

INTERVIEW WITH ROSALIE SIMON

MAY 15, 1994

TRANSCENDING TRAUMA PROJECT
Council for Relationships
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Interview with Rosalie Simon, a Holocaust survivor, May 15, 1994.

INT: Today is May 15, 1994, interview for Transcending Trauma. Can you identify your name, age, who you are?

ROSALIE: I am Rosalie Simon. I am sixty-two years old. And I was born on July 25, 1931 in Velka Kriva, Czechoslovakia.

INT: Can you spell that?

ROSALIE: Velka Kriva.

INT: Your marital status, how long you've been married?

ROSALIE: I have been married, 1952. Forty, it's going to be forty-two years June 1.

INT: And your actual date of birth? Did you just give that to me?

ROSALIE: Yeah, July 25, 1931.

INT: Okay. Can you talk about your education, the education of your husband and employment status of both of you?

ROSALIE: Okay, when I was twelve, as I said before, I was thrown out of school. But after the war I went back to school for a couple years. And I just couldn't continue anymore. And that is really my biggest regret because, a, if I really would put an effort forth I probably - well, we had to make a living and everybody had to provide for himself. And we had no money. We had nothing. So we just had to go to work.

INT: You mean you were thrown out of school? What had happened?

ROSALIE: In 1943, the Hungarian government, the police, came to the schools and they have thrown out all the children from, all the Jewish children. I was one of three. Because I was a good student I was left, one of three children. But eventually, a couple months, two, three months later we were thrown out also.

INT: And you were how old? Up until about what grade?

ROSALIE: So, twelve, what? Sixth grade? Yeah.

INT: Your husband's education? His background?

ROSALIE: He kind of had the same situation. He may have gone another two, three years, but he was also cut off because they did order them, too, to the ghettos.

INT: The type of work that he had done?

ROSALIE: After the war?

INT: Uh-huh.

ROSALIE: Everything. He, we had a chicken farm. Then he was buying and selling cars and trucks. He even dealt with a, out of the country with some companies. And he did that for a few years, and then he started to buy land and he went into the land business.

INT: And he is retired currently?

ROSALIE: Semi-retired.

INT: And he had his own business?

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes.

INT: You said that was in scrap metal?

ROSALIE: At the beginning he had scrap metal. Of course first he worked in a factory and then as soon as he learned the language a little bit he went in for himself. So he bought and sold scrap metal. He used to pick it up from the factories where they made all kinds of equipment and sell them to junk dealers. And then that was in Baltimore he did that. But when we came here he still continued without going back to Baltimore, back and forth for a few days. But then he started in buying and selling trucks along with the farm, with this chicken farm. And after that, after he did that a few years he went into the land business.

INT: Your economic status, was that of middle class?

ROSALIE: I would say so, yeah.

INT: Briefly, the names of your children, their education, where they reside and their marital status?

ROSALIE: Okay, Mitchell, Mitchell lives in Oceanside Long Island. He has three children. He is a dentist. And Ruthie lives in Manhattan and she is an attorney. And Billy is still in school.

INT: And you said at Temple University pursuing?

ROSALIE: Pursuing probably also something in real estate or law. Business or law.

INT: And so your second and third children are single?

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: Your religious affiliation, which synagogue you are involved in?

ROSALIE: We are members of Temple Beth El. We also belong on the board for the Hebrew Academy. And I am a member of Amate Misrahi. And as I said he had various awards from Federation and Bonds, which I have the-

INT: Your husband, you are speaking?

ROSALIE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

INT: This is a Conservative synagogue in this area?

ROSALIE: Yeah. In Margate.

INT: Are there organizations that you've been involved in over the years?

ROSALIE: No. No.

INT: How about any Holocaust related activities?

ROSALIE: We don't have any organized here. But like I said, if any of our children have any kind of affairs or bar mitzvahs or weddings or even the sad, sad occurrences like funerals, G-d forbid, we are kind of all together. We invite each other to go to each other's affairs or funeral or whatever is happening around the Holocaust survivors, we stick together.

INT: Do you socialize mostly with other Holocaust survivors in this area?

ROSALIE: Yeah, yeah. We have friends that are Holocaust survivors and we associate with them a lot.

INT: Can we now start about your life before the war? Talk about your place of birth and who was in your family at that time. What kind of family business your father operated and what your economic status was like?

ROSALIE: Okay. As I said, I was born in Velka Kriva but I really did not grow up there. We grew up in Teresva. That's about twenty miles from Kriva.

INT: Can you spell that?

ROSALIE: Teresva?

INT: Uh-huh.

ROSALIE: Teresva. And that's where I started my first grade. We had a nice house. We were six children. My mother was a homemaker. My father was dealing with wholesale foods, buying and selling wholesale foods. We had a little farm in the back where we grew all kinds of vegetables. Out of the six children we had one brother and I was the youngest.

INT: Youngest sister?

ROSALIE: Youngest sister, yeah. Youngest child.

INT: Who were the oldest siblings, their names, and how much older than you?

ROSALIE: My oldest sister is Helen. My, she is, she is now, she was born in '23. She is now 70. She is going to. She is 70. Helen, I mean Charlotte was born 1924. She is 69. Lenka was born 1926. She is 68. She is 1926, 67. 67, and my sister, Rose, was born in 1928. And she is now 36. No, 66. And I was born, and my brother, that's, was gassed in the concentration camp, was born in 1930. And I was born in '31. So I am now 62.

INT: What were your religious backgrounds?

ROSALIE: Yes, we were very religious. I used to go Saturday afternoons a lot and we got together with the friends. And of course we did a lot of a, hiking in the woods, and, and we played a lot of ball but we also took time to do some praying. So after the synagogue, after lunch we did some praying in the, just reading in the siddur. And then, then we got together with the friends, and we played and we did a lot of fun things.

INT: Would you call this an Orthodox background?

ROSALIE: Yes, definitely, Orthodox. Yes.

INT: Raised with kosher food and observances.

ROSALIE: I would not, I would not do anything that was against the Jewish law. I have never. Even if there was a little branch of the on the street I would not step on it because I was afraid I would break it and that was not allowed. We were not allowed to carry pocketbooks on the Sabbath because you were just not allowed to carry anything. And if you had a handkerchief in our hands we had to tie it around so we don't carry it. But that all stopped after the war. We just didn't do it anymore.

INT: Did you attend a religious school as well as a public school?

ROSALIE: We used to have a tutor come into the house and he taught all of the children in the house after school. I was never bar mitzvahed because I was never, I wasn't old enough before we went to the concentration camp. I was not thirteen yet. But my brother was and it wasn't a

big to do like it is now. It's just a boruchas, and prayers, and a little schnapps, and, and then not really that much.

