

INTERVIEW WITH VIOLET NEUMANN

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VIOLET NEUMANN: I'm independent financially, thank G-d. And the rest is not up to me.

INTERVIEWER: (laughs) All right, well, later I want to hear more information about that. Let's just get the basic...what's the date of birth? We have plenty of time, you can tell me all your stories about everything.

VIOLET: 1912.

INT: Do you know the date of your birth?

VIOLET: March, (Problems with tape, briefly)...by people who know him. And I had to have a witness that he died. So two people were with him who, so he...

INT: So for your first husband, there were two witnesses?

VIOLET: There were two, yeah, yeah, who...that was important, otherwise, you know, you never can tell.

INT: Okay. And where was he? Where did he die? Do you know?

VIOLET: In Auschwitz, I can imagine.

INT: Did you talk to the witnesses?

VIOLET: Yeah, when they...

INT: They came to you? And how come they took him and not you?

VIOLET: I'll tell you that also. It was so that couples, the childless couples they took first the husband. You know? The couples without child. And **then** came the wives. But I didn't wait until they would pick me up. I had an aunt in Czechoslovakia, and she sent for me and then, I went over to Czechoslovakia. So I escaped the concentration camp. Because first week the husbands are going and the next week they're following the wives, because they are childless. That was the beginning. That was the beginning.

INT: Did you know what was happening?

VIOLET: Yes, we knew about it then. This aunt, she arranged it, I went with him, that was the beginning.

INT: Okay. We'll get more detail on that. And then when did you marry...

VIOLET: After the World War.

INT: What year was that?

VIOLET: That was...my goodness. Wait, the war...the war was over in '46? Or '45, or '46.

INT: Do you know when you got married?

VIOLET: Susie would know.

INT: That's okay.

VIOLET: '45, I think it was, I think in '46 we got married. If I missed it, I would find it maybe there, but I don't want to.

INT: Okay, well, I'll fill it in later. And how many years were you married?

VIOLET: We were married thirty years. He got sick. He died in Philadelphia.

INT: What kind of sickness did he have?

VIOLET: Oh, he had a heart condition and diabetes, and then at the end he got a stroke. We took him to Lankenau Hospital, and he never regained his consciousness and he lost his speech. But that was my daughter's natural father. (inaudible) He was 74 when he died. And they were very good friends with my first husband.

INT: He was friends with your first husband?

VIOLET: Yeah, because that was a small town where we lived, you know? Trnava. It was a small town.

INT: The name of the town is...?

VIOLET: Trnava, it was in Czechoslovakia.

INT: How do you spell it?

VIOLET: T-r-n-a-v-a. Trnava. T-r-n-a-v-a.

INT: How did you meet your first husband?

VIOLET: My first husband? How did I meet my first husband? Maybe somebody introduced me, because that was also in, he lived in Czechoslovakia and I lived in...these cities were very close to each other.

INT: So you were already in Czechoslovakia when you met your first husband?

VIOLET: After my schooling and everything I went to Czechoslovakia because my mother was there. As I said she had a store or whatever. Yes, I met him in Czechoslovakia.

INT: And how about your second husband, how did you meet him?

VIOLET: I meet him after the Second World War.

INT: Where?

VIOLET: Also in Trnava.

INT: And someone introduced you?

VIOLET: Him I know, you know, that was a small city. I know him from my first husband, and we had mutual friends. I know him. And he, he didn't have a wife, you see? So...

INT: All right, and his education, their educational backgrounds?

VIOLET: He was a lawyer. My second husband.

INT: How about your first one?

VIOLET: Well, he was the printer.

INT: As a printer, okay. And your second husband was a lawyer.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: And how old...was your first husband when he died?

VIOLET: When he died, how old was he when he died? Maybe 41, 42.

INT: And your second husband?

VIOLET: When he died?

INT: Yeah.

VIOLET: He was 74.

INT: And their nationality, the first one?

VIOLET: Czechoslovakian.

INT: Were they both Czechoslovakian?

VIOLET: Both, yeah. But my second husband was born in Austria, actually -- Vienna -
- but they moved with his parents, they moved when he was four years old to Trnava.

INT: The next question is your economic status of your nuclear family. If you just grew up with your mother and she was a housewife, you said you were middle class.

VIOLET: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: So how did she get money? From working?

VIOLET: First of all she got some widow's, you know, after she lost her husband, and then the store was a pretty good store...and we managed.

INT: So she wasn't just a housewife, she worked in a store.

VIOLET: She, yes. (pause) She hated it. It was a very ugly store, but she had to do it. And then was the house, a big house that belonged to her, then, you know, when her parents died. With four, we had four tenants.

INT: Okay, you have one child?

VIOLET: I have just one child.

INT: That's Susan?

VIOLET: Susan Gordon.

INT: And she's forty, right?

VIOLET: She's forty. She just became forty in October.

INT: Okay. And her educational level?

VIOLET: She has college, and she has graduate school.

INT: What did she go to graduate school in?

VIOLET: She got her master's from social work.

INT: And what's her religious affiliation?

VIOLET: Very Orthodox.

INT: Very Orthodox.

VIOLET: (laughs)

INT: More than you?

VIOLET: Maybe more, a little bit. A lovely girl. But you don't see it, I mean, she's a modern one, not, you mean not, she doesn't wear a sheitel and she doesn't wear a tichel, but otherwise, she goes without anything, I mean during the day. But otherwise she goes to shul or so, naturally, she wears a hat, and she...like Bracha. Just like...that's what I can tell you.

INT: Okay. And her, does she have organizational affiliation?

VIOLET: Oh! She's very busy.

INT: Very busy. What are her organizations?

VIOLET: Well, what can I...I don't know. First of all she's, with the school, the children go to the Torah Academy. That's the Orthodox school. And there she is very busy. And then there is the AMIT.

INT: What is AMIT?

VIOLET: AMIT, that was the Mizrachi before, it was called Mizrachi. You know, maybe it will be a time when you will introduce, and you should really talk to her, too.

INT: Yeah, I will.

VIOLET: She has so many, busy with meetings in her house meetings, and in the shul meetings, and she's **very** active. I must tell you that. Very active. She says that's very important. That's what she says, it is very important, to us.

INT: What do you think?

VIOLET: I think so, too, but I wasn't brought up like that, I tell you. She was brought up...

INT: Well, did you raise her to think it was important?

VIOLET: My husband and me, we raised her, (inaudible). My husband, he wasn't too religious. What I missed, I want to give it to my daughter. Really, I mean it. And I had the background. You know, I was with Orthodox girls, always. And I picked it up, and I loved it. And then she goes, she went naturally to the Orthodox schools. To Hillel

Academy, that was the eighth grade, and then she went to Central High. You heard about Central High. She went to Central High, four years, in New York? For girls.

INT: Central Queens? Yeshiva.

VIOLET: In New York. That's where we sent her. She picked up everything. She speaks Ivrit wonderful. She was many times in Israel. From the Federation she was also sent out. Then she went to college in Rutgers, Douglas, but there was also the Hillel Foundation. And then she went to, for her master's, in New York, in Wurtzweiler.

INT: Okay.

VIOLET: We tried to give her the most. As a matter of fact, she wanted to get her Ph.D. But she was pregnant! All the time pregnant. She started, and she was accepted. And she did very good. But she was always, always interrupted.

INT: I know about that.

VIOLET: You know. But you waited. But you still made it.

INT: Okay. Any reason why you had only one child? Did you want more?

VIOLET: First of all, I wasn't too young when I had my first one. I was 38.

INT: Oh, okay.

VIOLET: I was 38 when I got pregnant. It was with Caesarean. And then, after the war, was a very, we didn't want to stay there, you know, after the...no, no way! No way. My husband had a good friend in South America, and he sent us how you call it, that you can go to South America. To go there, we got a visa actually. In Quito, Ecuador. At that time my daughter wasn't here yet, don't forget. This was after we married, but it's a little too early to talk about it now, right?

INT: Okay. Yeah.

VIOLET: That comes after.

INT: We just have a little bit more of this. And your grandchildren?

VIOLET: I have four grandchildren.

INT: Why don't you start from the top. The age?

VIOLET: Alisa will be twelve in April. And then comes Ari, he'll be nine in March. And then is Gavi, how you call, Gavi's, just, how they call him? Gabriel. Gabi. He will be four in January, and then is the baby, he was a year old in December.

INT: And the baby's name?

VIOLET: The baby's name is Kivi. Akiva.

INT: And they all go to Torah Academy. All the older ones go to Torah Academy.

VIOLET: Three of them. Actually not. Two of them. Gavi, he goes to nursery. He goes here, it's very close to them, so, he started, there is a school, a Jewish school there. Adath...

INT: Are you involved in an organization of survivors?

VIOLET: I am. Maybe the Holocaust, and I don't know, they stopped with me. I send them usually paper, news...

INT: Newsletter?

VIOLET: Newsletter. And I paid, you know, I was a member. I don't know what **happened**. They...stopped, and I miss that very much. I was so, always waiting for it. They didn't send it often. Maybe it was once, once in two months or something like that. But it was, you know, people who went through everything. It was close to me. I don't know why. They, they...it is...not there anymore.

INT: What's the name of the organization?

VIOLET: The Holocaust of Survivors, I think? Something like that. Very good paper.

INT: Did you go to meetings?

VIOLET: No, because...I don't know if that was in New York. No. I don't drive, so...

INT: Are you involved in any kind of Holocaust activities? Related activities?

VIOLET: Not really, no. I was, you know, when there was three, four years ago, five years ago, there was the Holocaust. You heard about it maybe. There was a big exhibition. It took three or four days. All the people from all, the whole world, from Europe, I mean.

INT: Oh, yes, I remember. Did you go to that?

VIOLET: Sure. Sure.

INT: How was that?

VIOLET: Very interesting. Very. I tried to meet there people who were...but I wasn't in the concentration camp. You know?

INT: Yeah, you just said that.

VIOLET: I wasn't, so...But there are people, suffered, Bracha's mother, met there Polish people whom she was together. She was in concentration camp. That was interesting.

INT: And how about your hobbies, activities, interests?

VIOLET: Well, what is my interest? I also belonged, when my daughter went to school I always was active in the Hillel Academy. That was many, many years before. Especially my husband, very active. He and I contribute naturally. And I belong to the Mizrachi. And to the Hadassah. But real active, I'm not so physical, I'm not so good anymore.

INT: Okay. Do you work? Did you work? You were a housewife, and you were involved in community activities.

VIOLET: Yes, yes.

INT: Do you have any hobbies?

VIOLET: Hobbies. What hobbies do I have? I really don't know. I'm a very plain person. Oh, you know, really.

INT: Well, your personality's not very plain.

VIOLET: Thank you. I like to read. Especially with Holocaust books. That's still in you. (pause)

INT: Any medical problems that you're experiencing now or in the past? You said arthritis, right?

VIOLET: Yeah. And cancer.

INT: What kind of cancer?

VIOLET: That's what I'm trying to...lymph, lymphoma.

INT: When was that?

VIOLET: When it started? Three years ago.

INT: So '87?

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: Okay. Anything else?

VIOLET: What else?

INT: That's enough. (laughs)

VIOLET: Isn't it enough?

INT: Yes.

VIOLET: That's the main. That's the main. What else do I have, I don't remember. Well, little things, you know, when you have these big things, then the rest somehow, it disappears.

INT: Okay. All right. I'll go into the next part now.

VIOLET: Oh, there is a lot of things to do, right?

INT: Right.

VIOLET: I will tell you, that's a big job.

INT: Well, I enjoy talking to you, so...

VIOLET: Yeah, Bracha told me you are a lovely lady.

INT: (Pause) Okay. So you lived in Budapest before the war, but you also had family in Czechoslovakia? Now you can talk as long as you want.

VIOLET: Yeah. I lived in Budapest before the war, yes. Wait a minute, before the war?

INT: But you said your mother had a store in Czechoslovakia.

VIOLET: Yeah, in Czechoslovakia. That's right. Yes.

INT: So when did you move to Czechoslovakia?

VIOLET: When I moved to Czechoslovakia. I got married there. With my first husband, you know.

INT: Is that when you moved there?

VIOLET: Yeah, I married, yes.

INT: So but you met him in Czechoslovakia.

VIOLET: I met him in Czechoslovakia.

INT: How far was it from Budapest to the town?

VIOLET: It was, it was not too far. You can imagine how far it is when I could walk it, when I had to run for my life, I run from Budapest to Czechoslovakia walking.

INT: Oh, you did? Uh-huh.

VIOLET: It wasn't a big distance. Okay. It was about maybe walking, I don't know. I walked maybe three hours. Who knows? You know, to walk from one country to the other, there is...

INT: So they were near the border, the towns?

VIOLET: Near the border, yeah.

INT: All right. And you already told me that your father died when you were one, and you had a twin sister who was raised with your aunts.

VIOLET: Yes.

INT: Were your mother's seven sisters nearby?

VIOLET: They lived there, all in Hungary, except one who where my sister was a lot, she spent a lot of time. She lived also in Czechoslovakia.

INT: Okay. Were your other mother's sisters...

VIOLET: The other ones, they all lived in Hungary.

INT: Were they in the same town as you?

VIOLET: In the same town.

INT: The same town. The same shul?

VIOLET: In Budapest? Yeah.

INT: So you saw them...a lot.

VIOLET: I saw them. I saw them very often, yes. As a matter of fact, even during the Holocaust, I was hidden by them for a while, until it wasn't too dangerous. Then they caught me.

INT: All right, we'll get to that.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: A little suspense, but we'll get to that.

VIOLET: It's hard to even remember, you know, almost eighty years old -- it's not easy to remember everything. (laughs)

INT: Okay. Your grandparents. What was your relationship with your grandparents like?

VIOLET: My grandparents. My grandfather I also had. My mother's, from my mother's side. My grandfather I didn't know. He passed also away. He had a heart condition. My grandmother I remember very well. And from my father's side, nobody I don't remember. No relatives.

INT: So when he died they didn't stay in touch with you?

VIOLET: What do you mean, when my...

INT: When your father died.

VIOLET: No, they didn't know exactly the date when he died. You know, he died during the First World War, my father. You know.

INT: What did he die from?

VIOLET: He was a soldier.

INT: He was a soldier. So he died in battle.

VIOLET: He died in battle. And my mother got the information that he is dead. That he died. She didn't know which one was the date.

INT: Do you know which battle he died in?

VIOLET: In the first, what was it? I think it was in the First World War.

INT: If you don't know, it's okay. I just wanted to ask you.

VIOLET: I'm not sure. I don't know. Maybe I can find out from somebody who in that time was also a soldier. I can find that out.

INT: You know other people who had fathers in the war?

