's smart enough to cover if they do something on Shabbos but I know he goes to shul now for the minyan.

**INT:** What happened to the Pole?

**SURLK:** This Pietrzak, Henrik Pietrzak, had a motorcycle and he wanted to go from our city to another city. I don't know why. I don't know...just maybe for a ride. Who knows? And on the way there was a mishmash. The Russian army took him for a spy. They shot him.

**INT:** The Russian army shot him.

**SURLK:** Yah. Soldiers shot him. Who asked questions? They had to have a tribunal for that?

**INT:** When did that happen after the war?

**SURLK:** A few months.

**INT:** Did they have a funeral for him in the town, do you remember?

**SURLK:** Who knows if they even brought him?

**INT:** Did you know the parents? Did they know his parents?

**SURLK:** I didn't. They probably knew.

**INT:** All right. You went out from there. When did you start to look for your house?

**SURLK:** Now the tragedy that happened to the Stipolovas. I must tell you. I told you in the beginning that he was in the Polish army. He was a big patriot and he went to London with the Polish underground.

**INT:** The free Polish army was in London.

**SURLK:** Shakorsky. General Shakorsky. He went with them to London and he stayed there. After the Germans occupied our part, he came back. In the eyes of the Russians he was an enemy.

**INT:** Because when they were there-

**SURLK:** We were occupied from 1939 till '41. He left to London with the underground. He came back with the German army. She stayed. He's a spy in their eyes.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** After a few months, on a nice day-it was still warm I remember, the Russians came and they arrested him.

**INT:** Did he have any idea he was in danger?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** None of his friends were arrested or anybody that did what he did?

**SURLK:** I don't know about his friends.

**INT:** So what happened to him?

**SURLK:** They took him away to a big city, to Lvov. I went with her. I vouched. I said what he did to Jewish people. In general, very fine, very good. If only you could help. I told them that I am a survivor because of them. We saw him once. This I arranged when I went. I don't remember if other people went but she said she would like to see a higher authority of the prison. He was put in a prison. So once we had to be sure that he is there so they said he is. She said how can I believe you? Maybe he is not. So they took him from one corner of the corridor, of the hall, to the next, so we saw him, but he was like sad. We saw him from far and then we knew that he is alive.

**INT:** Did he see you?

**SURLK:** Yah. We didn't talk. We couldn't talk.

**INT:** But he saw you.

**SURLK:** He saw me. He saw her. What happened we don't know, if there was a trial, if there was not a trial. He was taken to Siberia and I heard, she heard, I heard that on the way to Siberia he got sick on the train and he passed away. A young person.

**INT:** When did you find that out?

**SURLK:** Later. Months later. So she was left with two children, orphans, a widow, a young widow, me. It wasn't right, I must tell you, but I didn't want to stay with goyim. No matter what they did to me. We had such an implanted not hatred, chas v'sholom, (G-d forbid) but antagonism against goyim and when we saw what they did to us I didn't want to stay with them, but I couldn't say I don't want to stay. Even when he was still alive in the first few months. I

used to go in the morning to these two sisters. They lived in the Jewish quarter. And I stayed for a nice few hours and when I came back I saw that they weren't so pleasantly surprised.

**INT:** What was the expectation, that you were going to remain?

**SURLK:** No, chas v'sholom.

**INT:** Not by you, by them.

**SURLK:** No. If you stay with people for years and you just came out then you run to your Jews. It's not right either. But I was smart enough to do it slowly, slowly, slowly. And I said to her that after all, I must look for a future. Where will I find a future? Only among Yidden. And I was afraid. I remember I once went to a little store. It was after we were liberated. As I went in, I saw like a nice bag on these two horses. They had like these, you know, horse and buggy like they have here in the city and you take a ride. I saw and I had like two braids like a shiksa and somebody came out of that wagon and came up to me, a nice person. I didn't know it was a Jew. He didn't look Jewish. And he asked me-he came right to me when I was stepping into the store and he says to me, are you Jewish? So I said to him what's the difference?

**INT:** Did he look like a Jew to you?

**SURLK:** He?

**INT:** Yeah, or you didn't know? When he asked you. Did you think he was a Yid or not?

**SURLK:** I think yes.

**INT:** And you still hesitated.

**SURLK:** No, I knew he was Jewish.

**INT:** Oh, you knew he was Jewish. So what did you say?

**SURLK:** I knew and I was afraid of a stranger. I don't know. What do you mean you go up to somebody else, a young girl, and ask if she's Jewish? I was so afraid. So I went into the store and when I came out he was still outside. He said I came for the day here but I am going back to Drohovicz. It was a bigger city. But he stayed that night. He just wanted to know whether I am Jewish. He stayed that night in a little hotel and in the evening...and I went away. I was so afraid. And I went to these girls' house and I told them, you know, I met somebody who was nicely dressed, like an intellectual person, and he asked me if I am Jewish, but I was so afraid I didn't say yes. They didn't think that I did the wrong thing, that I gave the wrong answer. Of course, it's still so fresh everything. In the evening, he came to these girls. He asked around if there are other Jews here so they told him here, here, here, and he came to them. No, he came to another person and he said I met here a girl with braids and I asked her if she's Jewish and she didn't answer me. She didn't say yes, she didn't say no. It was more no than yes. So they said, oh, I know where you can find her. She is in these girls' house. So he went to that Mr. Kanner. A young boy. Went with him to the girls' house and he said maybe you know and they said, one

sister said yes, I know. It's Chaya'le. Oh, where can I find her? She said why do you need her? Oh, just I wanted like an acquaintance.

**INT:** How old was he?

**SURLK:** He? He was older than you.

**INT:** Thirty? Forty? How old?

**SURLK:** In his thirties. And somebody knocked at our door. I came out. These two girls were with the person and I knew right away and I said what is it? She said, this is a professor, a math professor, and he would like to know if you are Jewish. And I said, what's the question? So why didn't you say that you are Jewish? Because I am afraid. I don't know you. I don't want to talk to strangers on the street. I am afraid. So he was working at the head of a big accounting firm in Drohovicz, but this is to show you how after that we were still afraid to talk to people.

**INT:** What was going on in the house with you and her, you and Mrs. Stipolova? How was that going?

**SURLK:** It was very nice. It was nice. It was such a close relationship. Not a mother but almost. Like a sister. She was such a good, an angelic person. Such good character, good upbringing, good manners. Czech. She was Czech. Like Madeline Albright. (Laughter) Czech people are very fine people.

**INT:** Was she talking to you about your future?

**SURLK:** No. We had time. But I wasn't comfortable in a goyishe house. Before, it was my sanctuary. It was my everything. It was my shield. And now it suddenly became a goyishe house.

**INT:** I asked you a couple of times but I want to ask you again. When did you begin thinking about going back to your house and looking around? We didn't talk about that yet.

**SURLK:** Right away when we were liberated.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** I told you about twenty-four hours later I went out.

**INT:** And you went to where?

**SURLK:** I went to that place where my parents lived, where these two girls lived.

**INT:** Oh, they were living in your parents-

**SURLK:** No. They were living in their house. They went right away to their house. My parents' house was occupied. It was a beautiful house.

**INT:** So you didn't walk into your parents' house?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** First of all, I knew that somebody was there, that there was a family.

**INT:** Who was living there?

**SURLK:** There was a big question who it was. When we left, when my parents left, they gave this house to a Ukrainian family. He was the head accountant. And this Ukrainian family lived for a few months, but after that, (Yiddish words) this Ukrainian family left. (End of tape 7, side 2)

**INT:** So they gave it to Ukrainians.

**SURLK:** When my parents left for a while, a Ukrainian family lived there. Then they gave it to a Russian. How was he a Russian? He came, in 1939 and '41, he came with the army, with the Russian army. He stayed the whole occupation with the Germans. They said he was a spy later. Then the Russians came again, in 1944, and they didn't arrest him. So what was it in your eyes? Collaboration, no? Not a plain goy, besserer menschen (upper-class people), with a wife and a child. And they occupied this house. When I heard these rumors that he might be a spy, I knew that it will be a hard time to push him out and I didn't want to stay in such a big house. Who will need this? I was afraid even to go in, to stay an hour. But I had to go in. I had to take my things out. Another plan. Another story. I had to persuade the authorities that they should give me downstairs a room. I didn't even ask for a room. I asked for a kitchen, for the big kitchen, beautiful kitchen. That's enough for me. I put in a bed.

**INT:** What are they going to use as a kitchen?

**SURLK:** They had upstairs probably.

**INT:** Okay, so you went to the authorities.

**SURLK:** So I went with them to the authorities. I could go. Now I am a big talker. I didn't know even how to talk.

**INT:** Who did you go with?

**SURLK:** With these girls.

**INT:** How old were they?

**SURLK:** They were older girls. She helped me also, Mrs. Stipolova. I didn't want to show her that I want to run away, that I want to leave them.

**INT:** So how did you explain it to her that you wanted to go?

**SURLK:** I explained to her. She knew that I have some things I want to take out and I want to give her a certain part and for myself.

**INT:** You told her that?

**SURLK:** Yah.

**INT:** During the war, before the war?

**SURLK:** No. During the war we didn't talk about money. She didn't want even to hear about money. She didn't do it for money. Not money. What's money? Money was floating in the streets like water. People had jewelry. Ten thousand dollars-there were rich Jews that took out to let them in sleep a night. So they gave me the permission and I took that room. Here we will stop. Here I will stop because it's complicated. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** This is October 1997 and we're continuing with SurLK. I wanted to ask you-we were at the point where you moved into the kitchen. You received permission to move into the kitchen of a house that was occupied, a big house that was occupied by the family of Russians.

**SURLK:** This was a Russian person. They did not leave while the Russians left. He did not leave. He stayed and he was present at the occupation of the Nazis, the Nazi occupation. What he did during that time I really don't know, but when I came, he was already put in in our house.

**INT:** Did he know you from before the war?

**SURLK:** No. He was a Russian. How could I have known who he is?

**INT:** So you came to the kitchen. What was that like? You didn't have a bed there? You made a bed? What did you do?

**SURLK:** It was like a small, white bed, I think. Maybe it wasn't. I can't remember the details.

**INT:** Did you go and meet the Russian when you came?

**SURLK:** I don't even remember how in the world I got in because maybe I went to the office of the city, City Hall, and told them that this is my house. I wasn't so anxious to have the house, to tell you the truth, because I would never have stayed in that house by myself. It was very dangerous. But they told me how many rooms I need and I said I just want the kitchen. No, actually, I must have said that I want the house because I had a lot of things in that house hidden. So I probably...and they didn't give me the permission. The way it looks after fifty years to me is they didn't give me the permission. A little girl-they would give me the house back? And they told me...so maybe I asked them if I can have a room. I was very anxious to have the kitchen, because in the kitchen I had a lot of money in the wall, which I found later, jewelry and silver.

**INT:** You put it there or your parents?

**SURLK:** No, my parents, but I knew exactly where. I knew the place. And then I had, while you go upstairs, behind the steps, you have a big space, an open space, and we put an enormous amount of good things there and we put the bricks, you know, and we smeared it like paint and it looked like another wall. Who would have thought that there is something behind?

**INT:** But that wasn't your part of the house? That wasn't in the kitchen part.

**SURLK:** That was when you went out from the kitchen to the hallway. When you went with the steps up because it was not like a living room in America you go up. You have to go out into a hallway and then go up the steps. So I was interested in these corners. I was also interested to have a place.

**INT:** Do you remember coming to the house the first day and meeting these people? Did you meet them? Did you just walk in?

**SURLK:** For me, I was lucky that they lived there because if there would have been the Ukrainians from the same city or if there would have been from the same city I wouldn't have, wouldn't have, would have maybe the money. Before I started there, I must tell you that when we left, when they shot my parents and then, of course, I was hidden, there was a Ukrainian couple, not poor people, that they put them in our house so they started to look around and to spy around if they could find something in the house. They knew that every Jew if could, they did not know that it would take so long, has hidden something in the house. And they started to look and they looked. They started from the cellar and you know the beams. They were iron beams, modern house with iron beams. And they started to look under these beams and they found in one place and they found in a second place. They were searching probably days and night looking for it, but I found a lot of gold and a lot of money and a lot of jewelry that they couldn't retrieve.

**INT:** So you were in the kitchen and you looked. At night you went? When did you go?

**SURLK:** No, during the day. No, at night. I came in and I don't know if they gave me the permission I said, but they gave me the kitchen. They told him. So he didn't have a beraira (choice). What choice did he have? He said okay.

**INT:** While you were there you looked around.

**SURLK:** While they were there I looked around. I knew where to look. I had to look at that wall and see that that wall is all right, so I knew my things are there.

**INT:** And what did you do with the stuff when you got it? When you took it, did you hide it somewhere else? What did you do with it?

**SURLK:** I had there two-one is still alive-two elderly girls. They stayed alive. Their story in itself is unbelievable. They lived in the forest with another boy, a Jewish boy that they knew the parents. The names were Perel and Lea Mark. They knew me very well. They are much older.

They knew me as a very little baby, as a small child, as an infant, and my younger sister was acquainted with their sister and, you know, the town wasn't too big so they knew my parents, they knew everybody.

**INT:** They were married?

**SURLK:** No. Single. Maybe thirty years old, maybe thirty-two. No, I will tell you exactly. She was about thirty-two, thirty-three years old then.

**INT:** They lived home with their mother?

**SURLK:** She was about thirty-five years old. One was maybe thirty-five, one was thirty-four. When they declared Judenfrei in our city, they ran into the forest, because one of the Jewish persons, his name was Kalisch-I don't remember the first name-he said that they built in the forest like a bunker and for a certain amount of money they will take the people in. Anyway, her mother, her two sisters, a niece, and them two went to that bunker.

**INT:** They were not married.

**SURLK:** No, but they had a married sister. I think the brother-in-law wasn't there. He wasn't with them. And a little girl, Gisele. I remember her like today. A small girl, maybe three years old. Her mother. Very fine people. Poor people, but very fine. Very honest people. They went to that forest to be hidden. Nobody knew how long it would take. We don't expect it to take years. And while they were hidden in that forest, somebody ran in after a few weeks and he said we must run because the German Gestapo is after us. They know where we are hidden. So they started to run away in the forest.

**INT:** From the bunker. They came out from the bunker and they ran.

**SURLK:** Her mother and her sister with her little girl, they ran into a different direction. The sister who was acquainted with my sister, a little girl, ran in another direction, and they two older, the two sisters, ran in another direction. So the mother and the daughter and the grandchild, they were shot a few meters farther up. They shot after them. Her sister was caught by the Germans, by the Ukrainian militia, and who knows what they did to her. Who knows? They brought her to another city, to a small city, Rohatan is the name of the city. And they brought her there to be shot in the local police station, Jewish police station. Downstairs, in the cellar. The two sisters that I am talking about, one is still alive. One passed away, died here in America about twelve, thirteen years ago. They had heard that their sister Sally was taken by the militia and they wanted to shoot her, the Germans. They started to look for protectia, you know. Maybe money, maybe this, maybe that. And a lot of people tried to discourage them not to shoot her, but it didn't help. They shot her.

**INT:** You said a Jewish police station?

**SURLK:** It was like Judenrat. Judenrat is the central police station.



**INT:** So there were Jews in the police station.

**SURLK:** Of course. But the Jews didn't shoot people.

**INT:** Now these two sisters now were alive.

**SURLK:** These two sisters were alive.

**INT:** By themselves.

**SURLK:** By themselves. But it happened that a few weeks later this must have happened in February, was Judenfrei. This must have happened maybe in March, a few weeks later, and after a few weeks later, in ghetto, was also liquidated and they ran. We did they go? Back to our city, to Chovorow. Into the forest. They went to a Ukrainian family. Their name was Kossovsky. They are probably now in Gan Eden and they gave them a piece of bread and they told them, you know, there is another Jew. His name is Yoseph Schein. He comes over here for bread. Maybe we could bring you together with him so you will be a little bit heimishe. Of course. So she arranged a meeting between them and the Jewish boy, who lives in a village. Very intelligent, educated person. College graduate. He was even a distant relative of mine. Tall. Six feet, maybe taller.

**INT:** Now where was he staying? The Germans were all there.

**SURLK:** Judenfrei. There's no staying.

**INT:** He was in the forest.

**SURLK:** In the forest under the sky.

**INT:** So the two sisters were in the forest and he's in the forest.

**SURLK:** She brought them together.

**INT:** And now they came to the house.

**SURLK:** Kossovsky, the Ukrainian, brought them together in a day or two. And they decided that once a week-they had some money-once a week he would go to the Kossovsky family and bring back like three breads and maybe three, four bottles of water. They cut up the bread into small slices, they divided a slice in three and they ate in the morning, lunchtime, in the evening and they had a little bit water, like three, four sips. This was about for a few months. But then he said maybe he would go to his village. The name of the village was Ginetrov. He said maybe I should go and I should...he wanted cigarettes to smoke. Maybe I should go and they will give me, my people will give me something to eat, because the Kossovsky's-they were limited, you know. Even buying the bread, even preparing the water was a danger and then, after all, he came in once a week. They were angels. They were eager to help out. They were good people. But sometimes you saw the unhappiness that created-the situation itself created it. He had to go. And

he went to that village and he brought back some good things to eat. He gave them some money and he brought a lot of good things.

**INT:** How far away was it?

**SURLK:** It was like maybe six kilometers, five. It was not too far.

**INT:** It was Judenfrei that place.

**SURLK:** Oh yes. This was a long time. They concentrated from all the villages, they concentrated in one town, so it would be easier for them to work, the Germans, to bring us to the Final Solution. And he went. The next time he went, they gave him cigarettes. He bought it.

**INT:** These are Poles?

**SURLK:** Ukrainians. They gave him cigarettes, but they didn't give him the matches. And they gave him something to eat and they said next time we will prepare for you. Come next week. When he came back- this lady, who is still living, she comes to me for Succos, Chanukah, Purim, four times a year, but now she's fragile and sick and I go to her. I make her food. She has a daughter on Long Island but she's a teacher. She doesn't have time. So I prepare and my children, whoever goes to New York, I bought like a cooler for the summer and I send her kol tuv (all good things). I send everything. Sometimes I divide a bigger piece for her. She has money but...

**INT:** You talk to her on the phone?

**SURLK:** It cost me a fortune. The rabbi says he can't take it anymore. Really. A hundred dollars, ninety dollars. A lot of money.

**INT:** But you talk to her.

**SURLK:** Oh, three times a week, four times a week. And my thoughts-there's nothing that I expect her to do for me or I'd want her to do for me. I could use what I have in my house, you know, and she wasn't a wealthy lady to begin with, but I do it because I feel obligated. I will tell you why.

**INT:** So what happened to him?

**SURLK:** When he came back with the cigarettes without matches, she says to him, Yossele, [Yiddish words] I don't like it. He says, why? He probably forgot. She said, Yossele, I don't like it. They knew that you cannot buy matches. So they gave you the cigarettes without the matches? Oy, I am afraid. Don't go anymore. So he said, but we are hungry. We are thirsty and hungry. They were in the forest among the trees. No covering. Just winter coats, old winter coats that they ran away with. The snow was falling on them, five, six, seven, eight inches high. They were drenched when it was raining. They took out their coats and they put them on the trees to dry when the sun came out a little bit. Winter. In East Europe. Can you imagine the cold?

**INT:** What did they do at night?

**SURLK:** They slept. They had a big problem because the mice in the forest started to eat up their bread, so they had to take these pieces of bread and they hung it on a tree.

**INT:** So what happened, he went back?

**SURLK:** He went back. It was like two, three weeks. He went back and never came back to them.

**INT:** Did they find out what happened to him?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** They tortured him. They cut him up into pieces.

**INT:** The Germans were there waiting for him?

**SURLK:** No. The Ukrainians did it themselves. When he came in they started to beat him up and she tells me often. We talk about it. They cut him up into pieces.

**INT:** How does she know that?

**SURLK:** She knows.

**INT:** Why do you think they did that? They wanted to find out where he was staying?

**SURLK:** No, nothing. He was probably telling them in the forest. What do you mean why?

**INT:** But for a while they gave him things.

**SURLK:** A few weeks, that's all. For a while. They wanted to chap him arein (grab him). They wanted to catch him in. They didn't give him because they wanted him to survive. They knew he will come back.

**INT:** Just to kill him, for just to kill him.

**SURLK:** Yes. These Kossovsky's probably, the people who gave them bread, they probably told them what happened.

**INT:** So he never came back and they were in the forest.

**SURLK:** A year and a half in the forest, and they went every week, once a week, they both went. Not one, both, because what will happen will happen to both. They went to these Kossovsky's and she gave them-she told them what she heard about this Joe and she gave them

bread. They were crying with them. They gave them water and they went on, one week after another, one week after another.

**INT:** For money?

**SURLK:** They had money, yes.

**INT:** They gave them for money.

**SURLK:** They gave them but it was what it cost them. They didn't give them...you couldn't pay for such a piece of bread money. They didn't give them-they gave them a brocha (blessing). They are in Gan Eden with the biggest tzaddikim.

**INT:** Did you know these people, the Ukrainians?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** You knew them?

**SURLK:** I was little but I remember they came to us once.

**INT:** How old were they when this was going on, the Ukrainians? They were older?

**SURLK:** They were older people. They had their own children. I think she was a second wife, she told me, because he had a son from his first wife.

**INT:** What happened after the war with them, with the Ukrainians?

**SURLK:** Not after the war, but they had another Ukrainian lady, a husband, a wife, and she had a healthy daughter in the suburbs, you know, like they had a nice country house. A daughter and a son-in-law and a little mamzer, a bastard. They had a child.

**INT:** How old?

**SURLK:** The goyim. The Kashinsky's daughter. And they went to Mrs. Kashinsky. They had a lot of stuff there from the house that the Jewish people gave to the gentiles to hide for them, in case they will come back they should have something. We were so naive because we also had all over. So they went to Mrs. Kashinsky twelve o'clock at night and they wanted her to give them a few things, just a few things. First of all, a little bread maybe and then she should give them a few things that they will give to the Kossovsky's. She will sell it or she will have it, because the money was very scarce already. So she told them I prepared for you a nice package. Come next week. Also, this one who is alive, smart girl...the other one was like smart and talented with her own ideas. This one was like a quiet one but she knew more than the other one. She said to Perel, she said Peppy, I don't like that. She told us to come. She was afraid already what happened to Joe. And she said no...(End of tape 8, side 1)...six children. They had a store and they lost it and they didn't know what to do, so they made a candy store. Her mother made a candy store and they all worked in the candy store, but a nice candy store with ice cream also and a few tables

and her mother was a terrific baker and she baked like little potato kugels and other stuff and they also had a big house, so they put like two, three rooms for people who were traveling back and forth. Our city was a big junction. So they lived from that. It was a parnassah. That's what they did. They were nice people. The oldest brother was in Eretz Yisroel. He went on aliyah years ago. He just passed away a few years ago.

**INT:** So at this point, the younger one is telling...she said Perla, it's no good.

**SURLK:** She said to her, Pepe, I don't like it. She is a bandit. We must go. What shall we do? They knew that the front is coming closer, closer, closer. So the day that they were supposed to go they went to Mrs. Kashinsky. She told them on a Tuesday or on a Wednesday come. They went and while they were coming closer to her house, they heard already dogs barking all over. It took them a minute to realize that they are caught and in one second, from all over, German police, gestapo, Wehrmacht came out and Ukrainian police and they caught them, and they said to them that where did you go? And they told the police, the Germans, the Nazis, that we have our things in Mrs. Kashinsky's house and we went she should give us, we should be able to survive. So come with us. It was not far. They went over but it was very, very-in these few hours. You know it's just a matter of hours during a war. You cannot realize. They just don't go, they catch one city, because if they reinforce from behind, the armed forces, they go, and in these few hours they reinforced and they came not far from us, the Russians. And the Germans started to go back. And they said that in those times, that the Germans knew that the war was lost, so they had like a command, an order, not to shoot anymore. What do you mean they had an order not to shoot? You are always allowed to shoot a Jew. Who will take you to court? It's min hashamayim (from heaven). And they went in and they were sitting and in the other room are the Germans and eating and fressing, you know. They said to them, "Yes, Mrs. Kashinsky. What did you do to us?" So she said to me, you made me such a shame. Mrs. Kashinsky. What shame? She made like they are guilty. And they told the Germans that she took from them, that they brought a lot of stuff. Listen, what will they do to her? Nothing. And then they took them both and they closed them in the police station, in the German police station, because Judenfrei was a long time ago. Judenfrei was a year and a half ago. In February was Judenfrei. This was 1944. 1943, February was Judenrein and 1944, April, May-

**INT:** The Russians were coming across.

**SURLK:** The Russians started to come in. But then they went back and then they came stronger. They closed the door and they let them stay in their cell. The cell was empty. They closed the door, the German police, and they looked around and there was in the corner a man, a meshugana. They started to ask him something. A meshugana.

**INT:** A Yid?

**SURLK:** A goy. And then he started to bang on the door. The next morning he started to bang on the door, but in the meanwhile the whole city was almost in the hands of the Russians. Almost. So he was banging and the people came from the police station, from upstairs, came in to let him out. A meshugana. A goy. They opened the door and they stood behind the door a little

bit. When this person, the German, opened the door and the Ukrainians also were together with them, they didn't see anybody. They left the door open.

**INT:** But still Germans are there, all around still.

**SURLK:** Still Germans.

**INT:** The door was open.

**SURLK:** The door was open.

**INT:** What did they do?

**SURLK:** They went upstairs after a night. In the morning, I think, they went upstairs. No, before this happened, before they let them out, one of the German gestapo, Nazis, opened the door and took them out both. And he said your sister can stay here but you have to go to the forest and show me where you were hidden. So the younger sister, Lea, Lola, she said, I am not going without my sister. I am going with her. I am not going without her. So they both went to the forest. They showed them where they were hidden. And then one of the German police said to them-if I were you, I would run away now. You understand why he said that? You don't.

**INT:** I don't understand why he said it. No.

**SURLK:** He wanted to shoot them.

**INT:** While they were running?

**SURLK:** Sure. But this one is very smart. She said no, I'm not running. I'm not leaving my sister and she's not leaving me. We both go. I am not running. Whatever will happen...they were convinced that they are going to shoot them in the forest. But the Germans were already afraid. And she right away knew if they would have started to run, he would have shot them. They were spies, they were...he could have shot them for no reason. If he gave them an idea how to get rid of them on the legal way. So then he pushed them back into this cell, closed the door and then it was very, very quiet and he let out this meshugana. Very quiet. The whole night very quiet. They were hungry. Dying. Oh my gosh, I remember when I saw them I got so scared. Like skeletons. They went upstairs and there were already civil people upstairs. They said can we have something to drink or to eat. They gave them coffee with sugar, a piece of bread.

**INT:** Who were these? They were Ukrainians or Poles?

**SURLK:** The Ukrainians, the civil people, who came in, they were afraid because two kilometers farther you had already the Russians. And then they ate and we started to go towards the Russians. Slowly we see the houses and you heard shooting from all sides and then...even with the Russians it was a danger. They could have thought they are spies.

**INT:** What were they doing alive?

**SURLK:** They weren't acquainted yet with the tragedy that befall us. So they started to go with the soldiers. It was dangerous for two girls with soldiers but what can you do? What is there to do? And then the German army went out of the city. They were on the outskirts. The Russian...it's not so easy like I tell you but back and forth, and then they came back to our city, and when they came back to our city they went to their house. I cannot remember if somebody lived in their house, but even people heard, you know, when they took them to the forest to be shot actually. The general population thought that they are going to shoot them and when they took them and later on when they saw them, each one was saying Jesus and Mama mia. Resurrection. So they were very good to me and they said are you staying with these people, the Stipolova's? Are you staying with them? Sure I stayed with them. But I don't want to stay with goyim now. I don't like goyim and they don't like us. But I cannot run away because when you needed us you stayed with us, now you don't need us you run away? So I decided that for a while I will stay a whole day with them, with these two older girls, and they were to me not like sisters but like mothers. Both. And in the evening I went back to Mrs. Stipolova and to the children and we stayed together. She wasn't so happy with my leaving, but time takes over and you realize that you belong to them, not to you, so she had to make up her mind that I am a Jewish girl.

**INT:** So she was more connected to you than you were to her or no?

**SURLK:** No, I was connected. Fabulous person. She saved my life.

**INT:** She was like a Mama to you, a shtikel Mama?

**SURLK:** You mean the goyishe...

**INT:** Mrs. Stipolova.

**SURLK:** Yes, sure. My mother couldn't do that for me what she did. I got a call two weeks ago from her son, from her oldest son. His wife is dying and if I could send them right away \$2000. I said \$2000 I can't send you.

**INT:** What for, for medical?

**SURLK:** Yes. But I will send you right away. After I put down the receiver, my son went with a check to the post office, registered, sent them \$500. I'm thinking maybe today, maybe tomorrow, I'm going to call him. The rabbi wanted me I should call even before the holidays, Tuesday. I'm sending little by little, each time \$500. They are worth more than that.

**INT:** How old was the wife?

**SURLK:** He was married and he had a daughter and then he got divorced from his wife and he married another Polish lady, young lady, with a daughter. In the forties maybe.

**INT:** Did the two sisters ever see the Ukrainian lady that helped?

**SURLK:** Oh yes.

**INT:** What happened there.

**SURLK:** They were not...the other one didn't want to speak about openly because they'd be traitors for the Ukrainian people.

**INT:** They didn't want to let it be known that they helped Jews.

**SURLK:** No, not especially. No, it's an embarrassing thing to help the Jews. No. But they went to them and lots of people knew that they helped out. It was not only them. She helped out other people also. If a hungry person came in they gave them something. They were poor themselves, but whatever they had. Oh, they went through hell.