INT: Were there other family members that lived near you? Your grandparents?

ROSALIE: I never knew my grandparents.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about what you are familiar with in terms of your father and mother's families, where they came from or any of their background?

ROSALIE: My sister, Charlotte, knows a lot more because she was older.

INT: That's okay - whatever you remember.

ROSALIE: But I have never met my grandparents. I never saw them. They must have died or-

INT: Died before you were born?

ROSALIE: Yeah, yeah. My older sister, Helen, we were all very good in school. My older sister was dressmaker but a very good one. She designed her own clothes and she cut them. She made the patterns and Lenka followed in her footsteps. They did very nice work and they used to - that's how they made a living. Lenka, again, oh Lenka did the same thing but Charlotte was kind of helping in the house. She helped my mom clean and cook and with the rest of the activities. And my other sister, she did the shopping, whatever we needed at the grocery store, after school. And my mother did her own baking, and cooking, and, and she did all the gardening she did herself. And it wasn't easy. It was a hard life but we did okay. My father made a living, like I said, selling fruits and buying volume in wholesale. So we did okay. And I was, I was a happy child. I did a lot of outdoor activities. I played ball and sledding in the wintertime. We had a lot of hills around us and I had a lot of friends and everything was good.

INT: So was it common with families at this time that the older siblings care for the younger siblings, that you all had...

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: ...lots of responsibility?

ROSALIE: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Everybody did something 'cause my father was hardly ever home, and really, my mother was left with the responsibility of taking care of the family. So, she needed help and my older sister helped. Charlotte is the one that helped, and Rose, also, and Lenka, and Helen did the sewing.

INT: Did you know about your parents' background? Did they also come from a religious education?

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes, they do.

INT: Religious families.

ROSALIE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

INT: Did they have brothers and sisters?

ROSALIE: My mother had two sisters and my father had two brothers. They all perished. Well, the brother was living in the United States. He survived. He didn't go to the concentration camp. He is the one that brought us over here.

INT: Oh. Uh-huh. He left before the war?

ROSALIE: Oh yeah. He left in the twenties. But his other brother perished in the concentration camp.

INT: This would have been your uncle?

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: What about anything further about their background? Did they come from poor families? Did they have limited education themselves, your parents?

ROSALIE: My parents, yeah, they did have limited education. Probably finished eighth grades. And it, you know, you got married and you started some kind of a little business for yourself and that's how you made a living.

INT: How would you describe some, special friendships or relationships growing up at that time that you had with other children?

ROSALIE: As a child?

INT: Uh-huh. Did you play with other Jewish children, non-Jewish children?

ROSALIE: Mostly Jewish children. There was a street, the whole street was just full of Jewish children. So we got together after school and didn't have many toys but we had a ball. And we had a, we had a sled in the wintertime and we did a lot of sledding. We had a lot of hills. And what else did we have? Simple things that we were busy with and we enjoyed a rope, a jump rope. And that's how we spent our time and it was really nice. There were a lot of woods, and fields, and we used to go far away, and took a lot of walks and climbed the trees and this is how we spend our time.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about the community or the neighborhood, where you went to public school, there were both Jewish and non-Jewish children?

ROSALIE: In Europe? Yeah. It was mixed.

INT: Were you segregated? Were Jews segregated at that time?

ROSALIE: No. It was mostly Jewish people on our street but the teacher lived like two houses away from me. Next door lived the rabbi on one side, on the other side a merchant that had fabrics, all kinds of fabrics they sold. Across the street from me was a bakery. A little further was the big grocery store. But it was all mostly Jewish. As I remember, this one teacher was the only Gentile that lived there on the street. Otherwise they were mostly Jewish.

INT: Do you remember any experiences of anti-Semitism, how you were treated?

ROSALIE: In school?

INT: Uh-huh. In the neighborhoods.

ROSALIE: I personally did not come in contact with any anti-Semitism because we didn't really associate that much with the non-Jewish kids. We kept to ourselves and we never bothered with them and they never hit us or anything. My husband had different experiences but I didn't. Now of course came Christmas we were a little scared 'cause they used to go outside with the lamps, and then they were brainwashed that the Jews killed Jesus, and a, we had to close the windows and turn out the lights because they sometimes threw stones in the windows. So Christmas was the only time when we were really a little concerned. Otherwise we were not afraid.

INT: Did your parents say anything about these situations, if something would happen, the stone throwing?

ROSALIE: No, we didn't talk about it but we knew. We knew why they did that. We knew that because the churches were preaching that the Jews killed Jesus and this is what they knocked into their heads. And they really, came Christmas, and that was the time when Jesus was born and that was the time when they really didn't like us. So this is when they started to throw stones in the windows. But we personally didn't have the experience of them doing it to us.

INT: So did you live in a rural area or was it a large community? I'm not really sure about the area. Was there a large Jewish community?

ROSALIE: We had about 200 families. It was a little town. It was a nice little town. It wasn't a big city. But it was a nice little town with schools. We had, I'd say we had about three schools around us, not too far, and a synagogue was about two, three houses away from me. And the Gentiles, the Christian families lived kind of on the outskirts. So it was very, it was very friendly and neighborly. We used to go to each other's houses. My mom used to go to the neighbor's house in the afternoon or she used to come to our house. And it was just very friendly basis, or meet outside and the kids were playing with everybody else's children. It was a nice life.

INT: Can you talk about memories that you had of your parents, how they made decisions, how they solved problems? Did they talk, argue in front of the children?

ROSALIE: I have never heard them argue; whether my other sisters did I don't know. I can speak only for myself. I didn't. And decisions were not made in front of all the children. It was the two of them making decisions and whatever they made is this was where we followed. As far as raising us, it was mostly my mother, really, 'cause he was always out on the business with the business, trying to make a living. It wasn't easy.

INT: So would you say they had fairly traditional roles, your father and mother?

ROSALIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And of course my older sisters kind of took care of the younger ones and everybody pitched in to do something, except me.

INT: You were the youngest. You were taken care of.

ROSALIE: Yeah.

INT: How about any family difficulties before the war, problems, losses?

ROSALIE: Yes, we did. We did have family difficulties. My brother, when he was a little boy, he had rheumatic fever. And not having the right medication available, it developed into a heart condition. And having a heart condition was very difficult because we really didn't have the proper doctors, although we did have doctors but they didn't know what to do for him. So my mother, my father used to take him to Budapest a lot to the hospital for treatment, and until he got better and then he came back. And he was a special child. I mean being the only boy he could do no wrong. Everything that was special he got. And we understood. We understood because he is, he is sickly, that he deserves it. So, but most unfortunately he died in the concentration camp, which I have written about here.