VIOLET: At that time? Not really.

INT: Okay. That's okay.

VIOLET: I know before, in 1914. I was born in 1912, and he died in 1914.

INT: But his family didn't stay in touch?

VIOLET: No. Not really.

INT: So your mother's, so you just had your grandmother.

VIOLET: Yeah, from my mother's side.

INT: And what was, you said she had a liquor store?

VIOLET: Yeah, she had, and then when she passed away my mother took it over.

INT: How old were you when she passed away? Your grandmother?

VIOLET: My grandmother, how old was she? She was about 65.

INT: And you, how old were you?

VIOLET: I was a young girl. Fourteen.

INT: What was your relationship with her like?

VIOLET: I liked her, we had a nice relationship, as much as I was with her. I was mostly with my mother's sisters, not in Nitra, they had in Nitra the liquor store.

INT: Where's that? In Czechoslovakia?

VIOLET: That's also Czechoslovakia.

INT: Was your mother, your grandmother ill? Your aunts, everybody close?

VIOLET: Yeah. From my mother's side, yes.

INT: Did they celebrate holidays together? Did you get together with for Pesach or Chanukah?

VIOLET: That I don't know, but they visited Mother at least once a year. And they took her, as a matter of fact one daughter took her to Italy. Because she had asthma. So they took her there. They were not bad to her, really. As much as they could do.

INT: Okay. All right. Do you know anything about your parents' marriage?

VIOLET: Not too much.

INT: Did your mother talk to you about your father?

VIOLET: How long were they together altogether? Hardly married. And then the war break out.

INT: Did she ever tell you about what he was like?

VIOLET: She told me he was a very good-looking man. And he was also in the business, as I told you.

INT: And she never remarried?

VIOLET: She remarried.

INT: Oh, she **did** remarry? You didn't tell me that.

VIOLET: To America. That was, here, she remarried here to America.

INT: Oh, okay.

VIOLET: That was even after I married. That was in thirty...I married in '36. I think she married also that time, it was in '36. '36. '37. An American man. That was also...her uncle, my mother's uncle, and this American man were good friends, and the husband came every year to Marienbad. You heard about Marienbad, and Karlsbad? It was a very nice spa for people who had with the stomach some thing. You know, who had money, went there once a year or so to Marienbad. And this uncle of my mother, introduced this Stuhlbach was his name. Introduced him. And...we stayed there. The children, he wanted to remarry, and my mother went to America.

INT: Okay. Your father, do you know anything about what kind of person he was, or did your mother talk to you about, try to tell you about him?

VIOLET: You know, my husband, either in this, he couldn't understand it. That "how it comes that you don't know about your father's side? You are not informed." And that's the truth. He was so upset about it. Because he wanted to write about everybody. You know. But no, I really don't know. They lived all right. That time it wasn't in style to be divorced or something. At that time **nobody** divorced. But I don't think so it was a bad

marriage. But I don't know. I really can't tell you how was the marriage. I really can't tell you. I don't want to say...

INT: All right. And your sister? You said you didn't see her that much?

VIOLET: Not that much.

INT: What was your relationship with her like?

VIOLET: Later on it was better. When she was married, and I was married, then later on we got closer. I visit with her, she visit with me. Later on, yes. She was very young when she died. 21 years old.

INT: What was that like for you when she died?

VIOLET: Terrible. And my mother was in America. I had to provide for...that was...that was terrible. How to write a mother, that her daughter passed away. But I had to, because she didn't write, you know, and something must be wrong. So I had to write her. It was sad.

INT: Were you with your sister when she died?

VIOLET: Yes. To the last minute I was there.

INT: So you did have a pretty close bond, then?

VIOLET: Yeah. At the end she was very sick. She was, I don't know whether she could recognize somebody or what. Nowadays, leukemia is also differently cured. You can live many, many years. It's a different procedure. At that time she got, how you call it? Something, cobalt. Cobalt.

INT: Yeah, okay.

VIOLET: That was it. Six weeks she was finished. In six weeks.

INT: Okay. Were there any friendships or special relationships that were special to you?

VIOLET: To me?

INT: Yeah. To you or your family. Growing up.

VIOLET: Growing up. I had cousins. You know, from my aunts. Sisters. I mean, the children from my aunts. And I went to school and naturally I had friends. But somehow my life was very, very mixed up. I really mean it.

INT: How?

VIOLET: I wasn't like a child stays with the parents and is with the parents, and the parents know about everything, like my daughter with her children, you know, and her husband. **Everything** is like a family. I wasn't, I wasn't brought up like that. I went to one aunt, I went to another aunt, then I finished school, then I learned to make gloves, you know, I should do something. Leather gloves. That was a pretty nice...I made a little money. So I really didn't have...the chance even to know somebody really good. You know? It takes time. You have to grow up with somebody to be a really close friend, don't you think so?

INT: Either, there are relationships that...

VIOLET: Like my daughter, she has friends, they would jump in the fire. Bracha and Susie, there is no better friendship. There is **no** better friendship. And she has many of them like that. But not like Bracha. Many. But it's a different...I think that makes the upbringing, too. Don't you think so?

INT: Do you feel like you missed something, because you didn't have that?

VIOLET: Yeah. Yeah. My upbringing was...my mother didn't push enough I should go further with my studies, you know. Or something. I don't know.

INT: Would you have, do you think? Do you feel like you could have gone...

VIOLET: I could have, I could have. I could have. So...I'm, I give myself credit that I brought it so far. That I married a lawyer, and that was a wonderful marriage. And how many times really do I ask him, "Why did you marry me? You are so intelligent, you are so knowledgeable, and I'm a plain person." "Because I loved you." I have a good personality. You know, I am smooth. I understand people. And so maybe that's what made it easier. But it was, and naturally my daughter, that was our everything. What we could give her, we gave her. To go to camp, to Jewish camp, and all the trimmings. And that gives me a satisfaction. That's the only thing that gives me. What I missed, we did a good job on my daughter. I think at least. She complains and said, "Oh, Mom, you should have done this a little differently." Okay. It's too late. You can't do nothing about it. But she loves me and she...we're very close.

So that's the family now, I mean. And that gives me a little satisfaction. As much as I (?), in my age, and you never can tell. But they care for me. They care for me, very, very much so. Oh, when I was in the hospital, really. It couldn't be better. Then my doctor didn't let me go home. Believe me. She said, "I let you go home, but not in your apartment. You have to go to your daughter." "Okay," I said. "I promise." I was there three weeks, because I was very weak. Very weak. So they took care of me, and then I fight already a little. I said, "Susie, you know what? I try to go home." She said, "Mom! Already? Take time." I said, "You know what? If I won't make it, I'll come back." And so little by little I...

INT: Okay. When you were growing up in your family, with your mother, how did you solve problems and make decisions?

VIOLET: For myself?

INT: Well, in your family. Did your mother make the decisions? If there were problems, how did you work things out?

VIOLET: I made my, you know, then my mother wasn't too religious, and I became more religious. I was in contact then with Orthodox people. And when I needed something, I saw how they are working out. This way, that made me a little bit more...I asked them if I had some problems. They were, you know, Orthodox people are very close. I don't have to tell you, they are very close. And they have...if I had a problem. But at that time, who figured out, this is a problem, or this is not a problem, you know? It was a strange thing. Because my father wasn't there. And my mother, she was a very good wife, very good mother. And thank G-d, I took care of her. She was 95 years old, she lived with me. She was smart, I mean, her mind was till the last minute. So I could be with her. But how can you, nowadays, mothers with these age, they send to the old age home. I said, not me. No, no. She will live with me till the end. I had plenty feeling what...what you can't just, you know, forget. But a mother is a mother, and I felt that that's my, how you call it, that's my...that I should do it.

INT: Okay.

VIOLET: So I did it. I did it. And I'm not sorry for that. And I did the same thing with my husband.

INT: How long was your mother with you?

VIOLET: All the time.

INT: I mean, how many years?

VIOLET: How many, here you mean, living in America? We came here, oh, first she lived in Passaic, you know, she had a house there, and we went there in '49.

INT: We'll get to that.

VIOLET: So since that time.

INT: When you had conflict, how did you deal with it?

VIOLET: Sometimes I was yelling. (laughs) She doesn't, she wasn't a person to yell, no. I was sometimes, and that's still in me, would you believe it, when somebody is upsetting me or something, I am **loud**. That's most likely, I don't know why. That's in me, or what, the upbringing, or what. I don't know.

INT: Being human, maybe.

VIOLET: I don't know. And I hate that, really. I'm so sorry when it happens. But...

INT: Well, if you're upset, it's good to get it out.

VIOLET: Then I'm fine.

INT: Then you're fine. Sounds okay to me. (laughter) So if you and your mother would have arguments, or you would yell?

VIOLET: Yeah, I mean, you know, how long, I told her, I told her what is my, I told her what's no good, and how I feel. I wasn't ashamed to tell her. And she didn't say anything. She didn't argue with me.

INT: Did she accept it, what you said?

VIOLET: Did she? Sometimes she cried. Sometimes she cried, because which mother likes to be insulted? A mother is always supposed to be a good mother, and not to be insulted, you know that. Then I felt sorry, naturally, and I apologized, and then it came another time. That's the way it was. But it wasn't really too bad, especially when she was getting very old, you know. Then I really had to take, I took her out because she couldn't walk good, so I took her out. I, at that time I wasn't...the only thing was I couldn't go **out!** When I went out shopping. She said, "But you won't be too long gone." I said, "Mother, I'm still here. I have to go and buy some groceries or something." She hated to be by herself. She wouldn't live, like me, by myself. **Never!** Never, never, never! Not for an **hour**. She didn't want to stay by herself. So that was, you know, I was really, bound...to stay with her. So I had a pretty hard time. You know, at that time I was younger, too. You know, I used to be younger. Even a couple years ago I was younger, and she was always...

INT: And you're a pretty independent person.

VIOLET: I...I **became**. When my husband was alive I wasn't independent. I relied on him. He did everything. When he passed away, believe it or not, a check to write, it was a problem for me, because everything, he did **everything**. But my Susie said, "Mom, I will show you how to do everything. Then you will be on your own. I don't want you to depend on me with every little thing." And that was good. She showed me. And she said, "And when you have some problem, just find me. But you have to be more independent. You have to do it by yourself, otherwise, you will live terribly. You won't be able to move!" So I tried to go by bus myself. It was everything new. Everything. To go downtown, to go shopping. Now, I'm doing it.

INT: But what you described from your childhood, that you were independent, and you had friends, and you didn't have...

VIOLET: Yes. I had friends, but not so...I think about it, that I really had so very, I had maybe from the school I had one or two friends. But...when I moved away from there, not even that I moved to America, I got married in Trnava, then we finished. And that couldn't that doesn't have to be, because a friendship from two hours apart could meet, right? No. We...maybe it wasn't important for **me**, maybe. I don't know. My life is all in all pretty hectic, really hectic. Nothing stimulating. Nothing...we had parties. Naturally my aunt and her children, you know, they were brought up differently. And I was with them. But that was their children. I was just a niece, don't forget. That was a different story.

INT: How was it different?

VIOLET: I (?). Sure I felt...

INT: You felt left out?

VIOLET: A little bit, yes, yes, yes. I felt it. And that accumulates, and...

INT: Do you think your sister felt left out?

VIOLET: No, she was different, I think. She was more independent. Maybe because she worked, she had a good job. She was different. I was very, you know, that makes you shy, and...they were always...naturally. Your own children are first. Then comes the nephew, or the niece.

But, so it goes. Then, thank G-d, I got married, and it changed everything, especially the second marriage. I liked my second husband much more even than my first one.

INT: All right, we'll get to that. What was your earliest childhood memory?

VIOLET: My earliest childhood memory. I was in Czechoslovakia at that time. I started to go to school. In my grandmother's house. And we lived together with my grandmother, with my mother and me. And nothing exciting. But I can't remember, really.

INT: So you don't have a specific memory.

VIOLET: No. Later on, eventually, when I finished school and I went to Hungary sometimes, they tried to give me a good time.

INT: How old were you then?

VIOLET: I was after school, after I finished, when I was sixteen, seventeen, eighteen.

INT: Do you have any memories from when you were three or four?

VIOLET: Not really. Maybe I wanted to forget the memories. Could be.

INT: So you don't remember anything from before then? From elementary school?

VIOLET: From elementary. Yeah, I went to elementary. But I had also friends, naturally, because it was a very close, very small town. Yeah, and they came to me. They came to me, and I went to them. But I don't know. It was a different lifestyle that time. It wasn't like now the children invite a million friends. And nothing is too much. You know, it was different. It's so different. Thank G-d. It's better. Yeah. No, I really don't remember, some good memories, you mean. I really don't remember good memories.

INT: Was your family affectionate? Or how did they express affection? Were they physical, or...

VIOLET: Yeah, they were pretty affectionate, as much as they could do, you know. They tried, when I was sick they tried to feed me, or they called the doctor, naturally, when I was scared. Somehow I really, I somehow I like to just cut out this very young age.

INT: Do you think that you want to cut it out?

VIOLET: I want to, because I don't know. It's nothing **nice**. Nothing nice happened. There was Mother's Day, you know, that time also we had Mother's Day in school, and I made for my mother something embroidered. And I went to give it to her, I was crying. I was crying. And the children were (?), and it came that I gave it to her, and I was crying. That I remember.

INT: How old were you then?

VIOLET: I know already how to embroider. I was maybe seven, eight.

INT: Why do you think you were crying?

VIOLET: I don't know. It just came.

INT: And how did your mother respond to you? Did she hug you?

VIOLET: I really don't think so.

INT: Was she affectionate? Did she kiss you goodnight, or tuck you in bed? Do you remember?

VIOLET: She was a good person, but maybe it wasn't in her. Some people are not so affectionate.

INT: That's right.

VIOLET: And they love you, but they don't show it.

INT: They don't show it. So she was like that?

VIOLET: I think, I think, I think, because she was a good mother, and she had me really, after the Holocaust she sent me packages, you know, with food, and so, because we couldn't go out right away. And she tried. But she wasn't the type, like I, my daughter, there is no reason, and I hug her, and kiss her. No reason for it. No, that she wasn't. I mean, you give it to her sometimes, on a happy occasion, and I start to cry. Why, there must be some reason for that.

INT: Must be. Maybe it will come to you.

VIOLET: Emotional, yes.

INT: Was it hard for you to give something to your mother?

VIOLET: No, not anymore. Not at that time.

INT: Did you give her presents?

VIOLET: Every birthday and Mother's Day, yes.

INT: When you were little?

VIOLET: When I was little, at that time, it wasn't, Mother's Day, yes, they didn't really have a Mother's Day. Yeah, I gave her, yes.

