

INTERVIEW WITH ADELE MERMELSTEIN

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TRANSCENDING TRAUMA PROJECT

Council for Relationships

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INTERVIEW WITH ADELE MERMELSTEIN

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with a survivor, Mrs. Adele Mermelstein, and it's December 13th, 1995.

I was wondering if you could just tell me your name, your age, where you were born, and we could start with that.

ADELE MERMELSTEIN: My name is Adele Mermelstein. I'm 72. I was born in Czechoslovakia.

INT: Your date of birth?

ADELE: April 26th, 1920.

INT: And what was the name of the town?

ADELE: Sevlus.

INT: Could you spell that, please?

ADELE: (Spells it)

INT: And what was that near? Was that near a large city?

ADELE: Munkács?

INT: Okay. Could you tell me your marital status? Your husband passed away.

ADELE: Yeah, two years ago.

INT: Two years ago. So you're a widow. And how many years were you married to your husband?

ADELE: 43 years.

INT: Okay. Any children?

ADELE: Four children.

INT: Four children. Could you tell me who they are and what they do?

ADELE: My oldest daughter is Hedy. And she's a teacher, but she's not working as a teacher. She's teaching Hebrew school in synagogue, but she's working with her husband, who is a lawyer.

INT: Does she live in the area?

ADELE: She's in Bucks County, around there. I have twin boys. They were born about ten minutes apart. The older one is Neil, he's a family doctor. And the other one is a internal medicine, gastroenterology.

INT: Wow. They're both doctors.

ADELE: Yes. My younger daughter...

INT: Now, wait. How old is your oldest daughter?

ADELE: She was just 40. She's going to be 41 in February.

INT: And your twins?

ADELE: And the twins, they're going to be in November now, they were just 39.

INT: Okay. And then...

ADELE: And then Bonnie's 36. She took business courses. And her husband is a doctor, and she works for her husband.

INT: Okay. And what about grandchildren?

ADELE: I have ten grandchildren, eight boys and two girls.

INT: Wow. So tell me, starting with your oldest daughter, tell me how...

(Pause)

Okay, so we just looked at pictures of your children and grandchildren. So you have ten grandchildren, beautiful children.

ADELE: Eight boys and two girls.

INT: That's terrific. So I just wanted to ask for the record, all your children married Jewish people?

ADELE: Yes.

INT: Okay. How would you describe your religious affiliation?

ADELE: We're Conservative.

INT: Do you belong to a Conservative shul?

ADELE: Yeah, I belong right now to an Orthodox shul.

INT: In the neighborhood there's an Orthodox shul.

ADELE: Yes, about two doors away. But the boys belong to Conservative. Ohev Shalom.

INT: And what about your daughters?

ADELE: They all, my oldest daughter, two boys belong to one shul, and the other one is in Chalfont, belongs to another shul.

INT: But they all are fairly observant?

ADELE: Kosher homes. Mm-hm.

INT: Okay. Have you ever been involved in any Holocaust organizations, or activities?

ADELE: I just joined the New Americans.

INT: Just joined. You didn't join before?

ADELE: I never had time. Just joined them. This first year.

INT: Is that helpful to you at all, to get together with people?

ADELE: Well, it can't hurt. It can't hurt.

INT: How do you see it? As a social event or as a support group?

ADELE: Once a month they have some kind of entertainment or whatever.

INT: So do you enjoy that?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: How about other organizations or volunteer work?

ADELE: I belong to Adath Tikvah, the sisterhood. Once a month a meeting.

INT: Any other activities?

ADELE: No. I don't have time.

INT: All right, I wonder if we could start with your life, you know, when you were born, and the town you were born in. If you could describe it, and if you could describe the people in your family. Who was in your family, how many brothers and sisters, and what they were like.

ADELE: Like I say, I was born in Sevlus. I was the second daughter. My mother had three girls and two boys. And unfortunately she had a very hard life, because all my family, my grandfather with one daughter went to America, before the World War I, and he came back in 1905 or 1906, and he had three more children. And then he went back, because the situation was bad. He went back with one daughter, and the war broke out in 1914, so for four years didn't hear from them. So my mother was almost the oldest, and she knew how to sew, so she supported the family. But what I didn't like what they did, after the war, my grandfather sent -- my grandmother was here, too. He sent tickets for the whole family. My mother was supposed to come, too. In the meantime, they married her off. So she never saw her family again. It was very hard.

INT: So the whole family went to America except her?

ADELE: I don't think that was right. I didn't know my first grandparents from my father's house, and I never knew my grandparents from my mother's side. I don't know why they did it.

INT: Where were the grandparents from your father's side?

ADELE: Around there, but they must have died young.

INT: I see. So you never met your grandparents.

ADELE: No, not one. And unfortunately, **my** children never had grandparents, either.

INT: Why did they decide to marry her off without taking her?

ADELE: I would like to know that, too.

INT: Was it an arranged marriage?

ADELE: Yeah, you know Europe. And another woman came with her ticket to America.

INT: And she was the only one that stayed?

ADELE: And she went through hard times.

INT: How many siblings did your mother have?

ADELE: She had really seven, but two died home. So we had three girls and two boys.

INT: No, I'm saying how many did your mother, when your mother was a little girl.

ADELE: Oh, there were seven. And all my uncles and aunts were here, and she's the only one. In those days there was no plane to come. They never came to visit, nothing. It was very hard.

INT: So she never saw them again. So she married this man in an arranged marriage.

ADELE: Yeah, in Europe, there was always arranged marriage.

INT: And that was your father.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Okay. So your mother, what kind of background did she come from? Was it Hasidic, not Hasidic?

ADELE: Like everybody was religious in Europe. Everybody was religious, I would say. It was starting to change a few years before, but everybody was religious.

INT: So she was from a religious home.

ADELE: Yeah. Oh, yeah. My mother has a wig.

INT: She wore a wig. She covered her hair, okay.

ADELE: Oh, yeah.

INT: And your father? What kind of background did he come from?

ADELE: The same. The same.

INT: Was he from the same town?

ADELE: Almost. Almost.

INT: And what were your parents' names?

ADELE: Bleier. (spells it)

INT: That's your maiden name. And your mother's first name and your father?

ADELE: She was in Europe Chaya Green. My father, Adolf, or Avrom Bleier.

INT: So they had, so your mother had seven children, and two passed away. From childhood illness, or infancy?

ADELE: No. One was an infant, one was about, I would say about two years old. A little girl.

INT: What happened?

ADELE: She was sick, and you know, she didn't run to the doctor right away, and when she went the doctor said, "**Now** you're coming? It's too late."

INT: Do you remember that?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: How old were you?

ADELE: I was about twelve years old. Eleven, I'm sorry, because I didn't have to sit shiva. Only my older sister.

INT: That must have been very hard. So tell me now who was in your family? The names of all the siblings, and what order they come in.

ADELE: Well, my oldest sister was Irene, and eleven months later I was born. And then my sister Lily was two years younger, she's in Israel. And my other sister died. And the two boys, one was at home, Nehemiah, about twelve, and David was about nine. So they went right on the left side.

INT: Oh, so that's how old they were when the war came.

ADELE: And we three together went to the right side. And we survived.

INT: All right, so there were five children in your family. Could you tell me a little bit about what it was like, what your father did for a living? Did your mother work?

ADELE: No, there was no **way** to work. There was **nowhere** to work. If you didn't have, you were really struggling, because there was no factories, no nothing.

INT: Oh. What kind of town was it?

ADELE: It's a small town, maybe 30,000, 35,000 people.

INT: And how many Jews in the town?

ADELE: A lot.

INT: A lot of Jews? Half?

ADELE: When it came to stores, when it came Friday and Saturday, maybe two, three Gentile stores were open. The rest was closed.

INT: Because they were all owned by the Jews?

ADELE: Well, yeah.

INT: But how much of the population would you say was Jewish?

ADELE: I would say about 80%.

INT: 80%. So that was pretty high.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: And how were relations with the non-Jews in the town?

ADELE: We had no trouble. We had no trouble.

INT: You don't remember any...

ADELE: No.

INT: So it was a small town, and there were no factories, so you just sort of had to make a living. What did your father do?

ADELE: Well, he tried different things. First he had the bus with a partner, and they put such high tax, he couldn't keep it. And then he struggled. So finally he found a company in real Czechoslovakia. Because where I was born was occupied Czechoslovakia. And today is Russia. So my father found a company that sold machines for the farmers. And he went from village to village and always came home with orders, and that was very good.

INT: And he was doing all right with that?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: So how would you describe your economic situation growing up? What level would you say you were on? Middle class, or lower middle class?

ADELE: Well, my father was self-educated. Because his parents were very religious, and wouldn't let him go to school. So he was very good in German, and he was typing, and he really had a big business.

INT: And he did all that himself? He taught himself.

ADELE: Mm-hm. But he believed in education. He was a Zionist. I went to Hebrew school all my life. And then he sent me to higher school in another city. And then unfortunately, about '40 or '41 they came in and they took everything away. The license, everything.

INT: Before we get to the war, though, could you tell me...so your father was selling machinery, and he was doing a lot of traveling?

ADELE: Mm-hm.

INT: Was it a struggle to put food on the table, do you think?

ADELE: There was a time, yes. They took away the licenses, and there was nothing else to do. So towards the end, '39, '40, luckily he had a little money in the bank.

INT: Because things were getting...

ADELE: But we got packages from America.

INT: Could you talk a little bit about what your parents were like, what their personalities were like?

ADELE: Wonderful.

INT: Describe your mother. What was she like?

ADELE: I have a picture here. My mother was a plain woman. My father was more intelligent, because he...he got together with people. My mother, what did she do? Raise children and be in the house. There was nothing else to do. My father, like I say, he went on business, and he was connected with business people, and he was self-educated, so he was a little bit more.

INT: But your mother, what was she like? Was she a happy person?

ADELE: She was happily married, but missed her family. Missed her family terrible. You imagine? Just...

INT: Never seeing them again.

ADELE: Never seeing them.

INT: So would she talk to you about that, that she missed her family?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. She cried a lot, too.

INT: She did.

ADELE: Oh, yeah.

INT: Because of her family?

ADELE: Because it was a very close family. I came in America, I find three aunts and three uncles. And my grandfather just died a few months before we were liberated. So she missed everything. So I was...

INT: So she was sad about that.

ADELE: I was angry about it for a while. I mean, they should have never done that. They should have never done that.

INT: Just to leave **her** behind. It seems...

ADELE: Yeah, and she had a ticket in her hand.

INT: It seems unfair.

ADELE: Gave it to another woman. I guess that was...

INT: But she wasn't the oldest child, either, was she? The oldest daughter to get married?

ADELE: Almost. Yeah, I think she was. There was a brother older, then after she came.

INT: It doesn't really make sense.

ADELE: No, I told my aunt here. I says, "That was very wrong. Because she was unhappy all her life."

INT: So you saw her as unhappy when you were growing up?

ADELE: She cried an awful lot. And when she got a letter, she always corresponded with her parents and her sisters and brothers. And it was hard for her. It was very hard. If it would be another city, it's different. But another country, you couldn't even get out. There was no transportation.

INT: Could she enjoy life, though, do you think? Do you think she got pleasure out of her children?

ADELE: Yes, out of her children, right. Like at her marriage, she was happy. But this was a terrible thing.

INT: So this kind of over-rode everything. What about your father's personality? What was he like?

ADELE: A wonderful man, and a wonderful father. Wonderful. In fact, I found out I was his favorite. (laughs)

INT: Oh, you did?

ADELE: Yeah. Somehow my mother said it. Yeah.

INT: What was he like?

ADELE: Tall man. I have a picture in my bedroom.

INT: I'd like to see. But his personality, could you describe his personality?

ADELE: Wonderful, really nice.

INT: Kind.

ADELE: Yeah, kind, nice, tall, kind. A good father.

INT: Was he affectionate?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: How about your mother?

ADELE: Same thing. You know, in Europe, they didn't know any other way. We were good children, and they were good parents.

INT: Were you close with any particular brother or sister? Was there any...

ADELE: No, the same.

INT: You all played.

ADELE: Yeah, we were almost the same age.

INT: How about school? Could you describe what school was like there? Did you go to public school?

ADELE: Well, I never went to regular public school. I went to Hebrew public school, which was one class. And I don't even remember how they did it with so many classes. But I went there till I was like thirteen or fourteen. And then my father sent me to Gymnasium. But I couldn't be there almost two years, because the Germans came in there, and we were in Hungaria, and it was such a mix-up, I had to stop. So I stopped by fifteen. That was all my education.

INT: You stopped your education at fifteen.

ADELE: But I can beat anyone. Spelling, or reading, any American.

INT: Your English is beautiful.

ADELE: Any American, I can beat. (laughs) Or in Hebrew, it's a pleasure. Go to Israel, I know what they're talking about.

INT: Yeah? You can understand.

ADELE: I take the siddur, Shabbas, I know what I'm saying. It's a pleasure.

INT: So you went to Hebrew school all day long?

ADELE: All my life, yes.

INT: So it was an all day school. Did you learn secular subjects too, or just...

ADELE: No, everything. No, arithmetic, everything. History, everything.

INT: But it was a religious school.

ADELE: It was not a religious school. It was a Hebrew school. Like I say, in Europe everybody was religious.

INT: It wasn't like a Bais Yaakov?

ADELE: No, everybody was religious. Later on they made a Bais Yaakov for girls that didn't know how to read Hebrew. But I didn't have to go there. And my older sister went to Hebrew school. My younger one, they all went to public school. Because the situation wasn't good anymore.

INT: All right, so you went there till you were thirteen. And then you went to Gymnasium...

ADELE: For about two years.

INT: In what town? In the same town?

ADELE: Munkács.

INT: Oh, in Munkács. How far away was Munkács?

ADELE: I'd say about an hour and a half. Something like that.

INT: So where did you live?

ADELE: I was living with a family. With a family, they had two children.

INT: Okay. So can you talk to me a little bit about your childhood? What it was like growing up there? What you used to do?

ADELE: Well, (laughs) I was always interested in sewing. I played with a doll, I made doll dresses and a hat, and everything, and to this day I do sewing, just for the family.

INT: So you liked that when you were a little kid.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Anything else that you used to do?

ADELE: Nothing special. There was nothing to do there. We took a crayon and played, and took a rope and played. There was no toys.

INT: Yeah, there weren't toys, right. You had to sort of make it up. So did you play out in the street with the kids?

ADELE: Yeah, outside, yeah. I always liked children. Always, always.

INT: What kind of friends did you have?

ADELE: Same type. We had cousins.

INT: All Jewish friends?

ADELE: Oh, yeah.

INT: You didn't play with non-Jewish people?

ADELE: No. The section we lived was very little Gentile. Very little.

INT: So what was your exposure to non-Jews before the war? Did you ever run into them?

ADELE: Yes, we ran into them. But we were on good terms. I mean, like I say, the neighborhood I lived was mixed, but most Jewish.

INT: Did your parents not want you to associate with them?

ADELE: No, there wasn't such a thing like here. It's just not your friends. And like I say, the street I lived maybe was one Gentile, or one child or whatever. You really...

INT: There were so few around that it didn't matter.

ADELE: Yeah. And beside, I don't remember having trouble with the Gentiles. We lived peacefully with them. Until the Hungarians came in.

INT: Could you explain about Czechoslovakia, because it's very confusing. Because sometimes, you know, part of it is Hungary, and part of it is Russia, and...

ADELE: Well, in my mother's time, it was Hungarian.

INT: Was your town east or west Czechoslovakia?

ADELE: I don't know. (laughs) My mother's time was Hungarian. So I speak Hungarian. My mother also spoke Russian a little.

INT: Did your mother speak Hungarian to you?

ADELE: Oh, yeah.

INT: Oh, in the house.

ADELE: Yeah, because in her time it was Hungarian. And after 1918, we became occupied Czechoslovakia. This was occupied Czechoslovakia.

INT: Who was occupying it? Russia?

ADELE: No, Czechoslovakia. It was Hungarian before.

INT: I see. Then Czechoslovakia took it over.

ADELE: The Czechs took it over, and I was born in Czechoslovakia, but it's occupied. It's not Prague, like **real** Czechoslovakia. And after, let's see. I don't know when they went out, '38, '39, all the bad times, so they moved out, and we were Hungarians, we were Russians, we were Germans. Every time, and my father had a store with all these

machineries. Every time some other people came in, they had to take off the sign. Change three, four times. So it was such a mix-up.

INT: It's very confusing. You didn't know what you were.

ADELE: It's very, very...

INT: So what languages were you speaking at home? Yiddish at all?

ADELE: Yiddish and Hungarian. I speak Yiddish, Hungarian, Hebrew and English.

INT: What about Czech? Did you ever learn Czech?

ADELE: No, I went to Hebrew school. We didn't learn too much Czech.

INT: So what were the kids in the street talking?

ADELE: Hungarian.

INT: Okay, everybody was speaking Hungarian.

ADELE: Mm-hm, or Jewish.

INT: Okay. Anything else you can tell me about your childhood that you remember? Any earliest memories?

ADELE: It's not much to remember. It's always the same thing.

INT: It was a very stable life? It was always the same?

ADELE: No, very hard times. I had to come back from school. I couldn't continue. And then came the time we had to wear the yellow star.

INT: Right. But before the war. I'm just talking about before the war now.

ADELE: No, nothing special.

INT: Nothing sticks out in your mind that you want to...

ADELE: Nothing special.

INT: What about your parents' relationship? How did you see their marriage? Do you think it was a good marriage?

ADELE: It was a good marriage, except when my mother was very upset all the time. Cried plenty. And she find about five years later that her mother died, and her father died right after the war.

