

INTERVIEW WITH REGINA ORBACH PENNER

JUNE 16, 1995

**Transcending Trauma Project
Council for Relationships
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INTERVIEWER: I'm doing an interview today, June 16th, 1995, for the Transcending Trauma Project. I'm interviewing a Holocaust survivor. Could you introduce yourself? Your name, age, and where you live?

REGINA ORBACH PENNER: All right. I'm now a very old lady. I'm 76. (laughs)

INT: Your date of birth?

REGINA: August 18th, ... and I was born in Poland. Oh, I forgot the machine is working. (laughs)

INT: Oh, okay! You were born in...

REGINA: 1918.

INT: 1918. And your name is?

REGINA: Regina Penner. This is my, not maiden name. That is my name, married name.

INT: And where were you born?

REGINA: Poland. Chenstochowa (Czestochowa?).

INT: Could you spell that?

REGINA: I hope to write you and not to have to spell. (pause)

INT: So that's C-h-e-n-s-t-o-c-h-o-w-a. Thank you. Your marital status? How long have you been married, when you were married, and how long you've been a widow?

REGINA: I was married after the war. I met a guy who was in Auschwitz, and we met in Germany in Munich in a museum, and from the museum he took me as his wife, not right away. Just three days later, I was Mrs. Penner.

INT: Oh! Things happened fast!

REGINA: Yeah, very fast.

INT: What year was that?

REGINA: Right away after the war.

INT: So about 1945?

REGINA: Yes. I was looking for my brother, I had two brothers alive. The rest of my family, the whole rest of my family disappeared.

INT: How long were you married?

REGINA: My husband died four years ago, five years ago.

INT: Mm-hm. So you're married over forty years?

REGINA: I was married more than forty years.

INT: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. (pause)

REGINA: You know what this is? This is from Neumann Center. And this is my daughter. When she came to this country, she was two and a half years old, and we were in Boston, for four years in Boston. We were...we had over there, in Boston people what they met us and they took us in. Better than the family. This kid, this is my daughter.

INT: What's her name, and how old is she?

REGINA: She is 47 years old.

INT: Her name? Her name is?

REGINA: Claire (?) She's married. This is her son. This is my grandson.

INT: Do they live nearby? Do they live in the area?

REGINA: They live not in the area, just not too far. This kid...when she was born, she was born in Germany. I lived in Germany four years more.

INT: For four more years?

REGINA: Mm-hm.

INT: After the war.

REGINA: After the war. Those are my two brothers. This is my brother, he went to Israel and he married in Israel, and they live in Israel. This is the brother, was the baby.

INT: So you have one older brother and a younger brother?

REGINA: I have two brothers more. They are not here. This is my husband. And this is his wife. This married in New York with an American girl.

INT: And he lives there now?

REGINA: He lives in California. And this lives in Israel. With the whole family. His daughter...I have to show it to you. The pictures of his daughter.

INT: Maybe you could, do you want to show it to me a little later, and you don't have to get up so often?

REGINA: No, it's all right. (pause) This is my niece, which is married now in Israel with an American boy, and he went to the...in Israel, he went and he's a rabbi. He went...to Jerusalem, and he is now a rabbi. He knew so much about Judaism like you know Catholics. Just, and she have now four kids, in a very short time. Those are our Jewish people, you know? (laughs) The rabbis.

INT: Yes, they have a lot, bigger families.

REGINA: (laughs) Yeah.

INT: Can I ask a little bit about your education, your husband's education, whether you worked, and what kind of work your husband did?

REGINA: My education was in Chenstochowa. In Poland. I went until I went to Germans. I just finished school. I was supposed to go, I went to a Jewish, a Hebrew Gymnasium. And I learned a lot of languages, which they are Polish, German, whatever. I learned over there. Still, I am helping people when they need something. Now, I couldn't speak a word of English. In a very short time I learned. I didn't go to school. Just I had my books. Wherever a book was, and I could get it. I learned from the books. By myself. When we got married, like I told you, three days, I was Mrs. Penner. We were three couples. Playing cards in (laughs) and enjoying ourselves already. My husband -- my "husband." At that time he was not my husband. I met him, and we got acquainted. He was a married man before. He had two children, and all three, his wife and the two children, went into...to the Holocaust. And...

INT: So he lost his first family.

REGINA: He lost his family. I looked, because somebody said probably this kid is one of his daughters. Supposed to be in England in some place. We looked **all over**. We sent all over, wherever somebody told us. Just one of the guys was my husband was from Cracow, also from Poland. And when I came over there, to the (?) over there, and there were...a lot of people what came to look for their families. This was terrible. And...so my brother was married. One of my brothers was married. Both of my brothers was married. Just one of my sister-in-laws was with me together. So I knew that she is alive. And I just didn't know that she didn't wait even to see or her husband is still alive, which he was not. She married right away somebody else. When I

came, I said, "I am looking for my sister-in-law," so this guy -- I called him, "this guy"-- used to live already in Munich, by a German woman has just a place where to live, and when I was talking to him, and I didn't have no money. I didn't have no, nothing to wear, and I can tell you, I have from everything too much. Now, not from now. When I dressed something, could be for thirty years ago, you know? Because my husband didn't know about money. How much I spent. I bought for him to be dressed. And he didn't know anything about money. He knew how to work.

INT: When you came to the United States, what kind of work did he do?

REGINA: Now. Now I am coming to it.

INT: Okay.

REGINA: So he took me over, and I was working there, because a lot of people like I was were living already there in this house.

INT: This is still in Germany?

REGINA: In Germany. And they were living in their house. I was working, a house like this, not just a couple of...I was walking up and down and up and down to each person, what was living there. To look for my sister-in-law. And I found her. I found her, I said to her, "Can I sleep by you? Because I don't have no transportation to go." We were still on the bridges, you know, and I didn't have nothing to eat, and nothing, I didn't have no money. And happened, I went up to my sister-in-law, I came up, I asked her if she has a little place that I can stay with her. "No, there's no place." So I went down and I was crying. Here I don't have anybody. Over there, the girls what were there, I will come to this, too. We didn't have where to go. So we were sleeping still under bridges. We didn't have where to go. Just when I came down, I said to...to Peter -- my husband's name was Peter -- I said to him, "I don't have no place where to go. I didn't have no money, I don't have anything, I don't have to change." Because I didn't have it, even when I was there on the bridge, I didn't have it. So he said to me, what...what take me to get married right away with him. Because he was honest with me, you know? He, when he will say something, "Come with me, you will sleep with me, will not be a marriage." I am not from those people, and I was not born like this. And everything what I was doing was kosher. And...

INT: You were approximately how old when you met Peter?

REGINA: Eighteen. (pause) Eighteen years. When he would say, "Come, you will sleep with me," would not be marriage. Because I was not used to it.

INT: But he offered, it sounds like he offered to help you.

REGINA: So he said to me, "I will go in here," a German woman what I know already, because we was living there a couple months, or a year, I don't know how long he was living there. And he had some...some already from the Germans. He was talking nine languages. He was in the

camps after the war. The Jewish, Jewish theater and the Russian theater, he was working with them. He was working with them, he knew the Russian, those German people a little, and they liked him, because he spoke fluently German. I'm coming to this, and then when in the morning, I came to, they thought that I am...Hungarian. They were talking to me, and I was, I couldn't speak Hungarian. Just we were together. They said, when I came in, I said, "Hello, everybody. I'm a married woman." "Who is your husband?" "I married Peter. Peter Penner. He was in Auschwitz." And they were all, the Hungarian people were also in Auschwitz, and they knew Peter better than I knew, because I just married three days (laughs) the third day, but I knew him.

INT: What did he say to you? How did he propose to you?

REGINA: Nothing. We were three couples. With three couples, they were saying to me, "Reginka, Reginka, don't say that Peter is your husband." I said, "Why I should not say? I'm married to him." "I was in love with him, in camp." They were thinking about love. And I was not thinking about love. I was thinking I should have where to come in and to do something with myself. All right? I, we had a lot of people in camps, in the camps, what they couldn't write, and they couldn't read, and they couldn't talk. So when I married, so they were trying, "Don't say Peter is your husband." I said, "Peter is my husband."

Peter was having in Cracow his one business, just for women, beauticians. And had a large amount of clientele, whether they knew him, you know. Or when we were, when I was married already, we went from Boston, we were in Boston, we came to Boston.

INT: From Germany?

REGINA: Yeah, from Germany to Boston, and we met over there people what they took in, took us in, like we would be the best which we were like. This kid of mine, was more with them, because I was more in the hospitals. I was very sick.

INT: So you were sick after the war? Your health was poor?

REGINA: I was very sick. I had gall bladder operations after. In Germany, I was standing by two machines and working. And I was standing and crying that I was sick. Just after the war, right away after the war, yeah.

Then I got a nun, coming in every day to help me with, I was pregnant. When I was pregnant seven months, you would never believe that I was pregnant. Then in the eighth month, came out like -- oh, brother. When this kid came, all the nurses over there took this kid. But I went through so much. Took this kid, put in ribbons on the head, and take this kid to show this kid to everybody. All right. This kid is a mother from this boy. She have just one child. I have one child. I never had more than one child. My daughter. And I...