INT: But just that one time you...

VIOLET: Just one time. Otherwise, not, you know. Birthdays and Mother's Day, and she also, my mother also, always, yes.

INT: So, all right, this is a question about emotional expression. Was she emotional, your mother? Was she not very emotional?

VIOLET: She cried sometimes, maybe because she was sad when she was older already.

INT: Well, when you were growing up?

VIOLET: At that time, no. She wasn't very emotional, I think. No. She...she went, she got a (?), I had to be by myself for four weeks in the store. We had a maid, that's true.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

VIOLET: But still I was very scared. I was scared to death.

INT: To work in the store? When you were 20.

VIOLET: In **that** kind of store.

INT: Liquor store?

VIOLET: Yeah, but they get people to drink.

INT: What were you scared of?

VIOLET: Oh, you know, when they drink, they fight, and whatever.

INT: Was it like a bar? Did they buy bottles, or a place where they sat down and drink?

VIOLET: No, they ask, and they sat down.

INT: Did you tell your mother you were scared?

VIOLET: I told her, but that was again a necessity. She couldn't lift her arm. She couldn't eat. She had to go. And that was a place, (?), where these sicknesses, they cured. And they really cured these sicknesses.

INT: What is it?

VIOLET: Like for a (?). Very famous.

INT: What is it?

VIOLET: That's a city, where there is some kind of water, and some mud, I don't know how. You go to the doctor, and the doctor prescribes, I don't know how many degree the mud should be, and the water should be, and people spend many, many weeks, and they were cured. So...

INT: And did your mother go there?

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: And what did it cure her from? And did that cure her?

VIOLET: That cured her.

INT: What did she have?

VIOLET: She had it in her right arm.

INT: Arthritis?

VIOLET: She couldn't, that was like...

INT: Oh, that's where she was when you were, okay.

VIOLET: Yeah. That, you know, that was something, I was already a big girl. I know I had to do it.

INT: How about...discipline in your family. Did she, how were you disciplined? Did you ever get punishments, or a lot of rules?

VIOLET: Not too much, really.

INT: So, just what you described before, that you would yell at her and she would...

VIOLET: Yeah, but...

INT: But she never, you didn't get punished. She wasn't strict.

VIOLET: No, no, no, she wasn't strict. Maybe that was the problem, too. She should have been stricter, a little bit. In some way, right?

INT: What?

VIOLET: She should have been a little stricter when she felt that something is wrong. But I don't know whether she know when is wrong and when is right. I don't know.

INT: Okay. What was the influence, the role or the function, the influence of religious identity in your family?

VIOLET: That was a big problem between my mother and me.

INT: How was it a problem?

VIOLET: A really big problem. She always called me "The rebbetzin." And I play, that time I learned piano. And came Shabbas, and I didn't play the piano. Finally I stopped. I did it, but that time I wasn't so, but then I learned, little by little. I stopped. And she was mad that I don't play the piano. Because she said, "You are a rebbetzin!" And you know, and it bothered me. It bothered me.

INT: It was an insult?

VIOLET: Yes. Yes.

INT: And that was something that was important to you.

VIOLET: It bothered me very much.

INT: How old were you then?

VIOLET: I was already a big girl. Nineteen, twenty, you know. And as more she did it, as more I stick to it. And that was a big problem at that time.

INT: So what influenced your Jewish identity?

VIOLET: Because I had these girls, three girls, they lived in our house, in Nitra, where my grandmother had the house. And they, they came from Poland. They had to move, they had to emigrate, in Poland, there was big pogroms.

INT: What year was that?

VIOLET: The pogroms.

INT: How old were you then?

VIOLET: I was about twelve years old or so. Ten, eleven. And these girls were also my age, and they rented there an apartment in my grandmother's house. And so we got very close.

INT: Oh, okay.

VIOLET: And I liked it. Whatever, when came Friday, and the candles were lit, and I was down already there, the (?) they called it.

INT: The what?

VIOLET: (?) was the name.

INT: They were sisters?

VIOLET: Three sisters.

INT: Were there parents?

VIOLET: And with the parents, yes. Yes.

INT: And so the family came to your grandmother.

VIOLET: The family, they had to move, because there was a big pogrom at that time in Poland.

INT: So they got out.

VIOLET: They got out.

INT: And how did they find your grandmother?

VIOLET: They ask around most likely. There are many places, and they found us. And we got very...with them I got very close.

INT: Oh, so these were important people to you growing up.

VIOLET: These were important people for me, yes.

INT: Were they the kind of family that is close, the way, an ideal family for you?

VIOLET: It wasn't really. They were not very educated, I mean, you know. Also, they were very learned. Religiously. But they didn't have, they had the least schooling. And one girl went to a store as a salesgirl. And the other went to...another store. They worked. They worked, because they had to. They were very poor people. Very poor people. And that was my ideal. I grew up there.

INT: Okay, so that would be, you got your idea of family from them.

VIOLET: That was more my mother, very much against.

INT: Was she jealous of them?

VIOLET: She didn't want that something under her...that wasn't right. They were good people.

INT: What wasn't right about it?

VIOLET: That they are just religious, and they don't produce nothing. Educated.

INT: Oh, okay. Were they paying rent?

VIOLET: They paid rent, yes.

INT: But they weren't successful. Was that important to your mother?

VIOLET: I think so in a way, yes. Yes.

INT: And so you got your Jewish identity mostly from them, from these girls when you were twelve.

VIOLET: Mostly, yes. Yes. Really.

INT: Did you stay in touch with them?

VIOLET: Until Hitler came, then they **all** went to the gas chamber. The whole family. They were three girls, mother and father.

INT: Oh.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: So that must have been like family.

VIOLET: Yeah. I didn't know even. At that time, you know, nobody was in contact. You couldn't write, you couldn't phone. Everything was cut off. I just, after the Second World War, I realized it.

INT: How come they got them, and not you?

VIOLET: Because I wasn't there anymore. I was in Hungary already.

INT: Oh, okay. We'll get to that.

VIOLET: That was, you know.

INT: All right. What was your family view of life? The philosophy of your family, the attitude of your family?

VIOLET: The attitude?

INT: Or philosophy about life?

VIOLET: To be successful. That was their...you know. To be successful. To make a lot of money. At that time, that was...

INT: That was the attitude. Okay. And could you just describe your family, like give me five adjectives to describe your family? Five words that describe your family?

VIOLET: Like about what? About my family. My family was, they were not bad people. I don't say they were bad people. I wouldn't say **that**. But they were somehow, each, they were, some of them were very selfish.

INT: Selfish?

VIOLET: Some of them.

INT: This includes your cousins and your aunts and your mother, when you talk about your family?

VIOLET: Yes. Some of them were very selfish. And... (pause) they didn't get along too often. Because you know, they were, I don't know. One had more than the other one. You know, there were seven children, seven girls there.

INT: Were they jealous?

VIOLET: They were jealous. When one had more than the other one. I think so, yes.

INT: Can you tell me some more descriptions of them?

VIOLET: But it's interesting. When something happened in the family, that somebody...one sister got very sick. Got **very** sick. Then **all** of a sudden they were **so** good to her. And stayed with her to the last minute. And she got better, naturally. She didn't die. But I don't know what it was. She got an appendix, and it was already a little late to operate. But then they stick together -- when something came like that, they were all right. But otherwise, when everything went smooth, they were not in the best contact.

INT: Okay.

VIOLET: And all this, it happens also among sisters, don't you think so?

INT: Any other descriptions of your family?

VIOLET: I have one cousin living here from my aunt. A daughter. And I have nothing much contact with her, would you believe that? And **first** cousin. And we are so...far from each other. That's sad. That makes me very sad. I tried to call her. She lives in Boston. I tried to call her. She was once here when my mother was alive. That's true, once. But that was just for a short time. She came with her husband. But we are so far. I think she converted. She is not Jewish. Yeah. So far, like day and night.

INT: Okay. What's a typical day like before the war started? Right before the war started. What was the typical day like?

VIOLET: I was married. I lived in Trnava. And I helped out by my husband's ink printing. That was before, the first husband. And I was a housewife, and it wasn't too bad. I had people whom I know. We get together. It was a good...

INT: Did you have friends?

VIOLET: I had **very** good in-laws. Exceptionally good in-laws. That's for sure. Very, very good people.

INT: His parents, and brothers and sisters?

VIOLET: His family, from my first husband, parents, wonderful people. And better than a mother. She was so nice. So affectionate, I mean. Very, very nice. Very nice.

INT: And did you see them often?

VIOLET: They went to Australia. That time when Hitler, you know, before, or after Hitler. After Hitler. I had a brother-in-law. There were two brothers and a girl. One brother, he married, and he took his mother, and they went to Australia.

INT: And they stayed there?

VIOLET: They also died, all of them.

INT: But not in the war. They died in Australia?

VIOLET: No, no, no -- that was after the war.

INT: So you have relatives now in Australia? Or he has?

VIOLET: No, no. We were not even in touch, a little, but not too much in touch. And who else? And I had a sister-in-law, like my own sister couldn't be better. Such a lovely girl. From the Erlinger side. Very, very nice people.

INT: And what happened to her?

VIOLET: Hitler. Concentration camp. She was married maybe three months. And they took her husband first. Then her husband was taken when my first husband. At the same time he went out and went with him. The last time. And she was so, she was three months married. She was so...she didn't want to live. She didn't want to live. That's what I mean. And they took her.

INT: She didn't want to live?

VIOLET: She didn't want to live.

INT: Why?

VIOLET: Because of her husband. Her marriage, she wasn't so young anymore, and finally she married, and it was a wonderful marriage, and they took her, and she wasn't interested. She didn't want to fight.

INT: She didn't want to fight.

VIOLET: Because that was a big fight. That was, what do you think? (laughs) The fight I went through, I'm surprised that I went that through. I really. How I got so much **strength** to figure out all these lies.

INT: I can't wait to hear about it, but we'll get there soon.

VIOLET: Oh! I can't **believe** it! And they took me in chains and put me back, and I escaped again. I can't believe it that I'm here.

INT: We're almost up to that. What was your philosophy of life? What was your view of the world before the war?

VIOLET: Before the war?

INT: Yeah. Your philosophy, your world view.

VIOLET: I missed a lot of being with people together from whom I could learn more. Or do. You know, I blame myself a little bit, too. I wasn't strong enough. That time. That time I wasn't. Then I was strong. When everything was on me, and I have to take care. And then the world was nice and smooth. I don't know why I was so...nothing **exciting** happened with me. Nothing!

INT: Okay. So could you say anything specific, your philosophy of life, what it was before the war? What your philosophy was?

VIOLET: That I should do much better than I did.

INT: So you felt then you should do better.

VIOLET: I felt that I should do, that was partly my...my mistake.

INT: Before the war, what were your expectations for your future?

VIOLET: I wanted to have a family, naturally, like any other good family. A good couple, and...I had to, my husband's work. I went together at that time with people. Normal, normal. Plain. I had a nice apartment. I was satisfied.

INT: Okay. Well, you say you're satisfied, but then you just said that you should do much better. You felt that you should do much better.

VIOLET: Yeah, when I was myself.

INT: So you weren't satisfied with yourself? But you're satisfied with your life.

VIOLET: Than I was myself. I figured I should learn more, or something I missed.

INT: So you felt that before.

VIOLET: Yes. Something I missed, **very** much. And that because it made me like Minderwertigkeitsgefühl, how you call it, that I wasn't...how you call it? There is a word...underestimated myself. How you call that?

INT: Under-achiever? Or that you...

VIOLET: Susie, tell me!

INT: Inferiority complex?

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: You had an inferiority complex. You had an inferiority complex.

VIOLET: Yes. Because I never was sure that I say the right thing, that I can...converse with the people, you know? Something, I was always somehow afraid.

INT: Always afraid.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: How old were you then?

VIOLET: You mean that was before...

INT: The war, yeah.

VIOLET: How old was I? I married the first time, I was 24.

INT: How do you say "inferiority complex" in Yiddish?

VIOLET: That's in German. Minderwertigkeitsgefühl. Feeling. Minder. Less. Less worth feeling.

INT: Okay. I learned some German.

VIOLET: Yeah. (laughs)

INT: Were your expectations for yourself different than what your family wanted for you?

VIOLET: Yes. I wanted to be a little different. I wanted to be a little different.

INT: How did you want to be different?

VIOLET: I wanted to learn a little more. But why is it I wanted to, and I didn't do it? That I don't understand.

INT: Well, maybe we'll understand it...

VIOLET: You know why? Because I didn't get the push. I didn't have the push. Nobody was behind me, "Yes, you will do that. You go and come and try it." I was the person when I was younger, that I needed a push to do new things. I think that was a mistake. By myself I was very uneasy. To start something. I was afraid.

INT: Okay. But what did you want for yourself different than your family wanted for you?

VIOLET: I wanted to be a little more independent. A little more knowledgeable. Do something more to produce something more, you know? To be a little more than I became.

INT: Okay. And your family didn't want anything. They didn't have the high expectations.

VIOLET: No, no. Okay, the one thing, yeah, that I learned in store, or whatever it is. Gloves to make. You know, you had to have some, you had to cut it out and sew. They were hand-made. Oh, it wasn't such a big thing, and you didn't make too much money. I wanted to make a little more money. And you see, here is my sister, she was **entirely** different. Like we were never sisters. That's because most likely we didn't get along so good either. Because she, you know, she thought that she is **somebody**. And that made me feel bad.

INT: So she didn't have a "Minde...."

VIOLET: Minderwertigkeitsgefühl. No. No! She was very... (?) That's what they say. Even if you raise the children in the same house. I see by my daughter. They have four children. Each is different. Lovely children, but each has a different nature. And a different temper. So that was it.

INT: So what you said before, you expected to be more religious in your family than...

VIOLET: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They didn't expect, they didn't...that's nothing. They made it for **nothing**. That was **nothing**.

INT: So you felt...the next question you answered. Were you in the same mold, or different from your family?

VIOLET: In the same...

INT: Mold. Were you similar to your family? You were different.

VIOLET: Otherwise I, you know, I was raised in the same atmosphere. But the religious was a very, that cut us off very much so. They didn't understand me. They didn't understand me. That there can be somebody modern. I loved to go to theaters, to opera, to movies. I **loved** it. And I went, when I was in Budapest. That, I really didn't miss them. But when it comes to religious, they didn't understand me.

INT: Okay.

VIOLET: And that bothers me a lot. My own **mother** didn't understand me.

INT: That's painful.

VIOLET: It's very painful. Until finally I got in my own element, you know? When I got married, that was a different story.

INT: In your first marriage, you felt...