INT: So she never saw them again. Did she...show her, did she express herself in any other ways? Was she angry, would she get upset? How would you deal with that?

ADELE: Well, we felt sorry for her. I mean, we understood it. And there was a time, like I say, they took away my father's license. We had very little to live on. So we had packages from America. And my family wasn't rich, either. So they sent us clothing and money. My grandfather sent for the grandchildren. She had hard times. Many hard, plenty hard times.

INT: Did you have responsibilities in your house?

ADELE: Well, we used to help.

INT: What did you used to have to do?

ADELE: In the house. In the house.

INT: You used to help in the kitchen?

ADELE: We washed dishes, or gardening. We had a garden, I used to love gardening. I still like gardening.

INT: Yeah, so do I. What about Shabbas and Yom Tov? What was that like?

ADELE: Oh, Yom Tov was strictly Shabbas. My mother went to shul, and we had a shaygetz come in and make the fire to warm the, you know, there was no other way. Everybody did the same thing. Everybody did the same thing.

INT: Your father was also observant? Religious?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. In fact, they didn't send him to school, because his parents were so religious.

INT: But he stayed religious?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. Everybody stayed like that.

INT: Well, not everybody.

ADELE: Until '44, most everybody. After the war is a different story.

INT: Right. Okay. How did you start to hear that things, how did things start to go bad for you in your town? What year was it, and how did you know that a change was coming with Hitler?

ADELE: Like I say, I had to quit school. I had to come home.

INT: You had to quit school. What year was that?

ADELE: It must have been '40. It's so hard to remember dates. It must have been '40.

INT: 1940. Was Czechoslovakia occupied yet by the Germans?

ADELE: They were already out. Then came the Hungarians, then came Russians, then came Germans. Sometimes in a year twice. (laughs)

INT: In 1939?

ADELE: Well, after '39, you know, it got bad. And a lot of changes. A lot of changes.

INT: So tell me how it affected you. Tell me what happened to you during the war.

ADELE: During the war?

INT: Well, first you had to leave school. What was that like? They told you you couldn't go to school anymore?

ADELE: I couldn't get to the town. You had to come home if you lived somewhere else. And then my father, see, my father's parents were very religious, and didn't want him to come to America. But then when the situation got bad, let's say, '42, '43, my father decided to work on the papers for the whole family. And he went to Prague, he went here and there. And it would be another maybe four, five, six months, we would be here. They closed the whole thing. So my mother was corresponding with her family, they told her to see that the children should learn a trade. So my sister went to learn corsets and brassieres, because you couldn't buy ready-made. There was no ready-made stuff in Europe. You had to make your own. So I went for dressmaking.

INT: Where did you go?

ADELE: To a lady. In town there were private people.

INT: That did dressmaking or whatever.

ADELE: Yeah. So my father sent me there, and he paid for me to learn it in six months, because otherwise it would take two years, and they sent you there, and help in the house. So he didn't want that. So in six months I learned it. So...

INT: And your sister was learning the corsets.

ADELE: Yeah, and my younger sister didn't learn. She was young.

INT: How old was your other sister?

ADELE: Well, I was 21 in the ghetto. So she was eighteen or nineteen.

INT: Okay, so wait a minute. You had to leave school at fifteen, and that was 1939 or 1940?

ADELE: Yeah. No, no. It's, when did Hitler come in, '38?

INT: Oh, he came in '38 already.

ADELE: See, that town, Munkács, was occupied before we were, so you had to come home.

INT: I see. Okay. And once you were home, then your father decided to get you into a trade.

ADELE: You can't go back. I mean, they...it was just...like finished. You couldn't go back. It changed.

INT: How did you understand that? How did you understand it, that now you can't go to school anymore? Now you have to do something else?

ADELE: I guess I just took it from then on.

INT: Did your parents talk to you about it?

ADELE: No. They don't talk too much in Europe. It's just, we see the situation.

INT: But how did you deal with that?

ADELE: So I heard what my family wrote from America, that we should learn something, so I went for dressmaking, because I always liked it as a child. And they came handy. I used to sew those yellow stars. Sold it, because you couldn't walk on the street without it.

INT: So you were fifteen years old, and you were learning dressmaking with a woman in the town. Your sister's somewhere else learning something else. And the other children are home. They can't go to school either, anymore? They closed the Jewish school?

ADELE: No, the Gentile schools were open, and they went to Gentile [school]. But my school, Hebrew school, closed.

INT: Your Hebrew school closed.

ADELE: Yeah, especially....

INT: And the Gymnasium school.

ADELE: Yeah. They only had up to six or seven or eighth grade, and that was it. So I went to Munkács. I got into third grade of Gymnasium.

INT: Okay, you were up to third grade.

ADELE: And then I had to come home.

INT: Okay. And the reason was because everybody had to go back to their town where they were born.

ADELE: Mm-hm.

INT: Okay. So what happened? So you worked with this woman as a...

ADELE: For six months I learned it. And then I did my own sewing to make a few dollars.

INT: Okay. And what was your father doing? Was he able to keep his job?

ADELE: There wasn't a job. He worked for himself. But they took away the license, so it was hard.

INT: So were the Germans occupying at this time your town, or not?

ADELE: We were Germans, we were Russian, we were, you name it. A year, it could change twice.

INT: And your parents were trying to get out. They were in contact with your American family?

ADELE: You couldn't get out no more. Yeah, my father started to work on the papers, but then in maybe '43 they closed it, because '44 we went in the ghetto already. So they closed it. Just maybe pretty close. He had almost all the papers.

INT: All right. So then what happened? After you were working for this woman?

ADELE: I was dressmaking, I became a dressmaker myself. And my mother had a sewing machine, and she was helping me, because she was a dressmaker, too, and that's how they survived. For four years my grandparents couldn't send nothing home, because '14 through 1918. So that's how they survived, on my mother's hard work [during the First World War]. And she was very successful, with all kinds of dresses, gowns. They bought flour and potatoes. That's how they survived for four years. So I guess it's...

INT: You have it in your blood, sort of.

ADELE: Yeah. Anyway, since I was a little girl.

INT: And you enjoy it.

ADELE: Mm-hm. I still do.

INT: Okay. So you were doing that during the war. And what about food, getting food, was it difficult to do that?

ADELE: Didn't have the money. We had a garden, luckily, we had a little vegetables.

INT: But meat and...

ADELE: It was very hard. Very hard. It was a struggle.

INT: But there were no soldiers? There were soldiers in your town, but they were changing all the time?

ADELE: No, we didn't see them. And you know the police, it was your enemy. With a big gun, with a big knife on the bottom. Oh, they were especially, when these Hungarian soldiers, they were the **meanest**.

INT: What were they called? Was there a special name for them?

ADELE: Just soldiers. Oh, they were mean. Even through the war, too. These young ones, they were really bad. So in 1944 we went to the ghetto. It was Pesach. And I remember my mother left everything on the table, and they told us to take just a small package.

INT: They came to your door and told you this, or what?

ADELE: You know how they do it in Europe? There's no telephone, no nothing. So little streets, like little side streets. The men came with their drum, and when you hear the drum, that means news. You run out to listen to him. And he announced it, that take a little package and stay in front of your house. So we went to the ghetto. And we were there...

INT: The ghetto was in the town, or another town?

ADELE: In the town. They took one, they made empty two or three streets, and the people had to go out from there.

INT: You had a house before that time?

ADELE: Yes. Yes. So like a house like that, they put in about ten, fifteen families.

INT: What did you take with you, do you remember?

ADELE: Probably a few clothing, that's all. Not much to take.

INT: And how old were you now?

ADELE: Well, it was in '44. I was 20. Yeah. I was...

INT: And how old was your youngest sibling at that point?

ADELE: Nine. And thirteen. So they went on the left side. My father went to work. My father went to work, and somebody saw him in January in 1945, and disappeared. Who knows where he died, on the street like a dog or something. Nobody knows. My mother went right on the left side. And she was young.

INT: Tell me about the ghetto. What happened?

ADELE: It was terrible. We slept on the floor for about, I would say seven weeks, from Pesach to Shavuos. And they gave something, a little food. It just, a struggle.

INT: And there were many other families with you.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Did you know these people?

ADELE: Yeah, I knew a lot, because they left a section where my girlfriend lived, and when they took these few streets, and whoever lived there, they left them there. But then they added people. Instead of five, there were twenty-five, or thirty. We slept on the floor. And then six weeks later, we went to Auschwitz. And it was Friday night, I remember, in a wagon, in a freight train, sitting on the floor, jammed. And my mother cried, because she couldn't bentsch licht. It was Friday night. And we got to Auschwitz, and we three girls went to the right. We got to Auschwitz. We went to a room.

INT: Did you know what was happening with your...

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

ADELE: We had no idea there was an Auschwitz. "You're going to see each other soon." Of course, we never did.

So we got to Auschwitz. So they told us...

INT: Did you know what Auschwitz was? Did you ever hear of it?

ADELE: No. No. And they told us to drop everything, just leave your shoes on. After that they cut off our hair and gave us clothing. Just throw it. Fits, or no fits, that's it. And we were always together, the three sisters. Unfortunately, we went, we got very hard work. We were working on a field, summer in the heat, and winter like today. You hold your shovel, but you couldn't do nothing. We were...we were working on those, I don't know how you call it, those things that the soldiers run. Deep.

INT: Trenches?

ADELE: Something, that when they run, they shouldn't see them. You know. And they took us every day.

INT: So you had to dig and make the, you had to dig?

ADELE: Yeah, we have to dig and make it that narrow and deep.

INT: Right. So it was very hard work.

ADELE: The work is not so hard, but the weather, in a day like today, you couldn't do nothing, but we had to stay there and dance from cold, it was so bitter cold.

INT: What did you have to wear?

ADELE: They gave me, I had a little black thin dress, and then they gave me a thin coat. They didn't see if it fits or not fits. So we were freezing. Ah! Then we came back to a wooden barrack, a wooden, and the bottom straw and the top straw, and just wood. So it was cold. It was bitter cold, it was no heat. So we three sisters, every night, a different one was sleeping in the center, because it's warmer there. We were afraid to take off your shoes, somebody might even take it away. So it's...unbelievable.

INT: And you got into Auschwitz in 1944? In the summer?

ADELE: I got there Shavuot. I remember, because I got to the barrack in Auschwitz, Birkenau, and I said, "Today is the first day Shavuot, and the first day I'm eating treif." So I remember. That's how I know the yearzeit. That's what I keep.

INT: That's what you keep, the yahrzeit for your mother?

ADELE: Yeah, because I know my mother died that day, and my two brothers died that day.

INT: You know that for a fact?

ADELE: Yeah. Because they went on the left side. And I wasn't there more than about six weeks, and we went to work. I was picked to go to work, on the field. Some people worked in a factory, it was easier.

INT: What did you do during those six weeks, before they put you outside?

ADELE: Nothing. Sit on, you know, you're seeing in Washington those beds there? Sit there. And you have to go to the bathroom, you stay in line. That's all. There was nothing else to do. And Tzelappel every morning. You have to get out. They were counting us.

INT: What time would they wake you up?

ADELE: In the morning.

INT: What about food?

ADELE: They gave us whatever they gave. You know, they had to feed you a little bit. But you couldn't go too far with that food.

INT: Well, what were you and your sisters thinking and feeling at this point? I mean...

ADELE: You know, you're numb. You just, they say, "Stay here," you stay. "Do this," do this. We never experienced something like that. So I don't know.

INT: From the very beginning...

ADELE: And we were young. When you're young, you have no fear.

INT: You weren't afraid?

ADELE: There was nothing else to do. What else can you do? You have to obey the rules and regulations.

INT: But I'm trying to understand how you were feeling then, and were you able to talk to each other about what was happening?

ADELE: Like I say, there was nothing to say. We just kept seeing what are they doing with us. That's all.

INT: Did you know yet what this place was?

ADELE: I never heard about it.

INT: Did you know that it was a death camp, or that your mother had been killed? You still didn't know what happened to them?

ADELE: There was no radio, no news. I mean, you didn't hear these things.

INT: Maybe the other inmates who had been there longer?

ADELE: No, they never came back. Nobody came back. Nobody came back.

INT: I see. So you weren't there with people that had been there for a longer time. You were in there...

ADELE: Oh, from Czechoslovakia people were there, but they probably went to work after that.

INT: So you had no older inmates to tell you...

ADELE: No. They had to make room for us. They had to make room for us.

INT: So you were ignorant of what was happening there.

ADELE: We were just numb. You know, young, you...

INT: Did you see the crematoria, or did you see, you didn't know any of that?

ADELE: No, I didn't see it. No.

INT: All right, so you don't know what happened to your mother or your brothers at this point, and you were there with your two sisters. So how did you get through that time? Did you comfort each other, or what did you talk about?

ADELE: There was nothing. (laughs) You know, funny. There was no bathroom, so people went outside. And people always came in with something. "Oh, I saw the star. That means it's going to get better." They always came with some kind of a story. I don't know where they got it. So that kept us alive. "Oh, that should be nice, because this star is showing something."

INT: So it was a sign or something?

ADELE: So (laughs) we were hoping.

INT: So you had hope to get out.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: And your father, where was your father?

ADELE: I heard he was still alive in January. He went to work.

INT: In Auschwitz, also?

ADELE: Yeah. He went...

INT: He went with you on the transport.

ADELE: See, the men had a separate line, and the women. So he went to the right side, he was a young man. He was 49. He went to the right side. But somebody saw him in January, and I never heard nothing. A lot of people died after the war, too.

INT: Right. But you don't know. So in January of 1945 he was alive, and that's the last anybody saw him.

ADELE: That's right.

INT: So you don't know what happened to your father.

ADELE: I have no idea. No idea.

INT: Did you try to find out after the war?

ADELE: Well, see, my two sisters, after the war I was very sick. I was the sickest. I was...very bad. And all three of us were in the hospital with typhus and all kinds, but I was in bad shape. So they left after a week, whatever, they got better. So they went to Bucharest, all they see is at the Joint, the Jewish organization, was helping them. So they tried to find things out, but they couldn't find nothing. So I stayed in the hospital till September. I was very, very sick.

INT: Well, before we get to that, I'm sorry, could we go back to, there were the six weeks where you were staying, you weren't doing anything, and then after the six weeks they put you in the fields to work. So how long were you doing that, and what was that like?

ADELE: Till the liberation.

INT: You did it all that time?

ADELE: Mm-hm.

INT: So how long was that? About a year?

ADELE: Well, shall I say about two months before the liberation, the Russians were coming close, so they were marching us. They took us, we were marching for about two weeks, from morning till night. We came to a different little town. And there I went to work, too, until I couldn't do anything. So that's where I was liberated, in Praust.

INT: Where was that?

ADELE: In Poland.

INT: How do you spell that?

ADELE: I would say, P-r-a-u-s-t. Praust.

INT: They were taking you east, or they were taking you west?

ADELE: That I don't know, these directions. But we were marching, running away from the Russians.

INT: So you weren't liberated in Auschwitz, you were in Praust.

ADELE: In Praust, by the Russians.

INT: Can you tell me anything about that year in Auschwitz? What it was like, any stories that you remember? People that you met there?

ADELE: I was there just six weeks. I don't even have a tattoo. I don't have a number.

INT: So where were you in the field? Where was this field? This wasn't in Auschwitz?

ADELE: Well, they took us from place to place.

INT: I see. Okay.

ADELE: Place to place. When we finished the work there, they took us to another place.

INT: I see. Was this near Auschwitz? Was it around, you're not sure where it was.

ADELE: I have no idea.

INT: How did you get there? Did you have to walk?

ADELE: Oh, a lot of walking. A lot of walking.

INT: Oh, I see. So you were in Auschwitz for six weeks. The rest of the time you were doing various slave labor in place to place. And where were you sleeping? Were there barracks there, or was there some place to...?

ADELE: Barracks, or in a stable as we were marching.

INT: And how did you manage to all stay together?

ADELE: It was hard. It was hard, because every time you marched, you were the last one, they shoot you. So always someone was looking, "Oh, we'd better pick up speed. We're almost the last one." Run to the front. Somehow we survived.

INT: Was there any time when it looked like you could be separated?

ADELE: No. No. We were able the same age, same height, almost, you know.

INT: Was any one of you stronger, as far as, I don't know, maybe courage, or physical strength? Was anyone helping the other?

ADELE: No, it seems that we were the same. Well, we helped one another, like I say. But we were about the same situation. Same strength. Same health.

INT: And you said you were very sick.

ADELE: I was after the war. We all had typhus, but I was, must have pneumonia, G-d knows what I had. And then they took me from Praust, I was in that hospital for a while, but I was very sick. They took me to Danzig, that's Poland, big hospital. And I was together with three other girls. Two other girls. One was pretty good, the other one was very sick. And there was a nice Jewish doctor there. And then there was a Russian woman doctor, that was very nice. And one day the doctor comes in and he says, "These two girls are going to a different place." And I was crying terrible. That's all I had, and they're taking her away. I said, "I want to go with them." So the doctor says to me, "You don't want to go there. Because she won't survive." So I had a hard time after that. Very hard.

INT: That was sad for you.

ADELE: I was all by myself.

INT: Where were your sisters? What happened to your sisters?

ADELE: My sister went home to look in our town, and then they went to Romania. You see, in those days, organizations were organizing things that should help these refugees. So in Bucharest was an office, and most people went there. And they got some

money, and they get some help. And information. And then my sister went back to Sevlus. And I came back in about September. And where am I going? I'm going home.

INT: But were your sisters in touch with you? They knew where you were? They didn't know what hospital you were in?

ADELE: No! No. There was no such a thing. I didn't know where **they** are.