**INT:** How about Mr. Stipolova? Were you connected to him too? You were connected to him as well like a Tatte, sort of like you said Mama, or what?

**SURLK:** I was more with her than with him. He went away in the morning. He came back like after eight hours. He had his duties. So I didn't see him so much. But with her I was day and night, day and night. A whole day, a whole night. She didn't give her children a piece of cake because it was for me. But it's very, very seldom, very seldom. Maybe a few people had it as good as I had it, unless they married goyim, chalila (G-d forbid), that they converted. Who knows? Or you lived under Aryan papers. You had a passport. My passport was from 1942 and it was already 1944.

**INT:** You were all alone. You knew that your parents and your sisters-

**SURLK:** When I came out I realized that...not I realized. I knew it. I told you that I was in the company of a Jew.

**INT:** Could you have stayed with them in that town and lived with them, with Mr. and Mrs. Stipolova? Did they want you to? If you would have said you wanted to, would they have let you stay with them like a daughter.

**SURLK:** It couldn't be a daughter. I'm Jewish, they are Catholic. Couldn't be a daughter. But people knew that they rescued me, that they saved my life. But I couldn't have stayed with them. No. Absolutely not. The minute I saw a Jew I went back to them. I wanted to eat a piece of bread and just stay with my people.

**INT:** Did she ever say that you should stay with them, that maybe you'll convert.

**SURLK:** No, no, no. Never. Never mentioned it. She knew I wouldn't do that. I would not do that. I would do that if my parents, if I knew that I could buy the life of my parents, of my sister, I would convert. But like the Marranos. I wouldn't convert. If I knew that I would not be able to go back to the Jewish people, I wouldn't even convert for that reason. I'm reading now a book, The Crucified Jew. It's edited by an English writer but it's also from the Interfaith Institute, but it's very, very for Jewish. They have a special kapittel (chapter) on the Holocaust. We didn't



even know. I said to the rabbi last week when I came up reading this. I read it very, very slowly. It's hard for me to absorb these tzorus (tragedies). It's a terrible thing what happened to us during the millenniums. It's not years, it's not decades. Millenniums. Starts from 12 and 13 and 1400's.

**INT:** The Crusades.

**SURLK:** Terrible. I said to the rabbi, I said, you know, we don't even realize...I spoke to somebody who's very frum and I asked him if he read that and he said he has it and he's going to read it. So I said I don't know if it's permitted because it's edited by an Interfaith Institute. He said what does it have to do? They write our history.

**INT:** Did it change your mind about anything reading this?

**SURLK:** No. But it's horrible. There's horrible chapters. Horrible that we don't even realize. Last week I had a very big experience. It was chol hamoed and the rabbi received...I pull out the paper. The rabbi received a paper, the Algemeiner Journal. It's written in Yiddish. And it was very late and it was like ten after eleven, a quarter to eleven, and I went up and then I said to him-he was sitting and reading and I said go up. It's chol hamoed. We start to daven earlier. There's hallel, hoshonos. He says I will come up in a few minutes. And I see twelve o'clock he's not in so I got scared so then I heard he came up and he was already in bed and he said oy and oy and oy. I said what is the matter? You don't feel well? No, no. What is the matter? Vey, vey, our tzorus. So I said to him, what did you do downstairs? What did you read? He said I read how they liquidated the Kiev Jews is Babi Yar. I said now? At twelve o'clock at night? So he didn't sleep a whole night. He went around and looked out the window. So the next night I go to sleep and it was like five after eleven and I close the door and I turned off the lights. When I tell him to close this light and while I went in I see this picture with the mass grave and I took one look and I said oy, this is the article. Normally he doesn't leave it open I should see it, but he forgot and it was laying a whole day. I wasn't lazy. I went back to the kitchen, I put on my reading glasses and in Yiddish I'm not so fluent. And I started to read. I didn't tell him. The next day, and I was wandering from one window to the other and he says why are you so nervous? What happened? No, nothing. The next day I told him you know what? I read it. We only look for these shtiklech in the Jewish Press, in the Jewish Exponent.

**INT:** Why? Why do you think you do that if you're going to feel bad?

**SURLK:** I don't know. I don't know. I just feel good when I read it, you know. I don't allow myself the freedom of relaxing.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** We all feel guilty. All the survivors feel guilty. Didn't they tell you? We all feel guilty.

**INT:** That you should live.

**SURLK:** Why should this happen to them and not to me? Am I better than then? Why am I better? They were better than us a hundred percent. We're worse, because we survived to see the tzorus (tragedies). They didn't see. They just saw it. I was now at a survivor's funeral. Nobody

was there. Nobody. We were the only Jewish people. We took our grandson, we figured, maybe for a minyan. But we couldn't make goyim! His son married a goya (non-Jewess).

**INT:** She was a survivor and the son married-

**SURLK:** Yes. She sent him to Beth Jacob and everything didn't help. He married a goya. He had two children with her. She ran away somewhere. She was converted by Rabbi Yallis, but it didn't help. And the father was such a frumer Yid. Oh vey. And now I see Joe, Yossele, came. I said, Yossel, who are these people? My wife. [Yiddish words]. The wife, her mother, her brother and his wife. That's who were there. And me, the rabbi, me, my grandson. My son came a little late because he had an unveiling so he was rushing from Shalom to King David. He was very upset.

**INT:** The husband wasn't there from the wife who died?

**SURLK:** He died years ago, a few years ago.

**INT:** So what happened when you moved back into the house? You took the money. You found whatever was there.

**SURLK:** I moved in. It was like everything was just pretending. I didn't live there. I didn't sleep one night there. I was afraid, but they wouldn't have let me sleep together. But I was interested in getting out some things. Another story.

**INT:** What did you do when you found it? You took it back to where those two girls were?

**SURLK:** I didn't open. I had to have somebody to open it for me. It's a man's job.

**INT:** So who came?

**SURLK:** Another family, the only one that survived by that family. They all passed away. There were four brothers and a mother and the oldest brother's wife and a daughter and a girlfriend of the other brother that got married after the war. They were engaged. So one of these brothers who is no more here took that out for me from that...the oldest. The oldest who passed away in Israel was with his wife and child, so he took out from the room a lot of silver and money, dollars and money and gold.

**INT:** So what did you do with it?

**SURLK:** Listen, I didn't work. I had to live. I spent it.

**INT:** No, but I mean you brought it back to the house where those two girls-

**SURLK:** Yes, I brought everything back to these girls. Then they opened the things that I told you behind the steps. It was a hard job.

**INT:** But you took it out and you brought it back.

**SURLK:** I took it out. Yes, I don't know. It disappeared.

**INT:** What happened to it all?

**SURLK:** I gave here a little bit and there a little bit. I sold a little bit. I was young. I didn't know how to manage. I didn't know how to manage money. I didn't know from anything.

**INT:** So what did you do? You were living back with these girls?

**SURLK:** So I was living with the girls, and then we were living in parks, in fields. So then they said that the only solution is to go to another-not city but to another country.

**INT:** Who told you that?

**SURLK:** We heard. We heard people were coming, traveling, coming from Deutsch. I was traveling through a big city. Went a nice few times. I was traveling to get my passport with other people, and I knew I had relatives in Switzerland. I was looking for a way out to get to Switzerland. First of all, I sent them a telegram that I am alive.

**INT:** You knew the address?

**SURLK:** I knew that my uncle is the chief rabbi of Zurich, Dr. Taubis, so I wrote Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Taubis, Zurich. I knew Zurich is not such a big city.

**INT:** It was your mother's brother?

**SURLK:** My mother's sister.

**INT:** Sister married him.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Did you ever meet them before?

**SURLK:** Actually, we felt...like a parent she felt to me. I don't even know the relationship. My grandmother and her grandfather were brother and sister but it was such a relationship that we felt like she's everything to us.

**INT:** You had met them?

**SURLK:** I had met them because they used to live in Vienna and my uncle was in a big temple a rabbi and then Switzerland was looking for a chief rabbi and my uncle was ordered expulsion. A big talmid chochom and a big secular man. Both things.

**INT:** He went there before the war?

**SURLK:** Yah, because during the World War I his parents were living in Vienna and he went to seminary there, to the yeshiva, to the seminary then to the university and-(end of tape 8, side 2)

Each time that he came, he came for them, and he was in this course, a Talmudical course, with my aunt, and he said he knows big three ladies, intellectual on the level of a man in this world. One is my aunt, then it was Nechama Lazeroff who just passed away. There was another one that I don't remember. My aunt was the first. My aunt was sitting with a gemora. With a bible, a chumash, but with a gemora. I'll show you the picture.

**INT:** So you wrote them a letter.

**SURLK:** A telegram. And right away I got a telegram back that everything will be arranged. I was already in Prague, in Czechoslovakia, and they gave me a nice hotel and they were in the camps for the displaced persons. I slept with them. I stayed with them. I didn't want to stay in the hotel.

**INT:** Where did you get the money for the hotel? Oh, you went to the displaced camp, the DP camp?

**SURLK:** No, no. I had already...it was everything arranged from my uncle. I had already a hotel room and everything. They couldn't get a visa to Switzerland, so Rav Herzog came to Prague and he bought me a telegram that he's going to wait for me in that and that hotel and I should be able to come in two, three days so I went over. And then he arranged with the kinder transport, with the transport of the children. I got a visa to Paris, to France, with a traveling pass through Switzerland. And in Switzerland, in Zurich, you say I had a Pullman, sleeping car and on the station I got sick. My aunt and my uncle were waiting for me and their two children and they took me off the train and there was a big doctor, a Polish doctor, and he wrote a letter that I cannot travel to Paris. I must stay a few days in Zurich.

**INT:** What was it like seeing mishpocha (family)? Do you remember?

**SURLK:** Oh, I remember. (Sigh)

**INT:** You got off of the train and you saw them? It was hard?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** A few last things. Tell me about leaving Mrs. Stipolova the last time. What was that like when you told her that you were going to go and you had to say goodbye?

**SURLK:** Actually, I didn't leave her in my city. Actually she went with us from Eastern Poland to Western Poland.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because he was already in prison. There was no hope of him coming back. And they said that they took him to Siberia, which was true. And she didn't want to stay there by herself with the children so she sent with us. It was trading. I give you a ring and you give me a pair of shoes. Trading. It was like a trading between the Polish and the other Ukrainians. Anyways, she went with us. She went with the two children. I went, I think, first. I went first. And we landed in

Silesia, near Katovich. Katovich is a very big city in Poland. And then she came with two children. But I didn't stay with her. I stayed with these two girls. One of them was married so I stayed with the married. I stayed with that one, with Lola, and then she got married so I fluctuated, a little here, a little there.

**INT:** They got married in Poland.

**SURLK:** They got married both in West Poland.

**INT:** Did you go to the chasunahs (weddings)?

**SURLK:** (laughter) I lived with them.

**INT:** What was it like? Was it simchadik (happy)? What was it like?

**SURLK:** Simchadik? Oy. They had a rabbi who is still in New York now, a big talmid chochom. He is a chief justice, the rabbi who survived.

**INT:** From Agudas Harabonim?

**SURLK:** From Agudas Harabonim. He was mesader kedushin. And the meal, a plain meal. No music.

**INT:** Why? Because of what happened?

**SURLK:** Yes. (Speaks to Rabbi Leizerowski. Papa, we didn't have music either? We had music at our chasunah?) Who had music? Later maybe. Maybe months later, years later. When you look around who takes you to the chupah, who is present. It's terrible.

**INT:** But on the other hand, a chasunah is a simcha.

**SURLK:** In the back of your head there was not a simcha.

**INT:** Do you remember saying goodbye to Mrs. Stipolova?

**SURLK:** So then when I went to...I couldn't go straight to Zurich so I went through Prague, Czechoslovakia. Imagine. So I went to Czechoslovakia and there they arranged already a hotel for me, a beautiful hotel. I didn't want to stay even there. Everything was so strange for me. In a hotel people. I was afraid of everybody. So I stayed there a few months by the time I got this transport. He had to look how to bring me, what to say, what to do. It wasn't easy by Rav Herzog. He had connections. And he said to me I can give you as much money as you want. I have permission of your uncle. Try just to stick to your few people that you know and I'm sure that...so one day a consul called me and I ran over

**INT:** In Prague?

**SURLK:** In Prague. And he gave me a visa to Paris via Zurich.

**INT:** So that means it had to go through Zurich.

**SURLK:** This special express train went through Zurich. You couldn't go by plane. They told me what to say, I don't feel good. They called the doctor. I takeh didn't feel good. I was scared to death if I will be able to walk down or they will be able to take me out, but everything was okay.

**INT:** How did Rabbi Herzog find you in the first place?

**SURLK:** Because Rabbi Herzog came to my uncle every few months and when he came, my uncle knew already that I am in Poland, in that Poland, and he wanted to take me so they arranged it that we go to Czechoslovakia. My uncle specifically asked so many people in Prague, so many displaced persons, they had to call me to see Rav Herzog. Somebody will talk to him. But my uncle sent me a telegram. You will be contacted by Rabbi Herzog. Please go do as he says. And that's it.

**INT:** Did he ask you about your story, Rabbi Herzog, about what happened to you?

**SURLK:** Of course. Of course. He's a lovely person. So many people outside. It took me until...they called my name. Everything was so overwhelming just to see Rav Herzog himself.

**INT:** What were you like then? You went through all this. What were you like?

**SURLK:** I was nice. I was young. I was nice. I was determined to live. I knew somehow I will be able to establish myself. I was nice, nicely dressed. I had two big braids around my head.

**INT:** Where did you think you were going to wind up?

**SURLK:** I didn't know. I didn't see Switzerland then. I didn't know that I don't want, or later, when I came and I saw what it was...my aunt actually had a plan I should marry her son. It did not work out. Boruch Hashem (thank G-d) it didn't work out. Very intellectual person.

**INT:** But you thought then maybe you'd go to Switzerland?

**SURLK:** No, I'll go to Switzerland and I will see. She talked to me on the telephone and said there are other refugees there. We will see how you will feel, if you will still be able to establish yourself. If not we will look for something else. Just you have a house. You have a home, you have a father, you have a mother. You're coming home. So they treated me like a father and a mother.

**INT:** What about Poland?

**SURLK:** Poland? What did I leave in Poland? I couldn't even go to see in the forest the graves. If I would have maybe somebody with me, a brother, an uncle, maybe it was...who would go with me?

**INT:** You didn't think about staying there ever?

**SURLK:** In Poland? Who was in Poland? Nobody was there. There was one who was married to a goy-maybe not even to a goy. She went around with a goy, an elderly girl, with a Russian. Who stayed in Poland?

**INT:** So you knew that was finished.

**SURLK:** Poland was a grave. It was a graveyard. Poland was a graveyard. I don't even remember going to the cemetery in our city because I didn't want to see-I always sheltered myself. I knew what I could take and what I can't. I couldn't take it even. And to go to the forest and to see that they are there and not being able to take them out and to bring them to kever Yisroel (Jewish burial), so what's the use of going? And everybody was afraid what happened in Telz to them. They shot. They murdered all over Jewish people after the war.

**INT:** Did you see any of that?

**SURLK:** It wasn't in our town. We were only a few people. We were seventeen people. But from the little towns, from the little villages...my son, my Yitzchok, was now with his wife for Shavuos-not for Shavuos, Labor Day, he was in the Homowack for the weekend and they took both children with them. They have two children. And my little granddaughter speaks a beautiful Yiddish, like the greener. The greener are nothing. She doesn't know English. She knows one word, terrific. That's all. So she speaks Yiddish, and next table sits a yinge man and he says to him, oy, it's a mechaya (delight). Today, you don't see Jewish young couples talking Yiddish to the children. (Yiddish words) And he said to him, what is your name? So he said I'm not from New York. Where do your parents live? My parents live in Philadelphia He said what is your name? So he said L. You have a mother, her name is Chaya'le? I know her. He was from the village that's around Chovorow. During the war, during the occupation, they brought them, concentrated them in Chovorow. He didn't know me then, but he lived by goyim. He was also rescued by goyim. He was a young kid. And he knew me after the liberation. He came here to America. He has successful business people, his uncle and his aunt. They took him into business. He lives now in Monsey. He has an only son.

**INT:** Do you remember him when you heard the name?

**SURLK:** Yes. So he says Ma, guess whom I saw? I said I don't know. With her Yiddish, he was so overwhelmed, hearing such a beautiful Yiddish.

**INT:** What did Rabbi Herzog talk to you, what language did he talk to you?

**SURLK:** He asked me about my parents. He asked me about myself.

**INT:** Did he talk to you in Yiddish?

**SURLK:** Yes. German, Yiddish. Yiddish mostly.

**INT:** He asked you about what happened.

**SURLK:** Yes, he asked me. I was afraid even to tell him. I didn't talk in Switzerland too much either. I wouldn't be able to sit with them like I sit with you and tell them.

**INT:** How much did you tell?

**SURLK:** I told them a little bit. They are not here. She asked me about the mother, father. They are not here. What happened? Next time. I didn't want to hurt her too much. They were very good, these people.

**INT:** Did they lose people?

**SURLK:** She lost her whole family.

**INT:** Does she know what happened to them?

**SURLK:** She knows what happened. You see, I was there from 1946 until 1949 so you can imagine I live in a house so of course I talked to them every day. My uncle was a smart person. He knew that I can't tell her things. His father, I think, was alive and well and he had a sister in Switzerland who came from Vienna. He had some little members. My aunt didn't have any. She lost everybody. She lost everybody.

**INT:** Did she know how?

**SURLK:** She used to go on the streets. She used to laugh and she used to cry. Very human being. Very, very much of these good and bad inclinations that people have. Sometimes she remembered such things like there was by us a person who made a yomtovdige kiddush and it was very hard for him stop and he talked and talked. Do you remember? She says, you can't remember what I remember Mr...when he made a kiddish-they said in the town when he made kiddush it was so hard to put together these things. When my uncle made kiddush he knew right away what will happen when he came to the part. He right away started to laugh. But there were times when we passed a store if we went for a walk and in the middle of the pavement she started to cry hysterically and she said what happened? And she said I must show you the letters, the handwriting. What happened? When I see these people dressed, when I see how they live, how their houses look, our people did never imagine in their wildest dreams, the majority, that there is a life like in Switzerland. The ostjuden. The Jews from Eastern Europe were very poor compared to the West. Their imagination didn't reach so far. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** This is Norman Garfield with SurLK on the 2nd of November, 1997. I wanted to start off by asking you when you came to your aunt and uncle in Switzerland-this is where we left off-did they explain a plan to you about what was going to be? You came with a plan?

**SURLK:** No.



**INT:** How did it work? (Tape shuts) So I was asking you when you came to Switzerland, did you have a plan in your mind what you're going to do? Did they have a plan? What was the first conversation like?

**SURLK:** The first thing was crying, and the second thing was crying and the third thing was crying, and we were crying like a whole night. My aunt cried a whole night. And we had one problem on our hands because we had to hurry and get a temporary permission to stay in Switzerland. So the first thing was to get a temporary permission to stay in Switzerland until I recover. My uncle got in touch with a doctor. His name was Dr. Kaserdiner, a very well-known doctor in Switzerland.

**INT:** A Jewish doctor? Yes.

**SURLK:** My aunt knew, and he went to him.

**INT:** He was from your town?

**SURLK:** No, but he was from my vicinity. We came to him and Dr. Kaserdiner told us that I really need a rest. After his ordeal and after getting permission to go to France via Switzerland, it took out a lot of me.

**INT:** How old were you?

**SURLK:** I don't remember. I really don't remember.

**INT:** Early twenties? Middle twenties?

**SURLK:** No. I was about nineteen. So to get the permission to stay in Switzerland-it was the hardest thing that you could imagine because Switzerland, as we see it now, did not let any refugees stay and did not let during the war with the Nazis, didn't let any refugees in. Period. Many, many were just driven away. So my uncle went with me, and he examined me. I don't even know what he wrote. He sent that away and after maybe a few days we got a letter that permits me for three months. It was a big thing in those days to get such a permission. So three months went very fast away.

**INT:** So you got the permission.

**SURLK:** In a few days we had the permission to stay and I could stay in Switzerland for another three months. But after the three months, I had to go again. I had to go to Paris.

**INT:** Were you worried about it?

**SURLK:** Yes. Me in Paris? (Laughter)

**INT:** What were you going to do there? What were you supposedly to do there?

**SURLK:** I don't know. Maybe they will send me to school. I don't know. Displaced person or children's camp, older girls, younger girls, maybe a co-ed. I don't know.

**INT:** Did you lose contact with Lola and the other one?

**SURLK:** No, no. They also went-they went with us, I told you, to Prague in order to run away from Poland. So they sent them also to Prague. And I was already in Prague. They were in displaced person's camp but I lived in a hotel with some other excluded people. We were in a hotel. But I didn't stay in that hotel. I went with them.

**INT:** But then you went to Switzerland and they went-

**SURLK:** I went to Switzerland. They went to Germany to a DP camp. No, I didn't lose-

**INT:** How did you stay in contact?

**SURLK:** Because after a while they knew the address of my aunt and uncle and they wrote a letter addressed to me and then I answered them.

**INT:** What did they tell you was going to happen with them?

**SURLK:** With them? There was a possibility of going to Israel. Either they would go to Israel or they would go to America. Everybody wanted to go to America because Israel, in 1946, there was no state yet. So everybody was afraid to go. Where will they go? What will they do? And it was financially, economically was very bad there. I myself had a distant cousin who wrote me it's very, very hard here. She's now about sixty years. Came with the aliyah.

**INT:** She wrote to you in Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** And told you it's hard.

**SURLK:** Yes. And then later she wrote to me when I was married. So everybody wanted to go to the United States because Israel was like a dim future. You didn't know what is going to be. So they were waiting for emigration visa, to emigrate from Germany to the United States, and in those days President Truman already gave permission to let in like 20,000 displaced persons. Among them were criminals, goyim, you know, like they chap (catch) them today.

**INT:** Did you have to have mishpocha (family) in America to get in?

**SURLK:** No. No mishpocha, but you had to have a co-signer that will sponsor your stay in America.

**INT:** Did they have somebody?

**SURLK:** Yes, they had plenty. Everybody was crying. They knew they will not come and visit.

**INT:** Did you have anybody here?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** That would have done that.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** So you knew that at this time.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Okay, so what happened. The three months are up and you're waiting.

**SURLK:** When the three months are up we started to look around because there was a rumor that there are people who by getting a little money and giving it to this authority, you could prolong your stay. So my uncle started to look around, to ask around, so he found somebody. Mr. Schwartz was his name. He's not here anymore. We gave him money. It was my money because I had money that my parents left.

**INT:** You brought money with you from-

**SURLK:** From my house. And I paid him I don't remember, fifty, a hundred dollars. It was a sum. So he got permission for another three months. Each three months the same thing happened again and again. (End of tape 9, side 1) There was a sanatorium there that they took in people in that sanatorium and they had to stay until they were cured.

**INT:** Were you sick?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** So why did you go?

**SURLK:** Because I was with Mr. Schwartz.

**INT:** I see.

**SURLK:** I didn't go to that sanatorium but I went to the (?), to that place, and signed a form that I request another three months and then he put the stamp. I stayed one day. I didn't have the money. I couldn't afford even to stay overnight in a hotel.

**INT:** This is already nine months went by. Three, six, nine months?

**SURLK:** Nine months. I stayed with these permission, prolonged permission, I stayed from 1946 to 1949, March 1949.

**INT:** What were you doing there? What was the day like there? What happened?

**SURLK:** My uncle was like a chief rabbi in Switzerland. Imagine us, in this little Northeast, imagine my uncle. Every day there was some new...something happening. People came, people went. People had troubles. People had financial...needed financial advice. Marriage advice. A rov is like a marriage counselor. Din Torahs. It was a very interesting place to be.

**INT:** You were living in the house with a mother and a father, your aunt and uncle, and who else?

**SURLK:** And a son and a daughter.

**INT:** How old were they?

**SURLK:** My cousin was then maybe seventeen years old. The boy cousin was older than me, maybe a year.

**INT:** A year older.

**SURLK:** Yes. My aunt eventually thought in the back of her mind, she thought it would be maybe a shidduch.

**INT:** And did she tell you that at the beginning?

**SURLK:** No. She didn't, she did, she didn't. My uncle said a few jokes. But it was not for me. We were apart. He was a frum boy, but he was like an intellectual type, a genius type, and it wasn't. He was a professor in New York, in Sorbonne. He died.

**INT:** Did you know them before the war, the children?

**SURLK:** I remember them very slightly, like maybe six, seven years old. I didn't pay attention. I remember my aunt. I remember my uncle. They came every two years, maybe every three years, to visit.

**INT:** How did they treat you? Did they give you a lot of eitzos (advice) about what you are going to do with your life? Did they talk to you? How did they talk?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They treat her like a daughter.

**SURLK:** More than a daughter. My cousin was very jealous because I had already the experience of the war and like you were a young person with an older kop (head), you know. My aunt was to me better than my mother. In fact, we even had a relationship at that time. I had a special relationship with her. She was an intellectual person, a very smart...like the rabbi told you last week who learned Gemora like a man.

**INT:** What did you talk to her about?

**SURLK:** About everything. Everything that a human being is able to absorb, she had it.

**INT:** Were they afraid to talk to you about the war?

**SURLK:** No. Slowly, slowly.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They didn't know nothing.

**INT:** That's what I mean. But did they ask or were they afraid?

**SURLK:** It made a big impression on them so you couldn't give them to bring the whole cup. You had to give them slowly a little bit. I couldn't tell her...you know, she said what happened to my parents? What happened to this? I couldn't tell them. I said "they are not here." Slowly, slowly, slowly, I told them.

**INT:** Did you talk about your family with them?

**SURLK:** Sure we talked. Every day there was a talk. A day didn't go by that we didn't talk.

**INT:** How about the cousins? Did they ask you about the war?

**SURLK:** Yes. Oh yes. You must understand, it was the beginning. It was the beginning of the after-Nazi period. Everything was so overwhelming to the whole world, especially to people who had relative, who had a father, a mother. She had an only brother. The other one had a sister. He had a cousin. In Europe there were big families. Each one individual that you see here consisted- was a member of a big family, twenty, thirty, fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty...

**INT:** Did you run into people like that in Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Yeah, I ran in. Of course. I ran in. I wanted to run in. I wanted to see people who went through what I did. But somehow I met a few Hungarian people who lived through that Hell but for them it was easier than for us. To Hungary he came in 1943, the end, 1944, '45 was over. It was a short period for them. They took away, of course, hundreds of thousands of people straight to Auschwitz from Hungary, but it was not a systematic...

**INT:** Did you talk to them about it at all when you met the Hungarian people?

**SURLK:** Of course.

**INT:** How about Polish people?

**SURLK:** I met Polish Jews. Of course I met Polish Jews.

**INT:** What happened when you met them?

**SURLK:** We talked about it. Each one had his own story of personal survival and this one lost a family in Auschwitz. A lot of them lost families that they didn't know how. For instance, I lost my parents, my uncles-I know exactly where they are in the forest. I don't know. I didn't have the opportunity to go out, was afraid to go out. Sixty, seventy percent of the Jews didn't know

what happened to them. That I lost a sister and I lost an uncle and a wife and three children, Perel, my sister, that I don't know when and what. I keep the yahrtzeit licht together with them.

**INT:** But when you met other Polish people, you talked about it. Yes. Did you know the extent of what happened? Did you know or was it becoming clearer?

**SURLK:** They say tzorus rabim (pain of many) is chatzi nechama (half consolation). If somebody is injured collectively, lost...you see only people who are in the same basket as you are. But if would happen to an individual person, they wouldn't be able to take it. If it happened in my town to ten people and in Philadelphia to twenty, chas v'sholom (G-d forbid) and in New York to fifty, you would not be able to take it. But it happened to 99.9% people. Only 1% maybe escaped.

**INT:** Did you know about that?

**SURLK:** No, but I looked around in my city and I figured if in my city they have only seventeen, and I went to the bigger cities, to Lvov, and I saw empty streets, empty houses. They were occupied by goyim, of course, and it was a destruction. Like you come back from a battlefield. Everything was after destruction, after a flood. Like you saw in Lemberg, in Lvov, where it was hundreds of thousands of people daily and you see nothing. Closed stores, broken windows.

**INT:** Did you ever see Germans walking around, German people?

**SURLK:** No. Germany consisted of German people. You see now, you hear now, what they did. We don't even know the extent of the anti-Semitism in Switzerland, even now that they discovered the money and the gold and everything. We don't even know the extent how they were against the Jews.

**INT:** Did you feel that then when you were there, in Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Yes, I felt it. I felt it.

**INT:** How? What happened?

**SURLK:** I felt it because my aunt was almost forcing me to get married there to a Jewish nice people, a nice boy, financially independent. You know how they saw it? The parents always see the big glick in setting up their children financially. But I did not want to stay there. My mind was running out of Switzerland. Imagine, it took almost forty-some years till...I was so happy after I got married. I was so happy to go to Germany. Can you imagine? I felt so comfortable in Germany by not being in Switzerland.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** They were terrible people, closed in. Closed up. Anti-Semitic. Not kind people. Drunks. They had the highest rate of suicide in the world. Even with their comfortable living that

they have now in the last hundred years. I wasn't comfortable at all. I saw only the beautiful nature in Switzerland.

**INT:** There's a lot of money there.

**SURLK:** Of course there was a lot of money but listen, I didn't go where the money was. The money was in the hotels, in the beautiful places, in the restaurants. I didn't go there. I didn't see the money. I saw a new beautiful car. I saw beautiful cars. They had a lot of diplomatic people there, ambassadors, counsels.