VIOLET: In my first marriage, yes. Okay, then I was also very hard at that time. Because Hitler was already knocking on the door. I married in '36, and Hitler was in two years started **all** the terrible things. It was hard to have a shechitah, you know, to cut in darkness, in some cover, came the shochet and cut. It was for him also very dangerous.

So it was very tough again. Okay, that was that time. That's understandable. You can't do impossible things. What you can do, you can do. So you don't eat meat, or you eat meat, or you don't eat meat, that's up to you. And you can't have meat. You couldn't buy vegetables or something whenever you wanted to. 4:00 the Jews can buy the rotten potatoes.

INT: This was already, well, we're almost there. What were your experiences with anti-Semitism before the war?

VIOLET: It was.

INT: Well, can you describe it for me?

VIOLET: The anti-Semitism in Hungary?

INT: Do you have personal experiences with anti-Semitism?

VIOLET: Not really as much, but I know the Jewish men wanted to go to medical school, they didn't let them, in Budapest. They went to Italy, they went to South

America. They went everywhere, because they didn't get in, in Budapest. They didn't let them in. So you find it, pretty much.

INT: How about your family? Did your family have experiences with anti-Semitism?

VIOLET: Not right away. Naturally, you know, when they had, my uncle had a big store. One of them, whose cousin lives in Boston. He had to, he had mixed, Gentiles and Jewish, how you call it, people who worked for him. Angestellt, how you call it? Who worked for him. And there, sometimes he felt that some of them are anti-Semitic. Yeah. And you know, when the time came and it was worse, they couldn't send them away. **No** way! So little by little it started, to feel. The Jews started to feel. What can I give you to drink at least? A little soda. A little drink, okay?

INT: All right, we're almost done. All right. How about your personal faith system before the war?

VIOLET: My personal...

INT: Faith, belief.

VIOLET: Belief?

INT: Before the war.

VIOLET: In what? In, towards the world?

INT: The world, religion. G-d.

VIOLET: That was strong.

INT: Strong. That was strong. (pause) Anything else you want to say about it?

VIOLET: I always liked to mingle among nice Jewish people. I felt more comfortable. Not that I, I don't hate Gentile people, G-d forbid. There are very nice people among them, and I respect them. But I feel very comfortable with nice...my rabbi, I like my rabbi. He's **so** nice. That kind of people I like, really. And otherwise, everywhere are good people and bad people. Right? That we came here in America, I liked it. My husband, unfortunately, he wasn't too happy here in America.

INT: We'll get to that. Okay. All right. How old were you when the persecution began?

VIOLET: How old I was. I married in '36. It started about in '4...yeah, you know, from the beginning, they just gave us a little taste.

INT: How did your family respond to the events in Europe?

VIOLET: How did they respond? They had to give up slowly but surely everything. And they had to move together people, families. (pause) And as I said, my husband was taken, taken then, in '36, in '42, '42 I think. And then it started. By next week. Next week, my aunt went off from Czechoslovakia. This aunt sent for me. And I went with this old guy to Hungary.

INT: And you walked.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: What was that, about three hours?

VIOLET: Today I wouldn't be able to walk, with my bunion. And I arrived by my aunt. But I couldn't stay there.

INT: Why not?

VIOLET: There was already everything boiling, boiling. No. You couldn't **stay**. None of the strangers, someone strange whom they didn't know, right away it was suspicious. So he took me there. He left and got his money.

INT: Who took you there?

VIOLET: He. This guy. This guy.

INT: Who was he?

VIOLET: That was a Gentile, naturally. A Gentile guy. Like I would be his daughter. My aunt and uncle, they know him.

INT: So you walked to Czechoslovakia, and then the man got his...

VIOLET: And the aunt then, then I stayed there overnight. He left, and I went then to Hungary. I was just overnight. It started to be light, good-bye, I had to go. Because that day I would have been in **big** danger, if they would know that I am there, that they keep me, you know. So I had to disappear.

INT: Who would be in danger? Your aunt would be in danger, or the Gentile...

VIOLET: They would be in danger. Even the Gentile, maybe, it would be dangerous. Nobody should be seen who doesn't belong there. So I went. Then I went myself to Hungary. I went myself to Hungary, because that time in Hungary was better. You know there was a time when in Czechoslovakia started to be much worse than in Hungary. It may be a year later would you believe, that any...so I went to Hungary, and went into coffee houses. The Jewish people. I said, "My goodness, what is that? That's

a different world than here?" We are all, we would go in a mouse hole, by us was such a difference. So I missed that, close to a year, very comfortable by my uncle.

INT: In Hungary.

VIOLET: In Hungary.

INT: By this man.

VIOLET: Not by, by my aunt.

INT: Your aunt.

VIOLET: By my aunt. By the Gottesmanns.

INT: What's your aunt's name?

VIOLET: Irma. Yeah. That was my mother's sister. And she, well, she liked to live, you know, Hungarian people like to, the music, and the going, in the morning they go in the coffee houses. That I told her, "My goodness! Don't you think you should think about it, to find a place?" "Who will you be able to do that? You have no idea what's going on by us. I wouldn't come here just for pleasure." She was looking, "Ah." She didn't believe me!

INT: So she didn't know what was happening?

VIOLET: She didn't believe me what's going on in Czechoslovakia! They lived just like before. They were rich people. Big apartment, and the maid, and the fraulein, you know, for the children. But...then they got, then it was very bad. Then they had to move out from their house, their apartment, I mean. And two couples moved into one or two room apartment. They took away the store. They took away everything. And I was in trouble, too. Because they caught me.

INT: How did they catch you?

VIOLET: I had my brother-in-law, my sister, she should rest in peace, the husband. And he wrote a letter. He know that I was by Gottesmann's. "Please send for me just like you send for Ibie, for Violet." And they caught the letter. They caught the letter! And ring the bell and gendarmes, you know what gendarmes mean, with the...they called it [Ibola Steiner], at that time, Ibola Steiner [was my maiden name]. And I was in the bathroom. And my aunt was there. She didn't know. What could she do? Either I could, you know they lived on the, I don't know, sixteenth floor. Either I could have jumped down, and that was their solution. Or how long can I stay in the bathroom? So I went out. And they caught me and they took me to jail. In Hungary. And they asked, he was so nice, that he said in what jail are you taking me. So they took me, and my aunt, she

came after that. She brought me a coat. I don't know. I went just like, I don't know if it was winter or summer. Anyway, I was there.

And that's nothing. That was just the first part. They didn't let me in Budapest. I went back, I went to Czechoslovakia, they send me back in another jail.

INT: Wait. They took you in Hungary and put you in a jail in Hungary?

VIOLET: First in Hungary. That was just for a couple of hours. That was just temporary. But I was, in Czechoslovakia residence, you know, I married to a Czechoslovakian. So they took me on the borderline, and took me to Garanta, that was another city. And there was my, there I have relatives sitting there. My aunt who sent for me. You know, this guy? My aunt was there, another aunt was there.

INT: In jail?

VIOLET: They were sitting there. I said, "What are you doing here, my goodness?" She says, "What? They thought that we are in (?) because they caught you, they want to know more about it, how it happened." They were staying there just for two days. But I stayed there.

INT: How long?

VIOLET: There was a big trial, how you call it. You know, the (?) , you call it the, who is questioning you.

INT: The judge?

VIOLET: The judge. So what do will we do with this woman? The judge. I don't know. At that time I wasn't even afraid, I don't know why.

INT: You weren't afraid?

VIOLET: No! "So you know what you did?" he said. "You know what you did? You went from Hungary to Czechoslovakia, and you are going now back. You will have where to live and what to eat. Just tomorrow goes a train to Auschwitz. You will have what to eat." I think that I have to think about it! (laughs)

INT: You had to think about it?

VIOLET: I said to myself, there are many, many people whom I know from Czechoslovakia who were in the same, in the same prison, with them. I was also. Just like incidents, like incidents, they were also caught, and they went in. So okay, that was the judge, that was the verdict.

INT: What was the verdict?

VIOLET: It was the verdict that I have to go back. Shipped back, to go on the boat to Hungary, Czechoslovakia borderline, and then they take me from there to Auschwitz. Yeah.

INT: You didn't know about Auschwitz then.

VIOLET: I heard, I heard about it. I said, "My G-d, everything but not Auschwitz." I will try everything but not Auschwitz. And I tried. (laughs) How I tried, but I tried. And next day they took us on a train, two and two, with a tops. When I went with a little lower, I hurt myself, because the other one was pulling me. Two and two.

INT: Who were you stuck to, another woman like you?

VIOLET: No, no. People were looking, "What are these doing?" You know, the train was full. "What kind of people are this?"

INT: You mean the train had regular people, regular passengers? Oh.

VIOLET: Regulars also, people whom they caught. So they put us in the borderline, they let us down.

INT: Who let you down?

VIOLET: The, well, the train stopped, and there was...official and he saw already that we are, that we are Jewish, and you know that...

INT: Was he helping you escape?

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: So he was helping, when he let you down...

VIOLET: We were, you know, he came, and we were, there were five people.

INT: Wait, was the train going to Auschwitz?

VIOLET: No, no, no. That was the train just to, no, that was a train just to...

INT: But how were you supposed to go...

VIOLET: No. I supposed to go with another train, but further, you know. Not with that train.

INT: So he let you down before Auschwitz?

VIOLET: He let us down, and there was, and he was a very nice guy. (inaudible) He said, "You know what? When it's getting dark, about 2:00 at night, I let you go. I don't know where you want to go. I don't want nothing to know. Wherever you go," -- we were about five or six people -- "just don't go in one bunch, because then you are finished." So I went by myself.

INT: How did you get unhooked?

VIOLET: They unhooked us there already by the...where they let us down, you know.

INT: The officials?

VIOLET: Yes.

INT: So when you were on the train you weren't attached.

VIOLET: On the train that we shouldn't escape.

INT: And then he let you escape. Uh-huh. So you went by yourself?

VIOLET: Back to Czechoslovakia.

INT: Wait. But he let you off in the middle of the night?

VIOLET: He let me off 2:00. I don't know if I had, the dogs were barking. That was a village. That was a village!

INT: What country?

VIOLET: I went very slow, but the dogs were still listening, and I said, "Now I'm finished. Now I'm finished." When the dog was barking, I was already said, "That's it. That's it. That's it." And that was about a good three hours or four hours until I walked to Nitra where my brother-in-law was.

INT: How did you know which way to go?

VIOLET: I went maybe, I don't know. I just sat asking. "I don't ask you nothing, I just please tell me, shall I go to the right or to the left?" Just that much.

INT: Did you say "Nitra"? Did you tell the name?

VIOLET: Nitra.

INT: You told the people you wanted to go to Nitra?

VIOLET: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: So you asked directions?

VIOLET: Yeah. He said, "Go to the right."

INT: Were you walking on streets, on, where was this?

VIOLET: No. That was...in a village, in a...small village, and go, and another village and another village, and go, and how did I go so much, I don't know, but I go. And it was about 5:30 or so, close to 6:00 when I arrived to Nitra.

INT: In the morning?

VIOLET: In the morning.

INT: You walked at night?

VIOLET: I walked at night by myself. **All** by myself. How I did it, I thought that when I can sleep, I just think about, "How could I do that, that I went by myself?" Because I was so afraid to go to Auschwitz. I'd rather try this way to escape.

INT: Do you remember what you were thinking and feeling while you were walking?

VIOLET: Do I have feeling? Do I have this? My mind stopped. I just went, went, went and went, and I went all right, because I was in Nitra. I remember the...city. I was very familiar there. My sister lived there, and so, that was no problem. The problem was, I was suspicious. People, you know, what is this woman doing in the morning? And I was somehow suspicious. "What is she doing?" I had already in my mind what I will say. I said that I came to serve some people, because, to find a place, you know, to work by people. Either they will...

INT: So you made up a story?

VIOLET: I made up a story in my mind. And some people followed me, but then they left.

INT: Did they know you were Jewish?

VIOLET: G-d forbid.

INT: So you were a servant. You said....

VIOLET: No, I...I didn't look like Jewish that time. I didn't look like Jewish.

INT: Did you try and make yourself sound like you weren't Jewish?

VIOLET: No. You know, my language was good, because you know, I talked good Slovak, and I talked good Hungarian, so that was no problem, that my accent or something would be suspicious. And I went to my brother-in-law in the house, and he almost fainted! "What are you doing here, for goodness sake?" I said, "Thanks to you that I am here." And I told him what happened.

INT: Were you angry at him? For writing the letter?

VIOLET: I said, "You know they caught your letter, and they caught me and sent me back." But he, naturally he felt guilty, and right away he got in contact. He had a thousand people, you know, for money, they did it. So he had some peasant woman who he gave, I didn't have money. He said, "You know what, I give you as much as you want. Take her to Hungary. Take her back to Hungary." And I was with that peasant woman overnight. I didn't stay there by my brother-in-law. This peasant woman took me to her house, and in the morning we went together. I had maybe peasant, I think so, she gave me some peasant skirt. You know, the peasants, they wear these white skirts. Different. Anyway, and she took me, to Hungary. It was plain luck, that, because Hitler's people, the German people were everywhere. "Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!" But it was sheer luck, sheer luck that they didn't realize. They didn't ask me for, how you call it...

INT: Identification?

VIOLET: Identification.

INT: Because of your peasant skirt? Your peasant clothes? Did that help you?

VIOLET: Maybe, maybe, maybe yes. Maybe. And I was much younger. You look differently, you know.

So anyway, we arrived, and I went to the aunt again. To that aunt? No, to another aunt. And they had to find me, I had to have some identification if I stayed there, and I had to work, you know. But how? That doesn't go from one day to the other. So my aunt had a doctor in a hospital, a lady doctor, who again for money, everybody was for money. Said, "Take my niece, and after we find her papers," you know, that was also not real papers, you know, but I had to have it.

INT: You had papers that say you're not Jewish?

VIOLET: And a certificate and everything what you need.

INT: What did you get fake...

VIOLET: Tickets for food. But that I couldn't get, because that was very (?). That they would find out. And you know how long I was in this hospital? For two weeks, until they finally got the papers. And I was healthy. I was...

INT: So what did you do? You stayed in the hospital bed?

VIOLET: I had to stay in the hospital, in bed!

INT: You had to pretend you were sick?

VIOLET: You know, once she went with the doctor. She was a resident, or what she was. And the other doctor went with her, and the doctor wrote, "Is she Jewish?" Because he didn't find nothing wrong with me. And he wrote on the paper -- she told me after, when the visiting was over -- "Is she Jewish?" She said, "I ignored it. I didn't answer it."

INT: Hm. This is the nurse?

VIOLET: No, that was the doctor, the doctor who knew about me. But you know, a doctor with another doctor, they went visiting all the patients.