INT: How about feelings, emotional expression of affection? Did you see your parents show any affection towards one another? How about affection displayed to the children?

ROSALIE: I guess I've watched them kissing sometimes. And as far as affection towards me, yes, my mother gave me affection. My father was kind of never there. But my mother did and she, I'm sure she loved me.

INT: So you have early childhood memories that were positive?

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes. My earliest childhood memories are good ones.

INT: How about negative memories? Were they part of that childhood? Discipline, problems, unhappiness that you remember at all? This is all before the war.

ROSALIE: Yeah. Well, my mother was the disciplinarian. I have watched her hit my older sister sometimes but she never hit me. She was just nervous and if they did something wrong she gave them a paddle, you know. It was the thing to do in Europe. It's not like here - got to be careful not to touch a child. I mean she didn't hit him badly but she, she disciplined them. But I personally never remember getting hit. I would just scoot out of everybody's way. I did my thing and I didn't mix into anything. And I went out to play with the children and I...I listened. If she told me to do something I did it.

INT: So then she was primarily responsible for doing discipline.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: Your father wasn't around.

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes, right.

INT: With six children she needed some kind of order.

ROSALIE: Yes, of course. Of course.

INT: What was the role or the influence of religion in Jewish identity at that time for you and for the family? How much a part of your life was it?

ROSALIE: It was. It was a big part of my life. We went to the synagogue every Saturday. We observed every holiday, if this was dairy or meat dishes. We were very careful not to mix it up, not to touch it or...It was strictly kosher. I remember I opened an egg and I saw a little something on it or a chicken. I used to run to the rabbi, my mother sent me to the rabbi to make sure that we can use it. Or that the chicken had a little spot on the leg or whatever. So unless he said it's okay that we didn't use it.

INT: How do you view your family in terms of their attitudes, their values at that time? Did they have hopes and expectations for their children in terms of school or religious education?

ROSALIE: We would have, I assure you we would have continued school. We would have all gone to colleges, not in our town but in another town. We didn't have a college in our town. But we would have gone and continued our education but we couldn't. And this is, I really do regret that I didn't pursue it after the war. I had no one to encourage me, really, and so I did what I did. Went to work and we did never, never got any charities from anybody, although we came without a penny to the United States. We went straight to work and never received any money from anybody. So all of us.

INT: It is quite different nowadays.

ROSALIE: Yeah.

INT: Immigrants come into the country with support.

ROSALIE: Yeah, they come and they support them and they give them a chance to go to school. I went to work.

INT: Looking back at your family, if you could find some descriptive words to give examples of how you felt about your family, what would they be?

ROSALIE: Are you saying before the war?

INT: Descriptions. Uh-huh. You had said happy childhood was one. Was there some others?

ROSALIE: Was average. It was just an average family. This is how they lived from day to day, this is what we did every day. Didn't travel much anywhere. No vacations or anything like that we went together. Although sometimes one of the sisters went to visit an aunt or someone came to visit us. But this was everyday life.

INT: Few celebrations, few but happy events?

ROSALIE: Well, before the war, no. My oldest sister was what, 1943. She was barely twenty. So there were no weddings, nothing going on, really. We were all under age yet.

INT: There were day-to-day hardships of providing food and clothing for the family.

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes.

[Tape 1 - End Side 1] [Tape 1 - Begin Side 2]

INT: How could you tell that your life was starting to change? What were some signs that there were changes happening?

ROSALIE: In Europe?

INT: Uh-huh, or your community?

ROSALIE: Okay, I remember, well, first of all it started by us getting out of school. They didn't want us in school anymore. Then we noticed the Jews were starting to get beaten up in the streets. I've watched, as a matter of fact one person, he got slapped so badly by a policeman. He just fell on the ground, motionless. And that was such a traumatic experience for me 'cause I was really young and I thought why? Why is he doing that? But we soon realized that because we were Jews and this is what they did.

INT: How did you know this? Did you talk to your sisters, your parents?

ROSALIE: Yeah, yeah.

INT: About what was going on?

ROSALIE: Yes, yes, we were talking about it and, and we realized that really hard times are coming. We knew that.

INT: What do you think their view of the situation, either in their community or the war, what do you think that they were feeling or thinking about what was going to happen?

ROSALIE: The Jews?

INT: Your parents.

ROSALIE: My parents? We never ever expected the things that were happening, never. At the worst we thought that we would be put someplace in a place of where we would be working. They just wanted to get us out of that city and put us somewhere by ourselves, a ghetto or something, but to take us to Auschwitz and burn us? Never. Although, when we arrived at Auschwitz, my mother, when they opened the door, she looked out and she saw the flames and she knew right away that this was a crematorium. My mother was very smart. Very smart woman. But I didn't understand how she knew because where did we ever come in contact with even a word like that? I never knew there was a crematorium. But she, she said, "You know what?" Must have been Friday night because she says, "I'm not going to light the candles, no more."

INT: This is in your home?

ROSALIE: This was in the wagons. This was in the train already going to Auschwitz she was, she was so bitter, what they were doing to us that she says, "I'm not going to light the candles anymore."

INT: Can you talk a little bit of, a little more specifically about some of the circumstances, the beginning persecutions? For instance, you were no longer able to go to school. Were there other restrictions, other things? What happened to your father's business?

ROSALIE: Well, everything stopped. Everything stopped. They closed-

INT: These were like the Nuremberg laws?

ROSALIE: They closed the Jewish stores. I don't know at which point they gave us the yellow stars, whether it was there? It must have been, but we got yellow stars and they all knew who is Jewish and who isn't. But it was very shortly after that that they just gathered us around and - my teacher, I used to love my teacher. He was, he was a Gentile and I thought he was so great. I just. He paid attention to me because I was good and he used to take my paper and show it to everybody. The penmanship was so nice and the math. And if he needed to show an example to a higher grade, if someone didn't know the math problems they used to call me out of school and show them, "Look, this is a third grader and she knows and you don't." But I was so

disappointed in him because when we gathered in this place to be searched he is the one that searched us. And he asked me, "Do you have any valuables? Do you have any gold? Do you have any?" My mother, he took the wedding band away. And how could he do it? I was so disappointed in him. I couldn't understand how he could do, such a nice man, how he could do it. He just changed and he wanted to a, get some of that.

INT: So he wasn't wearing a uniform by that time.

ROSALIE: No, he was civilian.

INT: He was a civilian who volunteered?

ROSALIE: Yeah. He wouldn't want to do it he wouldn't have done it. But maybe he volunteered to do it, so. That's what makes me think he was. I was very disappointed in him.

INT: Were there stories among other residents, you know, what were you hearing from your rabbi and what other kinds of changes were going on?