INT: So how did you get separated? Please explain that.

ADELE: I remained in the hospital, and they left.

INT: And they just left.

ADELE: Yeah, and they took them out, and I don't know. And they went home, and from there they went to Romania, and wherever.

INT: Did you know they were going to go home? You didn't know. They just left. That must have been very frightening.

ADELE: Yeah. I was so sick, I just...I thought I was sunburned. I had no blood in me. I couldn't eat. I just...I was the worst. I was the worst.

INT: You had typhus and...

ADELE: And probably pneumonia, because they put, you know, in Europe I had, they called it bankus. It's little glasses, you put a flame, and you stick it. To take the pain out. That was to take the pain out. So then I get to myself, and I said, "I'm going home." Where else? And my sister, the oldest sister, she died three years ago. She didn't want to go nowhere. She said, "I know Adele will come home, we'll wait for her." So she waited.

INT: So they waited in the town for you.

ADELE: Mm-hm.

INT: So what made you decide to go home? How did you...

ADELE: Where else can I go? I don't know where to go.

INT: It made sense to go home.

ADELE: I didn't know where to go. There was no telephone, no radio, no news, I don't know. I'm going home.

INT: So what happened when you got home?

ADELE: I found my two sisters. So by that time, people were starting to leave. Because there was no future there. So...

INT: What happened to your house? Was your house still there?

ADELE: To the house, I'll tell you. When we, we had to cross the border, you needed papers already. Before it was open. So my younger sister went to a certain city to get the stamps. She came back with only two papers. So my oldest sister told me that she started to go with a boy already, so she didn't mind staying. So she got back the house. She got married there, she got the house. And my sister and I left.

INT: Which sister? Which sister got married?

ADELE: The older, no the younger one got married.

INT: What was her name?

ADELE: Lily.

INT: Lily. And who did she marry?

ADELE: Somebody from the same town. They're in Israel, now.

INT: And they had the house.

ADELE: It took them a long time till they got it back, but they got it back.

INT: And everything was still in it? Your possessions?

ADELE: No!

INT: Your possessions. Did you have photographs?

ADELE: Somebody was living there already. Oh, no.

INT: What about photographs, pictures?

ADELE: What I have, I have because my family was here in America. My mother used to send the pictures. That was the only way.

INT: Oh. You had nothing from Europe. Just what your mother sent here.

ADELE: Yeah. I have when I was a little child. I have downstairs pictures.

INT: How did you get that picture?

ADELE: My aunt gave it to me. My aunt, because my mother always sent pictures from the grandchildren, from the family pictures. You know.

INT: Good she did.

ADELE: Yeah, she had her father here, her sisters and brothers. So that's what I had. That's what I have.

INT: All right. So Lily got married, and she decided to stay there, or go to Israel?

ADELE: No, she lived there for about twenty years.

INT: Twenty years in Romania? In Czechoslovakia?

ADELE: No, that was already Russia then. And in fact...

INT: Oh, after the war it was Russia.

ADELE: Now it's real Russia. Russian money. Not occupied. It's real Russia now. Because I was there in 1969, I went back there.

INT: Why did she decide to stay there?

ADELE: Well, like I say, she met this man. He was a big communist. Jewish boy. And he didn't want to leave. And she didn't have a paper, because we only, she only got a stamp on two papers. So in the meantime she stayed and got married. And he was a big communist, he didn't want to leave. But once she said they decided to go through channels, or they almost got killed. They almost caught them.

INT: They tried to sneak out.

ADELE: Mm-hm. They almost caught them.

INT: Did Lily ever have children?

ADELE: She has two children.

INT: So what happened to her in the end? She got out and went to Israel?

ADELE: Twenty years ago already they let them out. It was legal.

INT: What year? 1974.

ADELE: About twenty years ago.

INT: And she had two children. A boy and a girl?

ADELE: Yeah, a girl and a boy. They're married. They are in Israel. I was there last year.

INT: And where does she live in Israel?

ADELE: Kiryat Gat.

INT: Is near...

ADELE: It's not far from Tel Aviv.

INT: Okay. So Lily got married, and you and your other sister, her name was...

ADELE: Irene.

INT: Irene. What did you do?

ADELE: We heard that we have cousins came back and went to Karlsbad in Czechoslovakia. And you know, the Germans ran away, so they gave these homes for refugees, the apartments. So my cousin got an apartment, and Irene knew about it, so we went straight there. We were there maybe, not even a year. And...

INT: How were you feeling at this point?

ADELE: I felt better, but I still, you know, still on the weak side, but I felt better. And then they gave them, my cousin got this apartment, but they all made black business, you know, to make a little money. So the Czechs, they said that you must have a working paper. You must have a sign on the door, somebody is working. So they picked me, because I had a trade. So my cousin says to me, "You don't have to go for the money. Just give me the paper. Get the paper." So I went to a dressmaking shop, and I told them, I says, "Look, I just came back. I'm very weak, I'm sick. But I don't have money. I must work. I can't work more than two days." So that's how I got the paper.

INT: I see.

ADELE: But we weren't there too long, because even there, it was just temporary. So we didn't know what to do with my sister. Go to Israel, go to America. America, we had all the family. So we decided we want to go to America. So from Czechoslovakia they smuggled us to Germany.

INT: Who smuggled you?

ADELE: People, they organized. Because you had to leave Czechoslovakia. There was no future for the Jewish people. So we went to Germany. I was there two and a half years.

INT: How did you feel about going to Germany after the war?

ADELE: Well, but there was an organization, you know, the UNRA? They supported us.

INT: Are they the ones that snuck you out, snuck you over the border, or was that like the Bricha?

ADELE: Yeah, like Jewish organizations, you know.

INT: Okay. Underground.

ADELE: So they took us there, and there was a lot of camps in Germany. Bamberg, and Dussendorf. You know, a lot of them.

INT: Which one were you in?

ADELE: Bamberg.

INT: How do you spell it?

ADELE: B-a-m-b-e-r-g. Bamberg.

INT: Near?

ADELE: Not far from Munchen. It took about four, five hours to Munchen by train. So we got there.

INT: What was that like?

ADELE: There was a big stable. They painted it and put paper walls, and two beds. My sister remembered some address. My grandfather's: Sam Green, Easton, America. Easton, America. But I'll tell you, the mailmen were very, very nice. There are about three Eastons in America. PA and whatever. And they sent the letter from Easton to Easton, so they found Easton, Pennsylvania. And we addressed it to my grandfather, Sam Green. So the mailman remembered Sam Green. But my grandfather was dead already, and he lived with his daughter. And the daughter moved a few blocks down.

INT: And the mailman remembered. He knew.

ADELE: And he rang the bell, and said, "Millie, do you know somebody by the name of Bleier?" So she thought it's her sister. "Sure." So she got a letter, called up her brother,

had two brothers and a sister living in Easton and two here. So you know what? We got a telegram right away with the correct address. We were there two and a half years. They supported us. They sent us money. And we were the only one in...

INT: Why were you there so long? They couldn't get you out sooner?

ADELE: Because there was quotas. They can only so many come to America. We had to wait.

INT: You had to wait for your number to come up, or whatever?

ADELE: Well, I knew someone. I have two problems. We knew someone in the office. And they helped us a little bit. But then when we got the papers to come to America, you have to go to Munchen and have an x-ray done. And my lung didn't, they didn't like the sign that I had pneumonia. So they threw me back for a year. And my sister cried terrible. "I'm not leaving you. I'm not leaving you." And somehow, some man told me what to do. And when we were on the boat, we were the only ones had a telegram from my uncle. "We're all waiting for you." All six of them. Three aunts waited at the boat.

INT: Well, wait a minute. When they told you you had to wait another year, did your sister stay with you for that year?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Oh, she did. She wouldn't leave you.

ADELE: She would not leave me.

INT: You're very close with that sister?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. She died three years ago. I miss her terrible.

INT: What was the age difference between you?

ADELE: Eleven months.

INT: Oh, my gosh. You're very close.

ADELE: Eleven months. She was a wonderful sister.

INT: What was she like?

ADELE: Resembles me a little bit. She was a wonderful person. Wonderful. And you know, she had a hard time, too. She got married. She had two children, one five, one eight. And her husband died suddenly. So I had six children in my house every summer for ten years. Four of mine, and two of hers.

INT: Took her children in.

ADELE: But we got along very nice. Wonderful. She was my second mother to my children. I had nobody. Every time I came home from the hospital with a baby, nobody helped me.

INT: Did she help you? Would she come?

ADELE: No, because she had a baby, too, that time. I could never help her, too. And now before she died, he was very, very sick, and I was really upset. I could never leave the house to go to be her, because we had a store. And the children. I could never help her for a minute. It was very hard. So she used to come to me.

INT: So what happened when you got to America? Did everyone come to meet you?

ADELE: I came to America, and I went to Easton, I was there. I came October 3rd.

INT: Did anyone meet you at the harbor?

ADELE: Like I say, we got a telegram in the boat that “we are waiting for you at the pier.” And everybody was there. All my uncles and aunts, all of them were there. And I went to Easton for about two months, and it's a small town. So we moved to New York and went to work. S. Klein? Remember S. Klein in New York? I was in the better dress department. Not piece work, but the better made to order. That's where I worked until I got married. And then I moved to Philadelphia. I met my husband here in Philadelphia.

INT: Was your husband a survivor?

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Oh, he was. So how did you meet him?

ADELE: Someone introduced me.

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Adele Mermelstein. And it's April 24th, 1996.

The last time we spoke, we sort of had an overview of your life up through the end of the war, up till liberation and when you met your husband. And now I'd like to go back and ask you some specific questions to get a better picture of your life before the war, and the people in your family.

I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit more about your parents and their personalities and what they were like, and your relationship with them. What was your relationship like with your mother and with your father?

ADELE: The best. There was no other way. In Europe there was no other way.

INT: But some people didn't have such good relationships with their parents.

ADELE: Never had trouble. Never had trouble. Never. Never.

INT: And with the siblings, the same thing?

ADELE: Never had trouble, never. I mean, we knew what we have to do, and we used to help my mother. We had a garden, we were gardening. I mean, we had no trouble. My mother, they were not the fighting type, or loud. Sometimes we got a smack for something if we didn't come home in time or something, (laughs) but that was normal.

INT: Who would you say would be the disciplinarian in the family? Your father or your mother? Who would be the one?

ADELE: My father was, you know, those days they were not educated too much. But my father's parents were very religious. They wouldn't let him go to school. But he was self-educated. He learned another language. He learned the typewriter, and he was very intelligent. Lately, first he struggled a lot, because whatever he did, he couldn't make money. But at the end he was working for a very big company, these machineries that the farmers [used]. So he learned a lot of things there, and he picked up another language. He was self-educated. My mother was still the same.

INT: But who was the one who would discipline the kids if you got into trouble?

ADELE: Well, we really didn't get into trouble. If I happened to be on the street, and I saw something, came home a little later, so my mother yelled at me. Not late, but I wasn't home, I don't know what she wanted me to do, (laughs) but nothing major.

INT: Do you remember anything about their relationship? Was affection expressed between them?

ADELE: Well, I understand that my mother was a little upset because she had nobody. She lived with my father's family.

INT: Oh, she did?

ADELE: I mean, she was close to them.

INT: Not in the same house.

ADELE: No, no, no. Like his sisters and brothers, or the cousins, that was her real family. That's all she had. And everybody came to our house. I had an uncle near us, and another aunt. My mother's place was the headquarters. Because she was so good to everybody.

INT: So she was looking for another family.

ADELE: Yeah, she was really welcoming them. She always made room for everybody.

INT: So they would come and talk and have coffee?

ADELE: Oh, or sleep over. Everything. Every stop was in my mother's house. Everything. Well, my other uncle had a second wife. The other aunt lost her husband. There was different types. My mother's was an open house.

INT: Tell me a little bit about your father's family.

ADELE: My father's family, I never knew my grandparents.

INT: Right, you told me they had died.

ADELE: I never knew them. They must have died young. And there were three brothers and three sisters. It was very close. I went to his sister's like I was home.

INT: Where was your father born? In the same town?

ADELE: Sevlus, something. No, in Chape, that's a little village not far from Sevlus.

INT: How do you spell that?

ADELE: C-h-a-p-e.

INT: It was a small town?

ADELE: Yeah, I have a cousin.

INT: Nearby?

ADELE: Yeah, not far. Not far. Nothing was too far.

INT: So he had pretty many siblings. Maybe six siblings, something like that?

ADELE: Three brothers and three sisters.

INT: Okay. And they all lived around that area?

ADELE: No, Sevlus was three, and then another village and another village, but you can go with a bicycle. Or a train in 20 minutes, half an hour.

INT: Did you have a special relationship with any of those aunts and uncles on your father's side?

ADELE: Well, that's the only where I went, summertime. That was my vacation place. To this aunt, to this aunt. And some places beautiful, with the mountaintop and everything. That was our second home.

INT: Where was this?

ADELE: I mean also not far from Sevlus. Because I couldn't go to nobody in America. There was no boats, no plane, no nothing. That's why my mother never saw her family.

INT: So in the summer you would go.

ADELE: Oh, yeah.

INT: And what would you do?

ADELE: I was very skinny, so I went to my aunt. It was a beautiful (?) in the back, and a beautiful mountain. Just to gain a little weight. And what did I do there? Nothing.

INT: Ate.

ADELE: Yeah, and then my cousins. And as soon as we used to go on vacation, my father used to write, "Come home already. When are you coming home? Come home." (laughs)

INT: He missed you.

ADELE: As far as I know, I was his favorite.

INT: You said that before, your mother told you that.

ADELE: Yeah. But look, I'm the only one sent out of town [to] school. I was the only one.

INT: Why? Why you?

ADELE: I don't know. I don't know.

INT: You weren't the oldest. Irene was.

ADELE: The second one, yeah.

INT: Right. Why wasn't Irene sent, do you know?

ADELE: I don't know.

INT: Did she want to go?

ADELE: Well, when the situation was bad, and my father got a different business, and Irene used to help him in the store. I used to help, too, but she was the oldest. But not the time I went to school. She was in school, too. She was just eleven months older. But somehow he picked on me. I don't know.

INT: Were you smarter, do you think?

ADELE: No, no. Just, you know, every father, mother, has a little bit favorite. I'm sure you have it, too.

INT: Did you feel it? Did you feel his favoritism?

ADELE: No, not that I know. The only thing, when I was out of town and he came to visit me, I got a lot of love from him. I went to a restaurant, kosher, everything. Washing the hands, and I sat with him, watched him eat lunch. And if I wasn't home, he found me in the gym room in school. He came often to see me. I'm sure he liked all of them, everybody, but somehow, I don't know.

INT: Did you have special talks with him, do you remember?

ADELE: No, no, no.

INT: What about your sisters? Can you describe them a little bit?

ADELE: Well, there was no exceptions between sisters or brothers. We all had the same father and mother, the same...

INT: But not the same personalities.

ADELE: Well, like I say, when we got older, and the situation was bad, I used to help my father. But see, I used to learn. I told you, when '38 or '39 or '40, the situation was bad, so they wrote from America the children should learn a trade. So I went to learn sewing. And I told you my father said, "You're not going to sit two years and be her maid." So six months, I learned. And my sister learned also to make brassieres and corsets, but her line wasn't as busy as mine. So she used to help more in the store. I used to sit home and do sewing. Once in a while I used to help, too. And my younger [sister] was too young. She went to school. And I was out of school already, because I couldn't go back.

INT: Right. Do you remember any stories that could sort of explain how your sisters were, what their personalities were like? Was one more of a leader than the other?

ADELE: No, we never had trouble. To this day we never had trouble. Never. I miss my sister terrible. She was so devoted. And I told you...

INT: Irene.

ADELE: Irene, and her husband died suddenly. And her son was five years and eight years. She spent summers with me for years. Imagine, six kids in a house. My husband was never upset. Never. He treated them royal. Every summer she came.

INT: How did her husband die?

ADELE: Fell asleep in bed. But you know what they think today? Her son has the same problem. He was snoring too loud.

INT: Sleep apnea or something?

ADELE: And that could choke you. At that time they thought he had a heart attack. Now my son takes treatments, because he's a heavy snorer, too, and now he's afraid. So that's what happened. But she came to me every year. Pesach and summer for two months.

INT: How old was she when he died? She must have been young if her children were so young.

ADELE: Her oldest was eight years old. She was...late thirties. In fact, she came to my house, I couldn't have television for almost a year. As soon as she heard music, she cried. I shut it off. I never had trouble with my husband. Never had trouble. "Let them come. Let them come." When they went home he always gave them money, pocket money. He was...wonderful.

INT: We're going to get to him.

ADELE: Yeah, so I mean, I had no trouble. (Pause)

INT: So can you describe your brothers a little bit? They were small, but...

ADELE: I remember, you know, they were in cheder. In those days I didn't understand it. My mother woke them up 6:00. "Let's go, you got to go to cheder, then you have to go to school." And the poor kids could hardly get up. But I was too young to understand that that's the way it has to be done.

INT: She wasn't waking you up early to take you to cheder, huh?

ADELE: No, no, well, I went to Hebrew school anyhow.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

INT: And your parents, you think, had a happy marriage, or a good marriage?

ADELE: Yes, they do. Like I say, I think my mother was a little bit on the upset side. So you can understand that. Never saw nobody. Saturday night we used to go out on the street in Europe, after Shalosh Seudos you went for walks. Up and down, people walking up and down. My mother stayed home. When we came home, in the dark we find her crying. Crying. She couldn't go and visit nobody. That's why I say I'm very upset about my family. How could they **do** that to her? I told my aunt.

INT: Okay. Who made the decisions in the family, do you think? Your mother or your father, or both of them together?