INT: So they pretended that they didn't know.

VIOLET: She just ignored it. You had to have luck in everything. It was very tough. Very tough. No, then I got the papers, then I went out from the hospital.

INT: What did the papers say on it?

VIOLET: It was written, "Born in Budapest," and the name, and...

INT: Did it say you were Jewish on the papers?

VIOLET: No! G-d **forbid!**

INT: Fake papers.

VIOLET: Fake papers. When they caught me, it wouldn't have been good.

INT: Oh, okay. So who got you the papers?

VIOLET: For money, somewhere they found in some office or whatever, you know. They had it many, many, many made it like that. Many, many people. So you know, what, to find an apartment. Because I have to go to work. So they find me a one-bedroom apartment. I was there with another woman. That's a different story. I was there with another woman, she took me in. I paid her. I called (?), that was my name. And it was on the papers. And I lived there, and I will find a job. That was no problem at that time. A job was easy to find. I went in a factory, for the soldiers they made covers. But the machine made mistakes, made holes, and we had to finish that by hand. You know, as it came out from the factory, we had to by pieces.

INT: Were the blankets for Nazi soldiers?

VIOLET: For the German soldiers. And nebbech, I was so nebbech, I was such a Gentile, you wouldn't believe it. I had to go to the church. Yeah. To pretend. And they were, and they asked me questions, my co-workers. Naturally, when comes a new person. "From where are you?" And I gave him again a very sad story. I had a stepmother, and she's beating me, she was beating me up every day, and I couldn't stay there, I had to come here to the big city, and find work. And they were so **sorry** for me. They gave, food was very hard to find, because with the food stamp, I got it, but that wasn't good. Something wasn't good, because the food...

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

VIOLET: I was 36. 36? Yeah.

INT: And what was your family's response to the events in Europe?

VIOLET: What do you mean?

INT: How did your family react?

VIOLET: Everybody was scared to death. Everybody wanted to run. Oh, my mother was here already. I mentioned that. She was in America already. She remarried before World War II. So she was here in America. I had just my husband, my first husband. He was taken by the Nazis. Never came back. And we didn't have children at that time. Susie was born after the Second World War here in America. I remarried the second time, and Susan was born then, in America. In 1950.

INT: How did your friends, and the people in the community respond to the events in Europe?

VIOLET: Oh, what shall I tell you? They were running all over. Some people were lucky, and they could go to America. Some people, I don't know, they got American citizen papers, and they go to England, and to be as a maid. They took them to England, some people. And most of the people were hiding. Many people were hiding. And the rest of it went in the gas chamber. And many people were hiding. I was hiding during the war.

INT: You were hiding. All right. I want to get to that. When your friends escaped, did they know what was happening?

VIOLET: Sure. Everybody did.

INT: When did you first know what was happening, about the extermination? How did you find out about that?

VIOLET: When the first transport was taken. When the first...was taken. They said they're going to work, to a working place. Not to Auschwitz or somewhere, but to work. But then everybody find out that that wasn't a working place, but they went to Auschwitz, to Birkenau, to I don't know where. And we know, and then I was lucky. An aunt of mine she sent for me, and I went to Hungary.

INT: Okay. At what point did your family become aware of how serious the situation was? When did you become aware?

VIOLET: What...the year you mean? The year, the year.

INT: Well, the year, or near the beginning?

VIOLET: '42? '41, '42. And you know, even the closest family, they were so scared and so occupied with themselves, each of them, you know, the family, that they even didn't know some of them didn't know where we were hiding. Because they were so scared, they had to find for themselves a hiding place. They know each other. They find each other after the World War. Really, really, really.

INT: So they just hid right where they were?

VIOLET: Because I, I had Gentile papers. I mentioned that, no? And once in a while, at that time I was young and I was so brave. I had many, there were seven girls, my mother's sisters. So I went once to one, and once I almost got burned. Because I went to see them, I wanted to see them. And an SS man came after me. (laughs) "What are you doing here in this Jewish place? You don't know that Gentile people don't supposed to be in a Jewish place?" I said, "No, I made a mistake." I didn't look toward this house. "I made a mistake. I'm looking for another house, not this one." "So go away from here and don't show up anymore here!" So that, you know, I really run for my life. So I couldn't go there. That was, I was there many times, and nothing happened. And I was lucky that he didn't took me right away in the jail or whatever. You know.

INT: Did you go back there after that time? No, that was why.

VIOLET: No, no.

INT: And what actions -- well, you told me some -- what actions were taken by you or your family in response to the threatening events?

VIOLET: In...

INT: What actions did different people take? Well, you got your Gentile papers.

VIOLET: Yes, I got my Gentile papers.

INT: And what did other people in your family do?

VIOLET: On, my mother's aunt, they got a Swedish, some of them got Swedish papers, you know, so that means that they could get an apartment, a room or what. Swedish, they were safe there. With the Swedish papers. But not for too long anyway. You heard about this guy, how many Hungarian Jewish people he saved before he got caught.

INT: Who, Wallenberg?

VIOLET: Wallenberg. So he was also from Sweden.

INT: Oh, yeah. I think so. Did he help your family?

VIOLET: He helped one of my aunts, and they got the Swedish papers. But that was just, he was also taken. You know, at the end, it didn't help, the Swedish paper.

INT: Oh, the relative that...how did they find him? How did they find out that he was Jewish?

VIOLET: My relative? It was Swedish house, you know? That is like saved. They know, Gentiles didn't have a Swedish house. They didn't need it. They had their own papers. But these were Jewish people. They supposed to be safe. But one of those days they were not safe. They took them. They took them **all**! My aunt, and uncle, and whoever was there. They leave more couples leave together. They was all taken because the Swedish paper wasn't good anymore.

INT: So they knew that Wallenberg issued those papers and they knew that...

VIOLET: I think so, yeah. Yeah.

INT: And they knew the people who had them?

VIOLET: Yes, yes. He was a good guy, but you see what happened to him? You have to be very careful how to take care of another Jew. I mean, like a Gentile, there were good Gentiles also. I don't say who, hide who, hid Jewish people in their own somewhere. I don't know, they made in the basement a place, or what. And they hide Jewish people. It was like that. But they were, after a while they got scared, then they said, "I'm sorry. We can't take you anymore." You know, maybe their friends, or what, they said, "How can you do that?" So they got scared, and they had to say, "Well, you have to go."

INT: And then what happened?

VIOLET: They went to another place, they went to another place to try. And they went. And I don't know what happened many times. Oh, my goodness. Terrible.

INT: These are people, specific people that you know that had that experience, that they were hiding?

VIOLET: Yes, yes, yes. My brother-in-law.

INT: What happened?

VIOLET: They lived, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, they lived in their house, and they didn't want to keep them anymore. And this woman said, "I will take you to a house in the evening when it will be dark. I will take you to that house." So they believed her. And what did she do? And the police did, she called the police! They were there, and she called the police, and they caught them.

INT: She turned them in?

VIOLET: She turned them in!

INT: And she told them she was going to help them.

VIOLET: Yeah, yeah, because for money. For money. First they gave her money and then suddenly when they had already, what they had, I don't know what they had in their suitcase. And suddenly there were the police, and they took them. So this kind of nice things they did.

INT: And do you know people that were saved by Christians?

VIOLET: Yes. Yes. They were saved. Even among my aunts.

INT: Your aunts were saved?

VIOLET: They were saved.

INT: And how were they...

VIOLET: They all died. They are all older, you know.

INT: But how were they saved, what happened?

VIOLET: How were they saved? With these people, with these Gentile people. They had...a place where to hide. And they gave them food there in this place where they were sleeping. And when there was danger that they heard somebody, then they have to be very quiet, they shouldn't hear. Like a mouse. And until the end. But at the end anyway, they went to Theresienstadt. To a concentration camp.

INT: How did that happen?

VIOLET: Oh, I know how that happened. When the Jews, they couldn't find any more places, so there was a...a place, how you call it, that wasn't a concentration camp, but in Trnava where I came from there was a city about 30, 40,000 people. And all the Jews were taken there in Trnava, to a place, a working place, where they had to work all different kinds of heavy work. And from there, they took them to concentration camp. That wasn't (?) that they were there, and they could work, and they got a little food. They were fine. But they took them away from there, and they took them to...like my husband went also to Theresienstadt.

INT: And they were all killed there?

VIOLET: No, he came back.

INT: He came back. Your first husband?

VIOLET: My second.

INT: Oh, your second husband, okay.

VIOLET: My second husband, yeah, he came back. My first husband, immediately, they took him and I **never** saw him again. Never, never, never. At that time I was ...young. So! It's terrible.

INT: All right, so now I want to get to your story.

VIOLET: Yes. Yes. So when I got my papers, or when I came from the hospital? I mentioned it that I had to go to the hospital until I got my Gentile papers.

INT: Right. And they wondered what you were doing while you were there.

VIOLET: Yeah, because that was a doctor who was paid, and she kept me.

INT: It was a woman.

VIOLET: A woman doctor, and she kept me there in the hospital until I get my papers I shall be somewhere.

INT: And what did she say was wrong with you?

VIOLET: Somehow she ignored. The doctor asked her, he wrote it that, "What is she? Is she Jewish?" Because he didn't find nothing wrong with me. Why is she laying in bed? (laughs) But she was a smart Gentile woman, a doctor. She said, somehow she ignored the whole question. And somehow, sometimes you had a little luck, even in

these terrible, terrible world what was there, you know. Sometimes you had luck and you slipped through.

So then I got my paper, and I start to work in a factory. And they find me a little place by a Gentile woman where I live. A little room. And I went there, they made their covers, or whatever they made.

INT: They made what?

VIOLET: For the German soldiers. Covers.

INT: Oh, covers, okay. And you were rooming with a Gentile woman?

VIOLET: I paid for her. Yeah, I stayed by in a, no, she thought that I am Gentile, naturally. I paid her the rent.

INT: So you were by yourself.

VIOLET: I was by myself.

INT: And you went to work every day making covers?

VIOLET: Every day until it was bombed down, the factory. (laughs)

INT: Bombed out?

VIOLET: One of those days I go to work, the factory is flat.

INT: Who bombed it?

VIOLET: The Germans, naturally.

INT: And what city were you in?

VIOLET: I was in Hungary, in Budapest. In Budapest.

INT: Oh, so the Germans bombed it.

VIOLET: Sure! And there was our job.

INT: So then what did you do after that?

VIOLET: What did I do without that? I had to live somewhere. In another place. I found most likely somewhere, you know, my memory's failing with every little thing, but I am sure I found somewhere. I wasn't on the street. I know I was very desperate. I was

so desperate. Why should I already to go through all this? Should I go to the gendarmerie? To the gendarmes? And I will turn in myself. I thought...

INT: You were going to turn yourself in as a Jew?

VIOLET: I wanted to, but somehow, then I changed my mind. I wanted to, because I was so desperate, I didn't know what to do. You know, after so many things I tried, and that time I was somehow, where to go now?

INT: Because you didn't have your job, and you couldn't pay the rent?

VIOLET: I didn't have no job. I didn't find a place to live.

INT: You couldn't find another job?

VIOLET: First I had to live somewhere.

INT: So your landlady didn't let you...

VIOLET: I think she let me, yes. I think. But I don't know what happened. She moved, or what.

INT: Did you explain to her that the factory was bombed?

VIOLET: Yes.

INT: So she understood that...

VIOLET: She was a big mamzer, too, you know. And I wouldn't want to talk too much, I shouldn't make a boo-boo, I shouldn't make a mistake. But yes, that's right. I was there for a while. I was there for a while.

INT: But it's not like if you lose a job you can look for another job?

VIOLET: Yeah. Why didn't she find a job? Everybody finds a job, you know?

INT: So why didn't you find another job?

VIOLET: I was afraid, because these papers, these papers were not so good, you know?

INT: You were afraid if you applied for a job someone would discover...you?

VIOLET: I was afraid when I show them the paper, they will see something. They know right away most likely from the...you know, who knows how a paper looks. A birth certificate, or whatever.

INT: Well, how did you get the first job?

VIOLET: The first job I got through a relative. Through a relative. Yes.

INT: So then they didn't look at your papers?

VIOLET: Well, where? At the first job?

INT: And how did your relatives, if your relative was Jewish, how did your relatives get you the job?

VIOLET: He was not there anymore, the main character, you know, because that wasn't his factory anymore. And I got in. There I got in somehow, and I worked there pretty much, and I had Gentile friends there, and I tell them a story, how my stepmother was so bad to me, she hit me, and they gave me food to eat, whatever they had, they gave, because they felt sorry for me. So that was fine, but...

INT: Did you go out with your friends? Did you go to dinner, to a show?

VIOLET: Some. I didn't want to show too much up, you know, because you never can tell, razias, you know, these...

INT: What's "razia?"

VIOLET: Razia is like, they take a place, and they go there, the Germans, and everybody has to show the papers. I was always afraid!

INT: So you couldn't get too close to anybody?

VIOLET: Not too close, no. No.

INT: Were you lonely? For close friendships?

VIOLET: For friendship, sure I was lonely. I went in once in a while to my aunt, whom I know where they live, but then even that I was afraid, you know? They shouldn't catch me.

So then, when everything was...they caught me, naturally. That, you know that.

INT: No.

VIOLET: Yeah!

INT: You didn't get up to that.

VIOLET: I had a brother-in-law in Czechoslovakia.

INT: Right, right.

VIOLET: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And the police came to my, oh, that time I lived by my aunt.

INT: That was after this?

VIOLET: That was after...

INT: That was after the factory?

VIOLET: That was before the factory. Because in Hungary, I think almost a year later, it started, the terrible things, you know? In Hungary.

INT: A year later after the factory?

VIOLET: A year, something, almost a year later, yes. So I was by my aunt, and I was all right. And these people came and they caught me, and they took me away. You know why, because my brother-in-law wrote a letter that they should take him just like me. They should send somebody for him, just like they sent for me, and they had the address and they had everything, and they came. And I was in the bathroom, and I know that is something, I didn't know what to do. There was nothing else to do. I had to show my face. What else could I do? There wasn't another door to go out. I figured I should make them more trouble, you know. They were nice, they took me in, so, I came out. And they took me to jail.

INT: And how long were you in jail?

VIOLET: I went from one jail to the other. First I was in Hungary, where they took me first time. And then I was maybe three, four days, and they took me away, and they put me to Czechoslovakia, because I was married in Czechoslovakia. I was born in Hungary, but I was married in Czechoslovakia. So they took me in Czechoslovakia, to another jail. Ay yai, yai, what to do now?

INT: What was it like in jail?