ROSALIE: In the town?

INT: Uh-huh.

ROSALIE: I really, it was just a very depressed, depressed situation. Everybody was very sad. We kind of bought some flour to prepare. Who knows what's going to be? We bought this to prepare, maybe we are going to need food. It was a very, very. I remember feeling very sad. It was Passover. We celebrated a Seder and we really did it the way it is supposed to be. But like the end of Passover, this is when we got orders to pack up all of our belongings and go gather in that area and that we were going to be taken away.

INT: Do you recall the date and time of when did that occur?

ROSALIE: I think it was the seventh or eighth day of Passover in 1944, whichever date that was. It was devastating to get someone out of the house that he lived there his whole life, leave everything behind and go to somewhere you don't know where and just take a few little things with you. It was, it was very sad. I was very sad. I remember that. Very sad. Then they put us in the trains and we were heading to a ghetto, leaving everything behind. The ghetto. Should I tell you about the ghetto? We arrived there and we slept outside for a while because they had no place to put us.

INT: This is still in Czechoslovakia?

ROSALIE: Yeah, that was Mateszalka. It was, it was considered Hungary at that time because the Hungarians occupied Czechoslovakia, I believe in 1938 or 1939. So it was no longer Czechoslovakia, it was Hungary then. And the Hungarians were not such good people either. They kind of worked together with the Germans.

INT: So they became like civilians?

ROSALIE: Some are the civilians, some are the police. So, after a few days sleeping outside, this is the way I remember it, we were put on an attic with a few other families. Really hot there. And we had very little food. We all sat there and I remember, we had some cookies that my mom had brought from home and we had the flour that we had packed up. So, my mom went down, and with some of my older sisters, and they made a fire, and they cooked or did, baked or something with some beans or whatever we had left. And this is what we ate. We didn't work in the ghetto. We just, we just wandered around from place to place inside.

INT: There were groups of, this was all other Jews from your town?

ROSALIE: From my town, from other towns. This is where I saw my cousins the first time. I've never seen my cousins that lived in another town, five little children, and I never saw them again after, though. They were all gassed. But after about four weeks or so, this is when they gathered us around and we were sent away. We were put like 70, 80 people in a cattle car, and on our way to somewhere and we didn't know where. And this is what I started to write this, if you want me to read it.

INT: Well, let me ask a few more questions and then whatever you are comfortable with sharing.

ROSALIE: Yeah, okay. Okay.

INT: How were your parents coping in the ghetto? How were they responding? Clearly these were very threatening, difficult circumstances?

ROSALIE: We did the best we could with what we had.

INT: Did they communicate to you?

ROSALIE: They were very hard times. No. No. Not very. No. Didn't talk. We didn't talk. We, everybody was just sitting for themselves and thinking for themselves and we didn't communicate much. It, everybody was very depressed for himself. So we, we expected some very hard times. And it was really very sad what they did to us.

INT: Can you start telling me about what happened in the transport, what happened once you left that camp?

ROSALIE: Going to Auschwitz?

INT: Uh-huh. How did you know where you were going? Was anything told to you?

ROSALIE: No.

INT: How did you prepare?

ROSALIE: Nobody, nobody told us anything. We were sitting in the cattle cars there. There was a bucket in the corner, they did not allow us to go to the bathroom we had to. And the little bit of food we had we ate. Not much. And the trains were just going and going and the sound of the train, it was so sad. Even when I think of it today I just every time I hear a train I think of the trip going to Auschwitz with the wheels, the blowing of the horn. And we just sat there and nobody, nobody really said anything.

INT: It's like you have a flashback of that experience even with hearing a train.

ROSALIE: All the time. All the time. I hear the sound of a train and it just brings me back going to Auschwitz.

INT: What do you feel? What do you think? What's happening?

ROSALIE: Very, very sad. I feel very sad because I feel the way I felt then. I, I just reminisce what I felt like then and it was very sad. And it brings back memories with all of us sitting there huddled together, squeezed in. Really like, like cattle. They really treated us terrible. No dignity. I mean you had to go in front of everyone if you had to go to the bathroom. It was degrading. It was sad. But not as bad as what we, what was happening later.

INT: What happened when you got to the destination of the camp?

ROSALIE: Well, we got off the trains. (paused) We stayed in the ghetto for about four weeks until we were ordered to gather around in a certain area and we were taken to the trains. We were shoved into the cattle cars, about 70 - 80 persons in one car. There was a bucket in the corner for toilet facilities. I will never forget the ongoing sound of the train moving further and further. It seemed like it lasted forever. When I hear that sound, even today, it reminds me of that train ride going to Auschwitz. Although we did not know where we were going at the time I remember feeling extremely sad. After a few days the train finally stopped. When they opened the door and my mom looked out and she saw the flames coming out of the chimneys she said, "Who knew that they had crematoriums?" How did she ever know? I never heard of a crematorium before. Little did she know that she would wind up there that very same day. How sad. They started to scream, "Out." We went out from the wagons. Someone came over to my sister.

INT: Who started to scream, "Out"?

ROSALIE: The SS. And told her to throw her eyeglasses down. He was a Jewish inmate, obviously tried to save her life. One was not considered worthy of living if he needed eyeglasses. My mom was sent to the left. My sisters went to the right. I held onto my mom's hand and walked with her. All of a sudden I let go. (heavy sigh) I turned around and started to run to my sisters. Whatever made me do so is something I cannot explain. None of us were

aware of where we were going. That was the last time I saw my mother. (crying) I joined up with my sisters, and as we were walking. I saw my father standing in line with my brother.

It's just so difficult for me.

INT: Please stop at any time.

ROSALIE: Okay. He handed us a piece of bread and that was the last time I saw my brother. My brother, William, was a year older than I. He had rheumatic fever as a young child. And not having the proper treatment available it developed into a heart condition. Being the only child, being the only boy in the family and sick from time to time, he was watched over and loved by all of us. Having gone through the experience of being separated from my sisters I can feel the pain he must have felt when he was called out of line and taken away from his father.

INT: What do you understand that was happening at the lines when you were separating from your mother?

ROSALIE: We didn't know where we were going, no. My little brother was taken to the gas chamber, having no family around him and no one to lean on in his last moments of his life. I will never forget him. Our next stop was taking showers. We were ordered to get undressed. They shaved our heads, poured some disinfectant over us and then we entered the shower room. We were later informed that these showerheads release either gas or water. We were lucky this time. They gave us the striped dresses and we marched into our assigned barracks. The beds were made out of wood, about four by six feet. They squeezed in as many as they could fit in. I remember it was raining that day. I was thirsty and went out and held my mouth open under the roof to get some water when all of a sudden I felt this bang on my head. I looked around and asked this woman why she was hitting me. She gave me another slap and told me, "Here you don't ask any questions." I learned fast. During the day we were forced to sit outside in the hot sun without any food or water. Our lips were blistered from the heat. Our daily food consisted of black coffee for breakfast, soup for lunch that was so bad it was impossible to swallow. Dinner was a small piece of bread and two little rotten potatoes. Night after night I witnessed the flames going full speed. We were told what was going on in Auschwitz. Our parents, sisters, and brothers were being gassed and burned.