ADELE: Well, my father was the businessman. And there was not much decision to do. I remember, we bought a house, and that's where I remember living, through all my life. So there was no decision. As far as business, it was my father.

INT: What about with the children? You know, decisions about going to school, for instance. To send you away to Munkács. Was that your father's decision or your mother's?

ADELE: It's not like here. It's the city, you go to the school that's in the city.

INT: Oh, okay. But they decided to send you, not your sisters.

ADELE: Well, I'll tell you why. My father was a Zionist. He was a Zionist. And like I say, somehow he must have favored me or something, or maybe Irene didn't want to go. I don't know. I really don't know.

INT: And this was a Zionist school?

ADELE: No, it was a regular Hebrew school. But he was a Zionist.

INT: So he wanted you to learn Hebrew.

ADELE: Yeah. And my sister learned Hebrew, too. We had a little public school in Sevlus. So both of them went to Hebrew school, and my other sister. But he sent me to higher grades.

INT: Did he want to go to Israel to live?

ADELE: At that time, no. At that time, who wanted to go to Israel?

INT: Well, if he was a Zionist, I thought maybe he wanted to go.

ADELE: Well, he was on the side that he believed in the Hebrew language. But there was no way of going nowhere. He didn't want to go to America, either. Or it was too late. Well, it would be another two months, we would be here.

INT: Yeah. He was trying. He was working on the papers.

ADELE: Yes, and then they closed the quota.

INT: Now you were saying that you didn't really experience any anti-Semitism that you can remember as a child. That you had pretty okay relations with the non-Jews in the town. Is that true?

ADELE: Well, I'll tell you, because 80% were Jews.

INT: Right. It was the majority -- vast majority.

ADELE: Yeah. On the block was one Gentile. So we had no trouble.

INT: So no problem, because there weren't any.

ADELE: Shuls, one after the other. A more religious shul with a shtreimel, with a beard, you know. But there was not too many. Not too many. You should see Saturday. The streets were deserted. All the stores were closed. 90% stores were closed. So...

INT: So because you were a majority, maybe, there wasn't.

ADELE: Yeah, it's a different situation. It's a different situation.

INT: Now when 1939 came, or 1938, whenever the war started for you, were your parents talking to you kids about the changes that were happening, and was there any talk about leaving Czechoslovakia?

ADELE: There was nowhere to go.

INT: Yeah, you couldn't get out.

ADELE: There was nowhere to go.

INT: But you had family in America.

ADELE: Yeah, but there was no quota. Like I say, my father went to Prague a few times, he gathered every paper. And we were just almost ready to go, they closed

everything. It was what, '38, '39? There was nowhere to go. Wherever you went, the same thing, the situation with the Jewish people.

INT: So I wanted to understand, in 1939, who came into Czechoslovakia? The Germans first? Or the Russians?

ADELE: First came in the Hungarians.

INT: Okay. In '39.

ADELE: The Hungarians. And that's when I had to go home, I think.

INT: Right. You had to leave Munkács then.

ADELE: Yeah. And then for a while, like I told you, we had a store. We had to take off the signs right away. And then after a little bit, I think the Russians came in and the Germans came in. It was such a change overnight.

INT: How were you dealing with that? Do you remember?

ADELE: When you're young you have no fear.

INT: You weren't afraid?

ADELE: When I'm young, all I had to do is, I'm young, and the mind wasn't on other things than the youth.

INT: Well, what about your parents? Your parents must have been worried.

ADELE: Well, I don't know. But see, the thing is, everybody was in the same situation. Everybody was the same situation.

INT: And you didn't know they were going to kill the Jews yet.

ADELE: I had no idea. No idea. And during the war, there were no streetlights. We had to put stuff, cover the window, because they didn't want to know, the enemies, that it's a city. I had no youth. I had no youth.

INT: Yeah, you couldn't go out and be with your friends.

ADELE: Not at night. Mm-mm.

INT: It was like a curfew.

ADELE: Yeah. Not a curfew, but it was dark. It was dark, so where are you going to go? It was a different world.

INT: This was from when you were about fifteen, right? This all started to happen?

ADELE: Fifteen, sixteen, yeah. And then, when I was about seventeen, like I say, that's when my father was almost started a paper, so they wrote we should learn a trade. So I went to learn. And then I sat down and was working in the house.

INT: And your father still had a business at that point?

ADELE: (laughs) My father, they took every license away.

INT: What year, do you remember?

ADELE: I would say in about 1940.

INT: Still the Hungarians.

ADELE: Yeah. G-d knows what it was. It was changed so many times, I don't even remember. So here he has five children. Luckily he had a very good business before, so he put away a few dollars. But that goes fast. So it took away almost all the Jews, the license. And you know what happened? A very old man that he was old already, when he was young. He got it back for a delicatessen store. So I don't know how, my father got to him, and he paid for it, and he made the man sit in the store, and if G-d forbid, anyone comes in, it's his store, it's not my father's. That's to make a dollar, to make a little living. So it was a delicatessen store. And my mother used to bake some cakes, whatever he should sell. We were struggling. We were struggling.

INT: And you were helping with the sewing, right, at that point?

ADELE: Yeah, I was sewing. And my sister, Irene was in the store. She helped. And...

INT: And the little ones were...

ADELE: The little ones went to school. The boys went to cheder, and the younger one, she was...three years younger than Irene.

INT: So is there anything else you can tell us up until, during those years, up until about 1944, I think you told me, when the ghetto, when you went to the ghetto?

ADELE: It was the same thing. It was just routine, the same thing, struggle. My father hardly made a living. Because...it's not a free country like here. You know, they just started to have a factory in Sevlus, a tobacco factory, and the women used to get up 5:00 and walk, I don't know how many miles, because there was no job opportunities.

INT: You said that. There was nothing to do there.

ADELE: No. What? There were no factories, no nothing. So this one opened, I remember, a widow. She used to get up real early and go to work. It's nothing. It's not like here, you know.

INT: Did you have any special friends then, when you were a teenager?

ADELE: Well, I had, my good friend was my first cousin. And I have a very good friend, she's in New York. We three of us, we were always together.

INT: When you were young.

ADELE: Yeah. My other girlfriend is in New York.

INT: And what were their names, and what were they like?

ADELE: This girlfriend in New York, her father was in America, too. And they left the mother with five children. He never came back for a visit. The mother married off two, three children, he was never here. The mother went, the father was, so the mother did go to concentration camp. She was always a sickish woman. But not there. Would you believe, she came back, she found her husband here? She lost about three children in Europe. She came back with two children. One died in New York, and one, my girlfriend, is still alive. And they both got real old, they moved to Israel. She must have been over 90 when she died. At home she was always sick.

INT: And she got back with her husband?

ADELE: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: After he left her there?

ADELE: Yeah. And she married off, and he never came home, not even for the wedding. I only remember, he came home not even for a visit.

INT: What was your friend's name?

ADELE: Henchy.

INT: Henchy. She was a good friend.

ADELE: She's still a good friend. She's in New York.

INT: Did you go to school with her?

ADELE: No, because I went to Hebrew school. She went to regular school.

INT: And what was she like?

ADELE: Nice. We were very good friends.

INT: And who was the other one? Your cousin.

ADELE: Her name was Kuka. She was my first cousin and my second cousin. The fathers married a first cousin, first cousins. So then she was a first cousin from my father's side, and a second cousin from my mother's side. (laughs) It's really something.

INT: So you used to go there for the summers and play with her?

ADELE: No, she was also living in Sevlus.

INT: Oh, okay.

ADELE: But now I get together with her sometimes. And she used to live in Boro Park, a block away from my brother-in-law. So I always can visit her. Every time I used to go to New York, I went to visit her.

INT: Is she still alive?

ADELE: Yeah, she's in Boro Park. Yeah, she's still there.

INT: So you kept these friendships.

ADELE: Oh, yes. I correspond with her, and I talk to her, Yom Tov especially. I would love to go to New York. I have a lot of friends like from home. Not the **best** friends, but friends.

INT: They live in Brooklyn?

ADELE: Some live in Brooklyn, yeah. I would love to go once a year. I just don't feel like going by buses, by trains. But one of these days, I will.

INT: One of these days you're going to get up there. Okay. Is there anything else you can tell us before the ghetto? Any other stories?

ADELE: Like I say, the same. Life was over and over a struggle and struggle and struggle, and I see the struggling. And my mother had a garden luckily, and she had a hard time feeding the family after my father lost everything. And America used to send a few dollars for her. But they were not rich here either, and we struggled. It was a struggle.

INT: How did you get through those times? Did you have faith or a belief in G-d at those times?

ADELE: When you're young you have no fear.

INT: Yeah, you said that.

ADELE: When you're young, what? You worry about, when you were young you worry about something? You know you have a father and mother, and they worry for you.

INT: So you weren't a worrier.

ADELE: No, I mean, I was young. I was young.

INT: But some people worried, whether they were young or not.

ADELE: Well, I'm not a real, real worrier type. I take things the way they come. I have a girlfriend, she's a mess. But I try not to be like that. If I can help it, I help it. If not, I let it go.

INT: Have you always been like that, do you think?

ADELE: I think so. I think so.

INT: What about faith in G-d? Did that help you?

ADELE: Oh, there isn't a day I should walk on the street, and thank G-d for everything He helps me. Every day. I always thank Him for helping me. I said, "You're my best helper. You're watching over me," and I always ask Him to continue watching over me.

INT: But when you were a child, did you feel that way?

ADELE: Well, we were religious. I mean, there was no two ways. Shabbas is Shabbas, Yom Tov is Yom Tov, and there is no other way.

INT: You didn't really think about it so much.

ADELE: No, there was no other way. There was no other way. You know, so, it's a natural thing in Europe.

INT: I'm just trying to understand how you coped with all the changes as a child, or as a teenager.

ADELE: When you're young, you don't worry, because your parents were there.

INT: You had both your parents.

ADELE: And then I was sewing and making a little money.

INT: Didn't you want to go back to school? Didn't you miss school?

ADELE: Well, I had no choice. I had no choice. So I went, that's why I went to learn a trade. When you're young, do children worry here, when, I mean, in a good family? They have father and mother to worry for them.

INT: So tell me about the time in the ghetto. How long were you there and what was it like?

ADELE: Well, and then Pesach came. And you know, I told you. How did we get news? There was no radio. There was a man with a drum. In little streets. Used to stand on the corner. When we hear the drummer, we ran, because that's our news. So he always told us what to do and when to do, and when they came the ghetto, they took a section and fenced it off. In fact, this girlfriend in New York, her home **was** in the ghetto. So it filled up with people and people. So they told us, it was Pesach, middle of Pesach. And take just a little package, I don't know how many, just a little package, and we went to the ghetto. I was there about from Pesach to Shavuos. First day of Shavuos I got to Auschwitz. And that's where I said, first day of Shavuos, the first I'm eating treif, and that's when I have yahrzeit.

INT: Yeah. Because that's the last time you saw your mother and the little boys.

ADELE: I knew, (Yiddish) it's Shavuos. And that's when I have yahrzeit.

INT: You remember your mother and your two brothers on that date?

ADELE: Well, I remember everybody, sure. Sure.

INT: What about your father? How do you keep his yahrzeit?

ADELE: Well, I keep the same time. Because I don't know.

INT: Because you don't know when he died.

ADELE: Somebody told me they saw him in January, but I don't know nothing else. So I keep the same thing. I don't know. Sometimes I think he must have died, nebbich, like a dog, who knows where, on the street. Who knows?

INT: How did you get through those six weeks in the ghetto? What did you think was going to happen to you? You weren't getting news.

ADELE: Well, we didn't know. We had no idea. And when you're young, you don't worry.

INT: Who put you in the ghetto? The Germans or the Hungarians?

ADELE: I think it was from the Germans. There came a law. It was a law. Probably the Germans. Who would make a law like that? Who would make a law like that? And we went to, they emptied all the Gentiles, whoever lived there, even the Jews had to move. And we used to sleep on the floor, as much space on the floor, ten, fifteen people. And like I say, I had my friends there. And I was young. I just, when you're young, my father and mother were there.

INT: Mm-hm. They did the worrying for you.

ADELE: So **they** did the worrying, sure.

INT: Did they talk to you about what's going to happen?

ADELE: They didn't know themselves. How would they know? How would they know?

INT: How was your mother reacting? How was your father reacting?

ADELE: I know, I remember we were in the train. They took us Friday. And we got there Sunday. And Friday night, my mother couldn't bentsch licht. She cried like a baby. But I was, when you're young, you just...it's different. (Laughs shortly) When you get older, that's when the worry comes.

INT: But when they put you on the train...

ADELE: We had no idea.

INT: You didn't know.

ADELE: No.

INT: What did they tell you?

ADELE: We were like, you know, we went like animals. Because there were no policemen like here. Policemen were your worst enemy. How often do you see a policeman with a knife standing up? Once in a while? It's not like here. We had no phone. You don't have a radio. You look at the sun, and you can tell what time it is, how far the sun is shining.

And when we got in Auschwitz, there were Jewish boys helping, because it was a freight train, a wagon. "Oh, you'll see each other later." They were told to say. So left and right, left and right. My mother to the left, and then my two brothers left separate, the men. And my mother was young, about 49, maybe, but she had a black scarf, she looked like 80. So she went to the left, and my three sisters went to the right. So that was the last time. That was the end of it.

INT: And you didn't know, even then, what was happening to your mother, or where she was going?

ADELE: Nobody knew. How can they keep a secret like that? Because there was no radio, no nothing. No nothing.

INT: So when you were with your sisters, I think you told me that you were only in Auschwitz for like six weeks or something, and then they took you to work.

ADELE: Yes. We went to work, yes.

INT: So for those six weeks, what were you doing? What were you talking about?

ADELE: Nothing. We were like animals. Laying in those beds, if you saw in Washington, about seven, eight women. We were on the bottom, and nothing. Nothing.

INT: Were you afraid at this point? Were you worried?

ADELE: No, not when you're young.

INT: You still weren't afraid.

ADELE: First of all, you're with so many thousands of women, it's...

INT: But they took your mother away, and your brothers.

ADELE: But we didn't know. Maybe we thought we're going to see them. Now my sister Lily, we had two women taking care of us in Auschwitz, in that big barrack, you know. There was an older woman. And somehow she noticed Lily. She said, "You look just like my daughter." So she tried to give her a little food. She said, "You look just like my daughter." So she favored her. But after six weeks we left for work. That's why I don't have my number on my arm.

So from the first minute till the last, I worked on the field. Those Shitzengrabben, that the soldiers run that they shouldn't see them [trenches]. Summer in the heat, and winter in the frost. We couldn't do nothing winter, but we were standing there.

INT: So how did you get through that?

ADELE: I wonder myself. I wonder myself. But we were about 1,000 women together, so we were company for each other. You should see how they composed songs, the women. As they were working, they composed. There's always talented people. We have war songs they composed there.

INT: What kind of songs? Do you remember any of them?

ADELE: I do remember a few. And then as they were working, they said, "Oh, if my little baby should see what her mother is doing here." You know, they're reminiscing all kinds of stuff. But you still have no fear when you're young. You always hoped. (laughs) And you know, things kept you alive. There was no bathroom, so people went out on the field. I could never say nothing. I could never notice nothing. But some women [said], "I saw that star. That means we're going to be free soon." So, oh, we're hoping already. We had hope already. "These three together, that means something." So they gave us hope.

INT: The older women? Were they older women or just...

ADELE: All kinds. All kinds. But some women were good at it. One says, "I saw the star today, and I know that this is a good sign for something." So we fell for it. Yeah.

INT: And that helped you.

ADELE: Yeah, isn't that something? I could never come home, back with nothing. I didn't see nothing. But some of them were good.

INT: And that definitely helped you.

ADELE: It does. It gives us hope. Oh, maybe tomorrow. Maybe next week.

INT: Do you think being with your other two sisters helped you also, that you weren't alone totally?

ADELE: Oh, yeah, sure. Now, we were winter also in a wooden barrack. Wood at the bottom and top. Straw here and straw there. We had very little clothing. I had a very summer coat. My sisters. My sister's toe is frozen, Lily's to this day. She has no circulation. Irene's heels were frozen. So we had no, they didn't give us covers to cover yourself. So we slept together, near each other. Every night another girl slept in the middle, because it's warmer there. So every night we changed. And we covered ourselves with the three coats. We didn't have...

INT: Where was this barrack? It wasn't in Auschwitz.

ADELE: No, this is already at work. At work. Summer we were dying from the heat. Winter we were freezing. Freezing. But we had to go out.

INT: How long did this last, do you know?

ADELE: Almost a year.

INT: Okay.

ADELE: Well, I was liberated in '45, in what, April or whatever.

INT: And you were taken around Shavuot time.

ADELE: And then the Russians came very close. So they evacuated us. We started marching for two weeks to another camp. And there we were working also, not too long. Everybody got typhus. Everybody was sick like a dog.

INT: You weren't sick up to this point?

ADELE: No. And there were bunk beds. And you should see the women. The thing was, you could see them dying. So I was the sickest. We were all very, very sick. So finally, we were lucky that the Russians liberated us -- they didn't have no food for us. You remember, the American was very kind and good, and so right there was a hospital. My sister must have been there a week or two, I don't remember. But I was so sick, they left me. They left me. I looked at my body, I was black. I thought I had sunshine. I had no blood in me.

INT: Your skin was black?