VIOLET: Every hour there was, they changed, you know? The guard. They changed the guard. And with a, how you call it...?

INT: Gun?

VIOLET: Gun, yeah. And people were laying on the floor. Jews and Jews and Jews on the floor. It was a tremendously big place, and all the Jews were placed in it. Nothing was, what was I, of course I had, there I like to put my head or something, and we were thinking when they will finish us.

INT: So you thought you were going to die then?

VIOLET: I thought that. There I thought that I will die. But somehow, there was then, you know, how you call it? They ask about the whole thing, the big thing, why did I escape? You know, how you call it, they...heard me out. That was by the, how you call it, bureau, by the court. There was a court, and I was sent there, and I had to explain them, how did I get there to Hungary, and you know, without a pass to go to Hungary? How can you do that? Because I was from Czechoslovakia. You know what you did? What big thing. I went from Czechoslovakia to Hungary without a passport.

INT: That was your big crime.

VIOLET: That was my big crime. "So you will have where to live and what to eat. Tomorrow goes, a wagon goes to Auschwitz. You will have that to live, and what." I forget what, I have to find out again something, some trick. So that was it.

INT: That's when you went on the train that you jumped off?

VIOLET: Yes, yes. I went on the train, yeah, yeah, and there was a soldier, he was very nice. And I told you that there were 2:00, another couple, about three, four couples, and he said, "I don't want to know nothing, I don't want to see nothing. You go wherever you want to, and don't ask me any more questions." 2:00 at night. I went by myself.

INT: But you went out and you were separated, right?

VIOLET: Separated.

INT: Was that when you walked to the other town?

VIOLET: Walked to my brother-in-law, I walked to my brother-in-law, and he almost died when he saw me. "What are you doing here?" I was, "Thanks to you that I am here." I said, "You better find somebody to go back," because there was already, everything was **terrible** there already, you know? People were taken, there were no Jews anymore in this city. So he find a woman, an older woman, and she put on me such a peasant skirt, and what, and as her daughter, she took me over to Hungary. Next day. I couldn't stay there. That was dangerous. That was a small city, if they would see me, that was **also** again a terrible thing. So she took me there. And then I went, from Budapest I went to Esterгон. That was also a Hungarian city, and there was some relative of ours, she kept five people, five Jewish people she kept, including me, that was in Esterгон.

INT: But she was Jewish?

VIOLET: She was Jewish. She was Jewish.

INT: Did she have papers also?

VIOLET: No. She was, at that time, as I told you, that time, before, and she was very nice to us. We were cracking nuts to sell it to Budapest. You know, somebody took it open. We opened it and we...

INT: What did you open?

VIOLET: Nuts. And then we measured it, then we had already a rock, then somebody took it to Hungary, to Budapest. And we made a little money, not too much, but we were occupied at least. We did something.

INT: What? With selling nuts?

VIOLET: Yeah, not we directly. Somebody else who could go to Hungary, you know. Who had...who could...so that's what we did. Until the big thing came.

INT: All right, wait. So your brother-in-law wrote a letter. They took you to jail. You went to a few jails, they put you on a train to Auschwitz, you jumped the train...

VIOLET: No. From the train we went down.

INT: Right, you walked to the...

VIOLET: We walked to this station where that was the Hungarian/Slovak, how you call it, borderline.

INT: And did you get your papers after that?

VIOLET: I get the papers after.

INT: You got the papers after. So you dressed up in peasant clothes.

VIOLET: Yeah.

INT: And you stayed with your relative.

VIOLET: Yes. So, after that...yeah. Then I went to my brother. That already I said. To my brother-in-law, and he sent me to Hungary again, and then I went to, not to Budapest anymore. But to Estergon. That was also...

INT: What is Estergon?

VIOLET: Estergon is a Hungarian city. E-s-t-e-r-g-o-n. Estergon.

INT: And what did you do there?

VIOLET: There was this lady, there was this lady who took a couple with three children, and me. Can you imagine?

INT: Oh, and then you told me about that. Did you have your papers yet at this time?

VIOLET: No. Wait a minute. The papers I had after. After, because, I tell you why after. Because in Esterгон was good for a while. You're not in Hungary anymore, but they made it from city to city. One city earlier had to...had the Jewish streets. So one of these days, we had to all run away, move, because she, our landlady, herself had to go.

INT: Was the landlady Jewish?

VIOLET: Naturally. Otherwise she would...

INT: The one who took you and the three kids?

VIOLET: Yes, yes, yes she was Jewish.

INT: So you got there before the Nazis came in, and...

VIOLET: Yes, yes. So she had to, she had to escape herself, but she didn't, nebbech, because she went to Auschwitz. She was an older lady. She had nobody. No, she had no chance to.

And I went back to Budapest. And then I got my papers. Then I got my papers. Yes.

INT: All right. So when they came into Esterгон, they took this woman to Auschwitz.

VIOLET: They took the woman, and we had to naturally.

INT: And you went, and you just had to go to Budapest.

VIOLET: I had to go to Budapest.

INT: They just told you to go to Budapest?

VIOLET: No, I had no other chance. I had nowhere else, nobody.

INT: And who was in Budapest?

VIOLET: In Budapest were still some aunts which were free, still a little free.

INT: So the Nazis didn't come into Budapest yet?

VIOLET: Not yet.

INT: So they came to Estergon first?

VIOLET: To Estergon, or first...anyway, I went to Budapest, but not to my aunt, either, no. I had to find, I had to find a place to live there. They have many Gentile friends, you know? These aunts, all of them. They have many. The mailman, and the cleaning woman. You know, they had, and some of them find me a place. I couldn't be with them anymore, because that was already...

INT: So your aunt asked their Gentile friends, and they found you...

VIOLET: Yeah. He was a mailman. He took their mail every day, and he said, these are nice people. He knew already them. So he find me a place where.

INT: A place to rent, or someone to shelter you?

VIOLET: To rent. No, to rent. To rent, because there I started to, then I had already my papers. And then I start to go to the...to the...you know. The factory. The factory.

INT: All right. So you worked at the factory, the factory got bombed.

VIOLET: The factory got bombed. Where did I go there, after the bombing? My goodness. You know? (laughs) Where did I go there? I went on the street.

INT: Do you know what year that was, when the factory got bombed, or when you came to Budapest?

VIOLET: That was shortly after the war was ended. I think that was shortly before, because I remember we had to go. I was already by this lady, by this Gentile woman I lived. And there we had to go in the basement. Every time. So I don't think so I was working anymore. No, no, no. I was by the Gentile woman, and we spent the time mostly in the basement. That was the end.

INT: Well, the war was ended, weren't you saved?

VIOLET: The war was ended in...wait, when? '56? No! '45. '45. Yes. '45. In '45.

INT: So how many years were you running, and hiding?

VIOLET: Hiding and running? Since, five years. It was a good job, what? (laughter) I did a pretty good job.

INT: You did a good job!

VIOLET: Did you wrote that down? That was also interesting. I had mostly problem with my food stamps. Jewish people didn't get food stamps. That was out of the question. And when you don't get food stamps, what do you eat? Where do you buy?

INT: You can't buy food with money?

VIOLET: Black, on the black market, but it was very dangerous. I wasn't so familiar there, where to go. That was the biggest problem. And each house, as it happened, that in a house, they didn't know that. Everybody had to...to...give in the food stamps. They have to, they had to see it, where they tried or whatever. Just for a day. Just to see that everything is...and I didn't have no food stamps! What will I **do**?

So I run to a little, a little, not a city but a village. I don't know who was that mailman, I think that mailman. He find me, that was just for a day, you know, that was just for a day. They had to go turn in that food stamps, and the next day they got it back. But I didn't turn it in, because I didn't have food stamps. So I had to go away from the house.

INT: Oh, because if you didn't have it, they would know you were Jewish?

VIOLET: They were Jewish where I lived.

INT: If you didn't have the food stamps...

VIOLET: Yeah, then something is suspicious.

INT: Because everybody else had food stamps except for the Jews?

VIOLET: Everybody except the Jews. Everybody. You couldn't get food without those stamps. Because there wasn't food enough.

INT: So you hid. You ran away.

VIOLET: I had to run away. Yes. Next day I came back, my landlady said, "Where were you? Everybody was looking for you." Maybe from the house, the janitor. "They were looking for you, they wanted your food stamps" -- she didn't know that I don't have food stamps -- "and you were not here." I said, "Yes, I had to go to a funeral." (laughs) Sometimes I always, Hashem Yisborach gave me always some good, "I had to go to a funeral and I couldn't be here, but it's all right, I already sent it in, you know." I told her, that when I came home, I gave in and I got it back, and everything is all right. Good thing that she didn't say, "Show me," but I didn't have to show **her**. She wasn't somebody whom I had to show. This was also, you know, something, such a little thing, I can fall down and finished. Just from the food stamps!

INT: So you had to be clever every second.

VIOLET: Just to find the right saying, that they should believe it.

INT: So were there like hundreds of times when you had to find something like that?

VIOLET: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

INT: Thousands of times.

VIOLET: Oh, yes.

INT: All the time, you constantly had to...

VIOLET: All the time. When you go, when you went to work. I went with, in Budapest there was electricity, how you call it? In the big cities they have it. You go with the, not buses but, how you call it?

INT: Subway, train, metro?

VIOLET: Metro. Yes. And I went there, also. You know, I just always was thinking. Then somebody looked on me a little bit suspicious or something, I was already, "My goodness. What will I do, what will I say?" You know, I was already...sometimes I went down from it. I didn't wait it out even that I should go down there when I have to. They shouldn't look at me or whatever. It was terrible. It was nerve-wracking. It was **really** nerve-wracking.

INT: Were you ever relaxed, in five years?

VIOLET: Not really. Not really. How could I?

INT: Right.

VIOLET: But I was young, and I wanted to live. That was the only thing that kept me on going. And I was healthy. Oh, sometimes I had a cold, I had a temperature. I didn't have an aspirin, I didn't have nothing. And I...I survived. You know, young people are stronger. Much stronger. Surviving. And willpower. Willpower.

INT: What did you feel? Did you have some special things that...

VIOLET: My mother was here in America. I wanted to go to my mother.

INT: Did you have something, did that keep you going? Did you have something, that dream of seeing her?

VIOLET: Yeah, that I will go to America. And okay, I'm married. I didn't know at that time that I will be married or not. (laughs) But anyway...

INT: Did you want to get married and have children? Did you think about it?

VIOLET: Yes, yes. You know. To start a new life.

INT: You said at one point you wanted to turn yourself in. You were desperate. What kept you going, and was that your lowest point?

VIOLET: That was very low. That was a very low point. Because I couldn't see the end that they should give me some idea. I was in Budapest not so familiar anymore. Where shall I go? To the police station? Where shall I go? I was walking on the street. Where did I go? I really don't know where did I go. But something, I find a solution. That I know. But that somehow I don't know where.

INT: But why didn't you turn yourself in?

VIOLET: Because I didn't want to go to Auschwitz! (laughter) I said, "That's the last thing." Because I know people who go to Auschwitz, very sad day. Some people came back, but very few. That was a **very** iffy, iffy thing, that somebody came back. In a couple of days I would be finished. They worked very hard, they didn't eat, and they got beaten, and no. That was, I said either Auschwitz, or I have to fight something. And I still thinking where, because I went somewhere. I know I went somewhere. Maybe I find, maybe I thought of a Gentile somebody who took me in maybe. You know from...

INT: Did you have someone that you were hiding?

VIOLET: (?)

INT: Was there a time when you were hiding?

VIOLET: When I was hiding, the woman, no.

INT: So you didn't ever really hide.

VIOLET: No. That woman I paid rent. I wasn't hiding. I don't know. Somebody, I'm sure, gave me a place to live. And that was already pretty much at the end. In a couple of weeks. And that was very hard, too. Very hard.

INT: All right, I have some more questions here, but is there anything more for this part of the story?

VIOLET: As I said, I hide in this basement, with I don't know how many people.

INT: Oh, tell me that part.

VIOLET: That was by this woman. That was by this woman where I was living. Where I lived.

INT: Was this after the factory was bombed?

VIOLET: That was after the factory, and the factory was bombed down, and everything was already bombing and bombing day and night. Day and night. Day and night. You couldn't go even...

INT: Could you hear, you could hear the bombing?

VIOLET: Oh! It was...they made this, how you call it, like the bombing was like one street they bombed down. House after house after...

INT: At civilian targets.

VIOLET: Oh, my goodness! You couldn't go to work. You went...you stayed and you lived in the basement.

INT: So everyone was in the basement?

VIOLET: Oh, there I got lice. There was no water. On one bed, five people slept on one bed. And that's nothing. And by the biggest bombing, they, oh, they said five people have to go every day out with the pail to take drinking water. You know, and not so close. And oh, my goodness, when it was my turn, and the bombs were just...terrible.

INT: In the daytime, too?

VIOLET: That was daytime. That was already at the end. Daytime. And you know what I brought home? An empty pail almost, because, and not just me, the rest of us, five of us, we went always on the door, you know, that we shouldn't be under, on the street. Eventually we can be safe, better than on the street. It was **horrible**. That was something horrible. And we hardly brought, because we were so scared, that do you know, the pails were empty, because so many bombs fell. That was it. That was also a miracle that I wasn't killed that time.

INT: Do you know people that were hit by the bombs?

VIOLET: Oh! There were people on the street, dead people on the...that was the last phase. It was horrible. That was the worst.

INT: That was the worst?

VIOLET: That was the worst. I really didn't know whether I will survive that. I said, "My goodness, I survived so **much**. Now this last part I really would like to, but how? **How** to survive that?" No food. No water. Just like now in Iraq. (laughs) Very similar. Can you imagine?

INT: Yeah. You think about that when you hear...

VIOLET: Oh, yes. Oh yes. But I feel sorry for **them**. I don't feel sorry for them, although they are people too, and there are little children. But for the Iraqis? Not too much.

INT: Children?

VIOLET: The children, yes. Children are children. For children I feel sorry always, yes. You saw what they did. One boy they were like burned terrible. But you know, that was about two weeks ago. The Americans went there and how many dead were there? Remember, that was a hotel, or what was it?

INT: Bomb shelter.

VIOLET: Yeah. And he still didn't want to give in.

INT: Anyway, back to you. So we're in the last part, and this was in Budapest?

VIOLET: That was in Budapest.

INT: And you were living, someone was, the Gentile was hiding you?

VIOLET: I was living with this woman where I worked. I had an apartment there. An "apartment" -- I had a room there. You know, where I went to work, to this factory. The same woman. She went also down. Everybody had to go down. That was a big house.

INT: Everybody.

VIOLET: I don't exactly remember. I don't know how many, six, seven, eight. Can you imagine? And there was nothing to eat.