INT: Who told you this? How did you know what was going on?

ROSALIE: The people, not the Gestapo. But there were some Jewish inmates that had been there for, since 1942. Some of them came from Belgium. Some of them came from other countries. They had been in Auschwitz for a while and they knew everything what was going on. And they didn't hesitate to tell us, "See that fire over there, that is your mother burning." They were so tough. They really didn't care about feelings. So that's how we knew.

INT: How do you explain how they were able to survive and what did they mean by telling these stories? How were they coping?

ROSALIE: They, they were so hardened by then and I'm not so sure they survived because they, people that had been there for a long time and knew so much they usually got rid of them, not to be able to tell too much. So I don't know if these people survived or not.

INT: From the time that you were put into the showers, you were with your sisters, what were some of the feelings you had and in losing your hair, what was that like?

ROSALIE: We looked at each other and we laughed, you know. There is something funny in everything, in all tragedies. So we didn't even recognize each other because everybody was shaven and we just looked at each other and sadly, we did laugh. But you know.

INT: And to be given other clothes, taking your clothes away?

ROSALIE: Oh yeah. Everything we left. They gave us striped clothes and this was our, I remember my number, 20,629, this was my number and this was my name. There were no names there. This is how we were called.

INT: How did you come to be able to be in the same barracks together? I think it's a miracle.

ROSALIE: It is. It is. We just constantly stuck together, and at one time or another we were separated, but we exchanged with other people, and they came to the other barrack and they let us go together with the sisters. Somehow we just remained together, not constantly. As I said, they used to separate us from time to time, but we managed to get back together again.

So, if one needed to go to the bathroom at night there was a big kettle outside and when it was full we had to carry it a distance to empty it. I had the honor a few times and it spilled all over me and I had no way to wash it off. It was a kettle there for the people that had to go to the bathroom. And of course when it was full they had to - and it just spilled all over you. They didn't take us to wash it off. That's how we went back to the barracks.

My worst fears were the selections, being one of the youngest in my camp was not in my favor. My sister, Charlotte, once pulled me out from that death row risking her own life. I was barely thirteen when we heard rumors that we were going to be transported to Germany to work in an ammunition factory. This was great news. Sure enough, the day came when we were ordered to get undressed, line up outside for selections. It was judgment day. Dr. Mengele showed up, and he will decide who shall live and who shall die. I was scared to death but I had hopes. My sisters all passed but when he saw me he put his hand on my shoulder, looked me over and told me to step aside. At that point all of my hopes had vanished to ever get out of this hell alive. I was taken to a room with the sick and those who Dr. Mengele thought were not able to work. I knew that this was my last day on this earth. I could not accept that my sisters are leaving and I am being left alone to die. I was hysterically crying, scratching on the window, trying to get someone's attention and begging to let me out. I was told later that my sister, Charlotte, followed by my other sisters came crying to Dr. Mengele asking him to please let me go with them. His reply was, "If you want to be with your sister you can go with her but she cannot go with you."

A red headed young Jewish woman watched this whole scene. She has been in Auschwitz for much longer than us and was helping Dr. Mengele. As I was looking out the window with tears rolling down my face, she opened the door, gave me clothes and told me to run. Had she been caught, she would have been gassed with the rest of us. I wish I could thank her. She saved my life. I never saw her again. I was running like a wild animal. I heard someone call my name. My sisters saw me running and they tried to get my attention. They were all lined up ready to leave. Noticing them, I ran over but they were already five in a row and I had no place to stand. They begged the fifth woman to move to another place. This was not a simple request as she was also scared but she finally agreed. I was standing in the back shaking with fear. I pinched my cheeks and stood on my toes to appear taller. Dr. Mengele came over again to look us over. This time we were dressed. I was very lucky he did not recognize me. Another miracle. We were all given a piece of bread for the trip. I was so totally exhausted from this ordeal I did not notice that someone stole my bread. That could happen another tragedy had I not had my sisters come to my rescue again. They shared their portion of bread with me.

It is now fifty years later. I still cry when I think of it. I question was G-d with me? If so, where was he when the other six million were murdered? I don't know the answer. The world was silent when we were being slaughtered and no one cared. There were some righteous Gentiles who did care and as a result thousands of Jews were saved. We will always remember and be thankful to Raoul Wallenberg and others who had it in their heart to save a human being. How tragic and unfair what happened to him. Instead of being honored all over the world he was locked up in prison to rot. What a reward for his goodness in saving so many lives.

INT: Could we go back and you account for running (out of the room), for what was going on in you in terms of how you felt about wanting to live?

ROSALIE: I just had such a will to live. There were some, there was another child with me that was also put in the same room with me. She said nothing. She didn't cry. She didn't beg. She also had a sister that was with her but the sister was picked out to go away and she wasn't. She was selected to leave but she wasn't because she was also little and like probably twelve years old. But she just stood there and didn't say anything and I just cried hysterically. I just didn't want to die. I wanted to go with my sisters. And, and I made them know so. And luckily someone noticed me, and would you believe when she let me out she took the little girl too and she said, "Go." I don't know what happened to her.

INT: It took a tremendous amount of courage.

ROSALIE: I was totally on my own. Everybody was. And I think it was very courageous of my sister. I have such a headache. It was very courageous of my sisters to come back to Mengele and then begged them. Because he could have said, "Forget it, you just go in with her." And that would have been the end of it.

(Her daughter, Ruthie asks): Do you want aspirin?

ROSALIE: Yeah, thank you. I came across another good person while I was working in Guisling concentration camp in an ammunition factory. He was my boss, a German. His name was Adolf Schoffs. Mr. Schoffs had a daughter exactly my age. He always used to say sarcastically, "Rosie, (?)" Translated, it means because of Rosalie there is a war. It is all her fault. He brought me bread sometimes and watched me eat it. When I worked night shifts he used to tell me to put my head down and sleep for a few minutes while he was watching out for the SS. I remember him trying to convince the SS, who happened to be a woman, not to report my sister when she found two potatoes in her possession that someone had given her.

INT: This is something Charlotte had done?

ROSALIE: Yes. Did she tell you about it?

INT: Quite a story.