INT: How old is your grandson?

REGINA: My grandson is now seventeen years old. He graduate last week. In fact, I had a piece of cake, and yesterday we finished the cake. So...

INT: Could we just go back a little bit to...

REGINA: A little bit. I was standing by two machines and working, and I got beaten up from the murder. My brother, in the morning, this one, the kid, nine years old, came to...to me.

INT: Your younger brother.

REGINA: My youngest. And he said, "You don't have to tell us what happened in the night time. We know everything what happened to you." And my brother, this one.

INT: Your older brother.

REGINA: Yeah. He is younger than I am. Those two are younger than I am. I was in between. So anyhow, he went in, not this one. Just the other one what disappeared already, went into the director of the...the factories what we were working.

INT: What kind of factory was it?

REGINA: We make ammunition for ourselves. That's what I was doing. So I was standing by the two machines. And my brother went into the director, because my brother was working in another place, and...by machines what he fixed everything, you know? And he told the director what happened to his sister. And was like everybody in the factory. Most people what was all there was Polish Jews. That was in the beginning. No, I remember, I could go out on papers, and nobody will say that I'm Jewish. And when you don't look like a Jew, and you spoke the language better than they did, you was not Jewish. What I saw, what I saw in my life. My mother was with me together, and they took my mother from my hand. My father, when I was sixteen years old, my father gave me a diamond ring. And I was (pause) and I was working with my mother, and I had the diamond ring on my finger. I took the diamond ring out of my finger, and I was working with her, and I saw what is going on. I took my ring, and I gave to my mother. I didn't see the ring, and I didn't see my mother anymore. Now, when I talk about...I didn't see my father, I didn't see the brothers, I didn't see my mother anymore.

INT: You all had arrived in time?

REGINA: Yeah. Just what I saw in my life, when I would be old, like now, I couldn't, I couldn't do anything. First of all, I wasn't used to do anything, because I went to school.

INT: You grew up in Poland and you went to school?

REGINA: I went to a Jewish gymnasium, a Hebrew. I learned Hebrew. And I was talking very well Hebrew. I forgot already. I remind myself here already, in New York, I was working, because my husband, I'm mixing up now. We had a beauty parlor.

INT: Maybe we could go back, and then we'll...go correctly.

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: When you moved from Germany to Boston, you lived there for...

REGINA: Four years.

INT: And then when did you come to Philadelphia?

REGINA: Oh, to Philadelphia, I came to Boston.

INT: First.

REGINA: Right. I came to New York from Boston to New York. In New York I lived a lot of years. Like thirty years or more.

INT: And how did you come to relocate to Philadelphia?

REGINA: Now, when I...we have over there a beauty parlor. I had in New York, in a house. The hand was still hands to work. And we had the whole United Nations in New York came to our store to have their hair done. I had whatever I want. They brought me in New York. They brought me for the United Nations. Cigarettes and wine, and whatever. I had a clientele, a beautiful clientele. Jewish, mixed. And we were working. I still, I didn't know how to work. Just I was working and massaging people. You know. And mostly I was doing just...the cash and this. And I...for when the time came to something. My accountant didn't have to do a lot. Just I had an accountant, it was everything prepared for him. And nobody did, just my two hands. And we were in New York, we were more than forty years. Between, you know. Just, I had to learn quick.

INT: You had to learn a language.

REGINA: I had to talk to them. It was not easy. Just we were talking all the languages, you know. And...and...shows.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

REGINA: So I didn't know the business at all. Yet, I learned how to make a manicure. How to make, when it was here already, in, just not in Philadelphia. Yeah, in Philadelphia.

INT: So you relocated from New York to Philadelphia, both of you?

REGINA: No. My husband, my husband died in New York. No, my husband died already here. Here in King David. I was the sick one. Always sick. I had two operations over there. I had a gall bladder operation. I brought to America 29 stones. And I went here, and I was sick here again with two stones. Just I had to be cut the second time.

INT: And how was your husband's health?

REGINA: He was, later on he was in a home, he got Alzheimer's.

INT: Was he older than you?

REGINA: A lot of years.

INT: How much older?

REGINA: He could be my father.

INT: So you married at around age...eighteen?

REGINA: No. I married around age...later.

INT: Oh, later. You met him...

REGINA: I met him, not when I was eighteen. I was...I was older than eighteen.

INT: After, oh, after the war. Right after the war. So you could have been...

REGINA: Twenty. In the twenties. In the twenties. Believe me, I don't remember when I got married. Just my husband was everything. And everything liked him, and everything was happy, and I was happy. That's what I'm saying. I'm not used to people, like everybody, you know. You cannot talk here to nobody.

INT: You don't have too many friends?

REGINA: Oh, I have a lot of friends. Wherever I go. You know, I came here to the Russian store, or to the 99 store, what they have here. I was standing a woman, with her husband, and she came over and hugged me already. And I looked at her, who is that? I didn't recognize her. Was the cashier from my bank. (pause) This is my daughter. This neighbor here. I cannot look at her. Because to me people are coming, and I think that somebody is by the door, I open the door. Whenever I open the door, she opens the door. I can't talk to her. She thinks that she's a big shot because she gives out the newsletters. I said, when I'm not saying that I'm intelligent, or I'm not intelligent. She can come to me and learn.

INT: What was your religious affiliation? How were you brought up? Can you talk about your upbringing?

REGINA: Very Jewish. Not Hasidic. Like...

INT: Not Orthodox.

REGINA: Not Orthodox. My mother, when it was Friday, and you put up the lights, on Friday, Shabbas is Shabbas. And came that they had, my father had a shoe store. And they were doing over there hand-made shoes. And came Saturday, they brought, both goyim and Jewish shoemakers. They came, when there was not a star in the sky, no business. My mother was very Orthodox. Not Orthodox. She didn't wear a sheitel, you know. She didn't put a sheitel on her head.

INT: How did you and your husband identify yourselves after you were married?

REGINA: Jewish.

INT: Yeah, were you affiliated with any kind of synagogue?

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: Were you more Conservative or Reform?

REGINA: I'm not Reform, and I'm not...I do what my mother was doing. Shabbas is Shabbas. My grandson, when he was born, my daughter met a guy, he is not Jewish. I took him in, because I had rachmones on him. He didn't have anybody. Sometime I will tell you. Sometime I will show you what he wrote to me. That I was everything to him. When I went out to buy something for my husband, I don't have to ask nobody. When I went out, I bought for my husband something, I bought for him, too.

INT: This is your daughter's husband?

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: Mm-hm. Are they still married?

REGINA: My daughter said to me -- just this I will never forget in my life. She said, "Your Jewish friends, the kids are almost the same ages. The Jewish girls met Jewish boys, and they married Jewish boys. And half a year later they divorced." So she said, "Look, your Jewish..." this is what she said. "Your Jewish friends, each one is divorced." She is keyne hora, she has the son, he is already seventeen years old. So she is, she didn't have a real, like, a real wedding, with all the...I said, I don't have a (?). I said, "I went to the Justice of Peace, we went, three couples went to the Justice of Peace, and we signed in, and we are married. You want to go to the Justice of Peace? You want he should be your husband? You don't have to have a (?)." A marriage is not just...we will not be, we will not be in a church. I told her, "I went also to the church sometimes," because by us, maybe you heard already. In Philadelphia is a...there is a...a

church. (laughs) With the name Chenstochowa. This is the holy mother, the holy mother of Chenstochowa. When you go into the church, and you see the holy mother walking. This was by us, too. They have this, but is not what was in Chenstochowa. The all pilgrims from the whole world, came to Chenstochowa to the pilgrims. And this church here, comparing to the other, is nothing. We had the place over there was bigger than here. Was a cemetery there, a goyishe cemetery. And when she came out walking, you think that she is alive. And we had over there in the cemetery, I remember, was a priest with the name Matsov. He stole the diamonds out of her eyes, and they caught him and they killed him. And he is over there laying on the...they have a place, "Here is Matsov. He stole diamonds from the eyes of..." Just when she came out, the people, they were walking with canes, they said, "Throw the canes, I can walk. I can talk, I can...this, this, this." The believing is so big, you know, over there. And the goyim, I don't have to tell you how they are. Anti-Semitism, the anti-Semitism here is...

INT: In Poland you're speaking now?

REGINA: I'm talking now about here. The anti-Semitism, we see it here.

INT: In the United States.

REGINA: In the United States. It's **very** bad. It's very bad. I sometimes, I put down, and I cannot look how they talk or something.

INT: Have you had experiences of anti-Semitism, people said things to you?

REGINA: Yeah. And when you say something, it is nothing to them. They don't like the Jews. Because I tell you, the truth is, the Jews are intelligent people. More intelligent than the goyim. I'm not saying that everybody...

INT: Some are and some aren't.

REGINA: Yeah. I'm not talking about everybody. She's a Jewish anti-Semite, this one.

INT: Your neighbor?

REGINA: My neighbor. She gives out the...and she, there are cases, her doing.

INT: Have you ever belonged to any Holocaust-related organizations or activities?