ADELE: Like I told you, like sunburned, you know? I was skin and bones. So my sister left me. And then they transferred me to another hospital in Danzig, a bigger hospital. I was there till September. And we were three girls in a room. One was very sick. The other wasn't as sick. So I think it was a Jewish doctor, Russian, he was very nice. Very nice. And one day he comes in, he says, "I have to transfer these two girls to another hospital." Well, I don't have to tell you, I cried so bitter. Now I'm going to be **all** alone. But you know what he told me? He says, "You don't want to go there. She won't survive, she's very sick." So I stayed by myself.

INT: Can I ask you something? You say that now when those women were transferred out of the hospital that you cried very bitterly. Do you remember any other times during the war that you cried like that?

ADELE: Not through the war, because we were all together. I mean, nobody cried. We were always hoping. "I'm telling you, that's a sign we're going to be liberated." We had a lot of hope in us.

INT: But it was when you were alone that it got to you.

ADELE: That got me. I says, "Now, I'm..." Because we were three together, it's a little bit easier. And then I cried so hard. And he says, "I couldn't let you go there."

So I got better. And in September they released me, (laughs shortly) and I don't know where to go. I didn't hear from my sisters. I don't know...

INT: Did they tell you where they were going when they left the hospital?

ADELE: They didn't know themselves. They didn't know. They were in Romania. You know, those days they were wandering from place to place. One refugee said, "Oh, go here and go there." (laughs) I don't know where I'm going. I don't know. I know I'm going home. I'm going to Sevlus.

INT: How old were you at this point after the war?

ADELE: 22. 22. I had a long, old coat. (laughs) My hair just started to grow in, because the first thing in Auschwitz, the hair came off. We didn't recognize each other. And somehow, you know, you talk to people, get advice. And sometimes, the train was so crowded, you were standing on the outside. So I know where I'm going. I'm going home. So I asked here, I don't even remember details. So finally I got home to Sevlus. How I got home, I don't know.

INT: Were you feeling okay at this point?

ADELE: Much better. Well, it was September already. I was in the hospital since May.

INT: Did you have your strength back?

ADELE: Yes. But I was still a little bit on the sickly side. I don't think I was 100%. So my two sisters, especially Irene, was like a mother to us. She was the mother. So they were in Sevlus, and she didn't want to go nowhere. She says, "I got to wait for Adele. I don't go nowhere." So that's what happened. She lived in a cousin's house, because they all got together. They took our house away. And I remember I got off the train, with a long, old coat. I looked like a little schlep, (laughs) a little hair growing back. And I met a boy -- not too many Jews came back. And I met a boy on his bicycle, and I recognized him, and he told me where my sisters are. I said, "Go tell them I'm home." Well, I don't have to tell you. My sister cried so hard. And that's the time people started to go away from Sevlus. There was no future.

INT: Who else came back from your family?

ADELE: Cousins.

INT: What about uncles and aunts?

ADELE: No uncles.

INT: Nobody from your father's side?

ADELE: No, no, no. They all went to the left side. Not one. The children, cousins.

So we didn't know what to do. My cousins there where my sister stayed, wasn't so nice to them. And Lily already started to go with that boy that it's her husband today.

INT: He was a communist. They decided to stay.

ADELE: Yeah. Oh, he wouldn't leave. He would not leave. He was a communist in Czechoslovakia, yet, when the Czechs were there. So by that time, the border was closed already to go out. So Lily went to another city to get some papers stamped, and she always came back with two. And in the meantime, we didn't have coats, nothing. So I know how to sew. So I had a big coat. I went to a dressmaker there, a goya, and she helped me to make a small coat. I even left it to Lily. So Irene and I left. We went to Czechoslovakia.

INT: How did you feel about leaving Lily behind?

ADELE: Well, we thought she would come later. You know. I don't think she mind it too much, because Irene says she met her already. He wanted her badly. He was married before, but Lily was a very pretty girl and young, and he wanted her for his second wife.

INT: His first wife was killed?

ADELE: Yes, with a child. So in Czechoslovakia we knew these cousins were in. Irene knew everything, because they met, during the time that I wasn't home, I mean, I wasn't home, so I didn't know.

INT: She was wandering around.

ADELE: So all the refugees went to Romania, they got money there. And you know, they knew where to go. I don't know. So we got to Czechoslovakia, and he had two rooms, and we were living there about ten people. You know what happened? Then the Czechs, or the Germans, I don't know, it was such a mixed up world. They took away from the Czech-German people their homes and gave it to the Jewish people. After almost six, seven, eight, nine months, there came out a rule that you must go to work. You must have a sign on the door that is a working paper. Now, my cousins, they were making black markets, and "What shall we do?" I was a dressmaker, so my cousin says to me, "You don't have to make money. Just try to get a paper." So she showed me, you know, you're not as embarrassed, you ask people. And I came to that place, it was a dressmaking place, and I told them, I says, "I just came back from the war, and I'm sick, and I must have money. I can only work two days, because I'm sick. I want the paper." So they felt sorry for me, and they gave me two days' work, and they gave me the paper, and that's how we lived there for about, not that long. Not that long.

And then from there, people started to go to Germany to the DP camp. And from there either to Israel or to America. So we signed up for that, too. I'm telling you, I was wandering like a gypsy. So we signed up with Irene, and we came to Germany, and then we waited two and a half years to come to America.

INT: Two and a half years?

ADELE: First we couldn't find them. I didn't remember the address. My sister remembered the address. She remembered everything. I didn't remember nothing. Whenever we were talking, "Adele, you don't remember?" I said, "No, I don't." So we remember my grandfather, "Sam Green, Easton, America."

INT: You told me that story, and the mailman found him.

ADELE: Yeah, there were three Eastons. So that's how we started to correspond. They sent us money. They even sent us papers, but later my uncle, the rich gets richer, he got back the money, we came in the DP camp.

INT: Bamberg, right?

ADELE: Yeah. And I came in October 1948. But look how many places I was before.

INT: And what was it like in the DP camp?

ADELE: DP camp, well, some people had a separate room. There was once a stall where horses used to live. A stable. They cleaned it up and made paper walls, and everybody got a little space with a little closet. With a little electric oven, that's it.

INT: Was there a Jewish life there? A Jewish organized life?

ADELE: Yeah, they organized things. They danced once a week. You know, Jewish people don't sleep. They're active. And we could go in the city, too.

INT: How were you feeling at this point, now that you're in Germany?

ADELE: Well, I knew that we're coming to America, so we just had to wait.

INT: Did you feel depressed?

ADELE: No.

INT: But you knew that your mother, how did you find out?

ADELE: Well, everybody was in the same situation, how can you be depressed? There was, I don't know how many hundred people there. There was Bamberg, all kinds of cities. Every city has a DP camp.

INT: How did you hear about your mother and the boys, or you just assumed that that's what happened to them?

ADELE: Well, everybody knew already after the war what happened. They knew that left side and right side, what it meant. We knew that.

INT: But when you were in Auschwitz, you didn't know, you didn't see the crematoria?

ADELE: I had no idea, no. We were indoors all the time.

INT: Right, and then you went out to work.

ADELE: And Tzelappel in the morning, and then we went to work.

INT: So you weren't near where the crematoria were.

ADELE: Now, I didn't go to work from Auschwitz.

INT: Right.

ADELE: So I was indoors. You have to go to the bathroom, you had to line up. And you went back.

INT: So you didn't know it was a death camp.

ADELE: I had no idea. I really don't.

INT: And about your father, how did you find out that he was even seen in January 1945?

ADELE: I don't know exactly, but somebody said, like I say, they saw him somewhere. He was young.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

ADELE: G-d can give you so much strength. All the time, I wasn't even having a cold.

INT: But then you got **very** sick at the end.

ADELE: Then I got pneumonia and G-d knows what.

INT: And typhus.

ADELE: Typhus. And you know what? I was in Czechoslovakia with my cousin in a hotel. It's a place you go for treatments. I didn't need it, but my cousin, when I went along. And you go to a doctor first for a checkup. And she says to me, "You had pneumonia right here." She felt it through the stethoscope. When I came home, I says to my son, "Check her." He said, "She's right, but it's nothing." But she detected it, where I had it. Can you imagine? I couldn't believe it. An older lady.

Then I got my strength back. It took time. It took time.

INT: So in the DP camp, what were you doing?

ADELE: Nothing.

INT: For two and a half years.

ADELE: Nothing. Yeah, at one point, I did teach. See, the Polish people had children, and they survived, a lot of them. In Poland it was different than in our town. So they formed a school, and I was teaching a little bit Hebrew.

INT: Did you enjoy teaching?

ADELE: Yeah, mm-hm.

INT: And what were you doing at night? Was there a social life?

ADELE: Well, no, no. I told you, we were in a place with about 30, 40 people. So we were talking to each other, laughing, and you know, everybody had a little paper wall. So.

INT: Were you dating at this point? Did you meet anybody?

ADELE: No, no.

INT: So the plan was to get to America, and you were waiting.

ADELE: Yeah, especially when we found them, and we registered, and they sent us money, they sent us packages. So we're going to America.

INT: And when did you hear that there were six million Jews killed?

ADELE: I can't even tell you. Well, by this time everybody had some news. This was telling this, this was telling that. So I always heard something. After the war, things were open. So whoever heard something told the other one.

INT: What about Lily? Did you decide to, were you still corresponding with her, and did you tell her that you were going to America?

ADELE: There was a time you couldn't. There was a time we couldn't. But then somehow they opened the gates and we could write to her and send packages. Very expensive. These Russians were tough. If I send a nylon, it was fancy, I had to, a piece, every piece had a different price. If I sent cotton, it was cheaper, but the nylon was expensive. So we sent a lot of packages for her. And I went to visit her in 1969. Finally I got there.

(PAUSE)

INT: During the war, was there any time that you felt like you just wanted to give up? That that was it?

ADELE: No.

INT: You never felt that.

ADELE: No. Not when you're young.

INT: You don't remember any despair?

ADELE: Not when you're young. The three sisters together, we were all the same strength. Nobody got sick, and we kept going. We kept marching. We were busy with ourselves. To get better, or to better our situation.

INT: Did you believe that the war would end finally?

ADELE: I don't know what I believed. I just kept going.

INT: You just kept going.

ADELE: From day to day.

INT: And what gave you that strength?

ADELE: G-d gave me the strength. Who else? When you're young, you can do a lot. You can do a lot. And who gave up didn't survive.

INT: Any stories about, anything else that you can remember you'd want to share about that year in forced labor and in Auschwitz? You said the women made songs, and they were giving you hope. Any stories about, anything having to do with food?

ADELE: Well, whatever food we got, we had to be satisfied. You learned to live on it.

INT: What did they give you?

ADELE: In the morning, a little nothing. Dinner, we came home, it was soup and potatoes, nothing too much. But you learned to live with it. You learned to, you know, your stomach can get adjusted, too.

INT: Was anyone dying? Did you see anyone die?

ADELE: Not in Auschwitz, because still everybody had the strength from home. But when we were marching, but you had to march so fast. In fact, if you were the last one, they shoot you. So we used to look, "Oh, let's pick up speed. I'm afraid." So there's no time even to look what's left behind.

INT: Did you see people get shot?

ADELE: Not, I heard the shots. But see, people, they had old mothers with them. It was hard. Sometimes the mother couldn't go any further, she had to go further. But we three sisters were in the same strength. So it was a little bit easier. We could pick, we could keep up with the crowd. And nobody get really, just after the war. Up till the last minute we were together. So that made a difference, too.

INT: You gave each other strength.

ADELE: Yeah. Like I say, to look at a mother get sick, and drag her, and...that must have been very hard. Very hard.

INT: Okay. So after two and a half years you got to America, and can you tell me a little bit about that, the crossing, and how you got here?

ADELE: Well, we came with a military ship. We were sick like dogs. The first, we got on and we ate. Was everything wonderful. But then, ten days, we couldn't eat, we were sitting at the deck. (laughs) And I want to tell you about my family here, my uncles and aunts. We spoke twice to them from Germany. We had to go through Nuremberg. We spoke on the phone. They called us on the phone. They were very devoted, because they know what they did to my mother.

So we get a telegram on the boat, "Irene Bleier, come to the office." It was on my sister's name, because she was older. There was a telegram, "We're waiting, the whole family's waiting for you at the pier." We got to New York, and I had a rich uncle. He was the richest; he married the boss's daughter. He was very rich.

INT: What was his name?

ADELE: Dave. Dave Green, and Matilda. So everything went on his name. He sent us, like I said, at the end he got back his money, because we came to DP, but this uncle arranged everything. He was the oldest. If he said something to Dave, he said, "Dave, you'd better send money for the girls, too. Because if not Chaya, you would be dead." Because my mother used to sit and sew day and night, because her parents couldn't send nothing. And that's how they survived [the First World War].

So we got to New York, and they're calling, "Dave Green, Dave Green, come get the girls." My rich aunt got hungry, so they went out. So Uncle Willy said, "I'm Dave," and he came to pick us up. So all my family was there. We don't know English. I don't talk English, but they talk Hungarian. So my rich uncle took us back to Easton. He lived in

Easton, PA. And it must have been around 1:00, 2:00 in the morning, and he stopped into a restaurant. I says, "What is this? There is no such a thing in Europe. 2:00, you're stopping to eat?" I didn't even know what to order. I didn't know nothing.

So we lived in Easton about...two, three months. It's a small town. And even his own daughter he sent to New York, because he had no future in Easton. So he took us to New York, and we lived with another woman, and we went to work.

INT: In New York.

ADELE: Yeah, I went there as a dressmaker, and I went in a corset shop. We had a friend there, and she took her in. And that's how we started.

INT: Okay. And you stayed with Irene, still.

ADELE: Yeah, oh, yeah. Always together. Until she got married first.

INT: So you were in New York for how long?

ADELE: Until I got married.

INT: What did you think about being in America? What did you think of America?

ADELE: You get used to it. You learn. We learned so fast the subways and everything. You learn so fast.

INT: What about English? How did you do that?

ADELE: We went to school. I went to school for six months, that's it. And I picked it up right away. Picked it up right away. When you know more than one, it's easier the third one.

INT: Okay.

ADELE: You know, it's easy when you know more than one.

INT: Because your English is very good.

ADELE: And it's like if you know Jewish, the Germans talking, I understood a lot what they were saying.

INT: Yeah, it's similar.

ADELE: It's twisted. So I know Hungarian, I know English, I know Yiddish, I know a little Hebrew. And Slavic language.

INT: Czech you never really learned, right?

ADELE: I was very bad in Czech, you know. We had Czech. In third grade we had Czech. I couldn't catch it. My father took an instructor. She explained to me everything. When she left I forgot again. But Hebrew I was good. I loved the Hebrew language all the time. So we learned.

INT: What was your family like here?

ADELE: Wonderful, the best.

INT: They were good to you?

ADELE: Oh! I'm telling you, they were all there.

INT: Because a lot of survivors talk about coming to America, and their families didn't want to hear about the war, and they didn't want to...

ADELE: You know why? Because they behaved like pigs. They were in Germany making a lot of money, and the family was poor, and "Give me, give me, give me. Send me, send me." Probably they deserved it.

INT: Oh, you think so?

ADELE: Yes. Yes. We were never like that. We went right to work. We didn't ask nothing from them. Nothing.

INT: But yet they were willing to give you anyway, right?

ADELE: Not much. Not much. No. No. They said, they took me into New York, they bought us a little suitcase, they bought us something there, and that's it, and I went to work. But I mean, we came back to them Shabbas, and we were wonderful. But none of them were rich, really. Only this one uncle. And she was American-born, and she's still alive, in Easton.

INT: Matilda?

ADELE: Matilda. She's in New York. She's now about 80. But I didn't ask, we didn't ask nothing. We didn't ask for nothing. We went to work.

INT: You were very capable women, the two of you.

ADELE: Yeah. We were so used to being on the road so many times, and look where we wandered around, so.

INT: So do you think that it made it easier for you to cope here with the changes?

ADELE: I think so. I think so. When you go through so many changes, you get tough. You learn. And here, too, I got jobs. And I went to one place, and I told the manager, I was married already, and I went to work, and I told him, "Friday, winter, I go home 12:00, and summer I go home 3:00, and I'm not working Shabbas or Yom Tov." I got the job, because I knew what I had to do. I knew the trade. I got it. I said, "I'm not working Shabbas." I had to be home for licht bentschen. And he let me out.

INT: So tell me about meeting your husband.

ADELE: Well, a friend of ours introduced me.

INT: Now was this in New York?

ADELE: No, in Philadelphia.

INT: So how did you get to Philadelphia?

ADELE: Well, I used to come to my aunt in Logan. She used to live on Franklin Street. Many times to her, I used to go to Easton to my family. And this man went to school with somebody, and somebody they knew my aunt, something like that, and they introduced me. He's also from my hometown, the man. He lives not far from here, on Algon Avenue.

INT: So tell me about your husband's background, his name, his background, his family, and what he went through.

ADELE: Well, his name was Hugo. Hugo. He loved that Hugo, and they talked him into being Herman. He **hated** Herman. (interviewer laughs) And after the war he came back. And he didn't find nobody home. So they told him his sister was in Czechoslovakia. Because a lot of people got to (?), or the other one, after the war.

INT: Wait, first of all, where was he born, your husband?

ADELE: In Munkács. Near Munkács. Pavlova. It's near Munkács. And like I say, he was two years old when his father remarried. His mother died when, I think at birth or he was very young. He was two years old.

INT: How many brothers and sisters did your husband have?

ADELE: He had sisters about three or four, and about two, three brothers. One sister came back. One sister came back.

INT: Oh, out of all of them it was just him. Now, his mother died...

ADELE: And the head brother.

INT: Okay. But his mother died, and then his father remarried.

ADELE: Remarried, and had another twin boys, I think, with the second, and ...

INT: Twin boys. Identical twins?