**INT:** How did you deal with an aunt and an uncle that wanted you to get married? How did you say no?

**SURLK:** It was a big struggle. My aunt was very opposed to me marrying a survivor.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because she said I am young and I have to forget and I will settle in Switzerland and I will be able to build a new family and everything will be in the past, and a danger of marrying a greener, a Holocaust survivor is to-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** All your life you will think about it.

**SURLK:** To stay in that valley of fear for the rest of your life. To communicate with each other that all those years I didn't feel that this was the right approach, but as we both get older I feel it. The rabbi doesn't, but I feel it. He was always with his kind of people and I already had this break in Switzerland, so for me it's even harder, you know, but I see now what she meant. You go out-you don't see-they say if your eyes don't see your heart that we cried so much, and it is true. But when they both didn't cry and there is three, four, five times a week that we talk about it. You must talk about it.

**INT:** But as a young girl, it didn't appeal to you to stay in Switzerland and marry somebody who-

**SURLK:** I didn't want. I was not materialistic. I was not materialistic so this never occurred to me because I figured what I always don't have today, I don't have the thought of materialistic things because I figure that Hashem will give you life, he will sustain you. This is how I felt in my heart because I couldn't have married a survivor who had nothing.

**INT:** How did you explain this to the uncle? What did you tell them?

**SURLK:** I said to them that what I'm telling you now, you have to be comfortable with yourself and know that this is the right place that you want go.

**INT:** So what did you tell them you were looking for?

**SURLK:** First of all, first of all, I knew that the responsibility of survivors, and we should make today big, big posters before their eyes and put it in their houses, is to continue. You understand?

**INT:** Yes.

**SURLK:** To continue our Yiddishe ways. If somebody is not so religious it's okay. You understand? But to feel that you are a Jew and try to observe as much as you can and to believe in Hashem, this is the first commandment that every survivor has. It is the continuity, because if you marry, chas v'sholom (G-d forbid) a goy-

**INT:** But they didn't want you to marry a goy?

**SURLK:** No. No. They only came in prospects only from people. Maybe not as frum as Rabbi Leizerowski is, but from people, shomer Shabbos, kashrus.

**INT:** Yes, so what's the problem? What was the problem for you?

**SURLK:** I probably didn't feel comfortable with them.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Who saw the churban, who saw the destruction, and who didn't say that it's true-that was a goy.

**INT:** And you didn't feel...tell me. You didn't want to marry then, when you were nineteen years old, you didn't want to marry somebody who didn't go through it?

**SURLK:** No. No. I went out with so many boys. I went out with-

**INT:** Non-survivors. And they weren't survivors.

**SURLK:** Swiss Jews who were very dumb, who said to me, one of them said, resented...you know Dr. Milworth. He just said today, a few years ago, he told me that they did not...I said weren't you afraid during the war that they will come to you and it will happen what happened in Europe, even they didn't know then. He said I wasn't afraid. How could they come? We have such Alps. When I heard that, you know, I say that he is dumb. Alps. This is dumb. I saw him a few times. He didn't marry right away. Maybe he was so much in love with me that he didn't (laughter)...a lady who's the sister-in-law lives in that city. She always said to me, you know, Dr. Milworth says today...good for him because he was so dumb that he didn't believe because the Alps might give you the...

**INT:** So what did you tell the tante (aunt)?

**SURLK:** I told her that I have to be comfortable. How do you call that? You have to be attracted to a person. You cannot say that. You cannot talk with your family. You have to be attracted to a person. You have to be comfortable. No matter-is it love? Of course it's love, but you don't say it you don't love that person. You're not comfortable.



**INT:** Would you say you're not comfortable with Swiss boys or you just didn't meet the right boy?

**SURLK:** No, I said with Swiss boy. With Swiss people I am not comfortable, and I have not only Swiss boys. I had immigrants that immigrated to Switzerland and were already settled for years and years and very, very baalebatshe person and everybody was established financially and my aunt said that she doesn't see a reason why I shouldn't marry him and Mr. Leibowitz is that and Mr. Zamberg is that and another dentist, Dr. Halpern.

**INT:** What was in your mind then-you're going to leave Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Yes. So my aunt said, so what will be the end? If you don't intend to marry in Switzerland, I want to be with you when you are sick, and when you have a baby I want to spend near you. I want to see how you prosper in life. I want you to start a new beginning. Talk here, talk there.

**INT:** Where did you get such a shtarkeit (strongness)?

**SURLK:** I have today it too. (Speaking to Rabbi Leizerowski) No, tatte? When it comes to frumkeit, I have the shtarkeit. I am very determined, after so many years.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She's very frum.

**SURLK:** I am very frum.

**INT:** This is what it was.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She believes more than a man.

**INT:** Where did you get this from?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** From Rebbes. Her mother got a lot of blessings.

**INT:** That's what it was?

**SURLK:** I went after my mother. I probably was born so frum because in Europe, when you went to a Rebbe...today you are going-I go to Skver. My place is Skver, but today when you go to a Rebbe you go with a bekusha (request), you go with a desire to hear from the Rebbe something good, to give you a blessing. You go out, you feel a little lighter. But I wanted myself to go to a Rebbe and I was a small girl. So in Europe you only went when you had tzorus with a child. Which child goes to a Rebbe? A sick one. And my mother didn't want to take me. So I knew where this Rebbe was staying. I went to a friend and then my mother went in with that Rebbe and she wrote the gabbai the kvittel (note), she sees me near her. And she said to me, I told you not to come. Why did you come? What will people say? What will people say? Nothing. I went to a Rebbe because I want a brocha.

**INT:** Why did you go?

**SURLK:** Because I wanted a blessing from the Rebbe.

**INT:** Without a problem?

**SURLK:** What problem did I have? I was young, strong, I learned good, I had a beautiful house and boruch Hashem parents. What were my problems?

**INT:** So the main reason with the Swiss Yidden was the frumkeit of them?

**SURLK:** No, they were frum. If a Swiss Jew was frum he was really frum, and the immigrants were a lot of them, ninety-nine percent...I didn't go out with non-frum.

**INT:** So it wasn't the frumkeit.

**SURLK:** It was a strange world for me, and the non-frum world doesn't exist. So after 1946 went by and 1947 came and 1948 came and there was no end of that waiting and to get this permission started to come harder and harder. It took out every penny that I had. So I decided to go to America.

**INT:** You told them?

**SURLK:** Yes. So my aunt was very distressed. My cousin had a visa to America to Yeshiva University.

**INT:** You knew this cousin?

**SURLK:** We lived in the same house.

**INT:** Oh-the boy cousin?

**SURLK:** Yes. But he could have a possibility to put me on his passport. I wasn't so eager. My uncle wanted that but he said, he made a joke, he said I am afraid that if he puts your name you will say already the thing, and this kills that plan, because I was takeh (truly) afraid. I figured he's not for me-what do I go into tzorus? So my uncle one day went to the American consul and he explained to him my situation. He told him the day I came in, and he told him that there is a problem now. I had relatives in America and I want to go to America.

**INT:** Did you hear from those relatives?

**SURLK:** Yes. I had a cousin who was a very, very elegant lady, Chanale.

**INT:** What did she tell you? You got a letter from her or you wrote to her?

**SURLK:** Yes. I wrote to her or to a landsmanshaft of my city and they gave me the address.

**INT:** What did they tell you, to come?

**SURLK:** Yes. She sent me every week ten dollars. It was a lot in those days. She sent me forty dollars.

**INT:** Did you know her really from before the war?

**SURLK:** No. I knew I had an aunt here. I didn't see her. She passed away a year before I came. She passed away maybe a few years. We came already with two children.

**INT:** Your uncle went to the American?

**SURLK:** To the American consul and told him that he would give me a visa, that I should come with him-he would like to see me, to talk to him, but there's one problem. My uncle has to put his name down and a guarantee sign that I will come back after six months.

**INT:** And what will happen to him if you didn't?

**SURLK:** What will happen to him? He cannot promise something that he's not going to be able to keep. But I told him that after six months, if I don't get adjusted here, either married...the only solution was marriage, to marry in America.

**INT:** Then you could stay.

**SURLK:** Then I could become automatically a citizen. But after six months I would come back and we will look again. So by the time, Hashem works in mysterious ways-this was 1948 and my uncle was supposed to go with me to the ambassador. He went to the ambassador, not to the consul. And he decided that we will go over. What should my aunt do with me? If I don't want to stay in Switzerland, if marrying here is out of the question, so what can you do? You must look for a solution. So he said that he will talk it over with me and with his wife and give him a call. It was the consul, not the ambassador, because the ambassador was in Bern and this was in Zurich. It was the consul. And he will give him a call and I will come over with him and sign the papers and I will get the visa, because the influx of the immigrants to America was already high. They had to restrict. In 1948...after 1945, three years later, a lot came in. America was afraid. They gave permission for like a few hundred thousand.

**INT:** He was ready to sign?

**SURLK:** Yes. I mean if I tell him-

**INT:** That you'll come back.

**SURLK:** Oh yes. What? I will not jeopardize the position.

**INT:** Did you have money to go?

**SURLK:** No. My cousin would have sent me a ticket. Maybe not a plane ticket, but a ship.

**INT:** All right. So what happened?

**SURLK:** So in 1948 my cousin got engaged. You want me to tell you the whole story?

**INT:** Yes. Did you know he was getting engaged?

**SURLK:** Not my cousin. My cousin went to America.

**INT:** Oh-so who got engaged?

**SURLK:** The daughter.

**INT:** Oh, the daughter. Did you have a close relationship with her? Did you talk to her?

**SURLK:** Yes, yes.

**INT:** So you knew about the boyfriend?

**SURLK:** It wasn't a boyfriend.

**INT:** Whoever it was.

**SURLK:** Yes, yes. She was a highly intelligent girl.

**INT:** So how old was she when she got engaged?

**SURLK:** She was young, a young girl. He was much older. He was maybe twelve years older.

**INT:** The parents wanted this? They made the shidduch?

**SURLK:** No, they didn't want that because they looked for a more intellectual person. He was a businessman. He wasn't a dummy but...

**INT:** So how did she come by him?

**SURLK:** Because she wouldn't have taken a person that my uncle or my aunt would approve, to their liking.

**INT:** And what did you say? Did you like him?

**SURLK:** They didn't show him to me because I would say no.

**INT:** You didn't see him at all when he came to the house?

**SURLK:** I saw a few that she was interested in and then I always said no, no, so they had to send me away because they were afraid that this time I might say no for her either. He was a nice person, but my cousin was-(end of tape 9, side 2)

**INT:** Chasunah? What was that like?

**SURLK:** A beautiful chasunah. Something like Rabbi Levine.

**INT:** It was in a shul?

**SURLK:** Switzerland has a different style of chasunahs. They have the ceremony, for instance, twelve o'clock, and then they have the dinner, like the English. The same thing. Six o'clock they have a dinner. My uncle, of course, had a few hundred people. You couldn't invite the whole shul.

**INT:** So did you get fapitzed (dressed up) for this?

**SURLK:** Oh, we got fapitzed for that.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I didn't see her then.

**SURLK:** I got fapitzed and I was dancing there. I'm not a dancer on the stage but the chassidische like dance. We had arranged very nice. Special planners. They have now for every little thing in New York they have a planner for the party.

**INT:** So it was simcha'dig with music. Now how did you feel? You could do this?

**SURLK:** I was a young girl. What are you saying?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A kallah.

**INT:** So you danced.

**SURLK:** Oh, I danced and I was introduced to a few people and somebody was interested (?). My aunt didn't want. But this chasunah brought my glick (luck).

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** We had a relative, a distant relative, in Germany who survived the war. He was in the army, in the Russian army, a captain, and the girl survived the concentration camp, also from a very famous family. The father was a big businessman, a chossid with a shtreimel.

**INT:** Where?

**SURLK:** In Poland, and she survived the camps.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** This captain married this girl.

**SURLK:** This captain married this girl in Germany, and my aunt invited that captain and the girl and they invited them to the chasunah, so he came for Shabbos and stayed at the aufruf from the chassan and stayed for the chasunah, so my aunt, with a heavy heart, in the evening, she talked to him. She talked to him about me, that she's very, very sad because I have to leave now. She

doesn't want me to leave and she introduced the few boys that were meant for me and he liked them very much and he said what are you doing? You are throwing away such people you will never get in your life. But he was a very smart person. He asked my aunt, he said, so what does she want? If this Mr. Leibowitz and this Mr. Hutner and this and this and that is no good, then what does she want? He knew. So she said I don't know myself what she wants. So he said, would she take a Rov with a beard and a kapote? So she said I don't know. If she would like him she would take him. So he was very smart. He looked at his wife and he said to her, to his wife, Fella, Rav Leizerowski. Just like that.

**INT:** You heard him say it?

**SURLK:** I heard him say that.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He was in my community. He was a member, this captain.

**SURLK:** And here we will stop. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** This is Norman Garfield continuing the interview with Rebbetzin Leizerowski. Today is Wednesday, December 10. Where we left off was you were telling me about-

**SURLK:** We finished the liberation. (Phone interruption)

**INT:** So what happened after the chasunah?

**SURLK:** When I came to Switzerland, I was staying here like a few months. I recovered a little bit emotionally and my aunt started to talk to me that it would be the advisable thing to do to get married. I don't think I was so much with that idea yet. First of all, I looked at Switzerland...remember, so many years ago, and I didn't like Switzerland as a country. As a vacation place it's nice. Nice spots. And then I didn't want to talk about marriage because I knew that in back of their mind they meant me for their son. This was would have been impossible for both of us. He was a genius, mammash a genius, but a genius is very complicated. A genius is very complicated. He remained that all his life. So how do you say to somebody that you don't want their son? But they knew. My aunt knew right away. She said I don't think she's interested in Jackie.

**INT:** Did you ever tell her that?

**SURLK:** She saw it. She felt it. She felt it. And we will start looking, maybe you'll get to know some people here. I went right away out from such a standpoint that Switzerland seemed out of the question to remain there.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I didn't like the country. I started to talk to the people and, you know, Switzerland is divided into three parts, the Swiss, the Italian and the German. I was in the German part but we had contacts in Geneva with other places, Lugano, which is Lucerne, Lugano. And, in fact, my aunt wanted someone from Lucerne. She thought this would be a person for me. But I didn't

want. So after a year's stay, and then it took maybe even longer, my aunt started to get worried with my uncle. I went out on a few dates and nothing was to my liking. I also looked for excuses not to be able to continue these relationships but it was a problem for me because I couldn't stay in Switzerland too much longer. I gave every little penny that I had just for the (?), just to let me stay there. Finally we had to talk to some of my relatives. I had two older ladies relatives who were financially well off, they should at least pay part of it. I had a visa for three months, and after three months I have to go again to the (?) and again to this Mr. Schwartz that I told you and again give the money and there was practically nothing for me. It was a problem to buy a pair of shoes or a dress or something.

**INT:** Who went to the ladies to ask them for money?

**SURLK:** My aunt talked to them on the telephone. She says, "Mrs. Berger, Mrs. Eisenstein, you are both relatives of her father. You must together pay the money." It's a special division in the Swiss law that says after you want to stay three months you will have to pay a certain amount, but they took a lot more.

**INT:** Did you ever meet these two ladies?

**SURLK:** Of course. I went to them. I came to them. I stayed with them once in a while.

**INT:** So they knew you?

**SURLK:** They knew me as a five year old girl. They went back to Switzerland. Once in a great while they came home. I didn't know them. I didn't remember them but I saw them.

**INT:** She asked for the money and she got the money and you stayed. But you knew this was temporary.

**SURLK:** I knew Switzerland is temporary for me and I started to make plans to go to America. I didn't want to go to America because I knew that here is everything is done in factories. You have to work. If you are lucky you get an office job. But I didn't neglect...I started to learn English twice a week by a very, very well-known teacher. He was not a professor. He was a teacher. He had a doctorate.

**INT:** Did you have to pay for it?

**SURLK:** Yeah. Of course.

**INT:** You paid yourself?

**SURLK:** He was a young boy but yes.

**INT:** The decision to think about going to America-who did you have to talk to?

**SURLK:** I talked to my uncle.

**INT:** You talked to him about this?

**SURLK:** Yeah, to my uncle. Did I tell you the story about this visa that my uncle got for me?

**INT:** By paying off? By bribing?

**SURLK:** No, no. That he went with me to the American consul.

**INT:** No, we didn't cover that. We didn't decide yet that you're going to go to America. You talked it over with him.

**SURLK:** I talked it over. I thought it over. I talked it over. I really was sure that this is the only place, even deep in my heart I didn't know if it will work out.

**INT:** What was his eitzah (advice)?

**SURLK:** My uncle saw my desperation and he said listen, you go and you try out like for six months or a year. If you're really unhappy there, you think you can come back to us? We will always take you. Our door is open for you. You can return any time you want. This was, for me, something that I was waiting for because I didn't believe in America too much. I know it's a very, very hard country. You have to work physically. I am not able to work. I don't know. Maybe I am a little weak also. I decided I want to go. You cannot go-they will not give you a visa. You know what? I'm going to the American consulate. I'm going to have an audience with the Consul General and I'm going to tell him you're dilemma and he will decide what to do.

**INT:** Whose idea was that?

**SURLK:** I wouldn't say it was my idea. Maybe I helped out a little bit. If he said I want to go-I go. But he said let me just go to him first. And he made an appointment. He went over and of course, you should see my uncle. He came in and he sat with him a long time and they talked about it and he presented him problem and the consul said like that-I can give you a visa tomorrow. It's not an immigration visa. It's just like a visitor's visa. But there's one catch in it. She has it for six months, then she could renew it for another six months, so she can stay a year. And maybe during the year she will find somebody who's going to marry her. So my uncle came home and he said to us...but, you must sign for her that she's coming back.

**INT:** If she doesn't find somebody.

**SURLK:** If. So my uncle said yes. He's sure I will find. You know how uncles are, fathers are. And he talked it over with my aunt and my aunt said, you know what, let us think it over another month or two. Postpone it. I said okay.

**INT:** What was the big deal about signing it?



**SURLK:** If my uncle signs that I am coming back I have to come back. There is no narishkeitien. You cannot say you don't want to come back. If you're not marrying an American citizen you have to come back.

**INT:** What do you think she was worried about that she was afraid to sign?

**SURLK:** The name, the reputation of my uncle. If he says something he must keep it. They don't care what you do to me, if you spank me, if you shlep me.

**INT:** She was afraid you may not come back?

**SURLK:** No. There wasn't such a thing.

**INT:** So why wouldn't she sign in?

**SURLK:** She didn't want me...she didn't want me to go to America. She didn't like America. You understand? My uncle didn't like America. He was on a visit here, in the Yeshiva University. He had a lecture.

**INT:** But I thought you said he agreed with you to go to America?

**SURLK:** No. He agreed with me that I can go to America and after a certain amount of months if I don't marry in America I have to come back. This is just plain. I sign it. If she is not marrying an American citizen she's coming back.

**INT:** But I still don't understand the hesitation for not signing.

**SURLK:** The hesitation for not signing it?

**INT:** If they agreed that you should go to America.

**SURLK:** It's not so hard eaten as it is cooked. Give her another month. Let me think it over. Hashem will help. You never know what in back of you awaits you. And this was really...later on we saw that this was takeh the hashgocha from Ribono shel Olam. So in the meanwhile my cousin got engaged and she got married. She was a beautiful girl, very intelligent, intellectual girl. She got married to that fellow. A fine person, but I would never take him. It wasn't for me. A Swiss, you know. A Swiss Jew. And didn't I tell you, don't you have on tape, that the people came from Germany.

**INT:** Yes.

**SURLK:** You have that.

**INT:** The major.

**SURLK:** The major with his wife. And, you know, they said they have somebody in mind. He closed his eyes and he said to my aunt would she marry a rabbi with a beard, with long clergy clothes? So my aunt said I don't know. You never know. She's such a shlock. Who knows? I

guess if she would like that person she would marry him. So he said to her, Fella, to his wife, Rav Leizerowski. And I didn't even want to listen to that major because I said he's a liar. He's a cheater. He could put together two walls...

**INT:** How did you know this about him?

**SURLK:** I knew him.

**INT:** From before?

**SURLK:** Yes. I knew him. He's very smart, very shrewd. You know, takes a look at that person, that person, and puts them together. So my aunt said tell me about this person. Tell me. And he said to her, oh, he's such a handsome...and my aunt called me and she said you don't even pay attention what he says. (Laughter) Oh, don't say this and you're not even worth he should pay attention to you.

**INT:** So what did you decide?

**SURLK:** She said to me what can you decide? Take a look at this person. "I don't want to go. I don't want to go." So later on I figure maybe I should go. What can I lose? We went to a port, (?), and the rabbi came from Munich. By the time they shlepped him, don't ask. He came from Munich and we met at that (?) and that's it. And I saw him and I said that's it. I couldn't believe my eyes. How the Ribono shel Olam could put together these two.

**INT:** How did you decide to do all this-it cost money, you take a boat.

**SURLK:** I went with my uncle. I didn't go by myself. I went with my uncle first time and then I went the second time with my aunt.

**INT:** Can you describe how you first saw him, where it was?

**SURLK:** The name of that port is (?). The name was Linchstadt, the first port. Linchastadt. We came by boat and he came by car with two people. Where could you go? I don't know how they arranged it, that we had a place to go in, to a goyishe house. We didn't have anything to eat or nothing. Maybe my aunt had some little cookies.

**INT:** Did the uncle check out the rabbi before?

**SURLK:** Oh yes.

**INT:** So he knew already.

**SURLK:** Oh yes.

**INT:** He made phone calls?

**SURLK:** Oh yes. He was a well-known person, Rabbi Leizerowski. Everybody knew him in Switzerland, in Zurich. People came, business people, and my uncle right away picked up a

telephone and said maybe you have a Mr. Davidsohn or maybe this one, Mr. Shlockbaum is coming. Ask him about Rav Leizerowski. I heard about him. My uncle heard about him. Everybody said good. Oh, what a fine person. What a personality he is. What a speaker. A great speaker for the public, especially for the public.

**INT:** Did you ever think when you were younger you would marry a rabbi?

**SURLK:** I was very frum. I was born frum, very frum, and I meant to marry somebody like very frum also but like a professional. I wanted very much this pharmacy. We should have a pharmacy. But yeah, after I was left I was thinking and in fact they introduced me to maybe three, four rabbis who are still alive. One was the Chief Rabbi of Prague. He's still in the West Side of New York. He wouldn't know. Yes, he would know. Of course he would know. I don't know. He was a nice person also. Short, but very nice. And one was Rav Leibes who is older than the rabbi. I always looked for older people, who is older. He is Rosh Beis Din of the Igud Harabbonim, and Rabbi Leizerowski is Sgan Rosh Beis Din. And they introduced me once to Rabbi Leibies, not officially but they sent him to find out when I have the yahrtzeit. He's a big talmid chochom. He's one of the biggest today after R' Moshe. He's in Borough Park. He's very sick. He's not going to be at the banquet. The rabbi is going to be at the banquet Sunday to speak but he can't be. Shvach.

**INT:** Why do you think you looked for older?

**SURLK:** I don't know. I always looked for older. Father image? Who knows? I was always looking. My age, a year or two, five years older, was nothing. They were like children to me.

**INT:** So describe meeting him again. It was in a goyishe house.

**SURLK:** So it was in a goyishe house. It was in early afternoon. It was before the Yomim Tovim. It was very nice then still, so it must have been August, because September we already were waiting for a New Year's card from him, so it was before September.

**INT:** This is what year?

**SURLK:** I wouldn't like to say that.

**INT:** Okay. It was after the war.

**SURLK:** B'li ayin hora.

**INT:** Okay.

**SURLK:** Sure, after the war. And it was beautiful then. And we met there. He had with him the gabbai and he had his secretary, Mr. Kornwasser, a shochet, and he has another one. He has three people who were mavenim (experts) on me.

**INT:** So you're all sitting together by the table there talking?

**SURLK:** No. He talked to my aunt and to my uncle and these people were talking to my uncle. You speak with talmidei chochomin. This is not pruster mensch. High class. So they were talking and I think I went with the rabbi for a walk. I think so. I didn't want to go home already. I said to my uncle, that's it. I'm staying here. He said don't say that. Se past nisht. You're such a moral person, right away you would go to the chupah. Don't say that, because if you want he'll get cold feet. In a shidduch you must have the strength (laughter).

**INT:** So you spent how long together?

**SURLK:** I don't exactly know. We talked all together. I didn't talk. They talked. And then I went for a walk I remember. I remember I had a black dress on with a green kragel and then we came back.

**INT:** What did you like about him?

**SURLK:** Everything. First thing I saw were the hands. I'm so worried because he said yesterday the (?) arbit nisht mir. The (?) don't work so my hands don't look the same, and I'm shorter he says. (Laughter)

**INT:** What else?

**SURLK:** His manners, his art of talk. I have the same, the same-how do you say...I appreciate today all these things that I appreciated years ago. There's no change. This is the person you see. This is how he eats. This is how he sleeps. This is how he talks. This is how he conducts himself in the house. You never see him differently. Sick, not sick, agmas nefesh, aggravation, not aggravation. The world can turn around. He was in ghetto. Nothing. He didn't say nothing. I heard what people told me. Somebody was with him in Auschwitz, in Lager Nine. He said this is the way how he was. He didn't cry and he didn't scream. He took everything b'ahavah (with love). Whatever the (Yiddish words). What are you going to say, that you are sick. I don't know. What are you going to say, that you are healthy? I told you how he went around because of the (?). Ribono shel Olam, he fooled because he was standing in that line.

**INT:** Oh, you told me.

**SURLK:** Sure. I say-they have to live so many years and to have this... and to see so many Gedolim like you and he says okay. What do I care. They cannot insult him, they cannot embarrass him.

**INT:** You were looking for this? What was it?

**SURLK:** I looked for somebody who is very determined, who has his own mind, who knows what he's looking in life, who is a yotzei min haclall (exceptional). Who is above the masses. He is above. He's certainly above.

**INT:** Did you see him affected by the tzorus?

**SURLK:** No. Never. The last years. The last two, three years. He went down under this terrible burden of churban.

**INT:** But then?

**SURLK:** No. Never. Always with a smile. Always a sense of humor. Not jokes, but a sense of humor which when you are angry and you are so desperate, you are so aggravated, he will tell you something that will make you lustig in the oigen. Who are you? Why do you say it should be like that not the way it is? Are you the Ribono shel Olam? (End of tape 10, side 1) In such a time capsule that you live what happens-children, cities, different aggravation, problem solving.

**INT:** Does he remind you of anybody in your past?

**SURLK:** No. This is how our gedolim probably conducted themselves because he had a good school. He knew them all. He was by the Chofetz Chaim in the house for seven years. He saw how this person acted and he even saw with the family intimate problems how they solved. He didn't make out like a secret, the Chofetz Chaim, for him. With him they were open. He was a ben bayis. He was in the house. Why did he like him? My uncle and my aunt objected a little bit. My aunt. Because Rabbi Leizerowski was married for a short time before the war. Three years.

**INT:** Did you know that?

**SURLK:** Of course I knew. Of course I knew. This wasn't an affair. His in-laws were very wealthy people and they were from (?), originally from Russia but came to Poland years ago. They had an only child, an only daughter, and he went into the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva and he wanted a talmid chochom. He wanted somebody who was...so he told him you want a bochur that's a fanem, take him.

**INT:** So it didn't bother you.

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Even early.

**SURLK:** I never in my life, never, never, never, never, asked something. Never. I heard something, once he said a word in twenty-five years. One word. So I knew it. I never. This I don't say. I never ask. I never spoke. I hear he mentioned his father-in-law, his mother-in-law. He put in his book all their names, her name. Why not? Kedoshim. They were good to him. In Europe you had to make like a little bit warm water to take a bath, so the mother and the daughter were arguing who first will come. He said to somebody who also came from Lodz. Unfortunately they didn't have children. He was about three years married. So my aunt didn't want. She said you are such a young girl. Why should you go in? She wasn't smart like that. My uncle said that she should learn from me, and I said this shouldn't be an obstacle at all for you.

**INT:** You said this yourself.

**SURLK:** Yes. I said to marry somebody that's not to my liking, not to my heart, and just...I don't like that to have on tape. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Did your uncle agree or disagree with you?

**SURLK:** No, my uncle agreed. My uncle, when he came in and when he told him Sholom Aleichim, he took a look at him...I must show you a picture. He took a look at him and he said to my aunt when he came home, he said, it's an overwhelming personality. What a young man. The rabbi was only in his thirties. He was a lot older than I was but he was only in his thirties. He wasn't fifty years old. He was in his thirties.

**INT:** What language did he talk in?

**SURLK:** He knew German already.

**INT:** What did you talk to him in when you talked?

**SURLK:** He knew Polish. He knew German. I think we spoke like Yiddish-German. A little Yiddish, a little German. What did I talk? I didn't even talk. I didn't know even a word to say. Later I became, when life forces you to talk to people, to take part in discussions, to decide something...I didn't even know how to talk. Believe me.

**INT:** Did you want to ask him a lot of things?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Did he ask you a lot of things?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** So how did you know each other?

**SURLK:** After that we went home. We saw each other about two, three weeks later in (?).

**INT:** You came again with-

**SURLK:** I came with my aunt. My aunt said I am going to show him. (Laughter) She didn't show him a thing. Nothing. She didn't even talk. She just listened what he said.