REGINA: Yeah. I was with, in New York, I was a big shot. I was a secretary. (laughs)

INT: Can you talk about what that was like?

REGINA: Oh, I have a lot of people, they would like to see me every time, whenever I would be there. I have...

INT: Is this the group that you and your husband socialize with? You did a lot of activities?

REGINA: Yeah. Yeah. I have to show you something, that is bothering me. I will show you.
(pause)

INT: Who is in this picture?

REGINA: (?)

INT: This is your husband and...

REGINA: Annette.

INT: Oh. Mm-hm.

REGINA: No, I want to show you what my husband was doing. This is after the war. (pause, going through papers) This is better. This I can explain. This is after the war, the Jewish people what were making...this is, this is my husband. Those are the players, shows.

INT: He was an actor?

REGINA: No, he was the make-up man and everything.

INT: Oh, he did all the make-up and hair.

REGINA: Yeah. And when they need help, he was doing. This is a show. This is all my husband's making. You see? He's all over. He is doing the whole thing. This is...this is Jewish theater. This is the Russians already. This is the Jewish theater still. (pause) People, they came in, National Center Foundation Chapter, this is in New York. "Dear Mr. Penner, Thank you." You, because I cannot read this.

INT: So your husband did a lot of work for the Russian and Jewish theater groups, make-up and hair?

REGINA: This is the cancer foundation.

INT: A lot of different groups had celebrations.

REGINA: This...this (?) Chapter, a cousin of his was in this, when we made this (?), so they want to pay. He didn't take a penny from them.

INT: And how did you help your husband?

REGINA: I couldn't do it.

INT: You made some costumes?

REGINA: Yeah. This, everything what is made, I made it.

INT: Like beards, and other kinds of...masks and designs.

REGINA: Yeah. I was home. I could do it. I didn't go with them. Sometimes. Just, they loved him so much.

INT: He seemed to like his work very much?

REGINA: This is from the Russians still. Can you see? In Russian. And this is (?), this is Jewish. I cannot read now. I cannot see. This is a Russian woman. (reads in Yiddish) Theater direction.

INT: So this is work that he did right after the war, and when you came to Boston, and then New York?

REGINA: In New York we have this, and we have, the whole United Nations came to our store. The Russian theater, and the Jewish theater. And this is my grandson, with the theater.

INT: Can you talk a little bit more about your family before the war? Who was in your family, about the kind of work your parents did. What was life like before the war for you?

REGINA: Life for me was...nobody can believe it. I was the only daughter in the house and four boys. So this was a queen. This, this was a queen.

INT: You were treated well?

REGINA: Very well. When I will tell you, I came home from school once and I was crying. My father said to me, "Regina, why are you crying?" I have three names. When I was three years, I was very sick. My father couldn't go to the rabbi. They believe the rabbi will say the prayers, and I will be all right. So when I was three years old. So my father sent a brother of his to the rabbi and said I am very sick. And I have two names, from two bubbes, I don't know from whom. I don't remember. And...the rabbi gave me the third name. A name after his mother, Bracha. You know what is bracha? A prayer. Bracha is a prayer. I have to wear something on my...until the Germans came. From three years. So I have, and the rabbi said in that time, the name of this, your child, has to be the first name, and then the two other names. Because I come from two sides somebody. So...I was laughing, because I said to the rabbi, when I got married, you know, before I came here to this country, he didn't want us to marry before, as the Jewish people have to wait seven years, because their people from the Holocaust were missing. They didn't went with a natural death, you know. So you have to wait seven years. So I said to the rabbi, the rabbi is here, in this country, with me. (laughs)

INT: What kind of work did your father do, and your mother?

REGINA: My mother...my mother was a housewife. Has two...two...has one shiksa to do with the kids, and one Jewish woman to cook, because the shiksa was doing with the kids, and cleaning, and a Jewish maid cleaned a little here and there. My mother was...a lady.

INT: So you lived a comfortable life? Your father was...did well financially?

REGINA: When I would tell you sometimes, was not a holiday that...we didn't have soldiers or somebody in the house. Always. I came home, and I was crying, like I tell you. And my father said to me, "Come here. Why are you crying?" I said, "I'm crying because my best girlfriend has to stop going to school, because we went to a private gymnasium. Because the father cannot afford." My father took out money and gave me, I should give her. I should give her. And she shall pay, and she shall go to school. What can I tell you? I don't want to say...

INT: He was a generous man.

REGINA: My whole family was like this. My whole family. My mother, my...when I went out, and somebody, I was sixteen years old, or seventeen years old. Because later on, I didn't have anything. I didn't go out with somebody, they should not come to my father, my mother's house to see with whom I'm going out.

INT: Did your father and mother have education?

REGINA: What people, what they couldn't sign their names. Most people from the Russian, they couldn't sign their names. When I came to Boston, I was living by a Russian man. He...just he had children, they were high educated. And he couldn't sign his name. I came in, I didn't have, I didn't have...my telephone yet. Just in the beginning. I didn't have the telephone. And I want to...(phone interruption)

My parents was educated. I came in, when we had to sign, I saw people, they couldn't sign a word. They couldn't sign. When I was sixteen years old, and I went to a party, the first time, I had grey hair. I was, I had brown like you, and here a stripe with white hair. Nobody, when I came in to have done my hair to go out, everybody, I was a kid. Everybody, they want the same thing what I have. The beautician said, "You cannot have this. It's natural." I had here just one big stripe.

INT: How did you celebrate holidays together? Do you have memories of growing up, spending time together as a family?

REGINA: Yeah. Always my mother had my grandfathers, both grandfathers, and their sisters, brothers.

INT: So you remember your grandparents. They were a part of your life?

REGINA: Not all. I remember two grandfathers. Not two grandmothers.

INT: Were your older brothers also educated, and worked outside the home?

REGINA: David was working outside. They was working outside. They went to school, too.

INT: How did the brothers and sisters all get along together?

REGINA: I didn't have no sisters.

INT: Oh, that's right. Brothers.

REGINA: (Laughs)

INT: You were the only daughter.

REGINA: They was all right. (pause) I had a nice family. (pause) I had a nice, very nice family.

INT: How did your parents make decisions? Did they communicate well, were they affectionate with one another, do you remember much about your parents' interactions with their own children?

REGINA: The parents have something to do **with** the children. My parents talked to the children. My parents will not let me go with nobody. They have to see who is coming to take me out.

INT: They were protective of you?

REGINA: Too much.

INT: They treated you differently than your brothers?

REGINA: No. They treat me nice, because they treat their boys the same way. They couldn't do anything what they are not allowed. I was smoking, when I was sixteen years old, cigarettes. And I was sitting by the table, and I took out a package of cigarettes. My grandfather was sitting by the table, and I gave him a cigarette. It was the first time when I stopped smoking. So...when I took out the cigarettes, and my mother said to me, "Please, what is this?" I said, "Ma, you want somebody..."

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

REGINA: "What is this?" I said, "This is a cigarette." "I allowed you to smoke cigarettes?" I said, "No." "Somebody comes over to you and tells you that I'm smoking outside, or you're

better off." I ask my mother, when I am smoking here. She didn't say a word anymore. And my grandfather was sitting there, and smoked also.

INT: How did your parents talk about problems, handle difficulties? How did they solve problems?

REGINA: They always have, they would say, they were talking Jewish. The kids were talking Hebrew. They want we should not know whether they are talking, you know, and we don't know, the kids didn't know (laughs) didn't want **they** should know. So once I was sitting with my parents, and I was laughing. I said, "When you was talking together, and I was listening, I can tell you word by word what you were saying." They start laughing.

INT: Was Polish spoken at home?

REGINA: Was Polish spoken at home, was Yiddish spoken at home. And the parents were talking Yiddish. And they spoke Polish. And they spoke German. They spoke a couple of languages. Just we, the kids, we were talking Hebrew. I, myself, when I went to school, I told you that I went to a private gymnasium, and was Hebrew. And (laughs) I said, just when **we** talk, you cannot understand what we are talking.

INT: Were they affectionate towards one another and towards the children?

REGINA: No. They had two children. When I came home after 9:00, I was punished.

INT: Who was the disciplinarian, your mother or your father?

REGINA: My mother. My father was a tzaddik. He didn't say anything. I tell you, my father, my father was married to my mother's sister. She was pregnant, and she died in the pregnancy. And he didn't want to go out from the family, you know? So.

INT: Was she an older sister, your mother?

REGINA: My mother was younger. This was more than one. My mother was younger. I always was asking whose pictures, when I was younger. Later on I know already this whole story. That he was married to another sister, and the sister is on this, and this is a portrait, you know. And...he didn't want to go out from the family, so he was waiting. My mother was sixteen years old. Until she finished school, some school, and they got married.

INT: He was older? Much older?