ADELE: I don't know that. And he had a brother, a son which is in New York now. Sholom. But we don't know half-brother. He's a brother. He carries the Mermelstein name, too, and we never talked about it that he's not from the same mother. There's no such a thing. No such a thing. So he came to Czechoslovakia, and he met his sister there.

INT: But wait a minute. What kind of background did he come from?

ADELE: Well, they supposedly were very rich. The father, they say, was a wonderful man. My brother-in-law here, married Herman's two sisters. Two of them. And he talked highly about his father-in-law, Herman's father. And he's a wealthy man. They had a lumber business. And then they had, in Munkács also a lumber business. They were import/export. And this brother Moshe, that was his favorite brother, because he worked with him. And he followed his footsteps, Herman, with his own children. He made a mistake, his brother never yelled at him. You learned. That's why Herman **never** yelled at the children. Never. You learned. So he was very attached to him. And I told you that he married his stepmother's daughter. So it became a double family. She was a mother and a mother-in-law. (laughs) So they had two children. And he's very, very close...to the last minute he died, Herman, he just missed his brother terrible.

INT: What was that brother's name again?

ADELE: Moshe. He just was sick over him. Moshe was his favorite.

INT: What was the difference in age, do you know?

ADELE: Maybe four, five years. Not that much. Herman was two years old, he must have been maybe five or six, I don't know. Fanny was about two years difference.

INT: So how did he survive the war, your husband?

ADELE: He was also in, he always knew what to do. And he was in Russia, and he was in Poland, all places. And then one Russian man kind of liked him, and he was like his helper. And he saved a lot of people, because he was with this natchalnik, and whoever was in trouble, he could do something. That's why, you know, he was so sick. He says, "Why do I deserve it? I saved so many people. Why do I deserve this?"

INT: Your husband said that.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: How did he save their lives? Got them a job?

ADELE: I mean, got them food, got them clothing. No job.

INT: Where was this all happening? Was he hiding?

ADELE: In Russia. It's from the war.

INT: Oh, okay. So he went to Russia during the war.

ADELE: They sent him so many places. But he wasn't in concentration camp, no. So he met this natchalnik, and he kind of liked him, so he shined his shoes, and he was, you know, guarding him. And he could have favors from him. So he saved a lot of people's lives. You know? And when he came back, like I say, he went to Czechoslovakia, and from there, the sister came first.

INT: How did she survive the war, his sister?

ADELE: Same as everybody else. Came back, and he went through Czechoslovakia. And the brother-in-law was there, too. He lost his wife and two children, I think. And Fanny was there. Her name was Fanny. So he says, "If you really want to make me happy, and make me forget all the problem, I want to marry you." So he married.

INT: So the brother-in-law married Fanny.

ADELE: Yeah. That's his survived sister. So he married **two** of Herman's sisters.

INT: I see.

ADELE: So he came, she got married, they came to Czechoslovakia. And Herman came a year later. They were very wonderful, devoted sisters and brothers. She was like a mother to me. A sister, a mother. She didn't know what to do for me. The best.

INT: So did they come to the States around the same time you did?

ADELE: I came in '48, they came in '49. Fanny came in '48 or '47, a year earlier.

INT: So you met him in Philadelphia.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: And somebody introduced you.

ADELE: Yeah.

INT: Okay. So what attracted you to him, and what made you decide to marry him?

ADELE: Well, we had a lot of things in common.

INT: Like?

ADELE: He was a sufferer, and I was a sufferer. (both laugh) He didn't have nothing, I didn't have nothing. He didn't have a good job, I didn't have a good job. We got together, and he went to work, and I went to work, and put away one wages, and slowly we got to get something.

INT: How much older than you was he?

ADELE: Five years. Five years.

INT: What did you like about him?

ADELE: He has a very nice personality. He's good-hearted, really. Really. He's not a fighting type. There wasn't a thing he wouldn't buy me. I just have to say one word, "I like it," he'd get it. When he had money already. And the kids had a wonderful father. Don't even mention, because as soon as you mention their father's name, "Oy." My son. "Oy."

INT: They miss him.

ADELE: Oh! "Why can't Daddy be here? Why I'm doing this. Why can't I ask my father?" He was a very good advisor. And he was an intelligent person.

INT: Can you tell me about your wedding, what that was like?

ADELE: Just a few people. Who had money? Who had money?

INT: Who made the wedding for you? Did someone make it for you?

ADELE: Both of us. It was nothing. Just in a restaurant, that's it. A dinner, and that's it. Who had money?

INT: And where did you settle? In Philadelphia?

ADELE: Yeah, because he was working in Philadelphia, and his sister was here. And I had two aunts here anyhow. I had two of them. Aunt Janice, she was here, too.

INT: What neighborhood did you settle in?

ADELE: Logan. No, first we lived in Strawberry Mansion. Do you know I moved seven times in my life? Two times in one year, with four children. In March and in August.

INT: So you were in Strawberry Mansion first.

ADELE: First Strawberry Mansion, on 33rd Street, across from the park. No, first on Montgomery Avenue. Third Floor. Then we moved to Page Street, on second floor, and then Herman bought that luncheonette. Because I didn't work, he never had a good job. So in a few years we put away one wages and we bought a luncheonette. 7th and Rockland, you know where this is, in Logan. So I moved in with an eight-month-old daughter.

INT: Now what year was this, when you bought the luncheonette?

ADELE: In '56. My daughter was born in '55. In February. And February '54, '55.

INT: What kind of jobs was your husband having before that?

ADELE: Neck ties. He was working in neck ties.

INT: Okay. And what made him decide to buy a luncheonette?

ADELE: Because like I say, I didn't work anymore. And we could not live on one wages. So we put away one wages all the time, for a few years, so we had to go in business. Because he was a businessman before.

INT: What were you doing before the baby? Were you working?

ADELE: I was working in a factory, I told you. Rothschild. You know Rothschild Coats Factory? That's where I was working for about four years. And that's where I told Charlie I got to leave early. Shabbas. Winter. So one wages, and it wasn't such a good job. So we decided, so we bought a luncheonette with a living quarters. But it was hard on me. I put Hedy to sleep 6:00, and that's it. And 21 months later, the boys were born.

INT: Oh, boy. The twins.

ADELE: Three in diapers. And a luncheonette till 10:30, 11:00. From 6:00 in the morning. Well, I don't have to tell you.

INT: It's exhausting just thinking about it. (both laugh)

ADELE: You know, sometimes we closed the store and my husband said, "Let's have an ice cream soda." I said, "Herman, I can't do it. I'm going to faint right here. I got to throw myself in bed." I was exhausted. I had a monitor on the frigidaire, (moans) the kids were moaning.

INT: (laughs) Wait, so what was it like becoming a mother? How was that?

ADELE: It's good, wonderful. Well, I was 32 when I had my first one. It was time to have a baby. All these things that I went through.

INT: Your first you were 32? Yeah, you must have been.

ADELE: 32. But in five years I had four children.

INT: Wow. You made up for it.

ADELE: Because '55, '56, '59. So when the boys were born, we were there already, what, a year and a half?

INT: Did you know you were expecting twins?

ADELE: Not at the beginning. Towards the end. I felt different movement. One was hiccuping, one was moving. I felt it. So the doctor, eight months, sent me on an x-ray. So I says to that technician, "Well?" He said, "I can't tell you. You have to call your doctor." So he said, "You can tell her, you can tell her." So I knew it. Nobody knew it, only Fanny. Nobody in the family.

INT: You didn't tell your husband?

ADELE: No, no, I mean my aunts. So when the boys were born, my husband called up my aunt. She was a block away from me in Logan, the luncheonette. And "Janet, Adele had boy, boy." "Oh, she had a boy." They argued for I don't know how long. "Yeah, she had boy, boy." And she could **not** catch it. So finally he says, "Two boys." (laughs) So the bris was in the luncheonette. Friday night he closed the store a little earlier. No, not the bris, the ben zachor. The bris was in the hospital. They let me stay nine days those days. So...

INT: Wow. They kick you out right away now.

ADELE: So here I come home, nobody's waiting for me. A luncheonette is waiting for me. And Hedy was a year old.

INT: No help?

ADELE: She was 21, not even two years old. 21 [months].

INT: You had no help.

ADELE: No help. So my husband found me a girl, for six months I had help, six months. I used to feed them every three hours because they were little. By the time I finished the second one, it was time to take the first one. So after six months that was it.

INT: How did you cope with that time?

ADELE: Oh, you can do a lot, honey. Oh, if there's a will, there's a way. Oh, no. I was never the type: I can't do it. I didn't think; I'm just doing it. I'm doing it.

INT: But where do you get that strength from?

ADELE: G-d gave me the strength, I'm telling you. I had a kitchen downstairs, luckily. So I had them in the playpen. You know how many times a **customer** picked them up, they were screaming, and I was at the cash register, because it was lunch time. There was a soda factory; I had to be at the cash register. Customers used to go and pick them up. So finally I says to my husband, "I can't do it anymore. They're getting to be, they were almost a year. I can't **do** it. I can't do it." So my daughter, there was a neighbor, a little girl, took Hedy out and brought her back after lunch. I fed her, put her to sleep. I said, "I can't do it. You've got to do something." At first he didn't want to sell it. I said, "I just can't do it. I have three little ones. You're hungry, and I don't eat nothing from the store." It was treif.

So. So my brother-in-law used to have the delicatessen on Castor Avenue. I don't know if you remember, Stern. He had in Strawberry Mansion an Anise Appetizer, a fish, smoked fish, everything. He was ready to move out. So my husband grabbed the opportunity. "Let's go temporary. Settle down, and then we'll see what we have to do." So...

INT: It wouldn't be as much work for you, this kind of a business.

ADELE: Well, it's easier and it's most weekends, the work. You know, the fish is Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. It's an appetizing store.

INT: So were you open on Shabbas, or how did that work?

ADELE: No, we were open Shabbas, in the luncheonette, too.

INT: You had to, yeah.

ADELE: Yeah. So we moved there. There was a living room and a kitchen downstairs, luckily. And I learned a trade there, too. I had to help him. Couldn't do nothing without my help. And I had a girl coming to feed their kids around 12:00, and I put them to sleep, because that's the busiest time, especially Saturday or Friday. But that was in the future, then it started to become more and more colored people. And the place was an old place, and we lived there for three and a half years, and Bonnie was born there, my little one. So what do you do next? What can we do next?

So while we were there, my husband went in a pretzel business with somebody. I don't want to mention names. And we bought a little house here on Langdon Street, because we had to get out from there. We had to get out. It was run down, and then the neighborhood was run down. And he opened only three, four days. Monday, Tuesday was nothing there. So we moved here in March. And the business didn't work out. We lost everything.

Now what do you do next? You have four children. So we went to look for a business. Because from business you got to go to business. I didn't even see it. He found it on Princeton Avenue. 3100 Princeton. Princeton and Hawthorne, are you familiar? In Mayfair. There was a corner store. There was like a hang out there. Sodas and everything. With living quarters. Normally we would never buy it, but we were so pressed to something that with the living quarter. Because he found something somewhere near Adams Avenue. "Oh, we'll buy a home, and you'll come." I said, "That will never work out. With a baby sitter, I can't do that. Winter I'm going to walk two blocks to work? We have to live with the business." So we bought that business.

We bought that business, but we didn't have money, because we lost a lot. We put a few thousand dollars on this house, we couldn't get it out. But my husband with his head worked it out, the mortgage. A lawyer couldn't do better. Because I must tell you, with his pencil he knew a quarter of an inch, a quarter of a penny what he makes. He knew exactly what he's making. So it came to the settlement, and they wanted, let's see, \$300, \$400 rent, because we didn't put down too much. Finally, he said, "I can't take it on me. I don't think I can **make** that much." So it's no deal. So the lawyer said he couldn't solve the problem. I just want to show you what Herman could do. He said, "I'll tell you what: I'll give you half rent. In three years I'll give you the whole thing in one sum." And that's how he bought the business.

Well, we built it up beautifully. Yeah, I'm telling you. So we moved again in August to the store. He was 100% a businessman, because he learned from Moshe. And he was very good. That's why my kids cry today. They build a home, they build this. "Why isn't Daddy here to tell me what to do? He always gave the **best** advice."

So slowly we got to it. The house was run down terrible. But slowly, we fixed it. I wasn't the type that, "I can't do, and it's no good for me." Everything was good for me. So it took time to sell the house, and slowly, slowly, we got to ourselves. The kids got bigger. And with the little money, we sent them to Beth Jacob school.

INT: And why did you decide to do that?

ADELE: Because it was in a goyish neighborhood. 99% goyim. They had goyishe little friends. But that didn't disturb [me]. Christmas I let them out through the front door, the goyim don't have to see that he's going to school. You know, you don't tease them. And all four of them went to Hebrew school. In fact Bonnie went one year to public school. We had a public school across the street. So one year she went. I said, "Herman, that's

no good. She's going to grow up, she's going to say, 'How about me? Didn't I deserve a private school?' You have to be careful." We gave everybody the same thing. We made a wedding for my daughter, we made the same for the little one. So she doesn't want to go. We had a car. We paid for the car. Not a car pool. A car picked up all the children. She doesn't want to go. Well, you know, with me, if it's good for them, she can cry till morning. It won't help. I will not send her. I said, "Bonnie, I want to tell you something."

INT: Why didn't she want to go?

ADELE: Because the car comes with kids, and she doesn't know them. And she says, "I like the teacher, I like this, and I like..." I said, "Bonnie, you are not going. What do you want? You are not going." So finally she said, "I want Daddy to take me." I ran down to the store, mother runs down to the store, Herman left. The car comes full of children, she gets scared. So when she came home in the afternoon, she said, "Oh, Daddy, you don't have to take me no more." Fine. That was it. But see, I didn't get scared. I could have said to Herman, "Oh, the kid is crying." I can't stand when the mothers do that. "Oh, the baby doesn't like it." But you know what's good for the baby. What would I hear today from her? You tell me. "How come I didn't go?" Right?

So we tried to even everything. One music lesson, the other one took music lessons. The third one took music lessons.

INT: They all went to religious school.

ADELE: Yes.

INT: So for eight grades?

ADELE: No, we took them out after six grades, because we felt that they need a little bit more. A lot of things they didn't teach those days. And we had a rebbele, you must hear that. The mother is still here. Just out from the yeshiva, and he comes to Beth Jacob school, and fanatic he was, and every week he took home a kid for Shabbas. If I would have known, he wouldn't get my kids. We send them with Barton's candy. What do you send to a religious place? He went through all the children, and he brought back every time the kid Sunday. And after he was done, he said, "You and you and you, out from the class. Your father is not Shomer Shabbas. Out." He sent them out of the room.

INT: You're kidding!

ADELE: That's right. And one time my son said, "You can't even take your book, and you can't ask questions." We didn't know about it. So finally one day my son said that. Because your father teach him. There was a Dr. Freifeld there. I don't know if you remember his name. He was the principal. And there was a third floor, and my kids finally told the father. Of course Herman went over. They threw him out the minute they knew about it. They threw him out. He's in New York.

INT: The teacher.

ADELE: Now, can you imagine?

INT: No, I can't.

ADELE: Can you imagine? So the kids got so angry about that school. And the one day Neil says to me, "I told him, I'm not going out. My father..."

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

ADELE: But I said, "Neil, that was our best investment." And I try to talk him into, he should send his kids, too. My other son is going for it. He might send to Hebrew school. His little boy is four and a half years old.

INT: You wanted them to get a Jewish education.

ADELE: Well, they do get it in Hebrew school. They go to school. They go to Hebrew school.

INT: No, but I'm saying your kids. Your own children. You wanted them to have a Jewish education.

ADELE: Well, sure. Sure. And then we were in a goyish neighborhood.

INT: Did you care who their friends were when they were growing up, whether they were Jews or non-Jews? How did you feel about that?

ADELE: Well, I'll tell you. My kids never had too much time for friends, even when they were young. They came home 4:00 from Beth Jacob school, and they helped in the store. We had our social life from the store. I had my social life from the store. Nice people, I never went to their house, they never came to my house for a coffee. Business-wise. But I could hear talks in the kitchen, and they were so nice. Nice people. Then we put the kids to, we belonged to Lincoln High School. We didn't like it. So we went over, he says, "We want our kids to have the Hebrew language." So they transferred them to Northeast High School. Because we didn't like Lincoln.

INT: They have Hebrew language in Northeast High?

ADELE: Yes. Mm-hm. So we had a station wagon. And a rainy day, Herman took them to school, "Mom, come down, I got to run the store." Every kid he picked up. So they had a few goyishe friends in the neighborhood, especially one. He's still friends with him, a nice kid. They had a few Jewish, but they never had time to be with friends.

And when they went to medical school, college, they really didn't have time. And they loved the store. We never forced them. They loved the store.

INT: What about dating?

ADELE: Not too many. Well, my kids **never** went out with a shiksa or a shaygetz. **Never.** I never had to worry about it.

INT: Did you say anything to them about it, or they just knew?

ADELE: No, they knew it. They **knew** it. I mean, we're European people. They know. My daughter never...my boys would never. You know what happened? My son, when he was in medical school, he was transferred to Erie for four weeks, a class, you know, they had to take. And he met a nurse, a shiksa in there. There was no Jewish people there. There was nothing to buy there. And she invited him to the house. So my son knew himself that he's not going to fall for the shiksa. He knew that. So he, it was somewhere to go in. She was running after him. Oh, she really wanted him. So when he came home, the shiksa, her mother came from Philadelphia, and she said she would like to change jobs in Philadelphia. So if Neil could help her out, somewhere to put her. So once I really, I remember I called him, and the boy that he lived in the same room, he says, "He's not home." He was in her house. But I wasn't scared. See, I wouldn't jump, "I don't want you to go there." I knew my son.