**INT:** So what happened at that time?

**SURLK:** She said to me did you see the hands? She said to me did you see his hands? They are talking, the hands. So I said I saw the first thing. I noticed it. But then I came home with my uncle and I cried a lot and I said to my aunt you know, nobody was left of our family. If we will come together, this will be a cornerstone for future Yiddish generations. This I would accomplish if he will take me. There was an if. It wasn't sure.

**INT:** What did she say?

**SURLK:** She saw me. She saw me. She didn't see him yet and my uncle came.

**INT:** Yeah, but after she saw him.

**SURLK:** After she saw him? She is going to give him, she is going to show him, she is going to do...and she didn't say one word. Whatever he said made sense and she said yes, yes, you are right. And then we went home and we didn't see each other and he didn't write because he had other shidduchim and then meanwhile, you know, nebbich, a yesomah, because I didn't have parents. The other girls came. A beautiful girl. One was from Mannheim, a beautiful girl with a father and a mother and a brother-in-law. Beautiful people. Father with a nice long beard.

**INT:** How do you know?

**SURLK:** I heard.

**INT:** How long was it after the second time that he wasn't in touch?

**SURLK:** We expected a Shanah Tova card, just politeness, but he didn't want to be, how do you say, he didn't want to be obligated. So after the second time it took us until December.

**INT:** Your uncle called?

**SURLK:** My aunt was so furious. She said...I went out with a certain boy, a nice fellow. They were very rich people. A sister and a brother. The sister was in America with the brother-in-law, with her husband, and they made here a plastic factory and they became multi, multi-millionaires. In those times, plastic wasn't so...and he was the only one and they had wholesale-like a threads and needles and this. A warehouse.

**INT:** What did you do during that time? (Phone interruption)

**SURLK:** I prayed to Hashem. I prayed to Hashem and the whole story of my survival pointed that I am a lucky person. When this shidduch didn't go so right away, Mrs. Teitel, in New York, and her sister, wrote me a letter, because I was desperate. They said to me that you were a young girl in your position and Hashem helped you to be saved in such a way that you weren't hungry, that you weren't cold, that you weren't dirty, that you didn't have to sleep outside and you didn't have to run away. Run away I had to but...this means that He's going to take care of your shidduch also. Switzerland was enough twice a week to go to that English lessons and to prepare the lessons. It was a lot. And I don't know where I will go. I was very troubled. Money I didn't have. It was terrible. And I didn't want to go, deep down in my heart, to America by myself.

**INT:** Where did you think you would go if you married him?

**SURLK:** I didn't care. My aunt said you are going back to Germany. He's the main rabbi of Munich. It was very busy. It was very busy. Today we got married, tomorrow I didn't see him a whole day. He went in the morning, he came home three o'clock and he ate something and we

had already people with din Torahs, with chasunahs. Gittin he didn't make. He didn't write Gittin until Gilham Street. For a long, long, time until R' Moshe said you have to do it. He saw Rav Yolles is getting older, there was nobody in town.

**INT:** Did you think you might have to live in Germany?

**SURLK:** I didn't care. When I came to Germany I was so happy.

**INT:** So when she wrote you the letter that made a difference?

**SURLK:** Sure. It's comfort. (Phone interruption)

**INT:** What was the uncle saying during that time?

**SURLK:** He was aggravated. My aunt said don't be aggravated. You go out with Mr. Bolack in Lucerne. We like him very much. You just get engaged to Mr. Bolack, send Rabbi Leizerowski a card. (Laughter) I said that to my aunt and uncle. I said yes, I'm going to send him a card. So what? He will read the card and put it away and an hour later he forgets about it and who is going to be stuck? This was the chochma! She was such a smart lady. You see what she said? Send him a card and let him fly a kite. I will fly, not him. And my uncle he kissed me. He said she's so smart. What are you saying? And I went out with Mr. Bolack and I told him that I want to go to Germany for a visit and he didn't like it. I want to see my friends. Then he gave me some needles I should ask in Germany. I took the needles. He brought me such a big package and my uncle said don't dare to take that to Germany because this is not mazel. (Laughter)

**INT:** When was the next time you heard from the rabbi?

**SURLK:** I didn't.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** He was very busy, very, very busy, and then they introduced him to a few other girls. And then I saw it's no good and I, such a little, shy girl, said to my aunt, you know what, I must go to Germany. I have to go to Germany or nothing will come out of it. She said what will you do? You're so shy you can't...I said this major told me I should come and he will let know the other people that I came. Maybe he will want to see me again.

**INT:** You talked to the major about this?

**SURLK:** Yes, sure. On the telephone. I didn't. My aunt talked more than me.

**INT:** And said what's going to be?

**SURLK:** She said to him I don't know. He said I heard they're speaking here and that, I don't know the name, they introduced him to this Mannheim girl. She's a beautiful girl. She wants him



so badly and he is afraid. So I said no, it's no good. I have to go. I have to go to Germany. Yes, yes, no, no. So I went. It was December.

**INT:** What did the major say?

**SURLK:** He said the people tell me that I should come.

**INT:** And the aunt? What did she say?

**SURLK:** There was a rebbe, a Monostritzver Rebbe, that came the first time with him to see me and he said I like this girl very much. It's a young, nice girl and she makes a nice impression, like an aidele impression on me. You can see that this is from a fine family and...the other one had a lot of money because she had parents. The rabbi didn't have money and he didn't need money. What does he need money for? He didn't even have...when we got married he didn't take from anybody, from marriage, from something else, he didn't take any money. He didn't know the meaning of the money.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** So I said to my aunt I am going. I said to my aunt I am going. I got dressed. I made myself a little suit and I bought a coat. I don't remember. Something I probably bought. and I went.

**INT:** Alone?

**SURLK:** Alone.

**INT:** How did you decide?

**SURLK:** I decided. I figured...I wanted so much that person that I figured let me see. I saw he's not going to come to Switzerland. They will not let him in and my aunt was saying ze past nisht.

**INT:** How about letting you go alone?

**SURLK:** I think they asked him if I should come and he said yes, I can come. He saw me only twice. So when I came-

**INT:** But how about letting you go alone?

**SURLK:** For a few hours only by plane. And I went and I came to Munich and the next day somebody-this Monostritzver Rebbe was very helpful. I didn't talk to him but this major talked to him. He knew because the other one said oh, she has an uncle and he should give her, ich vais, ten thousand dollars and my uncle didn't have.

**INT:** Where did you stay at night?

**SURLK:** I don't remember. I really don't remember.

**INT:** Did you make arrangements?

**SURLK:** Oh, I think I stayed by the Kornwassers.

**INT:** Who were they?

**SURLK:** The shochet. Maybe the first night I stayed by the major, by Fella and the major. Perhaps the second night maybe. And then the rabbi came to see me.

**INT:** The major told you he was going to come? What happened when he came?

**SURLK:** When he came...it was a nice apartment they had and then he came and we spoke a little bit and I saw already. It's like an inclination. It's a feeling. You feel it. And we spoke and then I think the next evening-nisht the next evening-and then I was invited, I think, to...no. Then I had the shochet, Mr. Kornwasser. His brother is now one of the biggest millionaires now in Los Angeles. They own a bank. Chassidshe menschen. They went with shtreimlach and with peyos. And then he said, this major said, you have to have somebody a middleman, so I don't know who was the middleman. I think maybe either the Monostritzver Rebbe or Mr. Kornwasser. One of them. And then Mrs. Kornwasser called me on the telephone three nights later, because the rabbi said he would like them to see me. At least that he was not one hundred percent sure yet. So Mrs. Kornwasser called, or the Monostritzver Rebbetzin, and she said she should let me know that they invite me to her for the evening. All right. I dressed up as best as I could and I went to the Kornwassers in the night. They were very nice people. He is already no more. He is in Eretz Yisroel, and she is in Los Angeles. Has an only son with a shtreimel. She married off her daughter a few weeks ago. The rabbi was the mesadar kedushin. In Borough Park. A Gerrer Chossid.

**INT:** They had an apartment. Where? In the DP camp?

**SURLK:** No. It was after the war.

**INT:** These people decided to live in Munich?

**SURLK:** Where should you go? Nobody would let you in?

**INT:** But live among the goyim?

**SURLK:** He has a plan to emigrate but you cannot take the peckel and go. In the meanwhile it was a beautiful Jewish life there.

**INT:** What was he doing for parnassah (livelihood) there?

**SURLK:** Who?

**INT:** Kornwasser.

**SURLK:** He was a secretary by the Rabbiner. He was his secretary. He had another one. He was not the only one. He became a millionaire later.

**INT:** So they were living together in Munich in a shtickel kehilla there.

**SURLK:** Nisht in a shtickel. They lived in (?) kehilla and they lived in (?) Strasse, they were. They had another kehilla. They were spread in a few places.

**INT:** So what happened there at night?

**SURLK:** So I went to the Kornwassers and they started to ask me questions, very delicate, very little things, and I think they called him that I am okay. (Laughter). It schlepped a whole week, and after that week, in a nice evening, about two days before I left, Rabbi Leizerowski told me that if I don't mind to visit him in his apartment because he will have another few people there. Look, you don't even ask a person where do you stand. I didn't ask him. And I came into this house. There were already a nice few people, maybe twenty-five people. The house was decorated with beautiful flowers, white flowers. Beautiful. And there were so many cakes on the table. And he didn't tell me, he didn't ask me. Can you imagine something like that? I pretended I didn't see it. But a few minutes later he called me into another room. It was a beautiful apartment. He called me to another room and he said listen Clara, if you want, you ask somebody like that. If you want we could now make a vort, and when you will go to Switzerland we will talk about it. I don't know what I have financially, if I can support you with so much that you need. I make a fairly nice living. We will see what tomorrow will bring future, you know, the plans that we make are not worked out the way we want it. If you want, we can get engaged now. Tonight. And if I would say no...people are here already, the flowers are here, liquor is here, cakes are here. So I said all right. (Laughter) Thank G-d he asked me. So we got engaged. The next day I went back to Switzerland and then I came back and we got married and Boruch Hashem...(Yiddish words-laughter)

**INT:** What happened between that time and the chasunah?

**SURLK:** We talked on the telephone. He asked me if I need money. I didn't have but I was ashamed to take. I didn't have money. When I got married I had sixty-five dollars. I said this is all I have. Take the money. He said please. Don't be silly. I said do me a favor. Take the sixty-five dollars. Three days later I had to go to the dressmaker to take my dress, to take my coat, so I needed a hundred dollars.

**INT:** How did you make plans for the chasunah? He made all the plans, you made, the tante made them?

(The answer is not clear)

**INT:** So you came to Munich to the chasunah. You came with the tante?

**SURLK:** My tante wasn't a citizen. My uncle wasn't a citizen so they didn't give them the visa. They were very strict in those years.

**INT:** He couldn't go to the chasunah?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** So who came with you?

**SURLK:** Who came with me? All his people. We had a nice chasunah. I'll show you.

**INT:** Where was the chasunah?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** By the Monostritzver Rebbe.

**INT:** He was the mesader kedushin.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They cooked for us. They made for us in their house.

**SURLK:** This was where he was liberated, in Dachau.

**INT:** Was there music?

**SURLK:** Yes. I think so. I had a gorgeous gown from Switzerland. When we went to the chupah-it was outside the chupah and it was snowing a little.

**INT:** Did you feel sameach (happy) there? What did you feel?

**SURLK:** I was so happy. I was happy because I got somebody that I like, that I love, and what will be will be. Tomorrow what Hashem will give us...we had two small children and we went to America. They told us to go. Avi was a baby. You cannot imagine. They stopped us to look at him. I had a maid. I had a nurse for Avi.

**INT:** But the chasunah was all glicken and happiness? You didn't think anything-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The chasunah was because the Ribono shel Olam says you should marry. You should have a child.

**SURLK:** Two years later, three years later, nobody was-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I didn't have one landsman who knew me before.

**SURLK:** Even a landsman. And I had just the major. That's all.

**INT:** So did you think about this kind of business at the chasunah or you put it out of your mind?

**SURLK:** If you want to exist and if you want to exist today, you have to leave everything to Hashem. This is the way it should be. If you want to change it it's no good. Why is it like that? Why is it like this? No good.

**INT:** So when the memories come back what do you do?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** What you do? You cry.

**INT:** But I'm saying at the chasunah, around the chasunah. What would you do with that? You could be happy?

**SURLK:** You saw around you 99-100% people who went through the same. You weren't an individual, a yotzei min haklall, an exception. Everybody was in the same bucket. Everybody that was at the chasunah that they got married a day before or a day later was in the same position, that we came out from the churban. Some were very lucky. They had brothers, sisters.

**INT:** The day was the chasunah and tomorrow in the morning I went in office.

**SURLK:** It was Friday, remember. They bought me a chicken, I should make the chicken. Cook a soup. And I was so scared. I didn't know how to do it.

**INT:** Did you have sheva brochos?

**SURLK:** Yes. They came there. He was my landsman. He came after the chasunah.

**INT:** And you moved into the apartment.

**SURLK:** To his apartment. Beautiful apartment. There was a maid.

**INT:** How about your job as a Rebbetzin? What about that? (End of tape 10, side 2)

**NOTE:** The subject totally changes on this tape.

**SURLK:** Very seldom a father can learn. No. We asked him questions. Of course we had to prepare.

**INT:** And Shabbos he spent with the family?

**SURLK:** Sure. And then he wanted to go to Temple because other boys went to Temple and these boys worked out very good, but we were afraid. I didn't want to send him to a goyishe environment.

**INT:** And the rabbi agreed?

**SURLK:** Yes. Sure. So we saw that he would not go to a yeshiva, yeshiva only after high school.

**INT:** Did he want to go? He didn't want to go?

**SURLK:** No. He wanted right away a profession.

**INT:** Did you want him to go to yeshiva?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** Did the rabbi want him to go to yeshiva?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** Was there any discussions there?

**SURLK:** Yah. Please.

**INT:** And why did you give in?

**SURLK:** I didn't give in. He went to Yeshiva University.

**INT:** Oh. That wasn't his first choice?

**SURLK:** No. Temple was his choice, maybe because of the house, that he wanted to be in the house. But we didn't want Temple. So we confronted him and I put an application into Yeshiva University.

**INT:** Let me ask you. Who was stronger in the discussion with him?

**SURLK:** He has more respect for his father. (Phone interruption) More influence and more...like they have more respect and they give more for their father. When I say a hundred words, it's not as important to them as their father says one word. Their father doesn't talk too much. I told you. He doesn't talk too much. He doesn't eat too much. He doesn't talk too much. He doesn't sing too much. He is in his own world. But when he says something it has hands and feet. That's it. He will not tell him twice.

**INT:** And they listened the first time?

**SURLK:** They listen. They pay attention. Sure.

**INT:** Did they ever not listen?

**SURLK:** Oh yes. Of course. In years? (Laughter)

**INT:** What does he do, the rabbi, when they don't listen?

**SURLK:** He wouldn't repeat it. I say tell him again. He said I told him once. That's it.

**INT:** How does he show him that he's displeased?

**SURLK:** They know it. You can see it right away.

**INT:** How about you?

**SURLK:** I yell and scream and I told you so and I predicted it would be like that. You don't understand. I had a sermon on Friday, vey is mir.

**INT:** What was that?

**SURLK:** I wanted to show the children that in Europe they came to older people for advice. If you had a grandfather, if you had a grandmother, if you had a nice friend or you had a neighbor or you had somebody in town that you could rely on, that you could confide in, you went to them.

**INT:** A zaken (old person).

**SURLK:** Why a zaken? I told COSBL and I told Yitzchok because a zaken has already experience. He went through life. He knows what's good for that person and is not good. He is not a prophet. He is not going to predict things. But with his seichel, and if he is your friend, he will tell you approximately what to do. Later so you change a little bit. Here, the younger generation understands everything. They know everything. And if they make a mistake...I see all around us children come home. There are cases in marriage that parents tell their children, a daughter or a son, don't do this shidduch. It will not come out right. Now she doesn't want to listen to her parents. What do they understand? Old people and we are from Europe so we avadah don't know.

**INT:** What do you think about that? That you're from Europe and-

**SURLK:** We are so much smarter. We are so much smarter. We chap. We catch. We see. We foresee things.

**INT:** Why do you think that's true?

**SURLK:** We are, and our children will admit it. We are so much smarter. We understand so much better life.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I don't know why. American people are temimisdik. They don't understand that you can give a drei, you know. But Europe is raised differently. One of my children did something very foolish two, three weeks ago when we were in Florida. A very foolish thing. I didn't know. When I came home-vey is mir what was.

**INT:** Did they know it was a foolish thing?

**SURLK:** Now they know. After it's done. My older son was here Friday and I told him. He was so mad. He ran out. He thought that I am right.

**INT:** You would have known? You would have known right away?

**SURLK:** I would know? We would know. We just look at the person. We just can describe him right away. We just take one look.

**INT:** So you're better at reading people than your children are?

**SURLK:** Of course.

**INT:** Even Americans?

**SURLK:** They're so naive. They're so naive. They don't understand. Nah! The European people are very smart. Very mature, very smart, very down-to-earth. They understand life. They are such smart people.

**INT:** The Europeans you dealt with are like that, in the shul?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Different than Americans?

**SURLK:** Look. Take European people that came here years ago. Of course some of them didn't make it here because they didn't. This is mazel. But each one of them send their children to college. I mean not rabbis. They sent their children to college. They established a little house and a little car and a little this and a little that and they retired. They bought a little condominium in Florida. You know, they have to...

**INT:** What do you think that's due to in your being raised? What is it?

**SURLK:** It was different. It's a different country.

**INT:** Can you think about what the difference in being raised?

**SURLK:** Especially the Ostjuden, especially the Eastern Jewish population, was raised under pressure. Always under pressure. You had to know what's going to be tomorrow. You predicted so many things that came. But all these smart people couldn't predict what will happen to them. I read an article about Jabotinsky, the Jewish Exponent. I didn't read it. I just looked it over a little bit. He said go, leave your...go. So you see, when it came to rescue their life nobody was smart. They knew where to go under for the day. They knew where to...The Europeans are more on a high level.

**INT:** How about ethical wise?



**SURLK:** Ethical? Avadah (for sure). You don't compare the European Jews to American Jews on an ethical level. You don't compare their frum people to your frum people. Your frum people are as good as our frum people.

**INT:** Yeah?

**SURLK:** On an ethical level? Of course.

(Some conversation in Yiddish between Rabbi and SurLK)

**SURLK:** Mostly the boys. The men are here very nice. You could do with them such a good (?)

**INT:** And the women?

**SURLK:** Depends. Chap a woman that will be good, but the men are very, very fine. There was a difference. The rabbi said before that because their life was easier than ours they didn't have to fight for every little thing like we fought. They didn't have to think it over ten times where to get it, how to get it. We were so smart. If we were so smart how come we didn't understand that such a churban is coming?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Nobody believed that it can happen such a thing. To take people for nothing and...(Yiddish words)

**SURLK:** And gas chambers.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** (Yiddish words)

**SURLK:** There was also a difference.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** In America, a millionaire, you can go into him and speak to him. (Yiddish words) In Europe, a millionaire's house? You can't. (Yiddish words)

**INT:** Even the rabbi couldn't?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The rabbi could. Rabbi Chaim Meisels went to the richest people. (Conversation in Yiddish) But basar V'dam (flesh and blood)-no. (Yiddish words)

**SURLK:** Comparing the American army to the Russian army. They both clashed so we saw them both. The Russian army was very plain because government was plain. The nation was plain. Was poor. You gave them a piece of herring and a piece of black bread, a little vodka, and it was enough. But with the Americans you couldn't do that. They didn't have the Russian stores. They didn't have a revolution. They didn't have seventy years of oppression, sixty years, fifty years of oppression. They didn't have this. They were under a terrible pressure and so we called the Americans "Chocolavnikes" because for them they took out chocolate, Babe Ruth and the others, and they ate the chocolate. The Russians didn't even want chocolate. They wanted a piece of black bread and herring.

**INT:** How about yidden that were in the Russian army and yidden that were in the American army? Were they different? Did you meet yidden? How were they different? You met some yidden in the Russian army?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** What were they like? Like yidden that you knew?

**SURLK:** Some of them. You could see the communism and the Bolshevism, you could already see on them. It impressed them. They were born. They were raised. (Yiddish words)

**INT:** I want to ask you something a little different. When you thought, as a young girl, what you were going to be in life-you picked out to be a pharmacist. You wound up to be a Rebbetzin. Explain to me-

**SURLK:** I don't regret it.

**INT:** I want by your personality. By your personality, when you became a Rebbetzin in Europe for a few months in the camp there and over here on Parkside Avenue.

**SURLK:** Not a few months. We stayed years. You know how we lived in Europe after the war when the rabbi was a Chief Rabbi?

**INT:** Very well, you said.

**SURLK:** Our apartment and our servants and he had a private chauffeur with the car.

**INT:** I want to ask you about becoming a Rebbetzin.

**SURLK:** How many times do I have to go through it?

**INT:** What? What was it like to be a Rebbetzin? Your personality. To meet all these people and to be involved with people.

**SURLK:** First of all, if you are with a partner that's to your heart, whatever he does is good. If I had married a pharmacist, I would remain as frum as I am now. This is my nature and this is how I was born and nobody would even be able to change it. We had these Israelis here and I told her I am mekanah you, I envy you. I don't care what you have. I don't care what you eat. Whatever they ate we ate. We didn't eat this much more. Food is not the problem in America. We made a beautiful Shabbos for them. But I was so pleased he wears a shtreimel with a kapote. Somebody at my table. I wouldn't have changed.

**INT:** Why did you say you envied her?

**SURLK:** Because she lives in Yerushalayim. That's why I envy her. She is among yidden. They don't care about the politics. Whatever will be will be with us. What will happen to klall will happen to yuchid. They don't care. They don't need all these things that we have.

**INT:** What is the most difficult thing about being a Rebbetzin?

**SURLK:** It's a very hard job.

**INT:** What's the most difficult thing.

**SURLK:** An orthodox Rebbetzin is very hard. You have to give of yourself a lot and you don't receive a tenth what you work out financially, morally. You're a public person. You are sold to the klall. Everybody can klop in your window. Everybody. My little Berel says in the evening the telephone starts ringing. People eat supper. They relax. Let's call the rabbi or the Rebbetzin. Let's ask them a question. So he says, Ma, what do the people want from us? In the evening, nine or ten o'clock, let us relax. No. Like a doctor. You are always in tzorus. When they are well, when they are financially good off, they don't come to you to tell you. They don't need the rabbi. They only come for advice. If they need advice, if they need help, if they need moral help, financial help, mostly moral help, if they need a shoulder to cry on, they tell you tzorus with the wife, with the husband, with the children. Tell them what to do. Tell them about a get, if they should divorce or not.

**INT:** What are the kind of things you get involved in compared to what the rabbi's gotten involved in?

**SURLK:** Me? I almost take part in everything. Even if I don't give solutions, but I see what's going on and with one ear I hear. Now, as I got older, I'm sending them out of the house to the shul. If it goes. But mostly there are here what goes on. Tzorus. What do I enjoy? Tzorus? No. I have my own bundle. No. I don't enjoy. I don't enjoy people's problems.

**INT:** So how did you do it all these years?

**SURLK:** It's hard. It's hard. I forgot in English how you say it. It leaves an impression. You get nervous. You get with other people's tzorus depressed. And there is every day something else. It's non-stop. Nothing. The best thing is Friday night. The telephone doesn't ring. People after shul go home. We go home. We stay in the house. We eat our supper. We talk a little bit. We read. The rabbi learns always an hour. He lays down on the couch and he gets up and looks into a paper or in a sefer again. That's why I like these short days. I don't like the long days because if you bench licht eight o'clock, the tzorus go till eight o'clock, but if you start at four o'clock Shabbos, 4:18, half past four, you have a long evening. It's very hard, very hard.

**INT:** How do you take care of yourself to release tension?

**SURLK:** That's a problem. Not on tranquilizers. I have a little tranquilizer that I take once in a while when I have a serious problem, but most of the time...my emunah, my faith helps me a lot. My emunah. I spoke to somebody before and...

**INT:** How do you use it?

**SURLK:** I use it-

**INT:** When does it come to help out?

**SURLK:** In every problem. And I give people the same advice. The Eibershter will help. Hashem will help you. Leave it to Him. And the rabbi is also a big help to me. He is my psychiatrist. I am not his because I need somebody to talk out, to speak out these tzorus but he makes the clouds disappear.

**INT:** When you talk them out to him?

**SURLK:** And I take advantage on him and that's why he's a little nervous lately, the last year, because all those years I used to...like last night, three o'clock in the morning, Pa, geshluft? I'd like to talk to you. I have to tell you something. Oh, Clara, are you starting again? It's the middle of the night. You will see. Leave it.

**INT:** What was it? What kind of thing was it?

**SURLK:** He always says to me don't play G-d. Leave it to the Ribono shel Olam. Leave it to Hashem. He will take care of us. We were in more difficult situations and it worked out and he says we are worrying all week in advance about things that never happen. We think maybe this will happen, that will happen. It doesn't happen but we are worried.

**INT:** What are you worried about the most?

**SURLK:** About health.

**INT:** Whose health?

**SURLK:** About our health. My mishpocha (family). I have such a little mishpocha. About our health. About our position. I don't have problems with parnassah. I never had yet. Never. Even that week when we came without a penny. I didn't know what it means parnassah. We will not have money for bread or for milk. This I leave to Ribono shel Olam. But for us the worry-people are not justifiable.

**INT:** People are difficult. People can be difficult.

**SURLK:** And whoever does not have a success in life-I'd like to tell you something off the record. (Tape shuts) But that was a different kind of people. When we moved in thirty-five years ago, you had thousands of people and old people from Europe and new people. Here you have a clique of fifty pair of people, losers, non-achievers, not educated people. They don't have professionals like in Rabbi Levine's shul or in your shul of maybe fifty-fifty.

**INT:** How does that make a difference?

**SURLK:** And even Rabbi Young's shul. It makes a difference because you deal with them. They're higher. You feel so inferior. What did you accomplish? I make him aware what we did by sitting in Philadelphia. It's aggravating.

**INT:** Why do you make him aware if it aggravates him?

**SURLK:** Because I wanted to go away. Instead of moving here to the Northeast I wanted to go to New York, even when we sat here nine years already. We had different kinds of people. Like later they went to Har Zion, Schreiber, Perlstein, Bumsee. They were a little modern but they were all shomer Shabbos by us in shul.

**INT:** But the rabbi won out?

**SURLK:** He didn't want to go because he is not a businessman. Once they came and they wanted to give him a position in Flatbush, in Talmud Torah shul, which is today one of the biggest shuls. I said let's go. Let's start. Let's leave here. Listen, our destination...I was going to Skver. I come out every time with the same song. The Rebbi knows me already. He said your place was in Philadelphia. If you helped out one family from frei, from reform, conservative, becoming orthodox, to become frum, you accomplished something. His father even told me years ago-what do you want to accomplish by going to New York? I listened to him because he was a big tzaddik and a very big person. Smart, very smart.

**INT:** But?

**SURLK:** But if I would have come to him...never say I cannot live there. I cannot...we shlepped Brisman here. You know what a quality he is? He is one maybe of ten, twenty people in gantz America in his age that knows. He knows. The rabbi told me a few years ago that his knowledge is like a seventy year old rav in Poland. You know his knowledge? When he comes to Rav Pam, you know...

**INT:** He can go to New York if he wanted to?

**SURLK:** He cannot go now to New York. The children are growing up. Something he grasped. He's already forty years old. He's more than forty. He's forty-two, I think. Now we are old and our daughter would not like to leave us. It's not so easy in New York with a house. This is not his house. This is my son's. Yitzchok and the other son gave \$7000 each. They put down \$14,000 and they bought the house on their name, and he pays some rent. I pay. I pay \$440 to cover at least their mortgage.

**INT:** Did you give him eitzos (advice) what to do with his life, your son-in-law?

**SURLK:** He doesn't like me too much, I think. Lately I wouldn't say...he doesn't hate me but he thinks that I'm mixing in too much. But when the rabbi tells him something, you know Dov, do it like that or like that. He doesn't say "do" but my opinion is like...eh, no. I don't think so. With respect. Biggest respect. He respects every child. Goes home, he thinks it over, he does. He uses the rabbi's advice.

**INT:** Do you say the same eitzos as the rabbi? (End of tape 11, side 1)

**SURLK:** She wouldn't like to hear it. She says Ma...I told her Friday something. She says Ma, don't give me too many advices. Don't give me...Let them make decisions. Don't give me too many advices. I don't want to make the young people worry. It's hard for them, you know.

**INT:** Now that you're thinking about what the Rebbe told you, is it bashert that you're living in Philadelphia?

**SURLK:** Oh, everything is bashert. Every little thing is bashert. Of course. And if we would have moved to New York and something would happen, G-d forbid, to one of us, and we would be separated, this would be better? So you are already in New York and you accomplished your position and you can live according to a plan? You cannot make...they say in German [German words] Man plans and G-d laughs.

**INT:** So why do you say to the rabbi then you should have listened to me?

**SURLK:** Who?

**INT:** You.

**SURLK:** I tell him he should listen to me?

**INT:** About going to New York.

**SURLK:** Because on one side we would be very happy. You see people from Canada. Canada is more European. They understand us better than here. Philadelphia is a reform city. It started here, the reform movement, the conservative started here. It's not a blessed city for frumer yidden. It's a very hard ground.

**INT:** What do you think about the frum community in Lower Merion, in Northeast? Is it more than it was thirty years ago?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** It's not more than it was?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Maybe more Americans now.