REGINA: He was older than my mother. Not too much older. I don't know how old they were, just he was waiting, and then, when came the time, so they got married. My mother was sixteen years old, she got married. (Pause)

We came over there, and we were looking (laughs). I was walking from one apartment to the other to look for my sister-in-law. I found her. So I came down, and I said, and I told him what was that I cannot have no place to sleep. And here I cannot go back to the place where I belong, still. Just this guy said, when I told him the story, he said, "All right. Now we, I have to go in." He didn't say, "You go with me," because he had already, he was living already with somebody. He didn't say, "You go with me upstairs and you sleep with me." Because when he would say something like this, that to me, at that time, I would say, you go in brecht, because I'm not from those people that will go with a man to sleep. I was eighteen years old. I needed this? He said to me, "Don't worry. Come. We will find a place that you can go to sleep." So I said, "That must be a nice gentleman." It's not like the kids, now, fifteen years. So I slept.

Three days, I was over there. And was three couples. The same thing. Just I went to a rabbi. I went to a rabbi. I told him the story. He said, "I cannot do anything. You have to wait seven years." I said, "Rabbi, what? Seven years? I don't know I will live two years, and you tell me seven years I have to wait?" I came out, I cannot talk to the rabbi, also. (Pause) Married us, and we came, we were couples. I didn't see the other couples in my life. I didn't see them later. And I married. And this, a marriage, you know, is more than a rabbi's marriage. Just before I came to this country, and I had already a baby. I went and I got my marriage. And the rabbi asked me or I'm a virgin. So I said to the rabbi, "Yeah, I'm a virgin, with a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter."

Community is so big, that you cannot get from me everything, because I can't just tell you something, not too much. I went to a Jewish gymnasium.

INT: Mm-hm. You mentioned that. Mm-hm.

REGINA: And I went, not everybody could do this, what my parents could do for me, and for all the children. And...my family is not too big. Because now, is nothing. I have the two brothers, thank G-d they are alive. My father was...beautiful Jew. Not a Hasidic like with the tzitzis, with everything you could not see that on my father. My father was...I don't know how to say. Was a good Jew, just not fanatic.

INT: How big of a Jewish community was there? What percentage of the population?

REGINA: Population in Poland?

INT: In your town, in your large town.

REGINA: Was, I think was a large town. Was not a shtetl. You know what I mean with a shtetl? Was not. It was a big...

INT: It was a city. The closest cities, other larger cities being where?

REGINA: A larger city was Warsaw, was...was Vilna. All over. And the kleine shtetl was less people, and they lived very comfortable, because they lived like here. They don't live in the city,

they live in the...there where I was born was a larger city. Was...was, I cannot say how many. This was a larger city.

INT: Mm-hm. Okay.

REGINA: A couple thousand people what was killed. A lot of people ran away. When they could go and save their lives, they couldn't.

INT: How did you know that the times were changing, pogroms, how did you learn of what was happening to Jews in Poland?

REGINA: The Jews in Poland were not like in Israel. Poland is an anti-Semitism is very big.

INT: How did your family and you know that the times were changing? What was happening?

REGINA: That happened so quick that nobody **knew** what happened. **Nobody** knew what happened. You will say, you could run away. It was not a place to run. We run away from our, because we were living in a section. A very big section, and all of those people had money.

INT: When did you run away?

REGINA: We run away, and we came back home. We didn't go too far.

INT: What year was this?

REGINA: What year? Gedenk.

INT: Were there restrictions on Jews beginning at this time as well?

REGINA: The anti-Semitism was showing. When the students went to school, the other students whether they went also to school, was not Jewish people. And those not Jewish people was beaten up. Was...we knew is a change. Just was not, no place to run. From the big...from the big cities, from Warsaw, or from Lodz. Or from...whatever, Cracow. Was no place where to run away. In the small towns, was where I run, you couldn't, you couldn't go over there, either. We went out from the places where we used to live, and we have to go back. We cannot say how many, in what this and in what that. Six million people was killed.

INT: What did your family say to you? What were their fears and worries? What did they communicate to you?

REGINA: We communicate. Because I was home. Right? I was a good-looking girl. I have to say what is...is. And...a German soldier fell in love with me. True, yeah. He fell in love with me and he want to marry me.

INT: How did you meet him?

REGINA: In the street. He find me. I came home and I told to my mother what is, and I went out, I didn't see my parents, not my brothers, no nobody, for a couple of weeks, a couple of months. I couldn't go home, because he was watching. He wants I should marry him, and he wants to take me to Berlin. To his mother. (laughs) Another, not some nice thing? I went out from my mother's house, and I didn't see my mother, and I didn't see my parents. I didn't see my brothers. Nobody could come to see me.

INT: So you had hidden. You were scared to be at home.

REGINA: Yeah. I was not scared, I just didn't want to have nothing to do with it. I went to a friend, nobody could come to see me, because he was watching.

INT: Did he end up helping you in any way?

REGINA: Who?

INT: You or your family?

REGINA: No. He just want me. And I tell you something. A lot of, a lot of people was killed. In our town. (pause)

INT: What happened when you eventually left your community? How were you forced to leave?

REGINA: I was not forced to leave.

INT: Your entire family. What was happening that you had fled?

REGINA: This was happening: I was going with my mother. We was, they put us together with everybody.

INT: Who did this?

REGINA: The Germans, and the goyim.

INT: From the Polish citizens?

REGINA: They, they help them. They don't help the Jews. They were happy, because they took away from the Jews, not just the Germans took away. They took away, too. Not, not all the Jews was poor. Was people what they had a lot, a lot.

INT: Very nice homes, and...

REGINA: Very nice possessions. My father had a store.

INT: What kind of store?

REGINA: Shoe store. My uncle had a factory. And we couldn't see my uncle and couldn't go to the factory, to stay in the factory, because they were there, too. So what is the use to run? Oh, we left. We left, and they...we want to go. We couldn't. They picked us up.

INT: The German soldiers.

REGINA: They picked us up, and we had to go. They made a ghetto.

INT: In your same town, or somewhere else?

REGINA: I have in my town, I was a janitor. I was cleaning, excuse me when I express myself like this. The...whatever. The Jewish people didn't help, either. So gemacht where they want.

INT: So in the ghetto you were given a job as a janitor?

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: And they would give food or money?

REGINA: They gave me the job I should not go to work outside.

INT: They wanted to keep the Jews in the ghetto?

REGINA: No, no, no. The Jewish people, they had a committee. They picked their people, they know. They know me. They know who I am. Was very...my father was not a millionaire, just he did so much good, that everybody knew what the family Orbach is. The family Orbach had a store, and whoever came in, not a beggar. A beggar is nothing. People, they came in, and they didn't have nothing to eat. And my father had, by the store was an alley. And this alley was like here. And this was from everything to eat. Potatoes. I don't know. Whatever it was, was over there. And when people, what they couldn't afford to go out to buy already, and they were not beggars. Came in. My father even didn't go in with them. He said, "Go in and take whatever you want." Was from sugar, was from potatoes, was from everything over there.

INT: Was the business taken away when you had to go in the ghetto?

REGINA: Later on.

INT: What was life like in the ghetto?

REGINA: This was like in the ghetto, you didn't have this what you had not in the ghetto. You have to go outside to go to a...to go, when you needed to go. You didn't have the...anything over there. You have to go outside, and to bring in some water. When was water. Many, many

years. I went through, and I saw what is going on. I could go out on papers. What good will be that I go out on papers that I will leave my parents and my brothers, and I will be outside? I could go, because I had friends from all over. I had goyim friends.

INT: But you considered running away?

REGINA: No. No. I would not run away. I went with my mother to ghetto. I went with my mother together. When I was sixteen years old, my father gave me a diamond ring. I was just sixteen years old. Gave me a diamond ring. When they said, "Recht, links." Here, you go this way, and this goes this way. And you could not say no. Or not, you be killed right away. Maybe it would be better. They took children, infants, throw them out from, what did the infants did to them?

INT: This happened after the ghetto? After they transported you away?

REGINA: Yeah. It was all over. They took my mother away. I gave her my diamond ring. I didn't see her, and I didn't see the diamond ring. I didn't need it, the diamond ring.

INT: How old were you when you last saw your mother?

REGINA: Eighteen. Not even eighteen. I said eighteen.

INT: What do you believe happened to her?

REGINA: What happened to all the Jews. What happened to my father. You know, when my father went out...

INT: From the ghetto?

REGINA: No, went out, when was not the ghetto, not nothing. Every Jewish person put the hat for him. Everybody knew my father. Everybody knew my mother. It's not so easy to talk. To talk about is a lot to talk. A lot to talk, what you cannot talk. I have two...grandfathers. Two. My mother had two sisters, and one brother. One brother died and one sister died before. Two...yeah, two aunts I have, and one uncle. The rest died, with natural deaths. The rest I don't know what happened. I don't know. I know so much, that from England, my father's sister, my father's, her son was in England, and he came to Germany after the war already. He came into where I was, and they ask who is alive from the family, and they called me, and they asked me. I said, "I don't know anybody from there, and I cannot go to England. They would, what I will do there?" I don't know, I will go and be a maid? I'm not used to be a maid. I even didn't know how to take anything. And so I said, "I am married now." Because I married right away. I said, "I'm married, when I can go with my husband." No, I cannot go with. I can go and be a maid? I am not a maid, and I didn't go. I don't know, I don't know you from before, and I don't want to know you from now.

INT: So you had decided to wait to come to America instead of go to England or Israel?