So he says to me, "Mom, do you think you can give this girl two, three days, because she wants to look for a job, and there's nowhere to go." I told him, "They were very good to you for a month. I don't mind." Bonnie was married already. No. I know I had an empty room, because Hedy was married. So I gave her the middle room. Herman took her from hospital to hospital. Can you imagine? I wasn't afraid. He would never. In the meantime, he met his wife Cindy. But I figured, if she was so nice to him, I don't mind. I don't mind. She was in my house for about four days. I had no trouble.

INT: You trusted him.

ADELE: Yes. My kids **never** even thought of going out with a shaygetz. My daughter **never** went out with a Gentile. **Never.** I never had to worry. **Never** had to worry.

INT: How would you feel if that happened?

ADELE: I don't know. I don't think I would be happy, but somehow I knew it could never happen.

INT: Mm-hm. It wasn't a possibility.

ADELE: No. Because he never even looked at a girl, non-Jewish.

INT: Because these days it's pretty amazing that you could have four children, and nobody intermarried out of the four, you know? It's pretty unusual.

ADELE: Yes, my son went with this girl, Cindy. She doesn't come from a kosher home. But we can talk to our children. He went with her. I met her once, and he went with her about six, four, five months, maybe. And I see he likes the girl. And you know, my kids used to come home and tell, "Oh, we went to this restaurant, we went to a movie," you know. They were talking. I said, "Look, Neil. You'd better pop the question." Because he went with somebody from a religious home, and she said she could never give up the shrimp or something. So I said, "You'd better pop the question if she's willing to keep you a kosher home, because naturally, you'll marry her. You'll fall in love, and you'll have to divorce her." And he did. See, some kids would say, "Mom, mind your own business." It never happened in my house. No matter what, we correct them even today. He doesn't like it, but he won't say, "Never mind. Don't butt in." Because if Herman told them something, it was for their own good. We talk things over. We don't command them. We talk. He popped the question. She said, "It's not even a sacrifice. No problem." And it's no problem.

INT: And they keep kosher?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. He has an eight-year-old son. "What are we looking for in the store? For a K or OU." So he has this very nice girl, you should see, she bought a set of twenty dishes for Pesach. You should see the table she set for Pesach. Beautiful. And my other daughter-in-law, too. So I know my children. Because we never...

INT: So you kept communication open with your kids? Growing up they could come talk to you?

ADELE: We never talked with them yelling. It was always talking over. Talk. Today my son comes in and he talks to me. He tells me some things. He just asked me something last week, my son. I said, "Tatele, don't do it." He says, "I think you're right, mother." We don't command. We talk.

INT: You still talk.

ADELE: Yes.

INT: So where did that come from, that...

ADELE: Because we always did, with my husband, too. My husband taught them. We went to Israel when Hedy was nineteen, the boys were eighteen. We left them for seventeen days, because we just had to get out a little bit. And I remember when we came home, and Neil said, "I bought this on special." "Son, whatever you did is fine. Whatever you did is fine."

INT: So you were supportive of your kids, and you talked to them a lot.

ADELE: Oh, yes. To this day. To the last minute. But they prolonged my husband's life at least five years, they were so good to him. Oh!

INT: How so? How did that happen?

ADELE: With medicine. We'd talk, many times 10:00, he's so depressed. I used to say, "Shall I call the boys?" "Oh, don't bother." One time he said, "If you want to." It happened my both sons were still, Neil had an office, and Allen was somewhere. They walk in, the two boys, kein ayin hara. I want you to meet them. Good-looking boys with a smile, with a gute neshama. And he walks in, and Herman smiled from here to there. And they stayed with him for about a half an hour. I said, "Neil, you didn't even check your father." He said, "See? Nothing wrong with him. He was depressed."

INT: He needed to see them.

ADELE: Oh.

INT: How did your husband die? What was wrong?

ADELE: Oh, he had a lot of things. He had, you know, a muscle and nerve problem. He was on dialysis for a year and a half. Poor Neil checked his urine so often. Ah! What those kids can do, I'll tell you, it's G-d's present, G-d's gift. They're so good to everybody.

INT: Devoted to their parents.

ADELE: Ah, to his patients, too, you should see. There's no room, he can't take no more new patients. He's very devoted to that profession. Very. That's why I say, thank G-d, I have a wonderful family. I have wonderful daughter-in-laws, I have wonderful son-in-laws. I can't complain. I still have a family.

INT: Talk a little bit about the twins and how they still, I mean we talked off tape about it, but if you could just talk a little bit about how they still live close, they've always lived close to each other, and they're both doctors.

ADELE: They always did the same thing. One banged his head against, the other did the same thing. (laughs) They always copied. And they were always very close. Maybe because they're twins. But by accident, they became doctors, too.

INT: How did that happen?

ADELE: They went to Northeast High School, and they had the spark program years ago. I don't know if you heard about it. Where they had to pass three tests, in a suit and working conditions, whatever. They both passed it. But they did not, they were not astronauts. Laying on bed. Whatever they had to do. So there was a Mr. Montgomery,

and I don't know what he saw in them. He said, "Boys, why don't you go volunteer in the cancer hospital in oncologic." They listened, and they picked up medicine right there. After they went for two years in Einstein volunteer, that's how they got to medicine, both of them. Both of them.

INT: But they're in different fields of medicine.

ADELE: Yes. Neil, there was an internist, and he begged him, "Neil, go higher. You're so good at it." He said, "That's all I want. I love family medicine." And Allen went for internal medicine, and then he picked gastroenterology for his specialty. But they still work together.

INT: And they live right near each other.

ADELE: Two homes away. It just so happened they always follow one another.

INT: So they're very close. What about your daughters?

ADELE: Oh, very close, too.

INT: Are they close to each other and to the boys?

ADELE: Oh, yes. Yes. They're all one direction. I go to the boys, I go to my daughter, I go to my other daughter.

INT: Do they all live nearby?

ADELE: Yeah. Well, the boys live in Huntingdon Valley, it's Buck Road, it's a new development. They have big homes. Hedy lives in Newtown, you go with Second Street, if you're familiar. It's a new development. And Bonnie's in Chalfont, 309. So we used to go with Herman one direction to all four of them. And everywhere, "Daddy, how shall I do it? What shall I do? What shall I do?"

(Laughs) One boy had a bigger kitchen, so the stairway was done right. The other one had a smaller kitchen, had problems. They couldn't solve it. And Herman was in building line. So my son calls up, "Daddy, can you be there 7:00 when the builder comes?" "Sure." He gets up 6:00, it's dark outside. We run. Three times. Until the guy, but we were there. Whenever he said, we were there. They deserved it. To this day, I make him stop in for a little snack.

INT: Let me ask you something. How did you communicate the Holocaust to your children?

ADELE: I don't talk too much. They see films.

INT: All of them? Will all of them see?

ADELE: All of them. And Elie Wiesel was in my daughter's synagogue, in Ohev Shalom. And if you paid more you had dinner with him. So my son and daughter are very devoted to the synagogue. They give a lot of money there. And they stayed. And my daughter went to Elie Wiesel. She told him, "I'm a survivor's daughter, but my mother doesn't talk too much." He said, "Don't be surprised. Not everybody can talk about it." So my daughter was bas mitzvah there. And that synagogue was the first one that adopted a Holocaust Czechoslovakia Torah. And they fixed it, and again we just gave money. And when the bas mitzvah was Friday night, the Saturday, he took out the Torah, explained it to the people that it's a survivor's daughter, and the bas mitzvah girl is a survivor's granddaughter, and in honor of the grandmother and in memory of the grandfather, we're using that Torah.

INT: Oh, that's wonderful. That's beautiful.

ADELE: And in fact, I got a beautiful mezuzah, because I gave a nice donation to fix the Torah, in honor of the bar mitzvah boy. So now we're planning something. They're adding to the building. And they want to have a room in memory of their father. A recreation room, whatever the name will be.

INT: Did they ever ask you questions growing up about the war?

ADELE: Well, a little bit. You know, I never had time for them. I was in a grocery business. I was always in business. I didn't have time for them to talk too much. My daughters went to Gratz College. My two daughters. We gave them everything possible we could in our time. Hedy graduated from Gratz, Bonnie graduated from Gratz, the boys went to Hebrew high school, and then even in college one year they took Hebrew. So we tried hard to do what we can, as much as we could, because we were never free.

INT: But you didn't have private time with them. You didn't really have private time with them.

ADELE: Well, at night we were there. We were together all day. I mean, they came home from school, they worked in the store. And from here, boys, not in medical, but in college, went straight to the store when they came home.

INT: So they didn't ask you too many questions?

ADELE: Well, they knew. They watch a lot of movies and everything. They know maybe more than I know.

INT: But were they curious about **your** experiences?

ADELE: Well, sometimes I'll talk a little bit. You know, sometimes, all of a sudden we start getting to that subject. But thank G-d, good kids.

INT: Were any of the kids more interested in the Holocaust than others?

ADELE: See, they don't even belong to the young organization. They don't have time.

INT: Sons and Daughters they're not involved with?

ADELE: My daughter is so exhausted between, she's teaching Hebrew school. They got her in. She's working for her husband two days. She has three children. One goes to dancing, one goes to music lessons, the other one goes, the daughter, she was so sick last week. Last night I call 8:00, she was in bed already. She's running, running, running, running. And the boys, I don't have to tell you. Seven days they're working. Even Sunday they go out. Monday and Thursday Neil doesn't get home till 11:00.

INT: So they're very busy.

ADELE: Even today, Wednesday, he don't know where to go first, because he leaves every private things to do on Wednesday. But they do what they can.

INT: Did you have anyone to talk to when you came here about your experiences?

ADELE: No. Well, I went to work. Irene and I moved to New York, who shall we talk? We come for the weekend sometimes to my aunt, or to my uncle.

INT: Did you feel a need to talk about it? What you had gone through?

ADELE: I don't think so. I don't think so. I'd rather try to forget it. And I was busy with my family. Did I have time to think? Everyone has a different schedule. One car came five of seven, one came after seven. Don't ask. (laughs)

INT: You were too busy. Do you think that helped with the coping after the war?

ADELE: I'm sure it did. I didn't have time to think.

INT: Did you ever have nightmares?

ADELE: Not many. I did have, sometimes I dream of my parents, and my mother talks to me. And you know what? I believe it, because I see it. I saw her in this dress (points to a photograph).

INT: In the photograph, yeah.

ADELE: And she was talking to me.

INT: What was she telling you, do you remember?

ADELE: I don't know, she was talking to me. I don't remember exactly, but she was talking to me. So there is such a thing that they watch you. They do.

INT: Do you have dreams like that often?

ADELE: No. No.

INT: Do you ever feel fearful or worried or anxious about the world, you know, things that happen in the world? Do you think that the Holocaust could happen again?

ADELE: Things happen too fast. You couldn't finish one, when the other problem came already. Just, it was...it was just, it was the whole world was in problems.

INT: No, but I'm talking about today. Do you feel that the Holocaust could happen again?

ADELE: I don't think so. Not today.

INT: Why not?

ADELE: People are so alert today. They won't let it go. That time, we had nowhere to go. We had no, there was maybe two policemen in the whole city. Nobody was with you. Everybody was against you. You think the goyim weren't happy to see us go? What did they care? Came into the house, took everything away. See that picture? My mother made it. She sent it to America, to her sister. So when my aunt died, gave it to Irene, and Irene said if she dies, she wants me to have that picture. My mother made that.

INT: How did she make it?

ADELE: Oh, with needlepoint.

INT: She did, that's a needlepoint?

ADELE: Oh, I needlepoint a lot, too.

INT: That's beautiful.

ADELE: Oh, I needlepoint. I needlepoint, I knit, I crochet, you name it. I sew. Everything.

INT: You're very talented.

ADELE: I love to work with my fingers.

INT: Yeah, I know you love to sew.

ADELE: I do a lot. I do a lot.

INT: I didn't know you did needlepoint, also.

ADELE: Oh, yeah. Needlepoint. And I made scarves, you should see, knitted scarves.

INT: So you don't think that things today are...do you worry for instance, with Farrakhan and people like that?

ADELE: You know what? I'm too busy with my own things. I don't want to get into again all this worriment. Because I can't do nothing about it, and I don't want to upset myself.

INT: So you avoid that.

ADELE: I avoid that. Because today it's a stupid world. I mean, it's a mixed up world. So you can't stop worrying. There's always something else that you can worry about it. And I just live my own life. Now I've tried to do what's best for me.

INT: Tell me again. We were talking before the tape went on about how you stay busy during the day. Now you're alone, your children live nearby, but you live here alone. Your husband's passed away. And I know it's very hard for me to get you on the phone, so I know you're out a lot.

ADELE: I know. Because I can't stay home daytime.

INT: Right. Now tell me why that is and how you...

ADELE: Because it's too, the day is too long. How much can I clean? And it's lonesome. If I go out and come in, I feel different.

INT: So what do you do with your time, and where do you go?

ADELE: Today I'm talking to you. I go for a haircut. I have to meet a friend, and before I know it, it will be 4:00.

INT: And you go on buses everywhere.

ADELE: All over.

INT: No problem.

ADELE: No problem. I walk a lot, too. I can walk two, three miles a day. I go down the shore.

INT: Right. You just got back from Florida.

ADELE: Yeah, I go to Florida, and if my cousin calls me up, he goes to Czechoslovakia, "You want to come?" I go. And I try to get, now I help out my children whenever I'm needed. I just had my grandson, my gate is still here [for the steps]. And what was it? Thursday night my daughter-in-law calls me up. She says, "Well, it's the last minute, I want to ask you." And she says to me, "Mom, you're wonderful. I can always depend on you. Can I bring the children for a few hours?" "Sure."

INT: So you have your grandchildren here a lot to help out?

ADELE: Ten. Ten grandchildren.

INT: You've got ten, I know.

ADELE: But they don't take advantage of me. She'll call me up, and she says, "I need your help a little bit around 8:00, 9:00." And I say, "Well, I have a meeting tonight, but I can cancel it." No way would she let me. No.

INT: So they don't take advantage, but you're available.

ADELE: No, but I'm there when I'm needed.

INT: Do you enjoy being with your grandchildren?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. Like I say, my children are busy, and Sunday they don't know what to do first. She goes with the children. But when it happens that he has nothing planned, she'll call. "Mom, come over. Neil is home today. I know you like to be with your son." And used to do the same thing with my husband. "Dad, come over, Neil is home today."

INT: Oh, that's nice.

ADELE: Oh, yeah. No problem. They realize, because they have children, what it is. And that's how they teach their children too. And when I'm needed, I'm there. And it's good for me. I do everything myself. I mean, wherever I have to go, I have to go to a bank, I take cross town, I have to go Thriftway, for bread or milk, I walk. I don't bother them. I mean, I'm not a kvetchie type. If I can do it myself, I'm more than glad to do it. Even if...I walk many times to Bustleton, six blocks. I want to walk. I want to walk. I went down the shore yesterday.

INT: (laughs) Did you really?

ADELE: I went overnight.

INT: For the day? Oh, you slept over? What do you do down there?

ADELE: I got a compliment. First they said \$29. When I check out, it's a complimentary. I went with another friend. I walked from one end to the next one. And I waited for her to come 3:30 by bus. Then we went up to the room, and went back to another casino, and I got a comp for a restaurant. I had a beautiful lox sandwich they gave out. And the next day I came home. And I play a little bit.

INT: That's great. So you do that for enjoyment. Is sewing still fun for you? Do you do that for enjoyment, or you just do that for...

ADELE: Just enjoyment. "Mom, this skirt is too long, make it short. Mom, I've got new pants, have to make a cuff." My daughter just told me she has a few things, she'll come over, I have to fix. For the family and for myself. Not for strangers. I just bought myself a gown, and I have to fix it for my grandson's bar mitzvah. I keep myself busy.

INT: Yeah, it sounds like it.

ADELE: Because there's always somewhere to go. Yesterday I came home, I got off the bus on Castor Avenue, I walked to Olympia's for rye bread. I came home, it was 6:00.

INT: So when you get depressed, do you ever get depressed?

ADELE: Oh, there was a time, many times. I go out.

INT: You go out.

ADELE: Especially when it's raining. Now you imagine now it's raining. I take my coat and umbrella, I go.

INT: It doesn't stop you.

ADELE: No.

INT: Snow doesn't stop you, I know that.

ADELE: Because I used to go to work from here, to the store. When later on the kids got bigger, the home got too small, we had to buy a home, so I went with two buses. How did I go in the big snow? Walked backwards. And I went, so I'm used to it.

INT: And what got you through your husband's illness?

ADELE: Hm?

INT: How did you get through your husband's illness, and when he passed away?

ADELE: It wasn't easy, but I did what I could. He used to say, "I want to go into a home." I says, "Your home is here. If I have to take in a nurse," I was his nurse. I didn't mind it. I did not mind it at all. I did what I had to.

INT: And how did you deal with his passing away?

ADELE: Well, like I say, we sat shiva here, and the kids were with me for the whole week. Every night somebody slept with me. And after the time came, I said, "I'm not going nowhere. I got to learn to stay home from the first day." Because I knew a friend of mine, she used to be with her daughter for months. I said, "I don't want that." I have good neighbors. I'm not in a forest, that my neighbor is a few miles away. And I started, I said, "Let me try." And that's what I'm doing. But I get out of the house a lot, like I say. I do all my stuff day time.

INT: Would you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist?