ROSALIE: He told her, "If you have a heart..." See, I don't know what she said because I didn't hear it. He told her, "If you have a heart I beg you not to report her." She didn't, thanks to him. She would have been badly punished. I remember being sick and could not go out to be counted. The couple found me lying in my bed, beat me up.

[Tape 1 - End Side 2] [Tape 2 - Begin Side 1]

INT: How long were you in Auschwitz and when this opportunity to work in the factory came up and, how were you transported? Just a little background, how that came about.

ROSALIE: Okay. How long we were in Auschwitz?

INT: Yes. Uh-huh.

ROSALIE: We were in Auschwitz, we came to Auschwitz, that must have been, April, May, must have been the beginning of June.

INT: 1940?

ROSALIE: '44. And we were in Auschwitz until about, July, August. I remember it was very, very hot. It must have been, probably September we left.

INT: So four or five months.

ROSALIE: Five months, something like that.

INT: Then the selection occurred for this work detail.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: Where, and that was away from Auschwitz?

ROSALIE: No, no, that was in Auschwitz. That was in Auschwitz. We were called out from our barracks. We were told to get undressed and each of us lined up like one, one after the other and Dr. Mengele was standing there and we had to all pass through him.

INT: They needed so many people to work. And this would be outside the camp but you would be returned at night?

ROSALIE: No, he needs so many people to be transferred to another city where they had ammunition factories and they needed some people to work there. So they made selections from Auschwitz to send some people to Guising and to work in the ammunition factory. And of course he wanted to get the young and the healthy, someone that was able to withstand that to work. We had to work night shifts, twelve hours a day, walk to the factory. It was freezing cold and we were walking with our wooden shoes. I don't think we had any socks, and just the dresses, the striped dresses.

INT: So all of you, all five sisters were able to work. You stayed together and worked.

ROSALIE: We stayed together, we stayed together and worked in the same factory, not necessarily the same shifts all the time but the same factory. At one point I was in one place and they were in another. I remember three of us were working with this Adolf Schoffs.

INT: Were the conditions for food and sleeping better?

ROSALIE: It was better than Auschwitz. We had our own beds. It was a, was a small bed with some straw underneath, whatever. But compared to Auschwitz it was heaven not to see the crematoriums and not to see the flames. That was, that was much better. Although we had very little food, too, and we were working hard and they also had selections there too.

INT: The selections were what purpose?

ROSALIE: There was a woman, beautiful young woman. She was pregnant. They had no use for pregnant women there. I remember like today she was put into a little cart and wheeled out and she was shocked. And an empty cart came back without her and that was the end of it. She must have been in her twenties.

INT: So there were just women (to work).

ROSALIE: Yeah, just women.

INT: Young children weren't allowed.

ROSALIE: No. I really was one of the youngest.

INT: So it was through this employment you had met this righteous Gentile.

ROSALIE: Mr. Schoffs, yes. He used to bring my sister medicine when she was coughing a lot and she was.

INT: This is your older sister?

ROSALIE: My older sister.

INT: Did she also have health problems?

ROSALIE: She had sort of probably whether it was from the conditions or whatever it was but she coughed a lot. Some kind of an asthmatic condition. She also had a birthmark on her and we were very scared about that because Mengele might have thought it something bad and he could have just shoved her and made her go. But he didn't. He knew what it was, that it's just a birthmark and it's nothing serious. So he let her pass.

INT: So you continued to be very responsible for each other in the factory sharing food.

ROSALIE: We each get, we each got our own portions and we each ate our own portions. We didn't take from the other because we all needed, everybody needed his portion. Although I have to say one thing for my sister, Lenka, she always picked the smallest one. Here they handed us five portions for the five sisters, very unselfishly she took the smallest piece. And that's saying something about her too. I remember it was Yom Kippur in that factory. It was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. We were working in the factory. I think the SS were trying to test us how much faith we have left in G-d. They served us a very special meal for lunch, potatoes and buttermilk. As hungry as we were we did not touch it in observance of the holiday. Even though we felt abandoned by G-d we still believed in him. He was our last hope. There were no crematoriums in Guislinging that we were aware of but they still had selections. I remember this beautiful young woman, she was the wife of a rabbi, wheeled out of the camp in a little cart like some trash and shot because she was pregnant. It was about the beginning of March.

We were moved to another camp near Dachau where we witnessed piles of dead bodies every day, people dying from starvation. As the American Army was coming closer the SS didn't know what to do with us. So, again, we marched for miles until we came to a train. The train stopped after a few days and we were just standing there until we heard shot and we saw the American soldiers marching in. We were liberated the end of April. Unbelievable joy. I could not believe this was happening to us that we were finally free. After I settled down I thought about my parents and my brother, assuming that they are all dead and who are we coming home to? I cried. After we recuperated for a short time we were heading home. As we were sitting in the trains someone came over to us and said, "Where are you going? Your father is in Prague." We immediately got off. When I saw my father I could not believe it was him.

INT: This train was where and how was that decision made to take the train? This is right after liberation?

ROSALIE: Right after liberation. We stayed there for a little while because they tried to, the American Army gave us shelter and they tried to build us up a little bit.

INT: You mean with food?

ROSALIE: With food and, and maybe a dress or whatever they had.

INT: How did you feel at the time?

ROSALIE: How did I feel at the time? We were, we were very happy. We were very happy that we, finally it's over. Well of course we didn't know who survived from, from the family and who didn't as far as the father, the brother, the mother, we didn't know.

INT: So you needed to gain your own strength and you stayed there briefly until when?

ROSALIE: Yes, very briefly until we got a train and wanted to go home, all of us. And going through Prague, this is where the train took us. This is when we heard the news about my father, that he is in Prague. And of course we all got off. We were so happy that he survived. And seeing him, we didn't really recognize him even.

INT: You learned about the losses of loved ones, your mother and your brother, other relatives. How was this confirmed or told to you?

ROSALIE: My father told us what happened to my brother. He was with him and they took him out of line. And if they took him out of line we knew where he was going so we knew what happened to him. And since my mother didn't come home, we went home after to our hometown and she didn't come home. We knew that she was dead also. And just knowing that she went to the left was proof enough. We didn't need to know anymore 'cause whoever went to the left was immediately taken to the gas chambers, the children, the, the old, elderly. She was not old. She was, in 1944, she was born in 1899. 45 years old.

INT: Was it because she looked older, frail?

ROSALIE: Maybe she looked older, yeah.

INT: But even at that time you had, you had let go. You had walked with your sisters.

ROSALIE: I don't know why I did that.

INT: It's an amazing story.

ROSALIE: I don't know why I did that. I just let go and I started to run to my sisters. I had no idea where we were going. I guess I wanted to be with my sisters more so than with my mother. I don't know why. Maybe because they were more my age or, I don't know. But if I hadn't done it I would have, I wouldn't have been here to tell the story.