INT: Your apartment was six stories up?

VIOLET: No, no, maybe third.

INT: Third story, okay. What was the building like?

VIOLET: A big building. And everybody was, everybody in the whole building, sure. Because when you stay up in the heights it's more dangerous than to go in the basement.

INT: Right. So how many people were asleep, you were all day and night you were in the basement?

VIOLET: The last days, yes.

INT: And were people Jewish or non-Jewish in the basement?

VIOLET: They didn't know that I am Jewish.

INT: Were there any Jewish people there, or everyone was...

VIOLET: Maybe yes. You know, you know just afterwards. Maybe yes, maybe there were some.

INT: But everyone was, as if...non-Jewish.

VIOLET: Everybody, yeah. Everybody was quiet, but maybe there were some Jews. Yeah, maybe. Just like I was a Jew. But...

INT: And how long were you living in the basement?

VIOLET: In the basement, maybe two weeks.

INT: Two weeks? The last phase was two weeks?

VIOLET: Then came the Russians. Then came the Russian soldiers.

INT: Let's finish this and we'll get to the Russians. So what were you doing? You were hiding, and you went out for water. And what did you do for food?

VIOLET: That was a smart thing. Somebody told me that, everybody knows already, that it looks like it will be the end.

INT: So you thought it was going to be over?

VIOLET: Yeah, they said it. And I figured, maybe I should buy a piece of bread. That I forgot to tell you. Not too far a bakery, and somehow I got acquainted with him, and on the black market, she sold me now and then a piece of bread.

INT: For money, and no food stamps.

VIOLET: No, I didn't have food stamps. Food stamps was out of the question. So I had a piece of bread. The bread was already green, but I ate it!

INT: You mean moldy?

VIOLET: Moldy. And **I ate it!** And **nothing** happened to me. Would you **believe** that? It was really **moldy**. But I saved it and I ate it, and it was fine, like a cake. Do you believe that? When you are hungry. If I would right away I would have nothing.

INT: Did you save it? Was it green when you bought it?

VIOLET: No, no, no. I got a loaf. She didn't want to sell me, I don't know how much. I got a loaf and every day I ate a little piece of it. I was very careful how much I eat from the bread.

INT: And that was all you had to eat for two weeks?

VIOLET: No, and then I bought a chicken. I don't know where I bought a chicken. Anyway I bought a chicken, and I cooked it. And that I also saved. How long can you save it without an ice box? I ate it. That I had to eat. I couldn't keep it.

INT: And did you cook that up in your apartment?

VIOLET: Yeah, yeah, yeah, no in the apartment.

INT: When you were living in the basement, did you go up sometimes to your apartment also?

VIOLET: Not really. Not really. And maybe I had some apple. Some fruit. And that was it. And I had to be very careful how much I eat. Very. I didn't care if the chicken was smelly or what. I ate it. You know, when you are hungry, you have to eat, and you don't care if it tastes good. Now you can give me the finest thing, I am not hungry. (laughs) You see how human nature is? I mean now, my daughter would cook me the best things, and I am not hungry. I have no appetite. I eat, I eat, but there, every little thing. So I survived. For two weeks I survived on this piece bread, and with this chicken. And I think I had some apple. I had some apple, yes. So that's what I had.

Water, I don't know whether I had water. Because water was very scary. That was worse, and you know what, when you don't have water, it's worse than when you don't have food? I don't know how I, to wash yourself? You couldn't wash yourself. That we needed for eating. For drinking, I mean. You couldn't wash. So naturally I was dirty and lousy and whatever.

INT: And did everybody have lice in the basement?

VIOLET: Everybody.

INT: They were just scratching?

VIOLET: Everybody! That was the first thing, when the war was over, I went to the bathroom to my aunt, because they were also, you know, everybody. And I took a big bath.

INT: And when you went out to get water, where did you go to get the water?

VIOLET: Well, we saw, I don't know what that was.

INT: A pump?

VIOLET: A water fountain or whatever.

INT: So there was a place where...

VIOLET: There was a place, and the people who took care of these things, they were mad. He looked in the pail, and where is the water? You know. So and that was the end. That was the ugly end. Ugly end.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

VIOLET: You know what they did with the woman. So then you know what we did. We made ourself like old ladies, with the kerchief, and dressed like...because what they did, it's unbelievable.

INT: What did they do?

VIOLET: Oh!

INT: What, rape?

VIOLET: Raped, raped all the women. They were like animals.

INT: Wait. The Russians came in to liberate from the Germans.

VIOLET: After, yeah, yeah.

INT: Tell me exactly the moment that it changed. You were two weeks in the basement?

VIOLET: Two weeks.

INT: And then what happened?

VIOLET: And we saw suddenly, we saw that Russian soldiers could come in, in the basement. We didn't know. Suddenly, you know, you didn't know what that is. We saw that this is not the Hungarian soldiers. And they started to talk Russian. They don't talk Hungarian. They talk Russian. And we didn't understand nothing. And then they did whatever they wanted to.

INT: Did you see them raping the other women?

VIOLET: We...didn't. But everybody was scared to death.

INT: Well, how do you know that they were doing that?

VIOLET: They told us, "Be careful, be careful, the Russians are coming, and they are like wild animals. Be careful." So we camouflaged us, with all different kind of shmattas, so that you know, when they saw this is an old woman, so they didn't do it. Didn't touch us.

INT: And then what happened? You went out of the basement?

VIOLET: Then I went out.

INT: You went to your aunt's house?

VIOLET: Then I went to my aunt's house.

INT: And you could be Jewish again after that?

VIOLET: And that's nothing. And my landlady, didn't I mention that? We came up, and then I said, "You know what? Now I want to tell you a story." She said, "What?" "You know that I'm Jewish?" She almost fainted! (laughter) She, "I can't believe." I didn't look too much Jewish, maybe. I don't know. She, but she was also a good one. She went to the houses where they took the Jews, you know, to Auschwitz, and she called me. "Come on, there is so beautiful things. Come, we will take things." How can I get out from there?

INT: That's before she knew.

VIOLET: That was before, before, yeah. Yeah. She was for taking, taking everything, beautiful silver candelabras. Rich, rich houses. I said, "You know, I feel so bad. I have such a headache. Next time I will go." How can I do that? To my folks, nebbach, who went to Auschwitz? Pictures, family pictures on the floor. Aah. So sad. Really. It was so sad. And everything had to stay there, and they were taken, and they were rows and rows with Jews, and she called me to the window. "Look! Look, the Jews. They are taking them again."

INT: So she was anti-Semitic?

VIOLET: I think she was. Otherwise she wouldn't do that thing.

INT: And then when you told her?

VIOLET: Then I told her, "You know what? I am a Jew." (laughs) She says, "I can't believe it. That's not true. But," she said, "But you know, I wasn't bad, you know. I didn't do nothing bad." I said, "Well..."

INT: She said **you** weren't bad?

VIOLET: She, she, she.

INT: She wasn't bad. Oh, she wanted to tell you that she didn't participate.

VIOLET: That she didn't do nothing bad, that I shouldn't eventually tell the...you know, to turn her in to the police or whatever.

INT: So she was worried for herself.

VIOLET: She was worried for **herself**.

INT: Then the tables turned, huh?

VIOLET: Oh, yes. I said, "Yes. That's what it is. Yes. Oh, yeah, you called me, I should go into this neighbor to grab the things." I said, "But, I didn't want to go. I had some excuses." And you know, she was very...

INT: So she was embarrassed. Was she embarrassed?

VIOLET: She was **afraid**. Afraid, afraid.

INT: That you would turn her in.

VIOLET: That I shouldn't turn her in.

INT: Were people turning in people like her?

VIOLET: I don't know...you know, at that time, I figured, to heck with you already. I told her that I am a...I said, "Well, okay, I will see what I can do." I didn't want to tell her that I will turn her in, but...

INT: Did you want to turn her in?

VIOLET: I don't know. I had so much to do with **myself**.

INT: What were your feelings about her?

VIOLET: About her? I said, to heck with you. I was here, and I survived by her, actually. You know? So I went, good-bye.

INT: And were you angry at her? Did you dislike her? Did you feel neutral?

VIOLET: Neutral. Neutral. Neutral. She called me, I should go to church with her. Sometimes I had to, to show. And she made a, you know.

INT: Made a cross.

VIOLET: These things I had to go through.

INT: Yes. Sure.

VIOLET: There was no other way.

INT: That's right.

VIOLET: She was **very**, very surprised.

INT: You got a kick out of that, didn't you?

VIOLET: Oh! That was so funny! (laughs) I said, "Okay, now, now I start a new life."

INT: She said that to you?

VIOLET: I said. "I am leaving, and I start a new life." She didn't say, I don't know what she said. She said something or she didn't say something. I don't know. Anyway I left her alone. And I **never** saw her again. I didn't want to see her again. What for? And then it started from new, how to get home to Czechoslovakia, and to start a new life.

INT: So I have more questions about the war experience. Next time we'll go after the war.

VIOLET: Okay.

INT: What were the parting words, or messages, emotions that you had when you were separated from members of your family?

VIOLET: It was very hard. My husband, my first husband, I walked him to the train station. Yeah, we could...we could...they didn't say anything. I thought he was going like for the working, the working places. We didn't know that they will go to Auschwitz. That time, from the...he took, right from the beginning. You know why? Because the childless, the childless couples were taken the first. The childless couple.

INT: Okay. When you said good-bye to him, did you think you would never see him again?

VIOLET: No. Not really. I didn't think about it.

INT: How did you say good-bye to him?

VIOLET: We kissed each other, and I cried naturally, because I wasn't so sure that I will be seeing him again. I wasn't sure.

INT: What did you say to each other?

VIOLET: I even don't know. I never got, some people got letters. Not too many, but one or two. I never got, not **one letter** from him. Nothing. I just know that he died, with a good friend he went, because I had to have a witness when I get married, you know. Maybe he's somewhere alive, you know. That has to be...that this friend of his, he said, "I saw him. He died." So that was a witness.

INT: Okay.

VIOLET: No, I didn't, I was very...I wasn't a hundred percent sure that I will see him. That I was...but still, you know, you hope that somehow. Never, not a sign. **Nothing.** Disappeared.

INT: Any other separations that you remember?

VIOLET: From my family?

INT: From anybody, anybody close to you?

VIOLET: You know the same time, my sister-in-law took her husband? The sister-in-law was my husband's sister, and she also took **her** husband. They went together. On the same train. And she was just married maybe three or four months. But she was so desperate that she didn't want to live, and she didn't, she decided she won't fight, like I fought. Nothing. She want to die. And she died. That was easy. To die was **very** easy. She didn't want to live. That was it. She was happy, she wasn't so young anymore when she got married, and she was so happy and everything.

INT: Do you think the people that survived in general, they all had fight in them? They all had a fight inside of them?

VIOLET: Inside of them, what? That whether...

INT: You said it's easy to die.

VIOLET: It's very easy.

INT: You could have felt like she did.

VIOLET: You know how she died? Very easy. Her mother, her mother survived, an older lady, her mother survived. What can I tell you? And the daughter didn't want to live. Yes. Such a nice lady, her mother was a very lovely lady. Her mother said, "My daughter, **please** go hide. They have hiding places." "No, Mom, I don't want to hide.

When they catch me, they catch me, and that's it." She didn't, she was...she decided she don't want to live. So finally she wanted her mother to please, they heard German people, to come. You know what her mother said? She put her in a bed, and covered the bed, you know, just like it would have been...but somehow it looked too high, or whatever. And the German people came, and they opened the bed, and she was there. And that was, she was finished. She didn't have to commit suicide. Because you know, they opened the bed and she was there. And her mother was **so** desperate.

INT: And how did her mother live?

VIOLET: She was hiding.

INT: She wanted, her mother wanted to live.

VIOLET: She was hiding with another friend of hers, and she was hiding. She went to Australia after the Second World War.

INT: So you saw her again, your mother-in-law?

VIOLET: After the Second World War, sure. I liked her like my mother. A very lovely lady. Very, very good person. But her son got married.

INT: That was your first husband's brother?

VIOLET: No, no. That's my first husband's brother, yes.

INT: That's your brother-in-law that wrote the letter? The same?

VIOLET: That was a brother of my husband. He wasn't married before, you know. And he got married, and they went to Australia, and they took his mother, too. She died there in Australia.

INT: Is he still there?

VIOLET: They died, all of them. He died. His wife died.

INT: Did they have children?

VIOLET: No, they don't have children. They are buried in Jerusalem. They took the bodies to Israel.

INT: Do you remember any other separations or any messages? Did anybody give you messages to pass on, or anything like that?

VIOLET: From my husband, you mean, or...

INT: Anybody.

VIOLET: (pause) Not really. I have to think about it.

INT: All right, it asks, "Did you take it upon yourself to act on your own?" And you said you always acted on your own. The whole time, you were always acting on your own.

VIOLET: Whole time. Whole time. The whole time. I didn't have really a friend whom I could trust, you know. When you go do something like that, you have to really trust a friend, she shouldn't, because everybody was vicious. The best people turned out to be vicious and bad, and you couldn't trust nobody. It was a world like that.

INT: Were you ever responsible for someone else?

VIOLET: Not really.

INT: Because you were really, no one was responsible for you.

VIOLET: I had nobody. I had nobody. My husband was taken, and...

INT: Did you develop any special bonds during your war experiences?

VIOLET: Some friendship?

INT: Any special bonds. Anything.

VIOLET: You know with who? (laughs) Where I worked, with the woman who worked there, in the factory. Some of them, they happened to like me. And they were plain people, but I had to be also plain. I couldn't be a genadige frau, you know what I mean?

INT: What's a genadige?

VIOLET: I couldn't be a...a big shot. I had to be just like them. I had to do and everything, just like them. And I did it. And they didn't know to the **last minute** that I am a Jew. They didn't know. Because I was like them. I talked like them, with them I went sometimes out for a little walk, or...you couldn't do too much in the world. You know, what, where can you, when there is a...a terrible war, and you never know what can happen. Or a razia. How you call it, a razia?

INT: I don't know.

VIOLET: They closed, for instance, two or three streets. And you have to have, to have something to, that you are the person who you are. How you call it? Not a passport, but something. An identification card. And I wasn't too anxious to go in places where they, on open places, or in a restaurant or something. Because there, very often, very often

happened. And even on the street. They closed the street, and where you were, unfortunately, you were unlucky, and you went on the street, and they said, "Stop. Give me your identification card." Then...

INT: So you had to do that?

VIOLET: No. I was lucky. Because, I told you. My identification, my birth certificate, nothing was really a hundred percent. It wasn't. Maybe if I would have somebody who died, or so. You know, that could have been better. But this was paid for money.