REGINA: I would go to Israel, just was too late. I was married already.

INT: Can you talk more about your experiences of life in the ghetto, and then what happened when you were transported out?

REGINA: I was in the ghetto, right? Just I went every day to work. This was a factory where I got beaten up. That was already in my, in the ghettos.

INT: Who ran the factory?

REGINA: The Germans took over everything. And who had a little, inside their heads, they ran away. They ran away, I don't think that they are alive. Because there was no place where to run. I could go out on papers.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

REGINA: Really, he wants to save me.

INT: This is...

REGINA: A boy. He brought me home. He wants to save me. I said, "I don't want to. I go wherever the family is going." I can say this one guy want to do for me, but he want to do for me, he wants to save me. All right, I was saved without him. Saved. I feel today, still feel today my pains. (pause)

INT: You were treated harshly at the factory. Were you given an adequate amount of food for you and your family?

REGINA: No. We had food, yeah. Who could eat the food? (pause)

INT: What do you mean by that?

REGINA: You have to eat, just...and our Jewish people are not such good people, either. Don't think that they are tzaddikim. They are not. When they see, like...I would, from the...the high, right. Because my father had a store, and my father was...just, our people what they don't have everything. They are people, too. They are very nice people. Just, they couldn't do anything. First of all, I have a house to be a janitor. Can I be a janitor? I don't know what to do. Even now. I cannot do anything. I cannot do. I am not cooking. Why I'm not cooking? Not that I'm lazy. I cannot cook. First of all, I don't have the strength to do. When I cook some fruit, I have to stay and wait until it's ready. I don't bake, I don't do anything.

INT: So your health is not good now?

REGINA: My health? I wish the (?), they should have, and we have a lot of them. This Gentile people are not very happy with us. When they can do something, they did.

INT: How did you cope with the war? How did you get through your experiences? What helped you survive?

REGINA: I don't know. A lot of people ask me the same question, and I don't know why. I didn't want. I didn't want to live.

INT: Because?

REGINA: Because I didn't have anybody.

INT: You were separated from your mother, your father, and your brothers?

REGINA: I didn't have nobody from my family. Not having nobody from different families which were connected with our family.

INT: Did you develop any bonds or friendships that helped you survive?

REGINA: Nobody. You have to be on your own. Just...you have to be on your own to survive. You have to be very, very lucky. It's not up to you. I said, when I have to do something, I had pills to kill myself. I kept the pills, and I said, when comes some days, I will not live. I didn't want to live. This is the honest answer, what I can give you, that I had two pills, and those two pills was just to take my life.

INT: How do you account for not doing that?

REGINA: Because I had two brothers. I had two brothers, and I was not married, and I had the two brothers. They were younger than I was. Which means that I was the oldest from the family. (pause) When I married my husband, he told me from the beginning that he was a married man. And we had...somebody in, that knew exactly that they went into the gas chambers.

INT: His family.

REGINA: Yeah. And I got, this man did a lot for me.

INT: Did you take responsibility for your brothers? Did you know where they were? Did you stay together?

REGINA: No. In the beginning, I didn't know where they are. Just when they came, somebody came and told me, "Your brothers are alive. Both of them went to Israel." So I said, "Are you sure?" They said, "Yes, 100%."

INT: When was the last time you had seen them?

REGINA: What?

INT: When was the last...

REGINA: I was seven times over there. Now, I cannot go, because I don't have money.

INT: No, I meant when you were all in Poland when was the last time you had seen them? How were you separated? You had gone into the ghetto with your mother, and what had happened to your brothers, and your father?

REGINA: They went different places, and I went different places. We went...was in Poland, when they took over, they took over when we were hidden there, in the factories, in the place where the factories were. My brothers were there, too. We were lucky that we are a couple of people still alive. Our people, what they don't have anybody. They are just by themselves.

INT: Can you tell me more about what happened after the ghetto? What camp were you sent to, and what did you experience?

REGINA: I was working by two machines, like I told you. This was in the ghetto, when we were in the ghetto. Was here. Not here, I mean, in Poland. We were in our town. And...I got, I told you, beaten up and all those kind of things. Just after this, we were brought to Germany.

INT: By train? You were transported?

REGINA: Yeah. By train. What kind of train? Where they take the horses. What kind of train.

INT: Were you taken with people that you knew?

REGINA: There was a lot from my town. I didn't know them, just there was a lot. And then they were having, in my town, they have a lot of factories, which was a lot of factories, and they took over. (pause) I was working by the two machines, and close to me was somebody else working to a machine. Also. And this guy got killed, and I saw. I saw who killed him. I was a witness in Germany. I was a witness.

INT: What had happened?

REGINA: They were killed from the murders. So I...I know which ones, and I knew which names to tell. And after the war, I was called in as a witness. They came and picked me up, with a limousine. My husband went with me, after I was married already.

INT: This was the German police?

REGINA: From the German consulate. I went. They want me to go to Germany as a witness. I said, "I'm not going to Germany. I had enough." And you want me to say, to say as a witness, you have this probably on the...on the, I gave you...the...from Gratz College.

INT: Oh, yeah, the tapes.

REGINA: Tapes. Probably you have it on the tape.

INT: Okay. I didn't finish them all.

REGINA: So I went. I said, "I'm not going to Germany. When you want me to..." This was after the war already. "When you want me to be a witness, you'll have to come here." And you know what I did? When I went, and I was already a married woman. It was not so easy. I went to the German consulate and I said, "This one was killed, and this one was killed. I saw it with my own [eyes], and I swear to it." Just I would not go to Germany. I'm invited to come to Germany.

INT: What were your feelings and thoughts? What was going on?

REGINA: What was I feeling? I will kill them, before they touch a Jewish. So they sent a limousine. My husband went with me. We went to the German consulate. They came. I brought to them those cookies, with the name Nazareth. Israeli cookies. And I put them on the table. They had coffee klatch for fifteen minutes. And I said, "Whoever wants a coffee, here is the cookies. You can have them." Wherever I went, I took just cookies like this from Nazareth. From Israel. Israeli cookies.

INT: How did you get them?

REGINA: I could buy. Look. (pause) So, they came with a limousine, a big shot brought us in, and going home, they gave me money, I should go. I didn't have the limousine anymore. Just they gave me so much like the limousine cost. I said to my husband, I don't remember how much it was, fifty dollars, or a hundred dollars. Kill me, I don't remember how much. Just they gave me enough money. I said, "We will buy something for this kind of money, and we will go home. You want to go by train, or you want to go by a cab? A cab will not cost so much like a limousine." And I don't have to have a limousine. I can go by...even by train. And we will buy something for this money. (pause)

I tell you something. I went through my life a lot. I don't remember already. So many years.

INT: Before we talk about your life after the war, is there anything else you recall, or memories of your war experiences?

REGINA: I tell you something. I know just one thing: that I was one year in the house, and what I want, I had. And not because I'm the girl in the house, I could do whatever I want. Because I have somebody to tell me what I can do, and what I cannot do. I'm not like today the

kids are. Just when you were in Poland or in another country, it's not like America. It's not. Because the kids in America, they are seeing what their parents are doing, and they will be bigger than the parents. They are doing a lot more.

When a kid would do what they are doing here, they would not live too long in another country. They will not live too long. Because you have to have a little respect for your parents, respect for the elderly, not to do whatever you want. This is mine. That's not yours. When you are brought up like this, it's not yours. You couldn't go out from the house not saying to your parents, "I'm going, and I will be home this and this hour." When you came home a little later on, you was not sure that you was not punished.

INT: How do you think you were affected when you learned that your parents were dead, you wouldn't see them again, how...did you deal with it?

REGINA: For a long time, I was going around very upset. Very upset. I always remind myself, when I was fifteen years old, or sixteen years old, my brothers will not go out. When they don't have to go out. My brothers has to be home in time. I had to be home in time. I can be punished, too. And we were afraid to be punished. And you will not talk to your mother like they talk now to their mothers, to their parents. You have to have a little respect for your parents. And this is good.

When I want to go out, and I was...I was like I said, sixteen years old. I was not a child. I had to say to my mother, "Ma, I'm going out." "With whom you are going? Can the person what you are going come over to pick you up? I want to see with whom you are going. I want to see if I can trust." And you had to do it. The parents were saying. Was not like today. Yeah. I came home, one evening, and my grandfather was sitting by the table, and my mother said, "Don't take off your coat. What time did I tell you to come home?" I said, "Ma, there will not be another time like this. We were doing something, we were learning something, and it took a little longer." "Don't tell me stories."

INT: What happened to your faith and beliefs, values after the war? How did you change?