INT: So grateful you are.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: Tell me about your father, seeing your father, what that was like for all of you.

ROSALIE: He weighed about 95 pounds. I mean he was just skin and bones. I don't know how he could stand on his feet even. And as we were walking outside I was holding his hand.

INT: He was at the hospital or he was discharged?

ROSALIE: No, he was released after a while. Then he went back to the hospital. I guess he must have been released to come and see us or whatever the reason was. We were walking outside and I was holding his hand and I didn't look that great myself. And people were really staring at us and the restaurants were open and they said, "Will you like to come in, we'll feed you?" And they did. Everybody was so nice.

INT: This is in Prague.

ROSALIE: This is in Prague, already. And after, after being there a while we decided that two of the sisters are going to stay with my father and three of us are going to go home, see what's going on. In our hometown with a house, with everything, who came home and who didn't. So that was a very, very horrible experience. I came to my house. The house was empty, house after house, the whole neighborhood of houses, empty. Nails were all over the walls. The oven was demolished. They were looking for money or whatever. Was all over the kitchen.

INT: The houses were boarded up and there were no other residents living in them?

ROSALIE: No, it was empty. All the houses were, all the Jewish houses were empty there. I don't know why. I walked into the rabbi's house next door, it was a family of about 11 children, nobody there. I walked next door, nobody there. Across the street, nobody there, three little children across the street. And all along nobody, empty. So we settled in one of the houses there, not ours, someone else's house. It was a little room and that's where Charlotte and my other sister and I went in.

INT: So your two other middle sisters stayed with your father?

ROSALIE: The oldest and the middle sister stayed with my father. So next door to the house where we settled in the pharmacist used to live there and he had a very nice, big house. And he had a bathtub and I went in and I wanted to take a bath. The water was cold, it no. But still, I let the water run and I went in the tub and the cold water. And as I was washing I hear voices. Russian soldiers coming in, a bunch of Russian soldiers. Can you imagine me sitting in the tub naked and they are walking around? I mean I, I was beside myself. I was so scared I was shaking. I was just so lucky. All along they never opened the bathroom door. Whether they didn't see it, they didn't because they would have opened it. And after a while they walked out.

INT: Do you understand what was happening with the soldiers? Why were they there? What was going on?

ROSALIE: They, they, they occupied our whole town. The territory was occupied by the Russians. And this is where they were. This is where they were staying. I don't know which houses they were staying in but there was a bunch of them there. I remember once a Russian soldier came in and he started to walk towards me. And Charlotte had already left with Isaac, with her husband. He wasn't her husband yet but she liked him and they went back to Czechoslovakia. And only my sister, Rose and I stayed there. And a Russian soldier walked into our room. And my sister was very courageous, the one that's a little older than I. And she took a broom and she says, "You'd better get out of here 'cause I'm going to hit you." With a broom in her hand like this, "You get out of here right now." And he did. He got out. And that was lucky for us too because there was nobody around us. He could have done anything he wanted to.

INT: So you decided to stay there with your sister?

ROSALIE: Yeah, I decided to stay with my sister. She went, she went back with Isaac and then they came to pick us up. After a short while they came to pick us up and we went back to Prague.

INT: Did you see other people, residents that you remember growing up?

ROSALIE: In our town?

INT: Uh-huh. Did you remember who Isaac was?

ROSALIE: Yeah, I remembered who Isaac was. I remember Isaac from before the war. He had three little boys. I remember those three little boys, very cute little boys. I remember his wife. We used to shop in his store sometimes. And Isaac fell in love with Charlotte and he promised her the moon.

INT: But Charlotte said it wasn't love at first sight.

ROSALIE: I don't know. I don't know.

INT: It was, you know she wanted to be taken care of and supported.

ROSALIE: This is what happened to us, yes, a lot of people, a lot of people got married because they wanted to be taken care of. What was love? Did we know what love was? We didn't. We just wanted to be, have a little security. So, and that's where we went back to Prague and started a new life.

INT: What do you think helped you to survive that period?

ROSALIE: The period during, during the concentration camp?

INT: Here you were in, post-liberation, and grateful to be alive and you had so very little.

ROSALIE: We had nothing. I remember my sister saying, "Well, what do you want to do? Do you want to go to school?" I said, "How am I going to go to school? I have this one rag on me. I have nothing to change into. How can I go to school?" And I didn't. But I couldn't have gone anyway. We left our town. So there was just couldn't find a home there. We were surrounded by all Christian families and they didn't like us. None of them came over to say, "I'm glad you came home. I'm glad you survived. Welcome back to the, to the town." Nobody had nothing to do with us.

INT: How did you come to decide to leave?

ROSALIE: How? I want to tell you another little incident that happened. We had a neighbor across the street and he had a little baby boy, an only child. And he decided to leave his baby with a Christian family, thinking that maybe the child will survive. They were well rewarded, I'm sure. And that miraculously both of the parents survived and they came to pick up the baby and the baby was no longer living. They killed the baby. The Christian family killed the baby and this he heard from some other neighbors that that's what they did. Of course they didn't think that the couple would ever come back so they got rid of the baby. Tragic death that I don't even want to get into. But this is, so what is there to stay in that hometown for? There was nothing there for us.

INT: So after these stories it convinced you that there was no reason to stay?

ROSALIE: No reason to stay. And I've never gone back since. It's been 1945.

INT: How did you feel when you left? Was there a change in your faith or belief of your values?

ROSALIE: I, I kind of didn't observe any religion anymore. I didn't think about G-d much. I didn't feel bad to leave because I saw there - I was happy to leave. It was such a depressing place. When you see, when you see all those homes, and all those children that used to be there and playing outside, and the families living there and then nobody there. Out of all the children that I went to school with four survived and they were all older. I was really the youngest that survived. So only four of them came back from the concentration camp. We had so many of them. None of the children survived. So we just wanted to get out of there, the sooner the better. And I never missed it, either. Never missed it. It was a depressing place. And that's when we started our new life in Prague. And we didn't stay in Prague very long.

INT: You stayed there with your father?

ROSALIE: With my father and when he, my father had tuberculosis because he was working at Buchenwald in the coal mines and we settled in a town called (?). Used to be Sudetenland.

INT: What country?

ROSALIE: It used to be Sudetenland. It was captured by the Germans in 1939 and then it became Czechoslovakian again. So that's where we settled, in a town called Ba(?). And did my father work? No. My father didn't work. He didn't feel well. But we all went to work. I went to work in a shoe store called (?). Did you ever hear of (?). And my sister worked somewhere else and we all, we all had a job. We all had to support ourselves.