ADELE: I don't know. I'm just taking things the way they come. The way they come. Like I say, I have a girlfriend, she's always depressed. And I talk to her till I'm blue in the face. But I say, "I can't **lose** myself." Because what am I going to do if I get sick, it's better? I talk to myself, and I'm thinking about it. I got to take care of myself so I can go on by myself. And if G-d forbid I need it, the kids are right here. The kids are right here. My daughter built a home, and she has downstairs a bedroom, and a bathroom with a shower in case her mother-in-law or somebody, she should have it, she should have a room. So I...I mean, I can't bother them, they're busy themselves. They're busy themselves. I know what it is.

When we were in business, I didn't have a chance to go nothing, to do nothing, to go nowhere. I never went nowhere. People used to go to Wildwood with the children. I stayed home. It never bothered me. Never bothered me. You know, my store was social life. And my kids were my social life. They used to come upstairs and talk, and we always talked. Dinner time, we always talked. No reading newspaper, like some kids read a paper. We always talked. And they always liked to talk to their father. "What shall I do? How shall I do?" And I'm telling you, one in a million, a father like that. That's why they miss him terrible. The boys...

INT: He gave them good advice.

ADELE: Oh, they miss him terrible. Just terrible. Usually kids forget about the parents, you know. No, they miss him terrible. And they treat me really well, really. My sons, my daughters, my daughter-in-laws, my son-in-laws, no trouble. I treat them as they treat me. When I'm there, and they're there for me. Look a day like today. Why should she chauffeur me? Why should she chauffeur me? I have to go Castor Avenue four blocks, I walk. I have a bus, but I want to walk. I go for a hair cut, then I take the Castor Avenue bus, I meet a girlfriend. So what's so bad about it? I come home, I feel different. I feel different.

INT: Because you've been out.

ADELE: Yeah, I was out.

INT: And you're not so lonely.

ADELE: So I need the, you know what? I need the evening for myself. I have to just prepare something to fix, and I have to settle out the bills I do myself, the corresponding. I'm just sending my sister some pictures from, finally from my granddaughter's bas mitzvah. And I keep myself busy. There's plenty what to do. You know, not only housework. Other things I have to take care of. I try my best. That's all I can tell you. I try my best. And I always talk to myself, "Don't lose yourself, Adele. Don't lose yourself." Because if I say I don't like this anymore, I don't like that, then what's left?

INT: What do you mean by losing yourself?

ADELE: That I don't want things for myself. I go down the shore, I love it. I enjoy it. But if I give it up, then I lost something where to go. I go to department stores. I shop. My sister, I was hoping she'll come to the bar mitzvah, but her husband doesn't feel so good. I prepare for her, because in Israel it's very expensive. So I shop and I put away. And when she'll come, she'll have it.

INT: How often do you visit with Lily?

ADELE: I was there two years ago.

INT: Does she ever come here?

ADELE: Four times she was here.

INT: Oh, really?

ADELE: Mm-hm. And I was hoping, but her husband is about 82, 83, and he started to get trouble with his heart, so she's afraid. It's a hard trip.

INT: Oh, sure.

ADELE: I told her, maybe she can come by herself for ten days or something. I don't know what she's going to decide. Maybe her son will come.

INT: But you were never as close with her as you were with Irene, because Irene was here, first of all, and she...

ADELE: Oh, my gosh. She was here every year. Unfortunately, I could never be with her. Even when she was so sick, I couldn't be with her because we had the store. Or

Herman. No, the store we didn't have, but Herman was sick. So we asked my sister from Israel to come and stay with her a little bit.

INT: How did she die? What was wrong with her?

ADELE: She had cancer.

INT: That was pretty recent, her death, right? Just two years?

ADELE: No, it's going to be four, I think it was four. Herman is going to be three, and she died before. And she used to be, I told you, with the kids **every** year, for years and years.

INT: You were very close with her.

ADELE: Oh, yeah. And I had a husband, was not against it. And even if they run in the store, they schlep candy in and cake. Never said a word, never.

INT: He was very tolerant.

ADELE: Very.

INT: Let me ask you about your feelings about non-Jews today, after the war, and what you've been through and losing your family. How do you feel about Germans, for instance, or Poles?

ADELE: I hate them. I hate them.

INT: Yeah. The whole group as a group.

ADELE: (?) I hate them. But I lived in Mayfair, 99% goyim. But they were different goyim. They were so nice to us. They were **so** nice. They did anything they could help.

INT: It wasn't like Europe.

ADELE: No, no. And believe me, they used to love to come to the store. They used to come to the store.

INT: You had non-Jewish friends. Store friends.

ADELE: Not really friends. Store friends. I never went for a coffee. I never invited them. I don't want to start. I don't want to start with them. But I had a neighbor, a next-door neighbor, and he was known for terrible people. That was his second wife. When we moved in, she took to me right away. First she started telling me, "I'm a good Christian," and she had a little front yard. I said, "Mrs. Bart, you don't have to worry. My kids will never step on your stuff." Because when I walk with the kids, I says, "Walk on

the pavement." I wouldn't let them walk on the grass. "Walk on the pavement." We used to cross the street, three in a carriage, and one on the side, and I want to cross the street, and the lady went, "Go ahead, honey." I said, "What do we say?" "Thank you, lady. Thank you, sir." That's how I taught them. And you had to teach them.

INT: So towards the non-Jews in America, you don't feel the same as you feel about, say, the Poles or the Germans?

ADELE: Well, sure. I mean, these are different people. These are my neighbors, and they used to kiss Herman. There was a nun, a young girl, she went and became a nun. She became a nun, and she used to come as a young girl to the store. When we met her once in Clover, she kissed and hugged Herman. That's how much love they had. We helped each other. So these are different Gentile people. This is America, this is not European. But I had nothing to do. On our street there was one family. There was all 99%, 70, 80% Jewish. The whole town.

INT: Are you able to watch Holocaust films, or read books?

ADELE: I don't watch it.

INT: Did you see "Schindler's List," for instance?

ADELE: Yes, I went to see it in Florida. That I wanted to see. I wanted to see what they're showing, how much they're showing.

INT: What did you think of it?

ADELE: I saw worse things. Of course, I cried. But to me it was nothing new. When we were marching, weren't the Germans hitting us or something? To me it wasn't...out of the ordinary.

INT: Who did you go with? I'm curious, did you go by yourself?

ADELE: A girlfriend. We were in Florida, and we went to see "Schindler's List."

INT: Also a survivor, your friend?

ADELE: Yeah. I wanted to see what they're showing and how much.

INT: Because this film has been shown to a lot of non-Jews.

ADELE: I know.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

INT: So you don't avoid, necessarily, Holocaust films, but you...

ADELE: I don't watch them. I'm not interested, really. It upsets me, so why should I watch something that I know already? I don't watch it. No. But that movie I wanted to see.

INT: And your faith in G-d has always stayed with you?

ADELE: Always stayed with me, oh, yes. Because a lot of people say, "Oh, I don't believe in it." No way would I give it up.

INT: Even after the war.

ADELE: I don't care.

INT: So why do you think the Holocaust happened?

ADELE: Who knows? I mean, must be some reason. G-d doesn't punish for nothing. The only thing he cannot take are the good ones. One for all, all for one. But I could never be mad at Him. Mm-mm. I walk on the street and sometimes my tears are coming down, and I say, I always thank Him for being good to me. Oh, yes. In fact, I just have this tzedakah box from Adath Tikvah. There's a lot of money in here. It's a lot of money in here. Anything good happens, my kids take a plane to go, goes in a dollar. They come home, goes in another dollar. I did something good, goes in another dollar. And there's a lot of dollars that I'm going to take it to the synagogue today. Oh, yeah, I do believe. And I give a lot of tzedakah, too. I do. I give a lot of tzedakah. Whenever I can I do. I never say no. In fact, I forgot to make a check for Yizkor. I go to Yolles. I'm a member now to Yolles. I used to belong over there, but then when Herman was alive, it was right here. And I like an Orthodox synagogue. I love it. You know why? Because I know what I'm saying.

INT: Right. You know the prayers.

ADELE: That's right. And I go into the synagogue, I hear a few words, I catch, I know where they are. They have the same machzor I have.

INT: So you can catch up.

ADELE: And I know what I'm saying. It's such gorgeous things. It's a shame people don't know what they're saying. It's gorgeous. It's gorgeous.

INT: So that was fortunate that your father gave you that Hebrew education.

ADELE: You know how many times I say, "I'm so thankful for my father, he sent me to Hebrew school. I'm **so** thankful for it." It makes such a difference. I went to Israel, I could talk. I could understand them.

INT: Do you have any regrets in your life, or any...could you talk about your successes of your life, and any regrets that you might have had, looking back over your life? What would you say are your successes?

ADELE: Well, I always loved the piano, I never had the chance.

INT: Oh, really?

ADELE: Oh, I always, we had a neighbor. I used to sit under the window and listen how she played. I never had a chance to really make something out of me. But thank G-d, my kids made up for it. I never had a chance, because I was young. I came to America, I had to slave. I had to work hard. So I just didn't have a chance. So I'm not sorry, but I see it in my children. Whatever I didn't have, they have it.

INT: They got the education.

ADELE: The education. My daughter took ten years piano lessons. My boys took accordion, and piano. And then my daughter took piano. I mean, we shtimt whatever we could. But not for ourselves. Herman and I, didn't give nothing for us, because we couldn't. But I'm not sorry. I would do it again. Because I got what I deserve. I got what I deserve. So how shall I be sorry? I got a lot of love from them. My son, I wouldn't change them for ten girls, I always say to them. Because they say, "Oh, a son. A son." Not my sons. Mm-mm. I want you to meet them.

INT: I'd like to interview them if that's possible.

ADELE: I'll get all of them here, and I want you to talk to them.

INT: I would like to very much.

ADELE: Yes. I will do that. Maybe on a Sunday. On a Sunday. Because you'll appreciate them, too. They're really gentlemen. And my daughter is such a wonderful daughter. Such a wonderful daughter. I was in her house, I said, "Hedy, just drop me from Bustleton Avenue. I'll take the 50." "Mother, I'll take you." I says, "Hedy, didn't I teach you to listen to Mother? I don't want you to take me home." She said, "Get in the car, Mother." (laughs) And so she took me home.

INT: It sounds like they're very good to you, and you have a very good relationship.

ADELE: Oh, yeah. And I'm good to them, too. I don't criticize them. I mean, like I say, my husband and I were **very** good to the children. We had a family, we could sit down and **talk** to each other. That's why I didn't make the social, that was my social life.

Never, never a "shut up" in my house. I hate that word. And it's always a simcha, in a good mood. Every birthday was celebrated in my house. Every birthday. I made them two engagement parties right in the back. And I never go empty handed. I mean, they like kugel, I make them a kugel. I love to do something for them. Because they appreciate it. My granddaughter and grandson, thirteen and fourteen, or the others. When they hang up, "I love you, Grandma. I love you." I say, "I love you too, Tatele."

INT: That's very nice.

ADELE: It's what you prepare. You have to have a lot of patience. And we just had a lot of patience. My son had to study. I said, "Tatele, any time, just tell me." "Mom, could you go in tomorrow for me, because I have a test." Of course. Just tell me. My daughter, "Mom, you want to go somewhere? Come on, I'll take you, I'll bring you." I said, "No thank you, Cindy. This I can do myself."

INT: So it's a give and take.

ADELE: Yeah. If I need them, they're there. That's all I want to know.

INT: Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this...

ADELE: They had their Hashoah, you know? My daughter is very active in shul. She brings in a lot of money. She...

INT: Which daughter-in-law is this?

ADELE: Daughter. Hedy. And she was the organizer. She made very well for the synagogue. So they were lighting candles, about seven or eight, I think. So she says to me, "Mother, would you like to light a candle?" I didn't know what was going on. I had no idea. I said, "Okay, it's not Yom Tov." I come there, and the synagogue is, no standing place. Kids came with their grandchildren, with their little children. Ach! I didn't know what to expect. I said, "Hedy, I don't believe this!" So they asked the people to light a candle, come the children and the grandchildren. I lit a candle, too. Because my daughter deserved it. The rabbi gave a candle. So in my honor, in the memory of my husband, and all the ten grandchildren walked up. Well, people said, "What a crowd!" (laughs) It's so beautiful.

INT: Just this past Yom HaShoah?

ADELE: Yes. Just now. Just now. One son couldn't make it, because he was in the office till almost 11:00. But the other one stopped early. And you know what? He went back. 9:00 he went back, because he didn't finish. And he went home 11:00. But he was there. And all my grandchildren, from little to big.

INT: That's wonderful.

ADELE: Oh, I really enjoyed that. And it was raining and pouring, I don't know if you remember. So of course, first I wanted to come home. I said, "I got to give Allen something to eat." Because I'm supposed to give him, either check with his wife, she won't have a chance to give him. And I'm going with him. But he was too late. So I gave him an apple, he ate in the car something. So Allen said, "Mom, you're not going back. You didn't see your other daughter yet. But if you really want to go, I'll take you home in the big rain." I said, "I wouldn't do that. That kind of selfishness I wouldn't do." So I slept over. Next day she brought me home. I says, "I can come home by myself." No. Good.

So like I say, you have children, you have to be very careful. The better you are to them, the more, that's what you're going to get. That's what you're going to get. You can't always yell at them. All right, there's a time you have to yell. My husband yelled once in a while, but when they're little, stupid things. But not when they were big. In fact, he didn't want nothing for himself. Everything for the children. Everything. And the main thing is a lot of love. You can't buy love for money. We have to buy love for money, forget it.

INT: Were you able to be affectionate with your children?

ADELE: Oh, yeah. You have to earn it. See, my son says, no matter how many kisses I gave him, and how many hugs he gives me. They always, my kids were always, they came here, the first thing was, Daddy gave them a kiss and a hug. All the time. And you know what, we were in the store. And they used to come in through the back to the counter, because my counter was closed, and gave them a kiss, and go upstairs. Once Herman said to me, "Son, come here. What happened to my kiss? You didn't kiss me for a few days." He says, "You were busy, you were so busy." "I'm never too busy to stop for a minute." So he continued. He realized it, said, "What's going on?" He comes in, goes upstairs. Never too busy. So like I say, love is more than money. We made sure they had money in their pocket. "Daddy, I have enough." "Bring it back, if you don't use it. Have it with you. You didn't use it, fine. But have it with you. Have it with you."

INT: So your husband became successful after...

ADELE: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He built up that store, you wouldn't believe it. It was a **wonderful** store, because first of all, we all worked ourselves. And he knew what he was doing. See, I never mixed in his business. I didn't have time. I know retail, I'm done, that's it. I could depend on him. He knew what he was shopping, he knew what he was doing. I never had to bother with nothing. I just was a helper. Retail, that's it. Finished, I go upstairs. Up and down, up and down, up and down, all day long. It was worth it. It was worth it.

INT: Do you have anything you want to add to this interview?

ADELE: Well, like I say. If you try your best, and you have somebody to work with, it's no problem. But you have to do it from little. Now my grandchildren come here, I

don't want to let them jump on the couch. He was here for Shabbas, no television. He said, "Mom, can I put on television?" I said, "No. Not another word. Not another word." I won't let him do it. Home they do different, and here they know, you know, home is different. But I never let my kids to watch either. Mm-mm. Never fed them near the television. In the kitchen. In the kitchen. It's no good for the child. You're finished, you can go. Twice a year I'll let them: New Year's Eve, and the Pageant. Then I give them something, because they were watching television, they were small. But otherwise, in the kitchen. (laughs)

INT: So there was discipline, but there was a lot of love.

ADELE: Yes. In a nice way.

INT: And a communication going on all the time.

ADELE: No screaming, no, "You bad boy." I don't like when they say, "You're a bad boy." I say, "He's a kid. What do you mean, bad boy? He's not a bad boy." So that's all I can tell you. We tried, Herman and I tried our best, and thank G-d, it worked, because they listened.

INT: And your coping and getting through the war was, you said...

ADELE: My strength. I was young. I was never sick home. I was never sick home. I'm used to the roughness. There was no, you had to walk wherever you went. And here, too, I believe if it's cold, I dress according to the weather, and I'm never cold. I put on shoes, I put on, people are shivering, they're not dressed right. I put on a scarf, I put on a hat, a glove, and I go. And I go. Nothing keeps me back, but I have to get dressed right. So, that's all I can tell you.

INT: You got through the war from your youth and your strength that you say you got from G-d, and...

ADELE: And like I say, we didn't eat too much junk in the house, not like here, they fill up themselves with junk. And we were never a sick family. I never went to a doctor home. 21, I went never to a doctor.

INT: So you had a strong constitution.

ADELE: And you know, you have a cold, home remedies. And thank G-d, I didn't know, my boys said, they also are in good health, thank G-d. And their wives try also not to, they cook, they have nice dinners when they come home. And that's what they wanted. They wanted a home type intelligent girl, and they got it. They knew who they were looking for. Very nice two daughters, really, I can't complain. Like my daughters. They're not daughters. I'm not a mother-in-law. I'm a mother.

INT: I'm just curious. Are the daughters-in-law friendly also? Are they close also, not the way the twins are, but...

ADELE: They live two homes away. And one introduced the other one. One got married first, and introduced a girlfriend.

INT: Oh, gosh. So they're all very close.

ADELE: Yeah. And especially with small children, they help out one another. They live two homes away, and the same age children.

INT: Well, I have to meet these kids.

ADELE: Oh, one is red-headed. All colors. You name it. I got blonde, and red-headed, and brunette. (laughs) All of them. I have the pictures, you saw them. I just added the last one.

INT: Your grandchildren are beautiful.

ADELE: I just add the tenth one. I got a frame for these pictures. And we all tried the best.

INT: I want to thank you very much for your time.

ADELE: My pleasure.

INT: Thank you.

(END OF INTERVIEW)