REGINA: I changed. I changed, because I don't believe. I cannot believe that G-d, I cannot believe there's a G-d, because what I saw. I don't have to look on the television. I can tell you stories what you shiver. So how you can believe that there is a G-d, when the G-d, at holidays, like, high holidays, people running to the synagogues, and the talleisim. I'm not frum, you know, just until today, I cannot believe it. I lost my believing in G-d. Because I saw. Taking out people in the talleisim from the synagogues, and putting them in a grave and kill them. Can you believe it? Can somebody believe it? When they hear me talking, they think that I'm crazy. I'm not crazy. I'm not crazy, because I said what I feel. You see, I'm now, when I'm talking about, when I saw taking out in the talleisim people, and put them in grave, in grave, somebody told me, "Oh, I lost my mother." Right? Or somebody told me, "I lost my father." I said, "How did they die?" I ask. "How did they die? Be happy," I said. "Because you know where their body is. I don't." I don't know if my parents are dead or they're alive. How can I believe it? Would

you believe? They said that I'm crazy. I'm not crazy. Believe me, I'm far from crazy. I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes, and a lot of people saw more than I did. It's not so easy.

INT: Where were people being transported to and killed from your community? What do you believe happened to your parents?

REGINA: The same thing what happened to everybody. Those people, what they believe in something, they don't have nothing to believe. How will, let me say, how will you or somebody like you will believe that your grandfather was not in his grave? You go to the cemetery, for what? To see the graves? I don't have to go, because I don't know where my mother is, or my father is, or my brothers are. I know that one of my brothers was shot. This was, I was told. The rest of them, I don't know. Maybe they're living someplace. Maybe. This is a big maybe. This is not a small maybe.

INT: Did you ever go back to your town to see who was left?

REGINA: No. No. I don't want to take anything from there, and I don't want to **see** them. I blame them more than I blame the Germans.

INT: You're talking about the Poles?

REGINA: Yeah. I will not go to Poland, when you give me, everything what we left there. (pause) And the place where my parents were living in Poland, was a tavern, you know what a tavern is. And this tavern was a girl married to a goy. She was my age, and she went to my school. She was a girlfriend. Just I didn't, when she married, she married a goy. And when the Germans came in, and they ask about where are the Jews, her husband said to them, "My wife is a Jew." They took her. They took her before everybody. They killed her right away. So you can trust people like this? I can't. Maybe I'm stupid. Just everybody what I know. And they know me. I'm not stupid. I'm not. I can tell this to everybody in the face. When you think you are big, not bigger than I am. You don't know nothing. You didn't see anything, and you don't know nothing. Good, thank G-d that people are here, and they didn't see what I saw, because this is the picture of everything. You think that I like to talk about? No. Just you have to talk about. The old generation knows already. The young ones don't know anything. That's why there's so many, together with my daughter, mixed marriages. I like my son-in-law. He's a nice guy. He's a very nice fellow. I like him. I cannot say that I don't like him. Just still, inside, is something bitter. You know, I went...

INT: How did you accept it, or deal with it?

REGINA: It's very hard to say. I went to the graduation of my grandson's. He came over and he said to me, "I want, Grandma, I want you to meet my girlfriend. She is Jewish. You will be very happy." (laughs) Because he has a father who is a goy. And the mother is...is not here and not there. And this kid is also mixed up.

INT: Confused about his identity.

REGINA: Confused. Yeah. Just till he came in with such answers to me. "You will be very happy. My girlfriend is Jewish." (laughs) Yeah. Then I have here a little girl, adopted little girl. Her mother cannot speak English. Her father speaks a little English, and she wrote...

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

INT: Who are you speaking of?

REGINA: This girl, what is my granddaughter.

INT: Oh, mm-hm.

REGINA: Granddaughter. Adopted granddaughter. I don't have more than...you have here. Here. This is the article. She loves me, I love her, too. Even she is not Jewish. I love the kids. What the kids, they don't know.

INT: Do you think that you had a chance to mourn the family members that you loved and you lost?

REGINA: It's nothing what to say. It's nothing what to say. Worse, as far I (?), when you know what this means. It's worse, a long time ago. I speak already a couple of languages. I speak a little Hebrew. I speak fluently German. I speak...fluently Polish.

INT: The memories always stay with you, the good memories.

REGINA: The good memories. I have more bad memories than good memories. My mother was 42 years old, going with me, she looked like my sister, not like my mother. Rechts, links. Links, rechts. It's not easy. It's not easy. (pause) I didn't have a too big family. Just, my family was knowing.

INT: When you came to the United States with your husband and your baby, how did you settle in the United States? What kind of life did you have?

REGINA: You know, when I came, I came to Boston. How you know Boston, American, how you know the people in Boston? Because Boston is a different, different than any place in America. You have cliques there. And to those cliques you can be 100% American. And you don't have in Boston somebody, should push you into the clique, you can be in America 100 years, and you will **never** go into the clique.

INT: So what was your experience with the Jewish community in Boston?

REGINA: They haven't got no **communities**. They have cliques. They don't need the community. They don't know the community.

INT: Were you treated like outsiders, as Holocaust survivors, not welcome?

REGINA: Survivors are not welcome. If you didn't live in Philadelphia, you don't live in Boston, you didn't know anybody in Boston, you can live there 100 years. When somebody will not push you into the clique, you can be there and not talk to anybody.

I came there, and I was welcome. I was so sick that I was more in the hospitals as I was home. My husband had to go to work, and my kid didn't have a home. She has a home. She was taken in, like the whole family, like we will be a family, not strangers. We were not strangers here. Everybody what came with us together to Boston, how you can live here? Nobody talks to you. I said, "Thank G-d. I met people, they talk to me." And I am in this family, better than in the real family. We were there four years, living there, four or five. Until we went to...from Boston to New York. We were, we were there. I was, like I said, more in the hospital than I was home. Just my kid had a home there. They took the, everything what belongs to a kid, they took everything to their house. She was like their kid, not my kid.

INT: So this helped you a great deal to recover, to gain your strength back?

REGINA: I was happy, because she has somebody, somebody. She was not alone. When was her third year of age, her birthday party, you should see her birthday party. They came and picked me up from the hospital to go to my daughter's birthday. My daughter was talking to me. (?) You just...(?) English. I had a very hard time to talk English. Just I spoke better English than anybody what came from there, from...

INT: From Poland.

REGINA: From Poland, from wherever.

INT: Mm-hm. What did you feel about having a family and raising a child, and, in the United States? Obviously it was very important to have a family, to start a new life?

REGINA: I start a new life. I start a new life, and you would know. I went into each store, bookstore, and I bought books. I bought books, reading for my daughter. I was doing my best for everything. And everything, everybody, how many...you have here. The Russians. I am staying with the Russians. I am talking to them. I said, "Now you talk to me in English." I correct them. They call me teacher. Yeah. I'm not like, you know, I'm not like an American. I am more like a European. And...I'm very happy. You know what? When I am going some places, and they all say, "Why you are different than everybody?" I said, "Because I was brought up different." I was brought up, I can say I'm happy to be brought up different. This is very interesting. This, this.

INT: What do you remember thinking and feeling about having a child?

REGINA: I couldn't have a child.

INT: Well, you had a daughter. How important was it after all the losses that you had had? What did it mean to you?

REGINA: Was meant to me a lot, because I would like to have more. I couldn't have it. Because I came to Boston, and I lost.

INT: Oh, you were pregnant again?

REGINA: I was pregnant again, just...when I said I was more in the hospitals than I was home, this is my sickness. That I was beaten up so that the whole thing is not working. Nothing. When I just prayed to G-d that Israel should be Israel for the Jews.

INT: What did you tell your daughter about your war experiences, or what does she know about life during the war for you?

REGINA: She doesn't know anything. She was not there. (laughs)

INT: But what did you tell her, what did she ask?

REGINA: She knows, because I belong to the Jewish community. I belong to the Holocaust, I belong all over.

INT: I went to the...they had a large dinner about a month ago, there were about 500 survivors.

REGINA: I didn't want to go. I didn't want to go. I have enough. I have so much. I cannot go all over.

INT: How do you think your experiences during the war and losing your family, how do you think that affected the way you raised your daughter?

REGINA: I raised my daughter the same way that I was raised. I said to my daughter, I was raised maybe different than anybody else. Just...I am not against anybody. Because she told me, "Oh, look, your friends, the Jewish people, they keep more than I keep with everything." Just when comes, when I look what is going on in Israel, it hurts me so much, that I am a better Jew than anybody. When she came in with this guy...

INT: Your daughter. When she was dating him?

REGINA: I was living that time in New York. And I had a house in Brooklyn, what I bought. A two-family house. We bought the two-family house just because I have my brother there, I have my husband's brother with his wife there. I need a larger, and I need money, too. I have to rent it out.

INT: It's like a duplex, or a twin?

REGINA: A twin? No, was a two-family house. Just, I remodeled the house from top to bottom. And my daughter had the basement, and everything was beautiful. This house was, I bought the house because near the ocean, not far from the ocean, and I said to my husband, "Look, we have something." So, but it broke our heart. She met this guy. He was very nice, just a goy is a goy. Just not him. I never saw his parents. I never saw his family.

INT: Do you think they were not happy about the marriage?

REGINA: Maybe. Maybe they are not. I don't know, and what I don't know doesn't bother me, you know what I mean? Just, I have thank you cards from him, which I cry sometimes. But he says to me, how I treat him from the beginning, that I didn't say anything from the beginning. And I sometimes am crying, you know?

INT: You treated him like a son?

REGINA: When I went out to buy something for my husband, I never forgot to buy something for him. When the little one was born...

INT: Your grandson?