**SURLK:** No. No, Mr. Garfield. No. Nobody should tell you that. No. We had thirty orthodox shuls. We had four hundred butchers. So they didn't have glatt kosher bread but they had kosher meat.

**INT:** The community is better for you now than it was?

**SURLK:** No. You don't have whom to deal with. You don't have baalebatim. Philadelphia does not have baalebatim. Baltimore has baalebatim. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** When you were talking to the rabbi about what you were going to tell the children about your experiences...did you talk about it and decide what you were going to tell the children?

**SURLK:** We decided, we didn't decide, but somehow we didn't tell our children.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** They asked us about a grandmother, a grandfather. I don't remember exactly what we told. We told them a teretz, like you say. But it happened once that-I think the rabbi told you-that a member of our shul davened here and his children were with my children in school and one day he came to the family and he talked and his father said oh, the camps were bad. So his son told him oh, because you were there in death camp. I don't remember exactly. And then he asked them were was your father? What camp? And they said we don't know. And it hit them and they were big children already, six, seven years, eight years. And then they came in and they said Papa, where were you during the war? So he had to tell them. He told them I was in Auschwitz.

**INT:** And how about more as the years went by?

**SURLK:** They are very devoted.

**INT:** But what do you tell them?

**SURLK:** They know a lot.

**INT:** They know a lot. Because you told them?

**SURLK:** Yitzchok knows more. Berel knows more. COSBL knows a bissel. Avi knows a bissel. They know.

**INT:** Did you talk about your parents and your sisters?

**SURLK:** Oh, they know my name. They know their names. They know my maiden name. They know how many sisters I had, my parents. Of course. My uncle.

**INT:** And the rabbi too?

**SURLK:** Yes. Sure.

**INT:** So it came out or you decided or it just came out-

**SURLK:** No. We didn't decide. He asked them so he just told them the truth. And they're very devoted children. Very devoted. Very, very devoted. My Berel went out with a girl a few weeks ago and she said to him-he went out a few times with her and then she said but you're so concerned about your parents and you're sticking to them so much, and he said you know Blimi, you are going every week to a different chasunah, to a different bar mitzvah, to a different affair. I don't go. I don't have aunts. I don't have uncles. I don't have cousins. I don't have grandparents. We don't have anybody. My parents left everybody, so I shouldn't stick to them?

And they fixed by COSBL a window and door, everything was broken, so they came out. A lady called me and she said seeing these three boys standing with that window, putting in the sister's house and so concerned and so devoted and the next day they told Berel you go home and tell your mother how nicely she raised her children, with such a devotion, with such a closeness. My oldest boy came Friday. He saw the windows and the doors and he kvelled around Avi. He sent the windows and he sent the door. Whatever they see they could shtup her.

**INT:** How about deciding what to tell the grandchildren about all this?

**SURLK:** The grandchildren know. They know.

**INT:** From how?

**SURLK:** I don't know. It just happened that little by little they know. They don't know maybe details but they know a lot. Matty went to an interview for the Bais Yaakov of Yerushalayim today in New York. My son-in-law took them. And she said Babbi, can I speak to Zaida. I'm leaving soon and I want his blessing. I said I don't know. He's upstairs. And then I told him call Matty and give her a brocha. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Okay. Today is the 19th of January and we're continuing with SurLK. I wanted to ask you- we haven't talked about any connection you had with Mrs. Stipolova. We came all the way to America and we even raised a child but we didn't talk about your connection with her since you left, since you left her. Can you talk about when-do you remember-before the chasunah, the chasunah, afterwards when you left Europe?

**SURLK:** Way before. Way before. We got liberated in 1944 but we were afraid to stay in Poland because of the pogroms that was in case in another city and we also felt the anti-Semitism was obscene for these few remaining people. The goyim didn't look on us so friendly. They say here in America he didn't finish his job. They didn't finish us all. Even these few people that remained.

**INT:** Why do you think the Poles were still...they suffered too during the war?

**SURLK:** The Poles suffered? They suffered because they wanted their national home restored. That's why they suffered. They were under the occupation of Russia from 1939-41, then they were occupied from 1941-1944 and from 1944 again the Russian army came in. So they were under constant occupation.

**INT:** Why would they be anti-Semitic to the Jews?

**SURLK:** Because they were afraid that the few remaining Jews will tell of the atrocities, of our persecution, and they were afraid that each of us had something, that we'll demand their loot. What they looted. Like, for instance, me and these two girls who lived in New York, the lady and her sister. They had given to the Poles and to the Ukrainians the best things that we possessed in our house. They didn't give them jewelry and money because this was a necessity that you had to carry this yourself, and you could carry it easily. You could put it in your pocket. You could put it in your undergarments. You could sew it into your clothes. And it stays with you until, you



know, they found it. But coming to a home where you had furniture and crystals...everybody had something. A little silver, silver cups, candlesticks, other items. Even the poorest people who married off their daughters they gave them a dowry. What did we give them? Two candlesticks. They gave them a silver becher. It was too expensive in Europe then. You had to accumulate all your life if you had a few daughters to buy that. So they took everything to the goyim. We didn't make a plan to stay hidden for a month or two or three or four or a year. We thought that this will resolve in a few short weeks, in a few short months. So we gave them almost...99% of Jews gave their good things for coats, linen, silver, dishes, expensive dishes, porcelain, other stuff. They gave away to the goyim.

**INT:** To hold for them.

**SURLK:** To hold for them and they figured when they come back, some were friends, some were neighbors, you will get it back and you will give them a certain amount of money, a certain amount of these items.

**INT:** For keeping it.

**SURLK:** For keeping it.

**INT:** And what happened?

**SURLK:** None of us came back except a few people. They had it in their possession and they treat it like it's their own and after they saw us they knew that we will demand it. So I myself had a few experiences with the goyim. Most of them were Ukrainian, because we were more Acrania than Poland, you know. Before Kiev there was Lvov, Lemberg. It was considered a Ukrainian city and all the shtetlach around her were considered Ukrainian villages, little towns. So my mother, like I told you before, we were considered rich people in those times and we had a lot. We had a lot in our house. A lot of silver. For instance, my mother put in a big candy tin...the candy tin had about fifty kilo of candy, a hundred pounds. We put in a lot of that silver into that can and we put it in our uncle's house. They dug a big grave, they covered it again with earth and it stayed, I'm sure, up till now. The house was destroyed but I'm sure that was deep in the cellar that it stayed. But what would I do with it? Whatever I got back, whatever I discovered in our house...I have a few items from my house that I could rescue. (Tape shuts) My mother had a big candelabra, a very big candelabra and besides that, when she got married she had two candlesticks. Every Jewish bride got two candlesticks, so she had two candlesticks, beautiful. Today it would be something to see. Modern in those days. Today also considered modern. And later we bought new styles-people used candelabras, rich people, and my mother brought a high one, very high, like you could see today in Borough Park in the windows displayed. A big candelabra with five candles to put it and what I got...my mother gave away the candelabra. I don't even know who took it and I didn't care about it. But the two candlesticks I got from our house where it was hidden. I told you, in many places it was hidden. My father took out from a wall. He took out the brick, made it empty and put everything...whatever he could he put in and then we went upstairs to our sleeping quarters. We had a big, big empty space so we put in thousands and thousands of dollars worth. Like my mother had a Persian lamb coat and leather

and linen and silk. You must consider that my father had a big place. Whatever he could rescue was like a hair.

**INT:** Did he give any to the neighbors?

**SURLK:** Of course. That's what I'm coming to. So when I came out and I found in a few places some money and we had to go away to the west, so I took-I don't remember-I think I took-in each one it was \$500. Five ones. Five one hundred dollars. And I put it into that hole in the candlestick, in each one. A few days before that I heard that Polish army soldiers, the Polish police, found a trick and they discovered that people are putting in money into the candlesticks. (Tape shuts) What will I do with it? What will I do with it? They will find out. So a lady who was with me and she went a few weeks later, a few months later, she said to me you know what? Tell me how much money you have? I'll give it to you and I will take it to a silversmith and tell him to cover it. So that's what we did. She gave me the money. I put it somewhere in my brasserie and I gave her the candlestick and she went to the silversmith and he cut it open and she took out the money. I met her later. So these goyim were so smart that they knew it will come to a day that someday we will confront them. I know that my mother gave it to you.

**INT:** You were going to say this. Your mother would probably give to somebody specifically-

**SURLK:** Yes. Not to one. To a lot.

**INT:** Did you go to those people and ask them for it?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** What happened?

**SURLK:** I didn't get. I got very little.

**INT:** What did they say to you?

**SURLK:** One lady said-my mother had a Persian carpet. It was very expensive. It was in our dining room, and my mother gave it to Mrs. Yurevich. The neighbors Yurevich. Her daughter, during the war, she thought the Russians are coming closer. They went away to Germany. From Germany they came with the displaced person's to Canada, to Montreal. She took everything that my mother gave to her parents. I don't know if she took, but the mother and father said that. I even was in Montreal once and I wanted to go but I heard her husband passed away, she has these two shkutzim, two boys. I was afraid even to go. We were so scared.

**INT:** Did you know what your mother and father gave to each one?

**SURLK:** Not details. I knew who they were.

**INT:** And you knew these people? You knew who they were? They were neighbors?

**SURLK:** Mr. Garfield, before I come to it, you must have a story, a happening why these two sisters, the ones that I am visiting now, how they caught them. Do you remember? Maybe you recall what I told you? There was a family and their mother gave the things to hide in their house, a lot of good stuff. Not only to one. You gave to everybody. Maybe you could take my linens? Maybe you could take my silver? Maybe you could take my porcelain? Every couple who was married for ten, twenty years, thirty years, had something, no matter how poor you are. So you remember that Mrs. Kashinska told them you come tomorrow. You come in two days, in three days, or tomorrow it was. I don't remember exactly. You come and I am going to prepare the things that you left. And when they came the Gestapo was all over with the dogs. It's very interesting to have these ladies interviewed. You would get a medal for that, a prize for that. It's worth to go to New York and spend two, three hours. When you go I also go. It's very important that for a piece of clothes, the fur coat, for a dress, for a piece of material-she knows exactly what they gave-they gave a life away. It's very important. This is one of the basic things how cheap our life was then.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** If you bring a Jew he will give you three pounds salt.

**SURLK:** And they brought. (Yiddish words)

**INT:** You went to these goyim and you asked them to give you the things back. And what did they tell you? Did you get anything back from then? What did they tell you?

**SURLK:** I don't remember. I really don't remember. Whatever was in our house, it was hidden in eleven places, I found maybe five, six, seven. In three, four places they took out the money. In the cellar we had the beams. We had iron beams. In Poland you had iron beams. So when you came into the cellar, instead of a ceiling you saw the iron beams. My father put it under these beams-he took it out with cement, put in some money, gold, and he put it in. So they were looking. Imagine how they looked thoroughly.

**INT:** These are the Deutschen or these are the Poles?

**SURLK:** The Ukrainians. I had to do with the Ukrainians because-

**INT:** When did they look, after the war or when you got out of the house?

**SURLK:** No. After they were shot. They lived in this house and I don't know if they looked when they were living in this house. Of course they looked. Why not? Who wouldn't let them? They knew that everybody had hidden something. I know now that they took apart these houses they found a lot.

**INT:** So you were saying that the reason you saw anti-Semitism was after the war, by the Ukrainians and the Poles, was because-

**SURLK:** It contributed, because they were afraid we will demand our things.

**INT:** Okay. Now you were going to talk about Mrs. Stipolova.

**SURLK:** So in 1944, when we lived for about just a few months, we realized that we must clear the territory, that we don't have a right to exist here.

**INT:** You had the legal right to live there.

**SURLK:** Oh please. What is legal?

**INT:** Okay. Did any of these neighbors say anything to you anti-Semitic about you should leave, you should go away, or anything like that. You just saw it didn't look good, but did people, did your old neighbors say anything to you, the Ukrainians?

**SURLK:** We knew. Please. Of course we knew. You could see it. You could feel it. They have to say? Sure they said.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** In peace time, before the war, every goy spoke against you. You don't belong here. Go to Palestine.

**INT:** And there was no rachmonus (pity) after the war?

**SURLK:** No. I just read in a paper, privately, it was twelve o'clock already...

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** This Stipolova was a customer by them and they owe her money. She was a nice lady. And she looks a little goyishe. And she didn't have a daughter. They have two sons. The nature of a mother wants to have a daughter.

**SURLK:** That was not the reason, Poppa. This was maybe a part of the reason. The reason was that he was an officer in the Polish army and he ran away with Shkortsy to England and she was left with two children and with the mother-in-law and everybody was demanding money from her that she owed them for things that she was buying. And my mother never said anything because my father said maybe you should tell Mrs. Stipolova she owes us a lot of money. Maybe she can pay? She said why should I make myself ridiculous. She doesn't have money. She doesn't have. Her husband is in England with the Polish army. And because my mother was so nice to her and she always greeted her with a smile, how are you, did you hear something from your husband, that's why they decided to take me.

**INT:** She risked her life.

**SURLK:** It was like a reciprocation for your kindness, for your understanding. That was the reason.

**INT:** When did you see her again?

**SURLK:** I saw her in 1945. Wait a second. In 1944. She also went away. I don't remember. I think that she and the children went first.

**INT:** To where?

**SURLK:** To the West Poland. Poland was divided. Lvov and the other, till (?), was considered Russian, so instead of being on that side of the Russian government we rather would be in the west. Like they divided Berlin. So we would rather be in the west. (Yiddish words) It was not the same Russia like it was 1939. In 1939 the communists came with their full power, until 1941. In 1941, the Germans. In 1944, after the liberation, the Russian army came again and liberated us from the Germans, but it was already a big difference between-

**INT:** So Poland came back? Poland came back as a-

**SURLK:** No. Poland came back as not an independent state. They depended on Russia but they had their Communist Party that governed in Poland, in Warsaw. So she ran away with the children because everybody knew in this town that she rescued me.

**INT:** That's why she ran away?

**SURLK:** No. She was afraid. (End of tape 11, side 2) ...so when I think she went first with the children. She went first in 19--(Talks to Rabbi Leizerowski in Yiddish) There are still a lot of things that I have to tell you. Vey iz mir. I'm coming back to 1944, when we were liberated. Her husband was taken by the Soviets, as I mentioned before. He didn't come back. He never came back. Some people said that they saw him on a train. They met somebody who said he was having malaria and he died. Anyway, he wasn't...he died. So she and the children-they were afraid to stay.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because he was considered a political prisoner and you never know what they can do to their family.

**INT:** By the Russians.

**SURLK:** Yeah. So just to feel a little bit more secure, they left in 1944 Chovorow and they went to West Poland, also under communist occupation but, like I said, it was governed by the Polish communists and they came to...Katowicz had a nice little town that was considered before the war half-German, half-Polish. Boyten. In Polish they call it Byton. It still exists. It's a nice town. It's a city-it's not a town. It's an industrial city. So they came to Byton because they were advised that this has more place for refugees. Urban cities were considered a bit squeezed in. And she came there with the children. We probably got some news that she is there. Then came our turn, the Jewish people had to go another two, three months. We took whatever we had. What did we have-two, three bundles? We took a little food with us on a train. All Jews from our city. We went also to Boyten. When we came to Boyten, she had a nice apartment and she took me in again.

**INT:** You didn't tell me that.

**SURLK:** I couldn't because I started from the beginning and now it's the end.

**INT:** She took you in? By yourself?

**SURLK:** By myself. She had to give away certain rooms, so she gave away a room to a professor. He was a math professor that I also knew. And she gave one room to a Mrs. Badzar. I think I stayed with them.

**INT:** Where did she get money to do all this?

**SURLK:** You didn't need so much money. You didn't need. In those days, if you had a hundred dollars, two hundred dollars, you were considered rich. I probably contributed also. I wasn't sitting on a...

**INT:** When you left Chovorow, you were with Yidden?

**SURLK:** Yes. I went with the Yidden who was wounded.

**INT:** But you separated yourself and went to live with Mrs. Stipolova or-

**SURLK:** They were living in the same vicinity. They got apartments, the Habers, the two ladies that I'm speaking about. Officially I was living with them. Officially. Because I couldn't stay...I didn't want to go back to them permanently. I knew that I am Jewish. I lived like a block or two blocks away, so I of course came to them, and we were thinking now of leaving also Boyten, the Jews, because they said if you go to Germany you are considered as a displaced person, and from here they will direct you where to go-either to go to Israel, which wasn't Israel then, it was Palestine, or you go to the United States. Some people had relatives in Canada. Some people had in Brazil. Some people...so we were sitting on our bundles waiting for the next step.

**INT:** She knew, when you came back, it was only temporary.

**SURLK:** No, I wasn't staying with them.

**INT:** You didn't stay with Mrs. Stipolova?

**SURLK:** No. I recalled yes. It's a long time.

**INT:** You did or you didn't stay with her?

**SURLK:** I did not. I just came every day, almost every day, to see her. Twice a day. What was it-two blocks? Sure. No, I didn't stay with them. I made my case clear that I am Jewish. They knew it. But in the beginning they resented it, I told you, in Chovorow, when I went to these two sisters. They didn't like it so much. They said you don't need us now so you run away from us. But later they knew that I really don't belong with them.

**INT:** What were her plans? Was she going to stay there?

**SURLK:** Yes. Her children are still there.

**INT:** So she decided this town is better for her than where she was.

**SURLK:** Yeah, it was much better. It was much better for them.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** So this was 1945. 1946 came. In the meanwhile I knew that I have an uncle in Switzerland. I knew his name. I knew that he was an oberrabbiner-the chief rabbi of Switzerland. When I came to Boyten, I wrote a letter to the Yiddishe Kultersgeminde, the Yiddishen rabbinate in Zurich and they delivered the letter to him. Like we have a lot of letters that come to the rabbi and without the address. They knew.

**INT:** So that part of the story I heard.

**SURLK:** So they took me out.

**INT:** Do you remember saying goodbye to Mrs. Stipolova?

**SURLK:** I remember, yes.

**INT:** Tell me about that.

**SURLK:** It was a tearful goodbye.

**INT:** Tell me about the goodbye. What was it like?

**SURLK:** Terrible.

**INT:** You knew you wouldn't see her anymore?

**SURLK:** No. I always hoped that maybe she can come to see me, maybe I can come to see her.

**INT:** Where did you tell her you were going to?

**SURLK:** She knew.

**INT:** To Switzerland.

**SURLK:** Yes. No, I didn't go to Switzerland. No, I couldn't go to Switzerland directly from Poland. I was ordered to come to Prague, Czechoslovakia, and in Czechoslovakia everything was prepared.

**INT:** So you told her you're leaving.

**SURLK:** That I am going with the displaced persons to look for...to settle our pay, to settle our future.

**INT:** And you said to be in touch or not?

**SURLK:** Oh please, what do you mean to be in touch? What do you mean in touch? It's like my mother.

**INT:** So what was it like when you left her? You cried?

**SURLK:** I didn't cry, no. After 1942 till 1946, four years, if somebody treats you like that, you didn't cry? Endangers her life and gives it almost away and the children-I didn't cry, no. The boy was, how much, twelve years old?

**INT:** So when you came to Prague were you in touch with her while you were in Prague?

**SURLK:** I think so. I wrote. The mail wasn't delivered so normally. It was still war, you know, but of course I wrote.

**INT:** How about in Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Oh, in Switzerland, it was already...when I came to Switzerland, the first thing I did is I wrote her letters. I started to write letters faithfully, maybe every week, every two weeks, every ten days, every day. Whenever I felt that she had to know certain things about me, I wrote her. And we were in contact.

**INT:** How can you compare what you told her with what you told the tante? What was the relationship like compared to the tante?

**SURLK:** You see, I personally-I considered always a goy. A goy is a goy. I don't know why. But I knew what she did for me. Here you are speaking of your own flesh and blood and here you are speaking of somebody who endangers their life and gives it away and deprives the children of a piece of cake and other things in order I should stay healthy.

**INT:** So what's the difference in relationship?

**SURLK:** But my tante couldn't do that for me during the war what she did. She was for me everything.

**INT:** What's the difference in how you talked to them? What kind of things would you talk to the tante about and what kind of things would you-

**SURLK:** Tante I talk exclusively about our mishpocha, about our family, about what they went through, about the persecution of the Jews, about the Holocaust in general. It's a churban. You call it Holocaust, I call it a churban. So I talked about that.

**INT:** And Mrs. Stipolova? What did you talk to her about?

**SURLK:** Mrs. Stipolova I didn't have to speak because she was a witness. She saw everything.



**INT:** So what did you write to her about?

**SURLK:** She saw it from a goyishe perspective and my aunt was in it. They hit her. Even if they didn't hit her personally, they deprived her of her own family. She was left alone. She didn't have anybody.

**INT:** So what did you write to her about?

**SURLK:** About everything.

**INT:** About what you were feeling?

**SURLK:** Not about the feelings. I had these years so much to talk to her about the feelings, about my mishpocha, about what we went through. We couldn't come to understanding that something like that could happen, even in a history of a people, so I didn't have to start from Bereishis and tell her you remember this, you remember. She knew it. She remembered. She had rachmonus (pity) because she wouldn't rescue me.

**INT:** Did you write to her about the shidduchim that were going on with you?

**SURLK:** Yes. Yes. She was very much for me...wanted me to stay in Switzerland, to get married in Switzerland and stay in Switzerland. Live in Switzerland. Switzerland was considered an excellent country, an international country, neutral country. They still think that they cannot-

**INT:** She wanted you to stay there and your tante wanted you to stay there and the uncle wanted you to stay there. They all wanted you to stay there.

**SURLK:** They all wanted and I was against them. Look what I accomplished.

**INT:** So did you invite her to the chasunah in Switzerland?

**SURLK:** Yes. Sure I invited her.

**INT:** So what happened? Did she come?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Who could come? You're talking about a war-destroyed country. Who came? Who went? Diplomats went.

**INT:** Okay. Now after Switzerland-

**SURLK:** After Switzerland she knew that I got married to a German and I wrote her. She knew everything. She knew about my children when they were born and I wrote like to a bubby you write, what they said, what they did, what the chochma'lach what they make. (Laughter) We had our grandchildren last week so oy, the little one is such a nice...the little girl started to cough and

she came in and he sees and he coughed so I said oy vey, and each time you said oy vey, she started to cough again. Everything. I sent her pictures.

**INT:** When you were going to leave for America, did you write to her and you told her?

**SURLK:** When we were about to leave Germany...she knew every little step. She knew every little change in my plans. Everything. When we were about to leave, she knew exactly but I didn't let her wait too long. When we came to America, my first letter was to my tante and to her, maybe the same day.

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

**SURLK:** Mrs. Stipolova. I didn't call her by the first name because European people are very formal people. I cannot say Norman. It's Mr. Garfield.

**INT:** Okay. So you called her...so you told her you're going to go to America?

**SURLK:** I remember here a Rebbetzin told me once, you know, we are so close, let's call each other by name. To me, you know, a few years ago it was like...Europeans are very formal. I couldn't call her Rosia.

**INT:** What did she think of the churban, from a goyishe point of view? What did she think of Deutschen? What did she think of Ukraine?

**SURLK:** She was devastated.

**INT:** How did she explain it?

**SURLK:** She couldn't understand it. She couldn't understand it.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She wasn't Polish. She was a Czech.

**SURLK:** Slovakian. She was an exceptional fine, intelligent person. Very sensitive and a nice looking person. Very eidel. Very, very noble. She was devastated.

Rabbi Leizerowski comments here that the Czech were a finer people than the Germans, a better people.

**SURLK:** But I read Shabbos night-I told you, it's always Friday night it comes out that I read these stories. I don't know. Maybe I am a little bit relaxed more. In my soul I feel that Shabbos is a little bit too much for us. It's too nice. Food and warm and light. You have to have a drop of bitterness. It's too good. So I always read Friday night. And you know, I had that paper for a whole week. I saved it for Friday night. Why is it that I always keep these bitter stuff for Friday night? So I read that in Germany, when they took the Italian Jews to Auschwitz, the railroad in Switzerland was emptied because the trains passed through Switzerland to Auschwitz. Yemoch shemo vezecrho, with their knowledge. A little girl who was about fourteen years old went with her mother. They let them in before, a year or two. They were considered temporary refugees

and they told them they should bring something to eat, bread, soup, so they nebech took everything they had. They prepared with other people and took them to the station, took the food to the station. So the Germans and Swiss police didn't let them go to the wagons because they were afraid that they will tell them the situation what's what. They knew already that they are taking...maybe they didn't know Auschwitz but they knew to hard labor camps. So they said put the food here and we will give them. You go away. And soldiers with bayonets, the Swiss and near the wagons German, stood and they said to the inmates, because some of them survived, not one word to be spoken because you will not get this little bit water or this little bit food. You understand? It was Switzerland. You don't know. Now I see. It took me so many years to realize that I was the maven. Many times the rabbi asked me, maybe before we got married he asked, why do you want to leave Switzerland? Everybody's dream was to be in Switzerland. But I felt very uncomfortable and I'm ashamed to say that after I got married and came to Munich and I knew that every pavement is paved with blood and sweat and hunger and dead Jews, I felt better than in Switzerland. I didn't feel good. I saw they are anti-Semites. They are hard menschen, very hard people. They're drunks. They are on the first place...I didn't read this statistic lately, but in those years they were first to commit suicide, relatively speaking. They are the first in the world. You would think in such a beautiful Switzerland...

**INT:** When you came to America, you were in contact with Mrs. Stipolova by letter?

**SURLK:** I am now in contact with the children.

**INT:** Okay. I just want to explain through. You wrote to her and she wrote to you?

**SURLK:** Sure.

**INT:** Did you call her? Did you ever speak to her on the phone?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** So you sent letters.

**SURLK:** She is deceased for maybe-

**INT:** How did you find out that she was sick or she didn't...what was that? When was it? Did she write you she was sick? Explain it to me.

**SURLK:** Her son. We were in contact for all...she's dead maybe for twenty, maybe twenty-five years. Those years you didn't call Poland. The calling story started just two, three years ago.

**INT:** So you wrote. Explain how she got sick, how you found out that she was sick?

**SURLK:** She wrote me that she didn't feel so well, that this and that, different medications she's taking, and once her son wrote me that...I sent her money, ten dollars in each letter. Of course. Then she passed away.

**INT:** How did you find out she passed away?

**SURLK:** Her son wrote me. It was for me a terrible blow.

**INT:** How old was she?

**SURLK:** She was sixty-two, I think. (Yiddish words) How old was she when I came? In her thirties.

**INT:** Twenty-five years it must have been. Late thirties. So what happened? You continued with the children?

**SURLK:** I continued with the children. Most of the writing goes to the older son. I wrote also to the younger son. Not many times. I feel a little guilty because I am not in touch with them that I should be. It's not actually ...because I should be more attached to them. But they were children. I was a young girl too. To me, the tatte and the momma were important. The children didn't have a say but they did what their parents told them. Indirectly they are involved in my rescue. The little one was four years old.

**INT:** Do you write to both of them?

**SURLK:** Yes. Once in a while. Now lately I am...

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A very sick man, the older one.

**SURLK:** The older one is sick. He went for an operation. It's his second wife. He got divorced. They had a daughter who wasn't all there. But I call them and he calls me.

**INT:** Did you ever do anything in memoriam to her in any way, put her name anywhere?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** How about in Israel?

**SURLK:** No. This they have. I told them about this righteous Gentile. He got in contact with the Holocaust surviving committee and he helped an acknowledgment and he has a nice letter. He is written up in the righteous Gentiles book.

**INT:** When people talk about all the goyim are no good, do you feel any responsibility to talk about her or you feel it's such a small...

**SURLK:** I agree with them. I agree with those who say the goyim are no good, but I also add that even though I was rescued by goyim, I was saved by goyim and I owe them my life, I consider it a hashgocha pratis. I quickly add to anybody, I say, even to my doctors when they ask me sometimes, I said I was saved by a goy. At the doctor last week, and he asked...he is also a child of survivors and he asked the rabbi, he said, but tell me rabbi, where were you during the war? So he told him. And you? And I said I also lost my entire family but I was saved by a

Christian family. I tell everybody. But I tell you they are no good. They are angels, inspired. A good malach inspired them to do good things for the other million that they didn't do good. I also read what Pope Paul-I think he's coming to Cuba now to Castro, so they asked him-they had an audience with him, they prepare him. So they said about the Holocaust. He said yes, I know, but why do you speak only about this Holocaust. You must remember there were a lot of Holocausts. Did you read that?

**INT:** Yes.

**SURLK:** (Yiddish conversation between Rabbi and SurLK) But the political prisoners became a Holocaust. (Discussion about how Jews were separated in the camp from political prisoners) We were lawless people. You can do with them whatever you want, from eight o'clock in the morning, seven o'clock in the morning, till seven o'clock at night. It was constantly aktions. It means you could do anything with any Jew you find on the street.

**INT:** Let me ask you. During the period we're talking about, did you ever have trouble sleeping or dreams or any kind of tzorus at night? During this period. When you were younger, thirty, forty, fifty.

**SURLK:** What period? After the war?

**INT:** Switzerland and Munich and come to America. Do you remember?

**SURLK:** You talk to teenagers. Teenagers. You are talking to teenagers who forget so quickly, who have on their mind...you have to choose about America, about Switzerland what to do, to go maybe to Israel.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I don't sleep now. How can you sleep?

**INT:** Do you have a picture in a dream? Do you wake up from dreams? You don't have dreams?

**SURLK:** Nightmares. But you are speaking about the youngest people who start to understand their life, who are by themselves, who have to decide to go, I told you, to Switzerland, stay in Switzerland, to Israel or to Palestine or to America. You speak about people who have to decide their future, if they should marry in Switzerland or if they should marry in America, and so it's with the rabbi also. He didn't think about marrying. He didn't want to get married. There were more important things to do, to rescue the remnants that were broken.