INT: Mm-hm. And you could tell.

VIOLET: And a different name, naturally. Yeah.

INT: All right. So you had this woman that you were, was she special to you? Did you have a close bond with her?

VIOLET: Which woman?

INT: The woman in the factory.

VIOLET: In the factory? Just there where I worked. No, we didn't have...

INT: It wasn't deep?

VIOLET: It wasn't a deep, no. Just when I go to there, and once I called her, because I was very, I always was very cautious. With everything. Maybe that was my luck.

INT: So you couldn't have a bond, really.

VIOLET: Yes. This woman, one woman, I want to see my aunt, one aunt, because there I had more aunts. And I called this woman. "You want to come with me? I want to see an aunt. And we go right away, and then back." Because she was really a Gentile, and I felt somehow more sure, or whatever. And I took her.

INT: She couldn't tell that your aunt was Jewish?

VIOLET: Not really. Or maybe, she was a good person. No. She wasn't, she didn't ask no questions. She went with me, and we went home. So this was the only woman whom I somehow I...but not too close, you know? Not too close. Just...

INT: How did you experience the losses of your loved ones?

VIOLET: So what can I...first of all, I had a sister, but she died before the World War. She got leukemia. She was 29 years old. That was just before the war. When was it? '39, in '40. In '40, I think, or so. That was a terrible thing. To write to my mother -- my

mother was here already in America -- to write to my mother that she lost her daughter. That was something. And I had to, because you know, when I don't write her a month or two months, she will be suspicious. What is it? Why don't I write? So I had to write to her. That was also very, **very** tough. Very tough. Very tough. That was her husband who wrote that they should bring her in. That was her husband, my sister's husband, who wrote that I should, that they should bring him to Budapest just like me. So that was a tragedy. That was a tragedy.

And the rest of the aunts, I know. I had seven aunts. They all, nebbech, most of them were taken to Auschwitz.

INT: Oh, they were. So you lost them during the war?

VIOLET: Most of them. Not all of them.

INT: And how did you hear about it?

VIOLET: That they were, some of them survived. And three or four, they went. How do I know about it? Otherwise they would have come back.

INT: So you just...you didn't get the news, you just knew they didn't come back.

VIOLET: If somebody, after a year, they came back in a month, in a week, or I don't know how. As soon as they could. Everybody wanted to go home. You know, I didn't stay in Budapest for I don't know how long after the war. I just wanted to go home. To Czechoslovakia, where I was married. Unfortunately, yeah, I find the mother-in-law. I went there, I lived there. By my mother.

INT: Well, we'll get to after the war.

VIOLET: But otherwise...

INT: But you didn't witness, you found out afterwards, right? You didn't witness anything. Any deaths.

VIOLET: Any, my sister was before the war. Yes.

INT: Right. And what were your thoughts and feelings during the war?

VIOLET: You know, somehow you lose your feelings, also, somehow. You got so **numb**.

INT: Yeah, that's right.

VIOLET: I really mean it. (pause) And...selfish. And selfish. What will I eat? Where will I take a piece of bread? Where will I live? How do I go to the work, whether they

won't catch me? These things was in my mind. I know my aunts, I know when they were taken. I know that, too. Because I know until they were there, I was visiting them, really. I know, for one of those days I went there, and they weren't there anymore.

INT: What did you, what was your reaction when that happened?

VIOLET: Terrible. Terrible. Terrible. And the whole house. There were a couple of people there. All emptied, then went.

INT: Were you able to grieve? You said you were numb, but did you feel numb then, or did you grieve?

VIOLET: I grieved, naturally. You know, that was my mother's sister. But I was so many, I saw so many people dead on the street. It was nothing special to see a dead person. Really nothing!

INT: So you're numb to that.

VIOLET: Yeah. Oh, there was a sure, the (?), you heard about that. The beautiful shul. Gorgeous. And I passed once by, as a Gentile naturally. I don't know, I had to go somewhere. And that was a **big** yard in this shul, and the yard was from here till up with dead people. I **swear** it's true. Who were dead, and they put, I don't know if they died there, or they just put them there.

INT: Were they Jews, or just...

VIOLET: Jews. No. No. But like a mountain. I got, and you couldn't even, you know, first I stopped, but you couldn't stop. You couldn't feel sorry. When somebody saw you that you stand there or what, you are finished. You shouldn't be sorry for Jews, that they are dead. That was terrible. So I just left. I just saw that and I left. Oh, my goodness. Death was who knows. The (?), who knows how big that yard is. I don't know they died there, maybe they, they....

INT: You don't know how they died?

VIOLET: They shoot them in the Danube, and then they...I don't know how, that I don't know. I never figured it out. Maybe they shoot them there, and then...until, there were so many dead that they couldn't right away put everybody in the grave. You know, they made big graves. But they didn't, they couldn't do it, because there were so many. They couldn't do it. That I...oh, was that a strange...

INT: You had to always grieve privately.

VIOLET: Shall I offer you a tea? You will feel better.

INT: No, I'm fine. I'm fine.

VIOLET: Or a Coca Cola?

INT: No, thanks.

VIOLET: Are you sure?

INT: Yeah, I'm sure.

VIOLET: Because you look so pale. I don't want you...I really would like to have soda or something.

INT: No, but we're going to finish in a few minutes. I have to go to work. So anyway, you had to grieve privately for your aunts and for those.

VIOLET: Privately. Yeah.

INT: Did you go back to your apartment and cry, or what did you do?

VIOLET: No. No. I felt it, but I don't cry, because then I would be suspicious. Why does she cry? Why does she cry? What happened? What happens to a gentile? You got work, you have where to live. What happens to a gentile? You get food. Not too much food. They get also just as much as...but...

INT: You said before that you were numb to your feelings.

VIOLET: Yes.

INT: But those times you felt...

VIOLET: Yes. Sure. Especially after the war. Then it came back. What I lost.

INT: Okay, we'll talk about that next time. That's very important. And what do you think helped you to survive?

VIOLET: I wanted to see my mother. I wanted to go to America. I wanted to forget where I lived. I wanted to forget that place, because they didn't **want** us. They killed us. Just to get out of there as soon as possible. And then met my husband, we got married, and **very** shortly, very shortly, we went. Not to America, to South America. We couldn't get a visa to America. He had a good friend, and he sent us.

INT: All right, we'll do that. So what helped you to survive? Was there anything else? Well, also your cleverness, that you said helped you to survive, that you had to make up things.

VIOLET: You had to be, you had to be lucky. You know what? Clever, because there are so clever people. Professors and doctors and very, very, and pschyia...how you call it?

INT: Psychologists?

VIOLET: Psychologists. And they died. They went to the gas like dead.

INT: Just because you're a psychologist doesn't mean you're clever. They might not have been as clever as you in some ways.

VIOLET: You had to be lucky, I think.

INT: You had to think on your feet.

VIOLET: Think, and you had to be lucky, and I had to do that. And I figured, that will be good, and that I will do, and so.

INT: You mean, you had to be optimistic?

VIOLET: Yes. Yes. Definitely. When you are not optimistic, then you, you didn't live through. Then you didn't live through. Like my sister-in-law, she didn't want to. Finished.

INT: And the people that you know that survived were also...

VIOLET: They're also optimistic?

INT: Maybe it was luck, but they were optimistic, or they had a dream, sort of like you?

VIOLET: Yes. Everybody wants to live, right? That's human nature.

INT: Well, your sister-in-law didn't.

VIOLET: My sister-in-law didn't.

INT: Not everybody did.

VIOLET: No, she really, like a suicide. But she didn't commit, she didn't commit suicide.

INT: What happened to your faith, beliefs, values, and feelings?

VIOLET: To religious?

INT: Yeah.

VIOLET: I became much more...you know what? That was, I promised myself. G-d, when I will survive, and I will start a new life, I will be religious. More religious than I was. I really, that was my promise. And I kept my promise. Maybe that kept me going. Maybe. Because at home, my mother, she should rest in peace, you know, we had a kosher house but, she wasn't that religious, my mother.

INT: When you were a girl you had more faith than your family, right?

VIOLET: I had more faith than my family. They were not, none of them were really like, I had good friends, they were very religious, and I was good friends with them, and I picked it up, every day more and more and more.

INT: That was before.

VIOLET: I became, I became very religious then.

INT: Okay, but during the war.

VIOLET: During the war, I couldn't eat kosher during the war. I was glad that I ate something. Whatever I kept.

INT: But your faith inside?

VIOLET: Oh! That's what I promised myself. If I survive, I will...and I raised my daughter very religious. I am very proud of it. **Very** proud. She's really religious. More than I am. Much more even than I am. Her husband, also. You know her husband?

INT: I'll meet them. I have to interview them.

VIOLET: You go today to the Torah Academy?

INT: No. Not today.

VIOLET: Not today. No Sunday.

INT: What is that?

VIOLET: The Torah Academy, every year they have a big supper in a big hotel. You know, to raise money.

INT: Wait, I have some more questions. Do you feel that your faith is a way of paying back for your surviving? That you paid that back for...

VIOLET: I think so.

INT: You think of it that way.

VIOLET: I think of that that way, yes. Yes. My mother always, nebbech, she said, "This is my rebbetzin. She's my rebbetzin."

INT: During the war, some people felt like, they lost their faith, because they saw what happened.

VIOLET: I am just the opposite.

INT: You were the opposite.

VIOLET: Even if it was Yom Kippur, that I fasted Yom Kippur. I don't know what I ate. A piece of bread or what.

INT: Did you have a Jewish calendar? How did you know when it was?

VIOLET: Jewish calendar, no, it got dark, when it started to be dark, I figured...so exactly, I don't know. But I really had...

INT: But you observed what you could?

VIOLET: I observed really whatever I could, and I davened at home. Naturally, I couldn't go to shul. I couldn't show that I am a Jewish person. But I was very strong-willed for my religion.

INT: What are your beliefs about the war? Like what are your beliefs about how something like that can happen?

VIOLET: Like the Second World War?

INT: Yeah.

VIOLET: That was, I don't know. I don't know, whether the Jews, they didn't deserve it, or maybe some of them were a little too, you know, the German Jews, for instance. I don't talk to many. I don't know all of the German Jews were German. They were not Jews, they were **German**.

INT: What about...explain to me more.

VIOLET: They were not religious. I don't say that **every** German Jew. I don't say, but, most of them. You know? The majority. The majority.

INT: So you believe that because they weren't religious they got punished? That's maybe why it happened?

VIOLET: The Jews were very...they had a very good life before the Second World War. Very good life. And maybe got punished. And who knows? They were too over, you know? They didn't know when to stop.

INT: You mean assimilating, or...

VIOLET: With assimilating, with going, with doing, with travelling, with everything.

INT: What do you mean, they didn't know when to stop going, and what is it about travelling and going and doing? What is that?

VIOLET: They lived so very leisurely, very easy, very...they didn't do, they didn't put their fingers -- I mean it, I talk about the...how you call it. The rich, the more rich people. The middle class. They had all help. They went just for their amusement. They didn't work like here in America people work. Not all of them. Some of them. Most of them were pretty lazy. Really. That was the mentality.

INT: So you think that G-d punished them?

VIOLET: I don't know why.

INT: But you think that G-d let it happen, or made it happen? What do you think is G-d's role in the Holocaust?

VIOLET: I think, I think that G-d got mad at them. They were very...how you call it, *ubermuhtlich*. They were very, they didn't know what to buy, and what to do with themselves. I'm talking about most of the rich people. They were **very**...they...And the religious wasn't important. The religion wasn't important.

INT: So why would your husband die? Do you think he was...

VIOLET: My husband, the first one? I don't know. He wasn't as religious as I am. But that doesn't mean that every not religious people died. That would be silly.

INT: Do you think it goes person to person? That the people who survived...

VIOLET: I really, that is hard to answer. Because why people here, religious people? Young. Right? Young. 26, 28. Get cancer and die. That's...that's not up, I really, that's very hard. That was my feeling, that I wanted to be religious. And that kept me on going. That was my feeling. I don't know whether...

INT: Well, your feeling is one thing, and then your belief...

VIOLET: And I believed. I believed that. Not just a feeling. I believed it.

INT: Well, that was your belief about yourself. And your belief extends to other people that they weren't...

VIOLET: Sure. My family, they're all religious. And that starts from me, you know? And from my husband. That was I who started, who sent the daughter, from kindergarten to Jewish schools. To Central High, and to all the Jewish schools. And she's really good in Jewish.... She goes every week, twice a week she goes to shiurs, Bracha also. That she wouldn't miss for no money. "You have so much now before Pesach." "That takes just an hour; I can't miss that." The Rabbi's shiurim.

INT: But how about your values? Did your values change because of the war?

VIOLET: In what respect? Because of the war?

INT: Yeah. What values you had.

VIOLET: Because of the war. Before the war, what values?

INT: No, because of the war. Did anything change, did your values change?

VIOLET: Not really. I am...I am, since that time. I'm still...

INT: So you had the same values before the war?

VIOLET: Yeah, but in a different, at that time I, you know, I have to watch myself. You mean with the religion?

INT: No, any kind of values. Educational values, ethical values, moral values.

VIOLET: I was a very plain, the same...what shall I tell you? The same...when will I learn English, tell me that.

INT: (laughs) You're doing great. You're doing great.

VIOLET: But I have a friend, a Hungarian friend. She's much worse than I. (laughs) What I want to say? No, I was...I was the same. I wasn't a person who was doing, now I want to go further with my studies. That wasn't in me. I was a good mother. I was a good housewife. I was a good wife. That I can tell. That I know. But I wasn't that, it wasn't in me, maybe my mother's fault. Maybe she didn't push me, you know?

INT: What wasn't in you?

VIOLET: To go, to study, to be something, you know. To be a teacher. Let us say just a teacher. I don't know. It wasn't in me. My sister, she should rest in peace, she was just the opposite. I was just a housewife.

INT: Well, don't say "just."

VIOLET: And my husband was a lawyer. I married a lawyer.

INT: All right. Is there anything else you want to add about...

VIOLET: About...

INT: Anything that we talked about today. Anything about during the war.

VIOLET: During the war. What else did I left out? If I left out something, I...I will tell you next time. If you think you want to see me again.

INT: Yeah.

VIOLET: You are very welcome.

INT: Well, next time, we have to do after the war.

VIOLET: After the war, and maybe after...

INT: That's an important part of this study.

VIOLET: After the war.

INT: This study is how, and one thing we're interested in, our research is in how did people survive? And what they did after the war and how you put your life back together again.

VIOLET: I didn't say nothing about that now?

INT: You started to, but I said we'll talk about it next time.

(END OF INTERVIEW)