REGINA: Yeah. Was, believe me, a rabbi couldn't have more Jewish bris than my son, my grandson. The bris was in my house. Two rabbis. And all the (?). Everything. He didn't say a word. All right? Sometimes we have to give in. You have to. When I was talking to my husband always, I said, "Peter, you had two daughters. I have one." I said, "I don't want to lost her. I want better should be like this, and I have my kid. I cannot say I am so happy that he is a goy, just it's better than nothing." I also talked to my husband, you know? He was much older than I am. Just, when I talk to him, he listened to me. I listened to him, also. Just, when I said, I was looking for his kids, every paper.

INT: After the war, to see if they survived?

REGINA: I was looking for his wife. I said, maybe she is in some other place. I don't have to look for nobody, because I was never married. I was looking for my brothers. She is so, the woman what is downstairs, you know, in the...in the kitchen. She goes, because she's the whole from those kids. And she just takes this article and look what, and I have to come down, I got flowers from the kid. You see that?

INT: Lovely. Mm-hm.

REGINA: So I have to come down with the flowers, and to show what flowers I have, and what is in the paper.

INT: How did you make decisions about raising your daughter with your husband? What kind of education did she have? Any religious education?

REGINA: Jewish. Everything Jewish. What I am, I am, and still I'm a Jew.

INT: What was her dating like? Were there...did you...

REGINA: I didn't say anything.

INT: Any concerns that you had about who she had friends with?

REGINA: Because I belonged to the Jewish Federation. I belonged to, from the Holocaust. So she had just friends from the Jewish, Jewish friends. She met this guy, and she liked him. You know, she would not, and...she came home, she told me about. I said, "Claire," so she said, "Ma, don't open your mouth. All your Jewish friends from the Holocaust, from wherever you belong, all these Jewish, they have kids like me, and I'm, I know them because we came together with them." And she said to me, "They married Jewish boys. How long they were married? A half a year? They are divorced. They have a kid, is gornisht mit gornisht." She said, "I like him. And I don't, I don't know his family." She doesn't know his family, either.

INT: So you're their family.

REGINA: I'm the whole family. And I tell you something. I did for this guy a lot. He is a...he is...I don't know what he is. Really, when they lived with me, in Brooklyn.

INT: After they were married?

REGINA: Yeah. They lived with me in Brooklyn. And when they didn't live with me, or Passover, or what kind of holiday was...

INT: You celebrated holidays together?

REGINA: They came, and they were with me, and...and...he found a home, because he was from, I don't know where his parents. His mother is not a mother. A stepmother. I didn't see anybody from the family. You know what I mean? Anybody.

INT: You don't know much about his background, how he was raised?

REGINA: No. No. I don't know anything. I know what I see. He is good for her. He is good for the kid, and he's good for me, too. I don't have, now I don't have my husband. He's good for me, too.

INT: How has it been, adjusting as a widow, since your husband's death? What's your life like?

REGINA: I didn't have a life. I don't have a life.

INT: Before or after his death, is that what you mean?

REGINA: Oh, before, I had a life, when he was alive. I couldn't make an egg, I couldn't put on an egg to cook. I didn't know nothing. That's how I was brought up. My mother had two maids. One, to go with the little one, I don't know what she had before. Just...and we were brought up different.

INT: So you had to learn pretty quickly how to be a wife, mother.

REGINA: I had to be, and I didn't know how to put tea. I really didn't know. I was afraid to go over to the...to the sink to wash, to do this, do this. I was afraid.

INT: How did you overcome it? You learned, you coped.

REGINA: I cooked, and my food was very good. I have parties, just I have two maids. One maid was for the kid, and the other was for the cleaning. And I was the lady downstairs, in the store. I prepare everything for my income tax. I was never sitting with nothing. And I can make beards. (laughs) You saw. You saw the album. You saw.

INT: You were very busy with your work.

REGINA: Yeah. So I was over, everything was busy, busy, busy. And I am not...I am happy. When I could help my husband in the store. He didn't know from anything. He didn't know how much money I had or not. He didn't know when we bought the house.

INT: You took care of it. What do you see as successes of your life, and how you achieved them?

REGINA: I don't have successes. I have more troubles than success. And a lot of people are telling me now, "Why you talk like this? Why you talk like this? You're smarter than anybody from us?" I said, "Because I'm not intelligent enough to be smarter than you are."

INT: Well, you raised a daughter, and you ran a business. It sounded pretty successful. It seems to me those are accomplishments.

REGINA: Accomplishment that I could do what I could do for people. I brought my husband's brother with his family to this country. (pause)

Will be the flower girl, and Claire will not be the flower girl, I will not go...Claire was the flower girl.

INT: So it sounds like a success was your marriage. You married a good man.

REGINA: When they say something to me today, I should, why I am not going with anybody, why this and this, I said, "I cannot find another one like this."

INT: You didn't want to remarry?

REGINA: No.

INT: What about mistakes that you've made in your life? How those happened, and have you forgiven yourself for them?

REGINA: I don't think that I have. I don't think that I have. One time my mother scared me. One time. And this I remember every day, how long I will live. I came home a little late, and my mother said that I'm going to the basement.

INT: But you were a good child, and a good daughter.

REGINA: I don't know. Just I don't remember that I gave my parents something what I should not.

INT: Could you talk about the role of faith or tradition in your family since the war? How important is it to be a Jew for you?

REGINA: I cannot say this. I cannot say this, because when I will preach that I'm a Jew and this and this, I cannot say this. Because in my...I feel this is not my business to say it. If everybody has to say himself, and to bring the same thing, just one thing: How I am. I don't believe. And this is not...

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

INT: About G-d.

REGINA: I said, "G-d. You are G-d. Where are you?" I always say, "Where are you? Where you were when I need you the most?" You know, I cannot be...this is not me, because when I'm saying that I don't believe, I believe, just, I cannot...keep it. That I will say, "This I saw. Where were you?" You know what I mean? Because I cannot give out what I feel. Because I believed in G-d, and when I saw those things, to throw small children out of the windows, to take rabbis or Jewish people in the talleisim, you know, the talleisim, to throw in...in...that kills me when I have to talk about.

INT: Very painful. Sad.

REGINA: It's painful, is sad, is...not in me. I cannot see when somebody hits somebody. And I'm talking to everybody.

INT: Do you read books about the Holocaust or see films, movies, about the Holocaust?

REGINA: Not always. I read too much. I didn't have to read, because I went through too much from them. Not always, I look, I don't want to look, I don't want to see, because I saw too much.

INT: What about the Holocaust museum? How do you feel about that?

REGINA: I was there. I was there. My papers are there, too.

INT: Mm-hm. What was that like for you, going there, being there?

REGINA: I'm not going too often. I used to go. Once I went with my husband together to Israel. Was from the Holocaust, we have over there a memorial. So we both went. The rest of times when I went to Israel, I went by myself. When my husband went to Israel, he went by himself, because both, we couldn't go. We couldn't let the store, so when I was home, I...when we had open. I have the people what were working. I didn't do anything, because I couldn't do it. (long pause)

My husband was in the home, in a home, not here.

INT: In Boston? Or no, in New York.

REGINA: In New York.

INT: How come? What led to that?

REGINA: It was Alzheimer's.

INT: Oh. Okay.

REGINA: And happened, what happened, that I have, my daughter moved away, I sold my house, I came here, and that's that.

INT: So the decision to move here had to do with your daughter living here?

REGINA: With my daughter, with my husband, and I couldn't stay by myself in New York, and I hadn't got, and nothing over there. My family was not with me. But...

INT: How did you feel about the decision?

REGINA: The whole thing, from the beginning, I didn't want to have nothing to say. I didn't want to talk about it. I don't know what makes me to talk (?). When I was in New York, I had a lot of friends over there. I belonged to the Jewish Federation. I was all over. Just my husband was not with me, my daughter is going, so what I have to do there? So I sold the house, and my

money went in for my husband, and I was just...me. That's all. So I start talking. I was talking today about the Holocaust, with a woman, a goyah. She asked me.

INT: You tell your story to other people, especially Gentiles, now. So how come?

REGINA: I am not feeling like was. I don't want to have...we have enough without my telling. We have a lot of, a lot of people, Gentile people, anti-Semites. You cannot know, because you don't live in a house like this. This is a house where we have everybody.

INT: Everybody is Jewish that lives in this apartment complex?

REGINA: No. Mixed. And you see what is going on here, and what is going on, but you don't like it. A lot of things, what you don't like it, just you cannot say anything.

INT: Because?

REGINA: Because we have here a lot of people, anti-Semites. This is because...

INT: Residents, as well as people that are employed here?

REGINA: Residents. And we cannot say a word. I was talking today, sitting by my table is sitting a very nice person. She is a goyah. Just she is a very nice person. You know. We have here a lot of nice people, we have here a lot, a lot what they, they treat you. You cannot say a word.

INT: They treat you...like what?

REGINA: With talking. Jew, Jew, Jew, a Jew.

INT: And how do you cope with it? How does it make **you** feel?

REGINA: You see, I'm like this. I can live with everybody, and nobody will touch me. Nobody will touch me. Just our people here, Jewish people, they are fanatics, and they, from nothing they make a big shpiel, and I don't like this.