**INT:** So how does this relate to getting up at night and nightmares?

**SURLK:** Of course you had nightmares.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She told you, I think, last time, that I said he killed not only the dead, he killed the live ones too.

**SURLK:** We are not Holocaust survivors. We are kedoshim. We are people who killed them. If he didn't kill us physically, he killed us mentally, emotionally, morally. I always considered us worse than the people who went.

**INT:** Who died.

**SURLK:** They didn't die. They killed-(end of tape 12, side 1) ...this is the way it should have been. With one shot, you solved all their problems, but the living ones were afraid of that shot. While you are alive, you are afraid. After, they are takeh kedoshim. Maybe they are much better off than we are now. We have so many problems to solve now in our lives and we are older and we cannot handle them, we cannot solve them. We are sick.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The German doctors, after the war, they said now it will be all right. But in fifty years you will see.

**SURLK:** Twenty-five he said. In twenty-five and fifty-I'd like to see these people who are teenagers.

**INT:** They said that to you?

**SURLK:** To everybody. Not to us, to everybody. Now they are all right, they're young people, but let me see them in twenty-five and fifty years. It's going to rub off on them. I know the doctor that I came to him. I was twenty-some years old when I came here so when we came here to America with two small children he said to me you didn't get these problems here. You brought them from the other side. It comes to asking our ages. We are so confused. We don't know how old we are. We don't know how old we are. You had to say-in Auschwitz you had to say maybe older, because if you are forty years old you are stronger. You can work. If you are twenty years old, you're not so strong. You didn't know what to say, if it's now light or it's dark, how old you are, what you wear, what you eat.

**INT:** Do you think there's any lessons from all this that happened to the Jewish people? Is there a lesson from this that you can say? Let me ask her, and then you, rabbi, I'll ask you. What's the lesson that we should learn from this?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Mostly it's a problem a negative. But for some, is I think a positive too. Many times I ask myself why did I remain? I'm not asking why they killed my brother.

**SURLK:** It's a guilt feeling. That's what they always say.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I am safe. Why? What happened here?

**SURLK:** You don't have an answer to that.

**INT:** But is there a lesson from this for the Jewish people that this happened? We had a lesson from the first churban, we had a lesson from the second churban. Do we have a lesson for the Jewish people?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Because we have a blessing we forget. We forget. It's a blessing. If we would remember all our tzorus, we wouldn't exist for that day. But the Ribono shel Olam-like Yosef Hatzaddik says-Menashe-ki nashane elokim as kol amali-he made me forget all my tzorus.

**SURLK:** But Mr. Garfield asks you is not because we forget we exist. Because we are able to forget we exist. A lesson for our nation.

**INT:** That's right.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** What is the lesson? Why it happened. This a human being doesn't know.

**SURLK:** I wanted to say that this is a very big part that is connected with emunah, with faith. You weren't so bad in those times that you deserve such a punishment. Nobody was so guilty that they should deserve such a punishment. If somebody kills somebody else, you get the death penalty. I always think when one person, one individual, kills another one and now we have the greatest lesson for us especially, such a Timothy McVeigh and such a Nichols that took part in killing 169 people, you look for justice for Nichols and I am sure personally that Timothy McVeigh will not die so quick. There will be ten appeals and ten years of the death row and some day a meshugane president will come and he will give the amnesty for the people who are sentenced to death, so in killing one person or two people, comparing to 169. What is 169 comparing to the Holocaust? If you speak about millions, about children, about older people, about youth. What is it? I remember one thing. About three years ago when we were in Israel, we went out to the Dead Sea with the excursion and the rabbi learned there, he spoke on Shabbos and he davened. They had a minyan. So I remember that one person, his name is Kaplan from Johannesburg or Cape Town, and his son is now the president of the Israeli Bonds, the international Israeli Bonds. He's a millionaire in his own right. He came up to you, he was a litvak-you don't remember the shtetl that he came?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Lechovich.

**SURLK:** And he said rabbi-he just didn't want to let him menucha (peace). He asked him this, then he said one sentence that it remains with me always. He said you know Rabbi Leizerowski, I think that for killing six or seven million people, if you think that Hashem will let it go like that, no. It will come a day of revenge, but if we will be here I don't know. But if you think...he said, (Yiddish words) he waits, but they are going to get theirs.

**INT:** But a lesson for the Jewish people?

**SURLK:** A lesson to the Jewish people? If you wouldn't be religious, I would talk to you differently, but since you are religious-if there will be no emunah in Hashem, if our existence will not have the foundation of our faith and of our religion and of our belief, there's no way.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** It's our existence, our life. We must go back to the Prophets. The Prophets, they saw and they warned the people by the first churban, by the second destruction.

They warned for this, for this, for this. The last catastrophe, nobody knew why and therefore we cannot say what to do. But everything is connected.

**SURLK:** Hashem wanted it that way, even if the churban Bais Hamikdosh (destruction of the Temple) was a minimum comparing to that. Was minimal compared to that churban. There was not something like that in history. It will not be like that. There were pogroms, but not like that.

**INT:** Doesn't it say in Devarim about the tochacha, with all the bad things that are going to happen in golus? Doesn't it say it?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** All the kellolos (curses) happened already. Every kellala what is written there passed already.

**INT:** Does that have anything to do with the churban?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Maybe. It passed.

**INT:** It says it. This is going to happen and that's going to happen in golus.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** This is repeated many times. The destruction of the Bais Hamikdash wasn't much better. The destruction was a war. They killed people. Like today they kill for nothing. We didn't make war. In those times, they made a war. We fought against and they overpowered us and they destroyed us. But now, they didn't do nothing bad. It came like a...

**INT:** But it says in Devarim that it will happen if you do bad things.

**SURLK:** But we didn't do. These people didn't do bad things.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Our generation didn't do it. It was the tochacha says.

**SURLK:** I always think-I don't accuse the American Jews nor the Swiss Jews, but I accuse all our Jews together, except those who went, that this was for the...we suffered because not of our sins.

**INT:** For whose sins?

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

**INT:** But not for Europeans?

**SURLK:** No. Especially East Europe, because West Europe, the Western hemisphere, didn't suffer as much as the East and in the East you had tzaddikim, gold, silver. You had jewels. You had people who didn't even know...you had people who didn't eat. You had hundreds and thousands of people-they didn't have a knowledge, plain people, who fasted Mondays and Thursdays. You had people who didn't...food was not interesting to them. A piece of bread, a little water, a little tea, a little coffee, that was all. They didn't even exist. They didn't concentrate. So for them it came? Even for some crimes you don't get that.



**INT:** Is there any lesson about living in America amongst goyim or being in Israel? For your grandchildren.

**SURLK:** Yes. It's a big, big challenge for our children to live in a goyishe atmosphere. The street influences our people. The street. The frummet people get influenced. I see so many examples. This couple who stays by us now Shabbosim, he's a CPA, she's a school counselor. I said to them last week, Shabbos I said to them, it's amazing Mr. Kapsov, Mrs. Kapsov, that you had such a power in yourself to leave your house, your car, to run away to Eretz Yisroel and such tzorus, but you did one thing and this is the best. You saved your children. You saved your generations. Halivi I would have a grandchild, a child, in Eretz Yisroel, even if it's a hard ground, even if it's not so convenient, even if it's hard to make a living. It's a different approach.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Eretz Yisroel has its own problems.

**SURLK:** Yeah, Eretz Yisroel has its own problems. Of course it has, but it doesn't have problems that we have with assimilation. This intermarriage. I was yesterday sick in the morning before I left. Shabbos night Yitzchok came home and he told me that a lady, she's a Holocaust survivor. No, she was in the uptown home. She wasn't so old but she was very sick. She has an only daughter. The daughter is married to a goy and they took her to the hospital last week and she passed away. She passed away Shabbos. So Sunday was the levaya. So last night I came home from New York and Yitzchok came in and I said to him how was this levaya for Mrs. Kinreich? He said to me, Ma, you should see. This is an only daughter. She married a goy with a braid in the back. So today I spoke to a lady, she called me and...what a tragedy. She is nebech a fine lady, an intelligent lady, from a Yiddishe house. I don't know. The street made her. The street influences. I'm not going to mention but I know there is a very frum shtetl in the vicinity of New York State and they have mostly Yiddishe menschen, frumer menschen, and I know they had two, three years ago, because I go to Skver so hear, they had a taanis tzibur (public fast). They made it because the divorce rate is so high by them that it's terrible.

**INT:** Frumer yidden?

**SURLK:** Only frum. I'm not speaking from not frum. Frumer yidden.

**INT:** In Europe there weren't so many divorces?

**SURLK:** No. You lived because of the children, you stayed with your wife. Your wife stayed with you because she had rachmonus.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** It happened. Sure it happened.

**SURLK:** It was a different relationship. It's not like...they tell you a joke that a couple came to a rav for a divorce so he asked her something. He was working on shalom bayis, but he had to have some ground for a divorce. So he asked her, tell me, what's so bad about your husband? She said, rebbe, I can't tell you. This is my husband. I cannot talk about him in that way. So the divorce was made and the get was handed over and after that he said, maybe you can tell me now? He took her in a room. What was the reason? She said, rebbe, this is now a strange person. How can I tell you about a strange person? Before it was her husband and then when he left, this

husband, and it was cold outside, she told him, maybe you will put on a coat because you might catch a cold?

**INT:** Let me skip and then we'll end soon. We last talked about raising your oldest son Avi, and you talked about going away to Ner Yisroel. Now it comes to Yitzchok. How did you decide what to do there?

**SURLK:** This is a story in itself. It doesn't pay to start. I have to start from the beginning and finish with Yitzchok. This has to be a separate session.

**INT:** That's what I want to come next to. Yitzchok. We'll go through the kinderlach and then we'll...(tape shuts)

**SURLK:** When we sat down to write the invitations for the bar mitzvah, we looked at each other. You start with the family, no? Invite the father, mother, grandmother, aunt. We had to start inviting strange people. This is a terrible thing. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** It's February 11 and this is Norman Garfield continuing with Rebbetzin Leizerowski. I wanted to ask you whether you remember meeting Avi's wife's parents for the first time and what that was like when he told you that he was going to get married? Can you talk about that for a little bit?

**SURLK:** He graduated Yeshiva University. After Yeshiva University he went to Oxford. He went to Cambridge. He went to Hebrew University in Jerusalem. And then he wanted to settle in New York and his main interest was English literature. He wanted to become a professor, a lecturer. In those days...he was an assistant professor already. He's very bright. In those days they didn't give it to such young people. He wanted a tenure agreement and they said we cannot give that to you, but if we send you back to the South, somewhere in that vicinity you could get it. But Avi is very smart and he realized he was not married by then. He was like thirty, thirty-one years old, and he came home and he was seeking our advice and he said to go to the South, it's not a tachlis for me because I'm not married and I don't know if I'll meet Jewish people, a Jewish environment. Even I am not so hyper-frum but he was always Shomer Shabbos. He was always davening in the morning. He was always eating kosher. The basic things he followed. So his father said it's not for you. So he went back to...in those days mostly he went to the Fifth Avenue Shul, Lincoln Square. Lincoln Square, Fifth Avenue, West Side, and he was looking for a girl. Once he came home and he said that he found somebody who's very nice but she has some things that we should talk it over. She's now in Philadelphia. Confidentially...(tape shuts) She's not for him. He told his father certain things that he didn't like and it probably wouldn't have worked out.

**INT:** Did you meet her?

**SURLK:** I met her once.

**INT:** You were in favor or you weren't in favor?

**SURLK:** I was in favor because of the mishpocha. I wanted him to get closer to a chassidic crowd, because we were concerned more with Yiddishkeit than with a career, but on the other hand, I would have to talk loshon hora now. In general she wasn't for him.

**INT:** Rabbi Leizerowski had influence on him with this or you?

**SURLK:** Oh yes. Rabbi Leizerowski also saw her and she's a nice looking girl but she made a lot of tzorus for her parents and she left home, she lived in an apartment by herself. In those times, twenty years ago, a girl who's already over twenty has a say, but she finally got this... so Avi went with her and then with another girl from Detroit whose brother is a rosh yeshiva, Bertramovich, all these baalbatishe children, and then he met Leslie, his wife.

**INT:** In Philadelphia or in New York?

**SURLK:** Also in the Fifth Avenue Shul, Lincoln Square Synagogue. Her grandparents were yidden from Europe. Her parents were already Americans.

**INT:** Her grandparents were not Holocaust survivors?

**SURLK:** No, from before. Her father was a buyer in a big-I don't remember where-in a big store, and her mother is still today a hygienist with Columbia University Professor. Prestigious position.

**INT:** And they lived where?

**SURLK:** They lived in Lawrence, Long Island, with a maid, a gorgeous house. I didn't see and I didn't want to see. I'm not interested in that. She went with him out a few times and maybe even longer and then she also went with another boy from New Jersey whose father is a chazan, orthodox people. She had like an inclination to the frum crowd. It means that she did not become frum because of Avi. She became frum long before him.

**INT:** But she didn't go to day schools?

**SURLK:** She didn't go to day schools but she's a highly intelligent person. She can daven. She knows history. For somebody like her to pick up...she went to Harvard University with degrees. A mensch. A mensch. She was that time about twenty-three years, twenty-four years old. She made an impression like a mature person. So Avi told us that he goes with this Leslie and he doesn't know if it will work out or not but she's getting to know him close. She's a smart girl. In the meanwhile, she likes Avi very much. In the meanwhile, the boy from the chazan from New Jersey who was to become a doctor, a medical doctor, she said that he pressed her to either get married or they should go separate ways. This already was a big blow to Avi. That means I have to make up my mind. She says, Avi, I'm not going longer with you. I have to make up my mind. Either I go with the doctor-and she visited his parents and they liked her very much-or if you decide to marry me, I like you. So he came home and he told us.

**INT:** Had you met her?

**SURLK:** No. And he told us and he said I'm going to bring her over either next Sunday or the Sunday later and let's see. So it was like that. He told her that he would like to bring her home and on a Sunday afternoon he brought her home and we saw her personality, the behavior, the upbringing. I was very much impressed but I was afraid of the religious side. He took her to the station. She went back by train and he came back to our house. He said to us how do you like her?

**INT:** Did you discuss it with the rabbi when he left?

**SURLK:** Yes. We were very impressed, very impressed, but I didn't know how far she goes. She told me right away we have a kosher home. We never had anything else than that. We have a kosher home. I don't know if my father is a shomer Shabbos but he's from a baalbatishe mishpocha. You will see his sister, you will see his nephews, you will see my mother's family, you will see my bubbe, so you will see that I am not from a frier (non-religious) house. He came back and he said how do you like her to his father. And he said yes, I like her but in case I wouldn't like her for you, what would you do? So he said I will look further. This is from a boy who's thirty-one, thirty-two years old. That's something. If a father doesn't like you're going to look further? He didn't say I will marry her anyway. I will look further.

**INT:** Did that surprise you that he said that?

**SURLK:** Yes. Sure it surprised us. So his father said I'm very impressed with that girl.

**INT:** And you? Did he ask your opinion?

**SURLK:** Yes. He knew already my opinion.

**INT:** Which was?

**SURLK:** Which was I wanted from a chassidic...I would take her, Leslie, because the roots. It comes back. It came back to her, by the way. It came back to her, also other things that are not good.

**INT:** But you were not against or you were against?

**SURLK:** No! She knows this. She was Sunday here. She knows that I always am impressed with her. Each time she comes here we see some platzes more and more and more. It really worked out because she knows how to talk to him, how to keep him, and she knows what to say and he looks like first the Ribono shel Olam and then her. They met in a Chinese restaurant once and Chana came in with her children and Leslie was sitting with Avi and with some friends from New Hampshire and she was very shocked. They went to the zoo so she wasn't prepared to see her. So they sat at the other table, she with the children, and then he called over the other daughter, the little girl, and he said, go to your mother and tell her that Avi sends regards. So she went over and she said like that. When they went out they talked together. But Leslie said, Rebbetzin, to me, I am much more presentable and I much more...(end of tape 12, side 2)

**INT:** How about meeting the mechutanim for the first time?

**SURLK:** So Avi said I would like you to meet the Davis'. Her name is Davis. Okay. We will meet in Borough Park in a fish restaurant-was a famous on 13th Avenue-and we will talk. So when we came in we were also surprised. Very baalbatishe people. They are very baalbatishe and they are handling him like their own son. They have two daughters, her and a younger one, married. He got up and said Sholom Aleichim and he said rabbi, before we start to talk about our children, I want you to know one thing. Since Leslie was born-her name is Chana, Chana Leah-Leah Chana-and he said since Leslie was born, we did not have one day aggravation with her. One day. She didn't cause us aggravation. Now we can talk. And she plays piano, like these upper class children were brought up. You should see their house, how everything is in place. They have a maid because she goes in the morning and comes-she's twelve hours out of the house. They have a medical journal lately. She started to work at University of Pennsylvania so they say it's not nice because University of Pennsylvania lured Leslie Davis from us. Osgechapt.

**INT:** Did you meet the bubbe?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** What was she like?

**SURLK:** Like a European babbe, in a hat. She lived till ninety.

**INT:** Ukrainian?

**SURLK:** I think part of Russia, not Russia itself but something near the border. So we saw the parents and we are not disappointed with them up today. They were by us a few times. We meet on simchos. We talk on the telephone once in a while. I am a little cold, you know, and the rabbi is very friendly so he makes up.

**INT:** But they're nice?

**SURLK:** Very fine. They go to shul, he gets an aliyah.

**INT:** How about making the chasunah?

**SURLK:** Making the chasunah-they made the chasunah. Avi and Leslie said that they didn't want a big chasunah because they want the money to put as a down payment for a house in Elkins Park. So they bought that house-it wasn't too much because it was a widow. They had a chain of linen stores and they had only one son in New Jersey who's still there, a doctor, so he didn't even look. He left everything like that. He gave him a mortgage, he himself.

**INT:** Were you happy they moved to Elkins Park?

**SURLK:** Yeah. It's only ten-fifteen minutes from us. What I wanted-I wanted like all these greener mammas want-to buy a duplex and to live upstairs or downstairs and to rent the other half and to be able to pay because I didn't know how it would work out. But Avi went to work in

Temple University and finished law school and worked by a few people for a short time and then he said it doesn't pay for him. He wants to be for himself, no matter how much he makes but he's for himself a baalbaas, so he had on Boston Avenue an office. Now he has in Jenkintown an office. I wouldn't say that he makes such a great living but you can live on that, and she makes up what's short by him.

**INT:** So the rabbi was the mesader kedushin at the wedding?

**SURLK:** Sure. It was in Washington Hotel. It's near Long Island. Now it's Far Rockaway. I forgot the name. Small chasunah, maybe a hundred and twenty five people. Her mishpocha and nebech, our mishpocha, and a few friends.

**INT:** And the kinder came?

**SURLK:** Of Philadelphia we didn't invite people because if you invite one the other would be offended, so we just went and a few of his people that he knew very well. From my congregation nobody was. We couldn't. We would have to have three busses, like for Yitzchok's chasunah. We can't afford that. They said they are making the chasunah. They don't want nothing from him. Whatever he puts out of his own pocket I don't know. Maybe he gave them something for a few flowers. He didn't have too many flowers, not too much music. I'll show you pictures-beautiful.

**INT:** So you were happy, satisfied, with the whole thing?

**SURLK:** I am satisfied, I am not so satisfied, because he sends his children to Schechter. There were small children. They started the school. But look how many people came out that became later frum. Their children are very, very good children, excellent, beautiful children. The boy is so frum. He wants to much to learn. Here, Abrams is having now-making a high school so if he's going to put him into Torah Academy...he will go to Abrams, and if not he will go to the Torah Academy. He knows. He davens for the amud, the boy. (Tape shuts for phone interruption).

**INT:** I wanted to ask you about when the children were born, about naming the children.

**SURLK:** Oy vey, this is a problem. It was a big dilemma when Avi was born because we didn't know what to do. He wanted his father, I wanted my father. I had brothers, uncles, aunts, everybody was chashuvah (important) people and it was tough.

**INT:** How did you talk about, with him, with the mechutanim?

**SURLK:** Oh, Avi's children? The first name actually belongs to the wife.

**INT:** How did you decide that?

**SURLK:** I didn't decide. She told me that she wants her grandfather's name and the next name will be Avi's family. Her grandfather was Yaakov Yeshayahu so we call him Kobi. His name is Yaakov in school.

**INT:** So it's named after the father's-

**SURLK:** After her grandfather. After the mother's father.

**INT:** This is a first einikel (grandchild) yeah?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** So you didn't want from your side? How did it go?

**SURLK:** They say that the first name belongs to the mother. The mother chooses the first name. The next name, the girl, Pess-just passed away an aunt and my sister. Pess Devorah. Devorah is my sister. And the third child is a girl-it's after my sister Penina, Pearl.

**INT:** Were there any problems with the names?

**SURLK:** No, no, no.

**INT:** Okay. Now when the decision was made for the oldest-the son is the oldest?

**SURLK:** Yeah.

**INT:** ...to go to school. How did he tell you which school he was going to go?

**SURLK:** He went to kindergarten in Schechter.

**INT:** How did he explain?

**SURLK:** He couldn't explain. You see, she is more for Schechter. If it comes to him, he would send him to Politz. But it's not enough. It's not clean enough. And also the Torah Academy she went to look. It's also...and then he was, you should excuse me, vomiting while driving, so to go to Torah Academy it wasn't possible for him. He would come home sick every day. And here she didn't like.

**INT:** So did you discuss that with him?

**SURLK:** She didn't like the teachers, she didn't like the board, she didn't like...

**INT:** Did you discuss that with them?

**SURLK:** Yes, yes. I was fighting.

**INT:** You and her talked about it?

**SURLK:** Yes, sure. I talked and then I didn't talk. I was quiet a while. It's still a problem.

**INT:** Did the rabbi talk about it?

**SURLK:** Yes, sure.

**INT:** With his son, with Avi?

**SURLK:** Both. It came to a point...I don't want that on record. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** Who is the real baalbayis there then?

**SURLK:** In the education?

**INT:** In the house about the education.

**SURLK:** Avi is the boss. Avi is the boss, but when it comes to the children's education, she decides. She's afraid that they might not want to go to college and they will remain rabbaim. You miss something if you're not from that background. It's very hard to bring it to you.

**INT:** Do you think Avi argued with her or went along with her? What do you think?

**SURLK:** He didn't argue. No, he didn't argue. No. He said that he will know, don't worry, he will know. He's a nice kid and he's takeh a nice kid. And they teach them in school. They pay more attention to him. She gave me her word, Mrs. Landau, that she's going to take care of him. She has a special teacher from Israel that he takes him under his wing. He knows everything. He davens nicely. He's going to be alright. I'm not worried about him. And the girls-the Eibeshter will help. Listen, I cannot kill myself. I cannot have everything. And Yitzchok's children with Yiddish and she goes to the bathroom, you should excuse me, she comes down and makes netilas yadayim and she says the whole...Yitzchok took her to the kindergarten so the Morah said, oh Raizele knows all the brochos. Whatever you give her, water, candy, chocolate, cake.

**INT:** And they go to shul by-

**SURLK:** And Rabbi Brisman's children-you know how they are? So...

**INT:** They go to shul by Rabbi Brisman?

**SURLK:** They go to Rabbi Brisman. They give him not an aliyah but they tell him to open the aron kodesh. He says anim zemiros. Shabbos is Shabbos. Yomtov in Yomtov. His house is a kosher house. Boruch Hashem for that.

**INT:** Tell me about raising Yitzchok.

**SURLK:** Yitzchok was very easy. He was born an easygoing child.

**INT:** The decision to send him-

**SURLK:** There was no...

**INT:** Well, after the other one.



**SURLK:** I send him away when he was nine years. Yitzchok was seventeen.

**INT:** How did you decide now with Yitzchok where to send him?

**SURLK:** Yitzchok was...you see him like you see him now. He was always with a frum crowd. He was always-

**INT:** Where did you send him to school?

**SURLK:** He went to Philadelphia, to Beth Jacob, like the other children. And then he went to the Yeshiva. Avi graduated from Philadelphia Yeshiva High School and Yitzchok graduated high school. Avi went when he was nine years to Baltimore, then he came back to the yeshiva.

**INT:** Yes. But you didn't do that-

**SURLK:** Yitzchok we didn't send away. He went to Beth Jacob and Philadelphia Yeshiva.

**INT:** And how did he like going there?

**SURLK:** He liked it.

**INT:** And then afterwards?

**SURLK:** Afterwards he went to Yerushalayim. After that he went to Eretz Yisroel. He stayed in Kol Torah. Then he went to Ponevitzh in Bnei Brak and then he went to the Mir in Yerushalayim. He stayed straight five years.

**INT:** And were you concerned about him going to college or university?

**SURLK:** We were concerned a little bit because you know what's going on in the rabbanishe velt. It's hard to make a living. It's hard to exist. It's hard to breathe.

**INT:** So what eitzos (advice) did you give him about university or the rabbi?

**SURLK:** Maybe some college courses in the evening. He took college courses later on at the University of New York, for educational purposes, and it helped him a lot. But he's very, very handy. He's handy. He's a mensch. He's good. He comes in and all the clouds disappear. All the tzorus disappear. He makes it so easy for us. He has a meeting-oy. I'd like to go to that meeting. Rabbi Ginsburg called. Pa, don't worry. I'll take you. But you can't. I'll take you. He runs, he brings. Everything-don't worry. Don't worry. Pa-go lay down a little bit. Yesterday he said, Pa, please go out. It's nice outside. Walk a little bit. And he says I have no strength, I'm tired now. He said no, please, go. He sees his father sit at his desk in the evening-when he lays down a little bit in the afternoon he has more koach in the evening-he says, the Tatte sits, boruch Hashem, and learns. It's so nice. He went with him last week, Tuesday, to a bar mitzvah. His brother-in-law's son. He has seven boys. I didn't go. And I said how was it? Oh, Ma, Papa was terrific. I says, no,

but he's shevach. You shlep him to the bar mitzvah two hours and he has to talk. Ma, he was so good. Oh, you know how Papa is.

**INT:** Very nice. When he came back from Mir, he was twenty-five?

**SURLK:** No, he was twenty-two.

**INT:** What did he do after that?

**SURLK:** After that he went to Lakewood.

**INT:** And after Lakewood?

**SURLK:** After Lakewood he was here already. After Lakewood he was already twenty-five, twenty-six years old. And we were looking for a shidduch and it didn't work out the way he wanted. It didn't work out the way I wanted. And then he got a job in Trenton. He was more than ten years.

**INT:** It's a shul?

**SURLK:** It's a shul. It was a nice shul. It was a beautiful shul. The oldest shul. You remember Professor Levine? His father was there.

**INT:** How about the shidduch? What was going on?

**SURLK:** It didn't work out the way he wanted. Nobody was good enough.

**INT:** For you or for him?

**SURLK:** For us and for him. If the girl was good so the mishpocha wasn't so gevaldig and if the mishpocha was good so he didn't like the girl.

**INT:** Did you meet any of these girls?

**SURLK:** I knew who they are but I didn't actually meet them.

**INT:** Did you make any shidduchim yourself?

**SURLK:** For somebody?

**INT:** For him.

**SURLK:** No, I don't make shidduchim. I didn't make shidduchim. I only told him that people recommended this girl. Maybe sometimes I pressed him, sometimes I let him go like that.

**INT:** So what happened?

**SURLK:** The rabbi made a shidduch in Germany with the Israeli consul and a girl from Switzerland. They're happy. They have two married children. So what happened? They introduced him Esther, his wife, his present wife. He said she's a very nice girl.

**INT:** Where did he meet her?

**SURLK:** No, somebody suggested the shidduch.

**INT:** She's a New York person?

**SURLK:** She's from New York. She lives on Eastern Parkway in Lubavitch. She's not Lubavitch. They are Polisher Yidden. She's very striking but nobody was good for her. Nobody. Wasn't born.

**INT:** How old was she?

**SURLK:** She was a few years younger than him. He saw her and he came home and said yes, she's a nice girl and then he called her again and asked her are you interested? She said yes. She's a smart girl, she's a nice girl. She's very tall. She's as tall as him-six feet.

**INT:** Tell me about the chasunah, meeting the mechutanim. Where did you meet them?

**SURLK:** We made a tenaim in her house. Engagement.

**INT:** They're chassidishe? What are they?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A big chossid. Such a shtreimel.

**SURLK:** Famous mishpocha.

**INT:** So everything went-the chasunah went.

**SURLK:** I'll show you some pictures next time.

**INT:** The rabbi was the mesader kedushin?

**SURLK:** Yes, they wanted.

**INT:** COSBL.

**SURLK:** No problem. It was no problem. When she finished Breuers-when she finished Bais Yaakov here, she went to Breuers, to the seminary. When she was nineteen years old they started with shidduchim and she went out with one boy, one or two boys. Yitzchok was in Lakewood and was a chavrusah of Rabbi Brisman. Rabbi Brisman confided in him that they're redding him a shidduch here, there and then he came back and he didn't like the girl. And Yitzchok loved him. He's a serious mensch, a serious person, a lamdan. We always thought we would like to take a son-in-law a talmid chochom. What does a rav want? So he said to him Pa, I have this chavrusah. He always used to talk about him. This Dov Brisman. It's just like a Sefer Torah.

He's so knowledgeable and he's born here but he represents Europe. He's a historian and he's a lamdan. He knows what a rov knew in Europe, a seventy year old rov. Very mature and serious besides that. So his father said to him, if you're so impressed with him, why don't you red him for your sister? He's a poor boy. You have to support him. He said as much as I can I will try to help him. So he said it's not time yet. Let him go out with another few girls. And he went out with another two, three girls and then he told him I have a sister. I don't know if it will work out with you and her but maybe you should see her. So he says, yes. He liked Yitzchok also. They know each other maybe two years because they learned together. So he says all right. Call her here is her number. Call her in New York. She was at Breuers. She's nineteen years old, he was twenty-three. Call her up. So he called her up and they saw each other. Where do you go? The Statue of Liberty. Then went to the Statue of Liberty and she came home and she said, yes, he's a nice boy and he mistoma also says the same thing. And then they went out again to the Statue of Liberty and then they came back and like three, four times they went out and I think he wanted that shidduch. COSBL also wanted-saw him as a plus. In the meanwhile COSBL graduated and this was around Chanukah time. I remember when he came first. He took off the galoshes. There was a big snow. So he came to us. He wanted to talk to the rabbi. When he talked to him he was very much impressed. It was gevaldik.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A baki beshas. He knows shas. The whole shas.

**INT:** So then what?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He knows the teshuvos-he speaks about the grosser rabbanim in Europe more than I.

**INT:** He read the teshuvos?

**SURLK:** Gevaldik what he knows.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** His father taught in UCLA.

**INT:** So when did you meet the parents?

**SURLK:** So this was in December and Lag Ba'omer was the tenaim, so it's about five, six months that it schlepped and the rabbi said he has to ask. The last letter that he wrote was the Mir Yeshiva, to Reb Chaim Shmulevitz's son-in-law, Reb Nochum Parsevich. So a letter came back-my friend Harav Brisman. He has that letter. When he saw that from Reb Nochum... and the other way, his parents were already nervous. His father said a yeshiva bochur doesn't go out so many times and yes, yes, no, no. He called here. So we decided...and they're boruch Hashem happy. When they came to New York-

**INT:** And you met them?

**SURLK:** We talked on the telephone and we decided we should make a tenaim on Lag Ba'omer. In August was the chasunah, the 15th of August, the same day as Avi, and we decided to make...and they came over and his father has here a sister, Rebbetzin Feldman, Rabbi Feldman from the Mir Yeshiva. He was a mashgiach. And other mishpochas. Rav Pam's mother and my

mechutan's mother were sisters. He's a first cousin of Rav Pam. Rav Pam thinks of him...halivi Philadelphia should think and should know what he knows, should recognize what he knows.

**INT:** Now this time you had to make that chasunah. This is your daughter. How did that go, the details and working it out?

**SURLK:** No problem. They are very cultured people. They came here for Shabbos. We talked it over. Not too much-about the menu. You give him steak, you give him a piece of chicken, you give him a little rice-it's enough of them. He said you make the chasunah. Whatever I have to pay...his father said-just tell me. After the chasunah he says mechutan, how much do I owe you? He told him a few thousand dollars. We didn't make such an elaborate chasunah. We made a baalbatishe chasunah. He took out the checkbook and he wrote a check and he gave it to him.

**INT:** They're survivors?

**SURLK:** Yes. My mechutan was with the Shanghai people, with the Mir Yeshiva. And she's from a very fine mishpocha, Kronenberg. She was a secretary by Rabbi Sherer on the Agudah. They didn't make a living-they mutchered with parnossa. They didn't have what to eat. My son-in-law, Rabbi Brisman, didn't know what a soda means. He didn't buy a soda. In Eretz Yisroel, gornisht, but here in Lakewood also. Every boy bought a soda. No. He said my father works so hard. He has three children. I don't need soda.

**INT:** He was a professor, the father? So he didn't make a parnassah?

**SURLK:** He made. He had lots of debts from before. They had a car accident. He had a heart attack.

**INT:** How about naming the children?

**SURLK:** Naming the children is no problem. You deal with nobility, yiddishe nobility. You don't talk about this. You want the name, take the name. With the first child, with Yaakov Meir, they asked us permission because his father, Dov's grandfather, was Yaakov Meir ben Dov Aharon. His grandfather's father was Dov Aharon, so the mechutan called if we would not object if he would have permission to use the name Yaakov Meir and the father is Dov Aharon and the other one was such a godol b'Torah, such a big Talmudic scholar, so if we wouldn't object...

**INT:** You knew who it was?

**SURLK:** We heard. The zaida. He has a big sefer.

**INT:** And the other eineklach?

**SURLK:** Matti is the rabbi's mother but she died very young, thirty-six years, so we put an additional name, my cousin, who was older, seventy. Chana. Matti Chana. Feiga Leah worked out from my mishpocha and their mishpocha, because my aunt was Feige and their grandmother was Feige, so I think it's my aunt and they think it's their grandmother. The rabbi had a brother

Gedaliah. When Gedaliah was born he said I would like to have my brother's name, so they named him Gedaliah. This is not a problem.

**INT:** Now the last child, Berel.

**SURLK:** He was already in my old age, because Avi was seventeen years old and COSBL was eleven and then Berel was born.

**INT:** You lived here when Berel was born?

**SURLK:** We lived on the top of the synagogue. We lived with four children upstairs in two bedrooms.

**INT:** What did you learn from raising the other three about what you were going to do with him?

**SURLK:** It was a normal Yiddishe mishpocha. I didn't have any special difficulties with them. I had aggravation like every average person. Sometimes they want to learn, sometimes they don't want. Sometimes they eat, sometimes they don't eat. Sometimes they sleep, sometimes they don't sleep.

**INT:** Now with Berel you did what? You sent him to Beth Jacob?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** And then where?

**SURLK:** Berel went to Beth Jacob and after he finished Beth Jacob we sent him to-(end of tape 13, side 1)

**INT:** So Beth Jacob was a high school?

**SURLK:** Yes, it was a high school. He was about seventeen maybe and he stayed two years. He stayed a year, he came back, and then he went back for a year. He is not so much in learning. They take children who don't want to learn so much. His goal is to be a businessman. You're not going to impress him with giving him a title of the professor of a Yeshiva. He is not interested. He likes to deal. He makes, boruch Hashem, a living. He's a nice boy. He davens. Maybe academically he's not as bright as the other two, but he's...like I talked to somebody last night from New York and they asked me about Berel...he has such a sense of emes, whatever he says it makes so much sense. We would like more lamdus, more talmudical scholar, but like I told you, he wouldn't go out with a girl who's not a shomer Shabbos. He wouldn't go out with a girl whose house is treif. Hashem will help us.

**INT:** And a shidduch? What's with shidduchim?

**SURLK:** There are different kinds of shidduchim they're...

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He's going too high in shidduchim. If he'll step down a step he'll get a wife.

**SURLK:** He has a courage in that. I wouldn't be able to do it, because he goes with girls who graduated seminary.

**INT:** In New York?

**SURLK:** Yes, in New York. Lately, the last few times, he went out with a girl who's from a famous mishpocha and she liked him very much. I would be afraid even to start something like that. He says why? I saw already girls that married husbands who are not so educated. So what?

**INT:** Your sons waited more than the average to get married. Why do you think? Is there anything about the mishpocha?

**SURLK:** No, no. We both got married not old.

**INT:** Why would you think that occurred?

**SURLK:** Because we went once for a brocha for Yitzchok to the Steipler, Rav Kinevisky. You know he's a tzaddik. He's a litvishe rav.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A litvishe rav? A litvishe Gaon!

**SURLK:** The rabbi complained. He said a brocha for a shidduch for Yitzchok. And he looked at him a minute and he said, you know Rav Leizerowski, with an average boy it's not a problem. As I see in my practice, it's not a problem. A problem is only with a boy or with a girl who is above average, and if you look down to people who marry off their children young, you will see that this is, because a boy who is twenty-two, twenty-five, twenty-six years old, up to thirty, if he is not so talented, if he isn't an individual with his own mind and with his own view, it's easier to talk to him. You introduce him Sora and Rivka and Rochel and Leah and one he picks and gets married, but if you see boys, even in the yeshiva world, with the roshei yeshivos, with the girls and boys not naming their names, you will see that they have difficulties, because a boy is something like an individual, you cannot push him into something that he is not into it.

**INT:** So all three boys, you would say, are like that?

**SURLK:** No.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Avi has a grosser kup. Avi finished college-

**SURLK:** Summa cum laude. It's not that. We instilled in them-you read sometimes Rebbetzin Jungreis columns? I don't know if I like it so much but she has a talent of instilling into you that you are something special. You are from the priests. You are from the kohanim. You are from the Jewish princes. We instilled in them that they are something special, not because of Rabbi Leizerowski. Because we saw individual children that can reach to bigger heights. They can be a talmid chochom, a lamdin, and they could also to go college sometimes, chas vasholom. There

are Sacks and Jacobovitch and Rav Herzog, a doctor and others, Maimonides himself lehavdel. We saw that these children have the talent of being that and we instilled a little superiority complex. When I think back, sometimes I don't even share it with the rabbi, it was in some way our own fault. We made them grosse (big). You are somebody special. We demand from you and you should be ambitious to reach it.

**INT:** Is that more from you or more from the rabbi?

**SURLK:** It's more from me.

**INT:** Did you know you were doing that?

**SURLK:** No. I felt that they are really. I feel, like I told you, about Yitzchok, I feel he is something special. Avi told us the other day, he said, you know Ta, I didn't realize that he has such a terrific mind. We thought always Avi is with his mind more than him but he said...he's so logical. He talks so much sense and he has such an expression of being able to convey to you his feelings, his thoughts. For instance, last Sunday there was Yissocher Frand. I like him very much. He's a talmid chochom. He's a baal teshuva. He's a somebody. A young man. So he spoke in Yardley and Yitzchok introduced him. And a lady called me and she said, you know, your Yitzchok was terrific. I said he didn't speak-Frand spoke. She said, but the way he introduced him. The way he later thanked him. So you have to say a word-he said it so bachaint so frum and non-frum people like him. He likes people. He wants the best for them. You could feel the goodness that he is not a shlock, like he doesn't mean what he says. Avi is also. My children are very straight. They don't know to drey here and there. I just have a report about lawyers that are running...I told the rabbi. It was yesterday or the day before yesterday. They are running after these accidents and they are putting up people to make the accidents. I said Avi cannot make money like that because he isn't like that. He isn't like that. And I was thinking this morning-I laid down for ten minutes before the rabbi came in-and I was thinking about other rabbis. Rabbi Leizerowski doesn't have one penny, one dollar, that's not made on the ehrlicher ways, on the honest way. He doesn't know what it means to be a businessman and a rabbi. Oh, he's a businessman. The other one has old-age home. The third one has hotels.

**INT:** He has kashrus. Some people think that's a business.

**SURLK:** Nothing. We don't have from kashrus a thing. We are doing it just for the people. We don't have.

**INT:** I didn't say he does. I'm saying some people say...

**SURLK:** Nothing. Nothing. Mr. Garfield, believe me. Nothing. Pennies. You can count it in hundreds of dollars, you understand?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** For traveling they are paying back.

**SURLK:** For traveling. Nothing. Believe me, I'm telling you with my hand on my heart. Nothing.



**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** How many butchers I have already? Four butchers.

**SURLK:** He has a different kind of opinion than other rabbis. He thinks that he cannot force you to eat glatt kosher. He forces you to eat kosher. If somebody wants to eat glatt kosher, gesunterheit. The whole glatt business, I don't know...

**INT:** Does he eat from his own butchers that he gives hashgochas to?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Sure.

**INT:** You would eat from them.

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Some people don't.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** My machlokes with the other, the younger-they say we shouldn't give a hecsher not glatt. This is not written no place in shulchan aruch.

**INT:** They didn't have glatt in Europe?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** In Europe they had it once a year or two years.

**SURLK:** A behama. One behama (animal). But nobody paid attention even to it. You eat kosher.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Kosher is kosher.

**SURLK:** This is now the dream...you have gedolim. Somebody graduated Ner Yisroel. Somebody graduated Mir. You had to have competent...all the rabbinim who understood. We don't have.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Tradition.

**SURLK:** We didn't make one shortcut in our life. We didn't change anything. In our private life...(Yiddish words) When we were in Germany, I came from Switzerland when we got married. There was a law whoever was in Germany in 1947 could get some money. We had, of course, a lot of people in Germany. Everybody knew Rabbi Leizerowski. We had somebody who was working in that office and he said, Rabbi Leizerowski, your wife came a year later. I'm going to give you a tzetel that she was before. So he says no. Mr. Ingster. I remember his name. Mr. Ingster, I don't do these things. She wasn't there and I don't want...it's not emes, he said. So he said, listen, what's the difference? She is here. So I said...and I was very tempted to do it. Why shouldn't I? I was poor. I had sixty-five dollars when I got married. If I get a few hundred dollars...he said listen, I'm not doing these things. It's not emes. I am not doing these things. You can do it on your name but let my name out. We didn't do it.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** It's a chillul Hashem.

**SURLK:** If they catch you, chas v'sholom, a year later. They took out the books. They caught people later. The other rabbi, Orenstein, came to us to leave a suitcase because he ran away. He was afraid. He said, you see. I am not doing one thing that's not right.

**INT:** Where did you get that from?

**SURLK:** The rabbi is very strict. I am also. I'm ehrlich. I'm very honest. I'm an honest person. But he is terrible. I was in Acme and I bought an order and I bought a kiwi, one kiwi and I put it on the side when you open the cart. And I came out and I saw the kiwi and I had a big order. I put the order and I thought, oy, this kiwi, I didn't take it out. And I said to him, oy, I don't have strength to go back. Maybe I will take fifty cents or a dollar and put it in the pushke. He says you can't do that. I'm very sorry. It's not the pushke's. It belongs to the store. You leave that and you go in. I came over and I said listen, I forgot to take that out. She said, oh my gosh, you don't see people like that today anymore.

**INT:** What do you see in the kids that are like you or like the rabbi? If you look at the kids, Avi and Yitzchok, what part of them-is there any part that you say...is COSBL like you? Is COSBL like the rabbi? Is COSBL like your mother?

**SURLK:** They are individuals for themselves.

**INT:** Does it ever strike you that you see yourself in them?

**SURLK:** Avi is a lot like me.

**INT:** In what way?

**SURLK:** I see a lot in him of me.

**INT:** Talk about it a little bit.

**SURLK:** This is hard.

**INT:** Say a little bit.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** It's hard to translate in words.

**SURLK:** (Laughter) Mr. Garfield, you're killing me. It's half past eleven.

**INT:** Just say a little bit. What is he like you like?

**SURLK:** I have to think about it what to say. First of all, he's very sensitive. Avi is very sensitive. Avi can't go to a hospital to visit. G-d forbid, to a shiva house, I can't go. To a levaya I sit in a separate room by Goldstein. They know already to open the microphone and I don't care what the people say because when I sit in the room I cry and American people don't like to see tears and crying, so I sit myself in the separate room.

**INT:** How do you know they don't like to see crying?

**SURLK:** It annoys them. Even our people, our Holocaust stories.

**INT:** You sit by yourself because you don't want to bother them or for you?

**SURLK:** I sit because I want to be comfortable. I want to cry. I want to listen. I don't want to be forced to keep my shape, you know. I don't want. He is a little bit a softie like I am. He is a softie. And in some matters he's very hard, like I am. I wouldn't give in. I wouldn't compromise. I like to tell-even if I have somebody, my children, oh, I didn't do the lesson today so good. I don't have a good test because, you know, I had a headache. I said why don't you tell the truth. You didn't know and nobody is going to punish you, but tell it the way it is. Don't look to get out of it. People like I am, it's very hard to live.

**INT:** Because?

**SURLK:** Because I am too sensitive. I'm too sensitive. I cannot drey. I don't know. It's hard.

**INT:** But yet you have to mingle with people as a Rebbetzin, all these years.

**SURLK:** It's hard.

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

**SURLK:** This was very hard. In the beginning, when we were there in Philadelphia, the rabbi went as a rabbi. I didn't have so much to do. I'm more a loner, you know. The mingling started here. Here started the mingling. It's hard.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** When you mingle more, you make more mistakes.

**SURLK:** It's very hard. It's impossible. You can be so good to people, you do ninety-nine percent good, you do one thing not so...you think it's good but the other ones thinks...I had now like a little disappointment with a young person. I was very much into mekarav zein him and good and it came to a point that he was a little too close to me. He could say what he wants. And he told me a few weeks...he didn't say a nice sentence.

**INT:** About you?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He's a kranker (sick person).

**SURLK:** He's a kranker? I'm not his mother. I'm not his sister or his wife. I'm not mechuyuv (obligated) to suffer.

**INT:** He said about you?

**SURLK:** No, but chutzpadik. I try so much now to look at him but it will take years till I forget it. I'm sensitive. My children know that they cannot start with me.

**INT:** So they have to be careful?

**SURLK:** No, they are not careful. They can tell me I don't want to do it or leave me alone.

**INT:** They can say it straight out.

**SURLK:** Yes, sure. They should say. They shouldn't walk on eggs. You can walk a week, two weeks, on eggs but you cannot walk a lifetime.

**INT:** You were saying you were sensitive so I didn't know how that affected them.

**SURLK:** I am harsh also in judgement. Maybe we want too much. Really we demand too much.

**INT:** You give derachim (paths) to the children, how you want them to go?

**SURLK:** Sure. I am not superior. I am not the biggest one that I give. I tell them my mind, I tell them my opinion. You can't force adults to go your way.

**INT:** Do you get annoyed when they don't follow what you want them to do?

**SURLK:** I don't argue with my son-in-law. I never had one argument with my son-in-law. I don't argue with my daughters-in-law. Once in a while we had a shtickel...but I don't know. I look away. They don't do anything bad to me. They have their young life. We have already our life past. Every day is...thank G-d for that. We are not married ten years. I have to take you the way you are and you have to take me the way I am. If you could stand me when I was young you have to stand me now when I am older.

**INT:** Is there anything you enjoy about being a Rebbetzin and mingling with the people?

**SURLK:** I am already into that temper. I like politics, you know. I don't bring and I don't listen and I don't give it over. I never have people who say I said like that. (Conversation with Rabbi Leizerowski) (End of tape 13, side 2) ... because somebody is after an operation and somebody said to the rabbi you have to help Rose. What can I help her? I say Tehillim. I mentioned the name. They said Tehillim in shul. I called the hospital to see how it was. What else can I do?

**INT:** Do you go to the hospital when people are sick?

**SURLK:** Seldom. I stay outside.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I can't see suffering. I can't see suffering. I don't like to go to pay a condolence visit.

**INT:** Is this since lately or even when you were-

**SURLK:** No, no. I am always.

**INT:** Even when you came.

**SURLK:** I'm not a hard person.

**INT:** Who makes more decisions about running the shul, you or the rabbi? Not the halacha but-

**SURLK:** No, he does. About running the shul?

**INT:** Yeah. Should we paint something, should we-

**SURLK:** No, no, no. We have the children. If they need painting they call a painter and they paint themselves. They paint themselves.

**INT:** Or how much to charge on dues or for the yomim tovim?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** We don't have dues.

**SURLK:** If I would have the shul in my hands, the financial part, we wouldn't have what to eat.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** He goes on vacation, buys a condominium and we tear the check up. I am such a business lady that if you come to buy a pack of carrots, I ask you if you need parsley and if you need parsley for the soup I give it to you for nothing. So I made already my money in the carrots.

**INT:** But your father was a businessman?

**SURLK:** I'm not a businessman. But I like to do good for people. Between me and you, off the record, I go to the yeshiva for a meeting once a month. Whatever I can I give. I have three boys from our shul. Two boys from our shul and one that their grandparents, and I bring them each one a sandwich and lately I started to give, I have some tzedaka money, each one five dollars, because I wouldn't be able to go and to enjoy a cup of coffee or a little bit soup I shouldn't bring. I know these boys don't have. You bring them a little turkey roll or something and make a nice sandwich with fresh kaiser rolls that I buy. If I do something...(tape shuts) ...they bought a nice little house here and they davened here. I tore up all the checks.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Here's another check.

**INT:** Torn up. Who did it, you tore it up?

**SURLK:** Yes. And how many he doesn't even know.

**INT:** So why do you do that?

**SURLK:** Ich vais. I think oy, maybe this one doesn't have. Oy, this one is like that. He says if I would listen to you I wouldn't have what to eat. What's the matter? The shul costs us maybe six, seven, eight thousand dollars to keep out, electricity and heat, air conditioning. Me business? I come to New York, they see me like they see-I don't know. They like so much when I buy from

them. She says, do me a favor. Just buy from me something in the morning. I said Mrs. Weinberger-used to be a kosher butcher.

**INT:** I remember-in Logan.

**SURLK:** Yes. His brother, the wife, his sister-in-law, has a store. She said I don't want you to...just buy from me a pair of stockings. I don't have today what you wanted, a nightgown or whatever, underwear, but buy from me because when you come in my whole day is so good. It goes smooth. People are coming in. People are buying.

**INT:** You look for metzios (bargains) or you don't look for metzios?

**SURLK:** No. I go with a lady that I told you, the elderly lady, so she said I can't understand why are you doing that. It's \$13. Why didn't you start from \$10? Give him \$10, \$11. They make a lot of money. You do it. I don't want.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** Because when I come in to a yiddishe store I want them to make a few dollars, so I chop here a dollar and here two dollars, so it makes ten dollars more. Hashem will give me back. I come in, how much is it? So much and so much. Here is the money.

**INT:** I'll ask you one last thing and then we'll have one more time and that's all. The last thing I want to ask you-what would you like the future to be for you and the rabbi?

**SURLK:** I want a little bit menuchas hanefesh, peace of mind, that we shouldn't have aggravation that we have today, that we would be out of politics, of kashrus and of rabbunus, of everything, and just concentrate on the last days. That's all.

**INT:** By being a Rebbetzin in a shul or-

**SURLK:** No. Ous rabbunus. He should get up in the morning. He should go to shul and daven. He should come home, he should lay down, he should read a little bit, he should learn a little bit, he should relax a little bit. We should be together. Berel said in the evening, each night, most of the nights, Ma, what do the people want from us, calling. Who calls? With tzorus. You don't call a rabbi if you are good. You have a biopsy, chas v'sholom, you have a sickness, you have a grandchild, you have a bad marriage, you have a divorce. They are calling you only with tzorus. I run away. They talk on the telephone I run away.

**INT:** You're kidding. You do.

**SURLK:** Sometimes I run away. When they talk about the ticket, how much a ticket, I am not already here. I am already upstairs.

**INT:** But how about when women have called you and tell you tzorus about their man.

**SURLK:** We try to make sholom bayis.

**INT:** When they call you with tzorus, you, I'm not talking about the rabbi, how do you deal with that over the years?

**SURLK:** It's very hard.

**INT:** When they complain about their husbands.

**SURLK:** Lehavdel, if they ask once, when I was so down and I am down the rabbi says they ask lehavdel Mrs. Roosevelt, how do you deal with the president? There are so many responsibilities and so many problems and look what's going on now, today, with the president, so she said how do you deal? When somebody comes in and I have a problem with this person, I listen to her and then when she hangs up or he hangs up I have a little shade in my mind, in my brain, and I push it down. And I said that's it. And then another one comes. You have to put it in the back because otherwise...you like to solve people's problems but what do you say? I went yesterday to a doctor for an examination and he always asks me how are you here and there. He likes to talk to me. And then he had a call, an incoming call, and I saw his face changed a little bit, but I figure he has patients. Who knows? And then he puts down his pen and he says, I hear, you have to make up your mind. I would tell you to stick with the radiologist at John Hopkins. And then he says to me-he needed somebody to talk to-he says, that was my younger brother. He administers anesthesia to patients and now he has a problem himself. And I said maybe it will work out. He said no. Most of the time these things don't turn out good. And he was so...he was so troubled. I said Dr. Herman, you will see. It will work out. But it hurt me so much when I saw him upset. I came out to the rabbi, I said we think the doctors don't have problems. Look. With their own family they have problems.

**INT:** So how do you listen to the people when they call up?

**SURLK:** It's hard. Mrs. Lowenthal just told me-you see what she said. She called me three times last week. You think I don't know her tragedy? She herself isn't totally normal because of the Holocaust story. She lost a husband who wasn't too old. She lost nebach a daughter who was also...so they cut her up into pieces on a highway in California. She has a son upstairs. When she calls to me you think she has to tell me? I know her tzorus. It upsets me.

**INT:** But you listen?

**SURLK:** Yes. I listen to her. We weren't so close, but I started to do for her a few things, and she says you should be gezunt. When you tell me you don't feel good, oy, it's terrible. Terrible. You should feel good.

**INT:** So you listen.

**SURLK:** I listen, but it rubs off. You cannot go out and smile. Tzorus. Tzorus Rabim.

**INT:** Do you give eitzos (advice) to these people?

**SURLK:** Yes, as far as...I am not a chochom but I'm not like King Solomon that I can give eitzos, but I tell her go to that doctor. She told me she thinks it's a vein so I said make sure it's not a blood clot so she said she went to the doctor and he told her it's not a blood clot but it hurts her.

**INT:** How about when they complain about the daughter-in-laws?

**SURLK:** We don't make out of these problems big...for us, American people don't understand. For us, the problem is life, because if you live you can outlive all the tzorus. It can turn around all the problems. We had a problem how to stay alive, how to survive these tzorus. We had Sunday morning a funeral. I felt like compelled and responsible to go to that funeral. There was a family in West Philadelphia, a husband, a fragile person who was working in a shoe factory and there was a lady who was hiding there who was out from the tzorus and they had one son, Pinya, Pinchos. The husband was laying in bed maybe for eight, nine years. She was taking care of him. She stayed with her son and nebech, each time more meshuga, more neglected, more depressed. The house is a mess. She didn't want to let anybody in to clean.

**INT:** One son?

**SURLK:** One child. Last year he went to work. He was also working in the shoe factory. He went to work. He went to the bathroom. He didn't feel so well. Heart attack.

**INT:** How old was he?

**SURLK:** He was forty-nine, forty-eight. He wasn't even fifty. Never married. A lady, a young lady, American lady, two doors further up, too care of her but since her son passed away, she wanted to inherit it. So she passed away and Sunday was the funeral. Friday night she passed away, Shabbos, so Sunday was the funeral. So you can imagine how we felt. We knew them. We knew them all. We knew the father, the mother. So the father is here to the right, the son is to the left and in the middle is she. We were five, six people. Isaac felt also that he knew Pinya that he should go. Nobody. Not a nefesh. Five people. There was nobody to say kaddish. They are not smart enough to arrange in a yeshiva, in a shul, for something. She did not. The lady inherited everything. I don't know how much money. The house. I saw she was very, very satisfied.

**INT:** Who inherited?

**SURLK:** The lady, a Jewish neighbor. She said they have a will. So you see, when we came home, what could you expect from us?

**INT:** Let me ask you. This is the last and then I'll go. When you see such tzorus for certain families and they come here and they have tzorus, and then you see Americans who lived here their whole life, they don't know from anything, they live a good life, they have gezunte children, what do you think of that?

**SURLK:** I don't think. I don't think. I have emunah that Hashem's way is righteous and whatever he does. I said to the rabbi, couldn't that Pinya get married and have a wife and a child



so eppes beliben? Nothing was left. So Hashem, in his mercy, didn't see it fitting to make these people eppes something, a shtickale?

**INT:** So you asked the rabbi this?

**SURLK:** I asked him, yes. He said don't ask me-Hashem.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** This is what I said in the hesped.

**SURLK:** Oh, that's what I wanted to tell you.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** After the Jewish people came in the desert, it says Yisro heard and he came to see the people. The Midrash is asking, what made Yisro such an impression that he left his palace for a king?

**INT:** He was a big goy. Yes, he was a priest, a galach and everything.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** A galach and a king. Lived in such a palace and lived a nice life and came in desert to sleep on the sand. What made an impression? Says the Midrash two happenings. He heard of the splitting of the Red Sea and milchemes Amalek (the war with Amalek,) that Amalek came on the way, met the Jews and start a war. What shaichus (connection) is there? The splitting of the sea-this is a miracle that people didn't have since the world existed. This is a real miracle I would like to see myself too. This makes an impression. Milchemes Amalek (the war with Amalek)? Amalekim you see every day. They kill us and they make war. Why does the Midrash put together these two things? The answer is that Amalek to come and to fight the Yidden in this time and we remained a nation-he couldn't do nothing-it's the same miracle from the splitting of the sea.

**INT:** Why?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Amalek, a bad nation with ammunition, and they came and they saw the slaves are going out from Mitzrayim in the desert, they start a war to shoot them. Why? What we did to you? And the Midrash says these two things influenced Yisro. The teretz (explanation) is to live over such a tragedy from milchemes Amalek (the war with Amalek) is like a miracle like splitting the sea. All the new America, these are miracle people.

**INT:** The people who came to America, like you. So just coming here was a nes (miracle).

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Therefore they put together the two things. This is the answer. We are living with a miracle. We are here because of a miracle. We exist because of a miracle. It's like we don't understand the splitting of the Red Sea, we cannot understand our situation. It's not for human beings.