INT: Do you get along with the other survivors that live here? Do you feel that you have more in common with them?

REGINA: I don't have nothing in common with them. They were not with me. They were in different places, and I was in different place. There is nothing, all right. I am with them very nice. "Good morning, Gut Yohr, and Guten Woch." I have nothing to do with them. They don't want to talk so much like I do. And that's all. They went through maybe more than I did, which I don't believe it, because I got beaten up, and I feel it today more than I felt when I was younger. And that's that. I'm not the same person.

INT: You're not the same person that was when you were what?

REGINA: No. When I was younger.

INT: How have you changed?

REGINA: I've changed a lot. Sometimes I'm forgetting that I'm Jewish. Forgetting. I mean, I will never forget that I'm Jewish, just forgetting what I went through, and I can talk to them. So I'm not the same person. Of course, I'm not talking to them, when I see they are a little nuts, with listening. They don't listen. Jewish people don't want to listen, either.

INT: That happened to you when you first came to this country, and you still believe that now? You don't feel that at least my generation, the second generation wants to hear your story before you're gone? Want to respect what you went through?

REGINA: No. Maybe the generation, the second generation would like to know. Just nobody will talk to them. I didn't talk for years. Until I open up.

INT: You mean, your feelings. You can let show some of your feelings?

REGINA: I tell you something. When I was young, I did what I want to do. My parents didn't say no. They let me do. With all kinds of people. And like I told you, I went to a gymnasium, a Hebrew gymnasium. I didn't learn at home, like people took home a rebbe to teach the children. No. I went in a nice place, where I have my schooling as a Jew. And a different, different way. I didn't speak Yiddish. I speak now better Yiddish than English. I will not say that. I correct them. When they said something is not, they call me teacher, what can I do? I'm not the same thing what I was. That is a different story.

INT: So you're saying that what happened to you changed you. Affected you.

REGINA: Changed me, and I'm...they took away my mother from my hand. They killed her. My father was killed. My brothers were killed. How I can feel? What I can feel to them? We have here a lot of goyim. And when you sit down, it's cliques. Goyishe cliques, Jewish cliques. And you really don't have nobody, when you look. Look, with your two eyes, that you can be satisfied. No. Jewish, you cannot talk Jewish.

INT: Yiddish?

REGINA: Yiddish. Yiddish. They think they know everything. The Americans are...I'm not so easy. We have here most, we have here people what they live here, they are Russians. We have here even Germans. You know what? When I go and I see them, it's like you give a knife in my heart. That's what I feel.

INT: You hold them responsible?

REGINA: Yeah. Because they sometimes, they fail to face what they are.

INT: They show inside of them.

REGINA: They show their real face, what they are. Can you imagine, me sitting and listening, and I cannot open my mouth? I don't want to be in the middle.

INT: It feels like what you went through in the past, not being able to...

REGINA; Yeah. Yeah.

INT: They mentioned in the newspaper this week that they're building a memorial in Berlin to Holocaust survivors, and they're going to have names, there's room for six million names.

REGINA: I would not give them my name when they give me a million dollars. (pause) And I don't want to see, I don't want really to see that. That's what they did, they will, they cannot...they cannot pay for it. Right, I get a pension from them. What is today, the third, the fourth?

INT: It's actually the thirtieth of June.

REGINA: I get every month, the fifth, I get my check, because I didn't get the check yet. I lost already a couple of checks.

INT: So how do you explain that? Just becoming more forgetful?

REGINA: I don't know what to explain, because not forgetful. Maybe, maybe they are sick and tired to pay. You never know. You never know. I was a witness. Which I have in this paper. When they said that I have to go to Germany, I said, "No, I'm not going." And they want I should be a witness. They had to come to this country, where I was.

INT: You had mentioned that.

REGINA: I mentioned? Because this was very interesting. This was very interesting, because I have the satisfaction, which I think that I mentioned in this, too, that I have the satisfaction, the guy what hit me went and shot himself. He just hit me. I saw killing people too. So I mentioned there, too. I forgot what I ate today, just this, everything is just here. I see this every day. How I can say, when they say, "G-d, G-d, G-d, G-d," I said, "Where was G-d? When people like me need Him. Where was G-d?" When they went into the synagogues and took out rabbis, people in the talleisim. I'm Jewish. I'm not Catholic. I'm not...even when I didn't speak Yiddish, I was Jewish. Where was G-d, when we need Him? Going into the synagogue and take out rabbis and people what came to...to pray. And took and was...I think like this, house like this apartment, and put it in, people, and kill them. And how they killed them, and how. So how you can, how you can say something. Just when you will say this, when I will say this to somebody, they will look at me, that I'm crazy. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Our people, they look at me that you are crazy,

they don't want to hear it, and they don't want to see it. This everything what you see on the pictures is not like it was.

INT: You're referring to like films such as "Schindler's List."

REGINA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: So you continue to question where G-d was.

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: And it affects your faith. Your belief in G-d.

REGINA: My believing is gone. My believing is gone. When you said "G-d," I said, "Where?" I have here a woman what she talks, she is an angel from heaven. You talk to her. She's a little crazy. She was in heaven three times, and she came to the earth. And she has two gods. Not one god. Two. I wish that you will talk to her.

INT: This is someone that lives here? Someone you know?

REGINA: An American. When I say something, "Oh, don't tell me. You told me already." And she told me already like a hundred times about G-d, and G-d is her, and she can, she can do more than a doctor is doing. Save somebody's life, and she's an angel from heaven. It's meshugge. And I'm meshugge on the other thing. What is today, Friday or Saturday?

INT: Friday.

REGINA: Friday, all right.

INT: Would you describe yourself as pessimistic, or hopeful, or an optimistic person?

REGINA: I don't know what I am. I came today downstairs, and I have a very good friend, and she start yelling at me. I don't know even what she was saying. I'm very sensitive. That's what I am. I don't know, she didn't like what I was dressed or something. I haven't got the slightest idea. I came up, I was crying already. (pause)

INT: That's pretty unlikely she was angry at you about something.

REGINA: I don't know. About what. She said something, that she didn't like my jacket, or something. Thank G-d, I am dressed, and I got a real person. I'm not dressed what I...I'm dressed...when I'm, even when I'm sick, I'm dressed, I comb my hair, I made my bed, and I don't wait, my maid should come, because she comes just once a week. Because I cannot do what she can do. That's what...for medication, and for my...my maid, my money is gone. I cannot help it. I have to have, to live in a clean place. And I cannot stand what I have here. Just I don't have no

place where to put. It's all right. Everything is fine. When I go downstairs, there's nobody to talk there.

INT: Do you have friends?

REGINA: I have a lot of friends all over.

INT: That you feel close to?

REGINA: Yeah, I have a lot of friends, it's just, I have them enough. A friend is, your mother is your friend, your father is your friend. A brother is, or a sister is, (?) You know that. So where you have, where you have strangers who are friends? They are so long friends until they show you the real face.

INT: So you believe blood is thicker than water.

REGINA: That's right. I know when my husband was alive, I know that I have a friend. I'm not looking for friends. All right, I can talk to somebody. I can talk. Just I am not looking for special, I have to have a boyfriend like here. Here, everybody, you know what I said? They go in, go around in the men's hosen.

INT: People are lonely. They would like companionship.

REGINA: Oh, look. Companionship is different. You...you...have to know with whom you are talking. Here, any little bastard is a big shot. So a lot of women here, and they are lonely. You know what somebody asked me? Why I don't have a boyfriend. I said, "I don't need a boyfriend. I got a boyfriend. He is not here anymore. I don't have it. I'm not looking for boyfriends." Believe me, I could have a lot of boyfriends. I don't want to talk to them, I don't want to see them, I don't want anything. I am miserable for myself.

INT: Are there times that you're not miserable? That there's happiness and joy in your life now?

REGINA: Very little. I was very happy when my grandson graduate and called me. "Grandma! I want you to meet my girlfriend, she is Jewish." Do you know what he said to me? "Grandma, you will be so happy." And he called the girl, introduced me to her (laughs) "She is Jewish, Grandma. You are happy?" I said, "I am. I am happy." I tell you something. Whatever I was, I always kept saying, "It's nobody like Jewish people."

INT: You feel safer, more trusting of a Jew?

REGINA: Yeah. Just, when I would tell you that sometimes a goy is better than a Jew, you can believe me.

INT: You had experience such as that.

REGINA: Yeah.

INT: You weren't always suspicious or mistrustful of Gentiles.

REGINA: No. I told you, my parents were the same way what I am. They had friends between goyim and Jews, you know. Just when I was in the ghetto, this is a small ghetto, and my parents' friends was living in this section, I went over to the gate, from the ghetto. And that's, a friend of my parents went by, and I stopped when she saw me. She didn't ask me who is alive from the family, no, where the whole family. She said, she said this in Polish, "Are you still alive?"

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO. THE FOLLOWING WAS CUT OFF AT THE END OF THE TAPE:)

INT: I am grateful you survived for this interview. Thank you very much.

REGINA: You're welcome.

(END OF INTERVIEW)