**SURLK:** Like he said it two weeks ago in a sermon on a Shabbos. Kedoshim. We are kedoshim he said because...I think I mentioned it to you. We are the kedoshim. But he said also very nice Sunday. He said one sentence that I couldn't get over it. He said these people came over here and they died. They didn't leave anybody. They vanished like millions of the other people. What

zechus did they have by the Ribono shel Olam that it's a plus for them? What? They did have, because if they slaughtered us, if they gassed us, if they killed us, we didn't have that zechus that you have today, he told her, because you died, you have a grave, we are standing here. You are dying like a human being. The other ones they gassed, they slaughtered, they killed. They threw out the bones. Like animals threw out the bones. Never came to kever Yisroel. Never. We don't know where the graves are. At least here, maybe somebody will pass and see three people, young people. Maybe they will remember you. I was crying later because I was thinking of the other ones who don't have graves. This was very striking. (Tape shuts)

**INT:** This is Norman Garfield with the last interview with-

**SURLK:** Oy vey, last. Final. (Laughter)

**INT:** Maybe we'll continue in Eretz Yisroel.

**SURLK:** I hope so.

**INT:** G-d willing. It's Sunday, March 8. We're going to continue. Do you think that what happened in Europe could happen in America?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**INT:** Tell me about it.

**SURLK:** Definitely.

**INT:** Why?

**SURLK:** I personally think that-

**INT:** Are the goyim the same?

**SURLK:** The goyim are the same. Like I told you, there's only Yaakov and Eisav, and every goy hates us. We are not in a form to murder somebody. We don't like them because they don't like us. They persecute us. But they are able to do. Chas V'sholom, a few Farakhans or a few other bandits, Pat Buchanan's or whatever, could make it happen here also. Everywhere where the goyim, where the galut, it could happen again.

**INT:** You were saved by a non-Jew. What do you think about making friend with non-Jews so that if what you say could happen, at least people would have somebody to go to. What do you think about that?

**SURLK:** People would go to the gentiles, you mean?

**INT:** I'm saying you were saved by a non-Jew, so what do you think-

**SURLK:** Actually, I didn't go to them. It was min hashamayim that they approached us. They approached my mother.

**INT:** But I'm saying to you. What do you think about having relationships with goyim?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Every nation has tzadikim.

**SURLK:** There are certain individuals in every religion, in every nation, that are still menschen.

**INT:** But that's not what I'm asking you. I'm asking you-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Very few. In one state there's more, in one state there's less.

**SURLK:** Not one from a thousand but one from a million.

**INT:** But what I'm saying is if Jews have nothing to do with non-Jews, nothing, then in times of tzorus there's no business relationship, there's nothing, so I'm asking you how important is it.

**SURLK:** My parents had relationships, had a close, friendly relationship with goyim. What can I tell you? The number of them, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred maybe and maybe five hundred. Half of the city. We were known to half of the city of goyim. They came to us. They had tovos, favors, from us. We didn't have anything from it. We just sold what they wanted but they had favors. They came in, they told my father I cannot pay now for a number of weeks or months. Okay. Okay. I wait. The times are bad the other one said. I will not be able to pay. You have to wait till we have the money. My mother says, what can I do to them? This was the reason why I am alive today, because like I told you a few times, my mother didn't bother this Mrs. Stipolova while her husband was in England. This was one of the main reasons why they saved me. And when he came back and this one bothered her, this one...my father said to my mother, but at least you should demand. If she doesn't give you, so she doesn't give you. She doesn't have. She was a fine person. But at least let her know that we know she owes us the money. So my mother said to my father, why should I bother her? Why should I make her feel uncomfortable? Why should I make her feel guilty? If she doesn't have what to give me, so it's no sense. This was the reason why she saved me, and he came home and she told him Mr. Haber told me I should give him and this one. My father, Mr. Pelter, didn't demand from me money. They never told me I should pay them. My mother, on the contrary, when she saw her and she was such a fine, noble person, she wanted to say to my mother when my husband comes home...I know I owe you money. She said, Pani Stipolova, Mrs. Stipolova, don't mention that to me. I am not asking you for anything. And this made them save me.

**INT:** But I'm saying it came out of the fact that there is a relationship with gentiles. So I'm saying is that important?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** What means relationship? To do a good thing, a favor. You must have a border where to stop.

**SURLK:** My mother had good relationships. For instance, with the priest of the city, Russian Orthodox. Ukrainian. And my sister was by them. We were by them in the beginning. They

didn't know what will happen. At the end, when it was Judenfrei, they kept her for about a few days and maybe for a few weeks, but they told her-she was young girl. How old was she? You have to leave.

**INT:** But the fact is that they had a relationship.

**SURLK:** A very good relationship.

**INT:** Okay. But today, what I'm saying, the rabbi, for instance, and most of our rabbis, he doesn't know any galachim to go. It's different.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The galachim are more dangerous. They didn't give us back one child.

**SURLK:** One child they didn't give us back from the monastery, the churches. They saved the children privately.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They didn't give us back.

**SURLK:** They baptized them later. We never got the children. We got maybe...if the person came home, it was one in a million, and they went to that place where they left the child, they couldn't already...a lot of them lied. They said that he ran away, that they sent him to a cousin and the cousin put him out. They did everything not to give back the children. They didn't give us the children back. How many children. Later on in life, maybe this child will marry a Yid. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, he said that every goy that marries a Jew, either it's a lady or a husband, every member has a connection with Yiddish blood. They must have something that makes them want to be Jewish. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said that.

**INT:** The strength that you had to survive during the war-

**SURLK:** I wish I would have it now.

**INT:** That's what I want to ask you about. What was it and do you use the same...do you have it in your mind the same machshova (thoughts) now that you call upon for strength? What's the difference? Is it the same?

**SURLK:** I don't have the strength now. There was an okshoness (stubbornness).

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Every human being, his nature is to fight to life. The frummer is hoping Hashem will help and I will come out. The neighbor passed away, they killed him-(end of tape 14, side 1)

**INT:** ...strength as a young person, koach to survive. Everybody is different. Maybe it's to see their parents again, to tell the story over, a strength that you have.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Everybody thought so. Everybody thought so.

**INT:** But how about now? How about the strength...I'm asking the Rebbetzin.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** If we would have now the strength?

**INT:** Now. Where does the strength come from now to get up every day with health, with gezunt problems, the koach to go on now. What's the difference? Is there any difference in where your koach comes from now as it was then? That's what I want to know from you.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** By the big believer there's no difference. By the big believer. I'm not afraid-who will go and shoot me, because I live under a law and the law says don't kill. There was another law. You can kill him. Everybody could kill him. It was a danger. Now we have more hope to exist.

**SURLK:** You are asking now if we would have that koach now that we had before?

**INT:** Where do you get your koach to continue now?

**SURLK:** It's very, very hard. Let me tell you something. Every day is a strain. Every day is a job. To get up. Many times when the rabbi gets up, he goes in and learns a little bit before, but every time he gets up, first of all you must know that age does its natural thing. We are weaker physically and this makes us weaker also mentally a little. If you can't accomplish physically, you get a little mentally depressed. Don't have the koach now to do this. And then we would not be able to even take one percent what we took then. First of all, we were young. The youth. And the second, like the rabbi said, we didn't put us in the position of the person who went to the gas chamber. Like the rabbi. He was in Auschwitz. He saw the chimneys. He saw the people walk in and nobody walked out, but he should put himself in that position, in that column, who marched in? He said to himself, maybe Hashem will do a miracle with us, with me personally. He was waiting for the miracle and the miracle happened. I just read in the paper that each time I read this poem of that (?) I am sick a whole day. I had to read yesterday in the afternoon, Shabbos, that poem-I will give it to you-(?). He describes how the last columns that went into Auschwitz from the ghetto, the Judenfrei ghetto, the feeling of them, how they walked. This is a path that my loved one walked on their last walk to the gas chambers. It's a whole poem. I'll give it to you. He is alive.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** The Jewish halacha is that the goyim have seven mitzvos. If he is mekayim the seven mitzvos, he's chasidei umos haolam, they belong to the chassidim of the people. The Rambam says they will have Gan Eden, they will have the future world for the seven mitzvos. If they are not mekaim (fulfill) even the seven mitzvos...

**INT:** What did you have in mind all those days in the closet when you were there with Mrs. Stipolova to survive? What did you keep in your mind, and now, is it the same thing or is it a different thing?

**SURLK:** I personally as a child, and I was born like that, because I was raised in a frum family, but I wasn't in such a frum family that should be in the face of the dead, seeing it every hour, to have such a bitochon like I had personally. I think I'm the only one in this world. Everybody

thinks for himself. Because I believe that Hashem will somehow save me. How he will save me I didn't know.

**INT:** Why did you think that was going to happen to you?

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

**INT:** Why you?

**SURLK:** (Yiddish words)

**INT:** You saw the other people were going. Why you?

**SURLK:** I helped a lot of people to survive because when I saw these terrible things that happened all over in other cities, and it happened in our city so many times, actions, that they took away, I told the people...when I went I hardly could type. I went to a course. My mother paid a lot of money, I told you, that I should be able to type German and Russian and Ukrainian. Like I said to Mrs. Schulster, to the other ladies, Hashem will help us. She said what's new? You see the goyim there, you see the galachim. What's going to be? I said Mrs. Schulster, it's going to be alright. She said what's going to be alright? How could it be alright? Look what happened in Lemberg (says names of other cities), all over, Tarnipol, what do you mean? There will be something. You see, the Russian army is coming and the Duetschen will go in drerd. I didn't believe what I said. I just wanted to make her life a little bit easier. I knew it's bad.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She blessed her.

**SURLK:** She gave me every day a blessing. She was such a lady, intelligent person. She was such a lady that she waited every day for me to hear this word of hope and she said you shouldn't know from anything. Nothing bad should happen in your life. You should be gezunt. The blessing, because I gave her a little hope and I was so weak in my hope because I saw what's going on. So I didn't believe. I personally believed that I will be saved. How did I believe?

**INT:** Yeah. Why?

**SURLK:** How did I believe? I was in the next room with four Germans. Four Germans. The door was open, not locked. How did I believe? He came in. I told you he came in to go to the kitchen and get milk. I was sitting in a little housecoat, a little girl. One look he would have took at me, he knew already that I am not one of them. But Hashem gave a dreidel his seichel that he shouldn't ask who I am. He didn't ask. You see, I am alive. I don't know. I thank every day G-d. When I am depressed, like I said to Brocha Goldfein...actually, I said it to everybody who calls me...A man who is now in hospital, Mr. Goldenberg, and she cries, she's dying. I said Mrs. Goldenberg, at least you have one nechama, that he didn't get shot. He's not in Auschwitz. We are not afraid. I told you last time the eulogy that he made. They will not throw out our bones to the animals. She had the zechus to be brought to kever Yisroel. I also think about it.

**INT:** It sounds like you're an optimistic person.

**SURLK:** When it comes to...yeah. In general I am a very optimistic person.

**INT:** Where did this come from?

**SURLK:** This is the Ribono shel Olam gives you. This is a gift of Hashem, that Hashem gives you that it will be good. We have plenty problems now. Plenty. Health problems. Different problems. I say to the rabbi every day that oy, I don't have strength, and I say it's not Auschwitz. We have doctors. We have medication. We are getting older, we are getting shvacher (weaker), it's a natural thing. Hashem will help us.

**INT:** How much did your parents play in this optimism business? Were they like this or you're different?

**SURLK:** My mother was a very realistic person. My father was withdrawn. He didn't talk too much, but my mother was a very realistic person. She was smart enough to predict what will happen to us because it happened all over other cities. It happened in other cities, all over. We heard every day. We didn't have papers, but somebody came from the other city, from Tarnopol, from a bigger city, from a smaller city, they said it's no good. There's nobody left almost. So my mother said, when I said to her Hashem will help us, she said what do you mean will help us? It happened all over. So I said to my mother-once I was very chutzpadik and I said to my mother why are you just like a dark crow, you know, a not good bird? What are you predicting such things? Can't you say something nice, that this will be a nes min hashamayim. She said I don't wait for nissim because nissim will not happen. She knew. She was prepared.

**INT:** So you didn't get it from her.

**SURLK:** No. And my father was withdrawn. He didn't believe in it. I am convinced that he didn't. He saw what was happening. It's a matter of another week.

**INT:** And how about your sister?

**SURLK:** My sister-you talked to little girls, fearful children. What do they know? What did we know? What did we know? So many people couldn't predict? When you came to America and you told them what is happening in Europe, nobody believed you. This Polish man-what was his name? He came from the Underground and he told to Roosevelt, he told to the Jewish organizations what happened, he went to (?) and saw what's happening and he said I saw it with my own eyes. They wanted a Polish, a gentile should see what's happening, so the people took from the Judenrat and showed him the chairman and he came and they started to make demonstration in Washington, Rabbi Silber from Cincinnati. They started but...

**INT:** The optimism that you had, it was a religious optimism or just a positive way-

**SURLK:** Only religious. Only religious. Today I have only...I spoke to somebody about somebody now, not long ago, and I told them even we knew that everything will work out, but even this trepidation, but deep down in my heart I know it will work out. When something happens I say to the rabbi it's going to be good. You just told me you saw in a paper from

Steipler? Oh, he just read in a book. When I came in he was reading and he called me over and he said, look.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I cried. I cried today. The Steipler answers a letter to a great man, to rabbonim in one time. There was a machlokes. One was a tzaddik, on one side, and the other...and he writes to him I got great pain from your tzorus, but I hope Hashem Yisborach is here with the pain to forgive my other aveiros. You must recognize if you have pain, it is a gift from the Ribono shel Olam. This is not a punishment, because from this world...to clean us.

**SURLK:** So he called me over and he said look.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I thought about myself, the tzorus. We have a good G-d. So many tzorus.

**SURLK:** He wanted to tell me that the pain that I have in my leg and the other, so he called me over and he says, you see, the tzorus...I said you have to be blessed to take the tzorus also.

**INT:** So you would say that about the Shoah? You would say that about that as well?

**SURLK:** This was a too big punishment.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** This I don't know.

**INT:** I'm just saying what you just said about an individual.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** That's a punishment. This is a destruction, a churban.

**INT:** It's not the same thing.

**SURLK:** This is a destruction of a nation. Almost.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** And the best ones he took away. The best ones.

**INT:** So the optimism you had then as a girl was a religious optimism, not just a temperament.

**SURLK:** No. Emunah. Emunah shelaimah.

**INT:** And where did this come from?

**SURLK:** I was born like that.

**INT:** The tatte? The mamme? Where did it come from? A bubbe? A zaida? Where in your experience?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Her mother used to go to rebbis too. She was married and she wanted children so she went to a rebbi in Galicia. She was the oldest and she understood more than the other two sisters. When the Mama went to the rebbi she ran after and said take me too.



Said the mother if I go with you, people will think there is something wrong with you. You're going to the rebbi for a brocha. This is not good. And she cried she wants to go.

**SURLK:** People said take her, look, she's running after you. Take her. And she took me. And I saw the rebbe.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** And the rebbe asked if she's not writing on Shabbos or chalilah...

**SURLK:** We went to private school and on Shabbos I had to go to school. There was an eruv, of course, but I didn't write, chalila, on Shabbos. I just was sitting and listening and when I came home, Shabbos night, I started to write whatever I needed and Sunday also.

**INT:** Even though your mother went to the rebbe, it sounds like she didn't have the same kind of bitachon and emunah that you had.

**SURLK:** No, I had more.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** She understood more. She was a very smart woman.

**SURLK:** She saw. She was very smart. You couldn't fool her. She knew what is going to be.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They were wondering if Liba didn't tell them to run.

**SURLK:** When they saw me, they said your parents are alive, aren't they? And I said no, they are not. She said she ran away. No, they must be alive. Your mother is not alive? What do you mean? No, she's not. She was very smart.

**INT:** Did she ever ask the rebbi for eitzos about the tzorus?

**SURLK:** No. When we had the tzorus already, everything stopped. Maybe in the beginning you could go, but the rebbe himself was in the same basket. They write in that book that I wanted to give you, To Vanquish the Dragon, this lady who the parents they killed, they took them to Chelno and they gassed them in the trucks. It was very painful. It was not effective like later on. She came out...she was hidden. She came out and she said...they told her that they took them away but she didn't know where. She was a little girl. She was running. She heard that the Belzer Rebbe is there, so by the time she came to the Belzer Rebbe in a little town, he was waiting to be rescued. It took her maybe a day or two by the time she came to him. He was sitting in an underground, and she describes the scene how she came into the Belzer Rebbe and she told him-

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Asked him about her parents.

**SURLK:** And he was sitting with his head like this, and she said Rebbe, they took away my parents, my tatte and my momma. I don't know where to look for them. Rebbe, where shall I go? Where shall I look for them? And he just...his eyes were so moist and he put his head and he said to her don't go. They are okay. You understand? So she understood what happened. (Yiddish words) It means they are not suffering anymore. So she says, in that sentence she saw greatness and she went out. He was a tzaddik. We also go in Eretz Yisroel. He's on Har Hamenuchos, the

Belzer Rebbe. We also go. In fact, we needed a brocha from him when we came to America. We had something that we needed a brocha and the rabbi wrote to him a letter. I don't remember. It was special delivery. It had to go fast. Telephones were not so perfected. Faxes didn't exist. So the rebbe wrote us back a letter. His gabbai wrote us back what the rebbe said and I always pray to him that what he said should come true. And I went two weeks ago, three weeks ago, I went to Skver. I went to Skver. I needed also eppes an advice, a brocha, and I go out to his father's kever and he promised me little things and I said Rebbi, I came to you because I want to remind you what you promised me should be fulfilled, should be mekuyum. Each time I said you promised me rebbe so many things. I came to remind you, you should not forget. This is a wonderful feeling and I come out-you see, the rebbe doesn't want to take money from me but I insist. So I said to him, many times I say to him, I never lose money with Skver. I come home. Somebody who got a ticket came in and davened and didn't pay and had an aliyah and promised by the appeal a few dollars and never paid. We don't know who paid. We don't know who didn't pay. Comes the next morning, he comes, fifty dollars-I didn't pay for tickets. You understand?

**INT:** He's a European, the rebbe?

**SURLK:** The rebbe was born probably in Europe. Maybe not.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He was a child when the rebbe passed away.

**SURLK:** Not a child.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** He was already married.

**SURLK:** Yes. He was about twenty years maybe, maybe more.

**INT:** The Rabbi Leizerowski, he writes a letter to the rebbe, you said, a couple of times. If you didn't marry her, would you be writing to rebbes and have anything to do with rebbes?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** No, I wouldn't. I would speak to the Steipler.

**INT:** So this is because...

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I don't eat kneidlach because she can't...

**SURLK:** We didn't eat gebrochts. I could have my life easier. I could buy things. Pesach I don't have...my son wants to come to me with his children. I don't know how we'll make Pesach. So some people say go and buy some things. I said we don't eat gebrochts. I cannot buy. So the rabbi said maybe we should change? Yesterday at the table, just to make a joke, I said no, absolutely not.

**INT:** Have you ever gone to the rebbe yourself, any of these rebbes that she goes to?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I saw him. He called me I should take a taxi-

**SURLK:** A plane. A private plane. The rebbe wanted his advice about two years-last years, and the gabbai called. He wanted his advice and the rebbe said Rabbi Leizerowski should charter a private plane and he pays the bill.

**INT:** But the rebbes, without saying a name, these rebbes-they know how to learn?

**SURLK:** Yes.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** They're great talmidei chachomim.

**SURLK:** And let me tell you something. Even if they don't know how to learn like the misnagdim maybe, the litvakers, but they're frum and they are eidel and they are fine and they are from generation, from future generations. Zechus avos.

**INT:** Do you think your relationship with Hakadosh Boruch Hu has changed any because of the war or with the war?

**SURLK:** No. It's stronger. It's even stronger.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** More close. More close.

**SURLK:** I became very close.

**INT:** How did it happen?

**SURLK:** Because I see the chassudim, the good things that he's doing with us. I see, even now I see so many people around us, people that lived with us in Germany and worked in the Rabbinate. They disappeared. Nobody is here, and I thank everyday Ribono shel Olam that we are still here. The rabbi just said this morning, he said...I said it's hard, the weather is not good. You have to get up half past five, six o'clock. So he said to me, don't complain. Thank the Ribono shel Olam for this, that I am able to get dressed and you are able. Don't complain. We are grateful for every little thing. And he did with us big, big chassudim up till now. I always tell him when I light the candles, when I have decisions to make-I go into shul and I always say it's not in my merit. It's the merit of our avos (forefathers) and he should carry us over these tzorus that we have presently. Nothing is eternal. Nothing.

**INT:** Have you ever figured out why you were saved?

**SURLK:** No. We feel guilty sometimes. The rabbi said it for you. We feel guilty why us.

**INT:** But did you ever think why?

**SURLK:** A lot of Holocaust survivors suffer because they think what, I am better than them? I'm more worthy to stay alive, to sleep in a bed? I didn't know what hunger is.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** My oldest brother, a litvak, learned in litvashe yeshivos. He never touched his beard. He had long peyos. Him they killed.

**INT:** So you never thought about it, why you, why you were saved? Have you thought about it?

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** Sure we think. Every day.

**INT:** And what's the teretz (answer) you've come to about you and your wife?

**SURLK:** The teretz is that it's His will. We don't know why. We don't know why they killed them and we don't know why we exist.

**INT:** But do you know about you, SurLK? Have you thought about that?

**SURLK:** No.

**INT:** Did you think about it?

**SURLK:** Yes, I think about it.

**INT:** And no conclusion or a conclusion? Why you?

**SURLK:** So many girls, little girls, older girls, better than me were killed.

**INT:** So why you?

**SURLK:** I don't know. It's His will. That's why I want to remain...I was thinking-it was not today but it was Thursday or Friday in the morning. I woke up and Yitzchok came-it was Friday because Yitzchok came to daven. So when he came over and Berel got up and also went in, so I said to myself, isn't that a zechus that the children go in and daven and lay tefillin. I was standing here and crying to the Ribono shel Olam. Even if you expect a little more, you know, be bigger talmidei chachomim maybe, but I'm thankful for that. They are yidden, Shabbos, kosher. They know to do chassudim. They really-all of my children do favors for people, big favors. Who is actually keeping a house? Who is supervising the house and who is bringing in the love for Torah and frumkeit? (End of tape 14, side 2) ...the rebbi on Har Hamenuchos on the special plot, and he told us that he knew a big rav in Germany. He was one of the biggest in the dor (generation), Rav Yechiel Weinberg. So he told us that-in Germany he told us that he knew a big rov who was very frum and his Rebbetzin bought treife fleishe (meat). Can you imagine? And he ate it. And he didn't tell him. He didn't tell him, so I asked him-I was very young. You're talking so many years back. I said so why, Rav Weinberg-he lived in Switzerland so I knew him. He came to my uncle's house. So why didn't you tell him? He said because I knew it will not help and I didn't want to brech a mishpocha (break up a family) because there would be right away a get and the children would be unhappy and it would be...so I let it go. So a lady can do everything what's possible in her hands to (?). A man can't, because you are in the house. You are supervising the kitchen. You are bringing up your children. You are actually the boss of the household. I try. I try my best. The rabbi said he cannot trust me to give me...last week he said-I needed a few dollars. I needed ten dollars. I wanted to give somebody a present and I had a certain amount and I was short and I said oy, I don't have the ten dollars, so the rabbi was

laughing and he said you know, I can't even trust you with the money. I said why? He said because you give it away. It's true.

**INT:** Where did you get that from?

**SURLK:** I give a lot of tzedakah. I shouldn't say it but I give a lot of tzedakah. My children don't even know. The rabbi doesn't even know. I give a lot.

**INT:** Where did that midah come from?

**SURLK:** My mother used to give.

**INT:** You knew it? You saw?

**SURLK:** Yes, I saw. Of course I saw. And I also give. The Skverer Rebbe is always very mad. He says why do you give me such big matanos (presents)? I says Rebbe, I know I will have it and maybe I do my children a little not a big favor because I know Brisman, they don't have. They have it now because he's principal this last year, but otherwise they don't. But Boruch Hashem I give them and Hashem will give them also. I try my best.

**INT:** So when you give, do you feel there will be something in return?

**SURLK:** No. I give because I like. I feel that tzedakah is very important. And if you don't have it-if you have an excess, so much that you can give so much, but if you don't have so much and you give even more than you can, then this is...Hakadosh Boruch Hu gives you back. He gives you back.

**INT:** Have you seen this in your life, work out like that with people that have given?

**SURLK:** I see it every day in our life. I see we don't even expect and something comes is. I see that this is in the zechus (merit) that we give. We read in the Jewish Press last week, Rav Pam writes about nebech somebody got a nervous breakdown one son, and the second son and the daughter. They both got heart attacks. So I said to the rabbi we must send away a few dollars. He said send away. So I told him a specific amount and he said no, send more. You send it to Rav Pam's house. You cannot send like eighteen dollars. You send a little more. He's also. He loves...this boy, for instance, went to Israel. His father's an engineer but they are not-when he leined we always gave him fifty dollars, a hundred dollars, whatever we could. So last week the rabbi said Benjy is going away. I said yes, so we will give him twenty-five dollars. He said twenty-five is nisht...maybe I will talk to somebody and we will give. I said count on me fifty dollars. I have my tzedakah money and so I give you. So he gave him a hundred dollars. He was so happy. Boruch Hashem. Boruch Hashem. And I gave him also that the Rabbi didn't know.

**INT:** What are the hardest questions that I've asked you to answer? Is there any harder ones over all the talking we've done about all these experiences?

**SURLK:** No. I think that I...I told Brocha Goldfein that in one way it's sad because when you leave and it takes me a day to recuperate from these tzorus after I recall what we went through,

but on the other way I feel so relieved because at least I had a person that I could talk from my heart, that you talk what's on your chest.

**INT:** Did you ever think you were going to say it over like this?

**SURLK:** No. How it came to me such a vivid memories, you know. I never expected this. I think in little fragments. I tell it to the rabbi. There is not a day that we don't speak about it. Whatever. When we eat something. When you give him a shtickele chicken from Shabbos, if you wouldn't be here he said we would say Boruch Hashem I am not hungry. He suffers like this whatever you give him. And I also. I also thank the Ribono shel Olam. I could have it a little easier in life.

**INT:** How?

**SURLK:** Some things happened to us, a little bit more than we can take. (Crying)

**INT:** What kind of things?

**SURLK:** Tzorus. Health problems. We take care of each other. We are very much afraid that we wouldn't be able to go on, but he said we cannot think about what will happen tomorrow. Don't think about it. Plenty, plenty aggravation.

**INT:** From gezunt things?

**SURLK:** Yes. Gezunt and from children, different problems. It's hard for me to take. I told you my mother wanted always to say-my father wanted always to save me. Why me? Why me? Because the rabbi also. You know, every aggravation is hidden till the last minute I shouldn't know because of tza'ar from it. No more koach.

**INT:** You can feel that you have less?

**SURLK:** What?

**INT:** Koachis. (Strength)

**SURLK:** Yes. Very much. It's very hard. I just asked him yesterday in the evening, would you be able to go to Eretz Yisroel? I don't know if we'll be able to go next time but only this time, to say goodbye. So he said why not, but you are shvach. You go with a cane. You look for an excuse for an umbrella to lean on. But I said I can't go because my legs hurt. He says it will pass. Another week, another week. My son came over the other day, my oldest son, and he said to us I wanted you to go to Eretz Yisroel. He sees that we want so much to go. So I said but we can't go. I mean I cannot go shopping like I used to go two years even ago. He said so you will stay in a hotel. I said in a hotel? We are able to stay in a hotel? Avi, what are you talking?

**INT:** What did you mean? Do you mean gelt wise?

**SURLK:** Yes. It's a lot of money.

**INT:** So what did he say?

**SURLK:** (Repeats the conversation with Avi in Yiddish to Rabbi Leizerowski) In a hotel? I would better give it to my daughter. I would better give it to Yaakov Meir, he's leaving after Pesach, and Matty has to leave September. It goes in thousands of dollars. You have to pay the yeshiva, you have to pay for the dormitory, you have to pay for food.

**INT:** Even rabbis' sons have to pay?

**SURLK:** The rabbi's son doesn't pay, but Rabbi Brisman's son pays. Rabbi Brisman son pays for the Philadelphia Yeshiva with a scholarship. I'll tell you exactly. It's about \$7000 four years ago, and he paid \$4800, for only the tuition, besides what he needed for a nosh, for a laundry, for something else. And now he pays maybe four, five-I don't even ask but approximately. He pays. He pays. His father still pays for the yeshivos that they...maybe not now. Maybe he paid up already. These are different people. You cannot compare everybody to him. You cannot compare. He wouldn't take a penny from the state.

**INT:** So what did Avi say?

**SURLK:** A joke.

**INT:** So you think you'll go or you know you won't go?

**SURLK:** Somebody could give us...somebody called us and they said that they would give us an apartment for a few hundred dollars because they are leaving. Like we had last time for a few hundred dollars. They left anyway. What I did to their apartment, they thought they came into a palace. I cleaned the china, silver. They came in-the first thing they looked at the lamp. They thought it was so osgepitized.

**INT:** So, do you think you'll go?

**SURLK:** It was neglected very much. But we had a nice bedroom set, two new mattresses and two little beds. It was clean (Repeats for Rabbi Leizerowski). But otherwise, the kitchen-I had to scrub everything.

**INT:** In Yerushalayim.

**SURLK:** Yes. Yitzchok came then. He had a meeting. He cleaned the chandelier and I cleaned the silver. The rabbi went to sleep and each day I took out a few pieces of silver and with silver polish...I made them a china closet.

**RABBI LEIZEROWSKI:** I told her she shouldn't do it because the husband will then expect his wife to do it.

**INT:** So you think this time?

**SURLK:** He called us and he said if you want to come in May, just let me know so I can arrange it because I come to America anyway. I don't know. I'm afraid that the way I feel now, I will not be able to go, unless the Ribono shel Olam...then it could be. (End of tape)