INT: Did Charlotte marry soon after?

ROSALIE: Charlotte married. Charlotte married Isaac and they went back to a DP camp. My other sister got married. Lenka got married and she went to Israel. So it was Helen and Rose and I.

INT: What was it like to say goodbye to your sisters?

ROSALIE: When they left.

INT: For them to marry?

ROSALIE: It was really tough. It was really tough being that we were together all the time and now they are leaving. It was tough but that's where he wanted to go, Isaac, and that's where they decided to go, Lenka and Alvin, to Israel. But she suffered a lot in Israel. She got very sick and-

INT: A difficult life?

ROSALIE: They had a very difficult life, very difficult. And they were asking, could we bring them back?

INT: This happened when you had moved to the United States?

ROSALIE: This happened when we moved to the United States that they wanted to come back. And they came back and they settled in Canada because of her illness, she couldn't take it.

INT: Could you talk more about your life at the time, what were some thoughts and feelings, you know, after liberation what were you looking for?

ROSALIE: We kind of, we kind of started a normal life. As I was working I met a guy and we went out and we went to the movies. I had a girlfriend, she was one of the survivors. And afterward we went to the movies and we still managed to laugh and have fun. We had dates and went out to football games and we stayed there. How old was I? That was 1946. In 1949 we came to the United States, the end of 1949.

INT: Did you talk about your experiences with other survivors, young people like yourself? What were some of the thoughts that you had had? What was important to you?

ROSALIE: I tell you, when we came back, they kind of, everybody went their separate ways, all of my friends, the ones that were left.

INT: Why did that happen?

ROSALIE: One went to France, one went to Israel and one stayed in Czechoslovakia. So that was the only friend I had. She, yeah we talked about it but it wasn't the main focus in life. We just continued doing whatever we had to do and we just didn't talk about it that much.

INT: The losses?

ROSALIE: It was something that was, and we had to let it rest and just go on. We had to go on with our lives so it was very sad. I didn't have my mother, didn't have my brother. It was sad but....

INT: This seems like an obvious question, but how do you think you coped and grieved with their losses? What was the process for you, did it (the grieving) stop and did you cry?

ROSALIE: We didn't dwell on it. We didn't dwell on it every day, we just went on with our lives and we had to, we had a lot of responsibilities. And we didn't just sit down and cry every day, my poor mom and my poor brother. We never forgot them and there were times when we sat down and cried, yes. But we did what we had to do. We went on with our lives.

INT: You were able to talk about the memories-

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: ...of your life with your father and mother-

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes.

INT: ...with your other siblings?

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes, mainly together, the sisters, we'd discussed it a lot of things.

INT: Talk more about what decisions you made to leave, what opportunities came your way?

ROSALIE: In the United States?

INT: Oh, just before you came here, what happened that you ended up coming here?

ROSALIE: My uncle, we had found out, I think my uncle found out through the Red Cross that his brother is living in the United States, he found out that my father is living. And he wrote to him and he said, "If you would like to come to the United States I will be happy to send you an affidavit."

INT: Did your father or had he considered this? Had he talked about trying to leave?

ROSALIE: There was no question that we wanted to leave. We were, all wanted to leave. And that's how we decided to go. Made up the passports and working in Bacula like I told you before, I really, I was one of the top sales people there. And they were going to send me to some kind of a communist school for some courses 'cause it was communistic, and as soon as they heard I was going to America, forget it. "We can't do it now for you. You are leaving us. You are going to the capitalistic country." So that all stopped.

INT: How did you feel about the changes going on in Czechoslovakia, the communism, there were all sorts of things going on?

ROSALIE: Yeah. But didn't bother me. Didn't bother me. It wasn't a bad time for us.

INT: The Jews were treated-

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: ...well?

ROSALIE: Yes, we were treated well. We, as long as we did what we had to do, and worked and we were fine. Nobody bothered us. We went to the theater. We went to movies. We went to, for walks. We went to games and we just went on with our lives.

INT: So what happened when you arrived here in the United States?

ROSALIE: No language. Couldn't speak a word of English. We came to New York and got to eat. We have to eat. Went to find a job. And I told them, they asked me, "Well, what do you know how to do?" I said, he happened to be Jewish, so I spoke to him in Jewish. I said, "Well I know how to sew. I know how to sew on a sewing machine." Never did. My sister came with me and you'd be surprised.

[Tape 2 - End Side 1] [Tape 2 - Begin Side 2]

ROSALIE: Of course they didn't need fine workers there, they just needed someone to get the work out and then sew on the sewing machines. And she was a designer. Like she used to make gorgeous clothes.

INT: This is your older sister.

ROSALIE: My older sister. But she later found a job and we moved in together, the whole family in a place, some kind of a hotel.

INT: Just three sisters and your father? Who was in the family then?

ROSALIE: Yeah, it was the four sisters and my father. My Charlotte, my sister, Charlotte, had moved to a DP camp.

INT: And Lenka?

ROSALIE: Lenka was with us.

INT: Oh, okay.

ROSALIE: Lenka was with us. It was later. No, wait a minute. That was already United States, right? No, Lenka was in Israel.

INT: Okay. Okay.

ROSALIE: Lenka was in Israel. Only the three sisters with my father. So we all went to work and they placed us in some kind of a old hotel. They gave us a room there which was very nice. I think it was paid by the HIAS. And then we decided to get out of there.

INT: New York?

ROSALIE: Yeah, in New York. Uh-huh. We decided to get out of there. What made us go to Baltimore?

INT: So your uncle had provided an affidavit for you to live and he was in New York at that time?

ROSALIE: No, he was in Virginia.

INT: Oh, okay.

ROSALIE: Alexandria, Virginia he lived. But the boat. Of course once he provided for us. Once he sent the, the card, the tickets and everything he was finished.

INT: So there was no-

ROSALIE: He didn't support us or anything.

INT: ...intention to move to Virginia?

ROSALIE: No. No. We came to New York and this is we had to just find our own way. He left. He left. He brought us some plums, I remember, and some really, not very good stuff and he put it in the drawer. He came over and he said, "Oh, you finished? I bring you some more." But he meant well. He didn't know better. So he went back to Virginia and we stayed in New York, but for a short time only we went to (?). We went to, what am I saying? I am getting mixed up.

INT: Where?

ROSALIE: We went to Baltimore.

INT: Okay.

ROSALIE: Why did we go to Baltimore? My sister had already come back from a DP camp to the United States and she was, she settled in Baltimore. So we all came to Baltimore to stay there, got an apartment and I went to work. My father went to work and my sister, we all went to work. My sister worked in a very fine shop in Baltimore. She resumed her career with her sewing. That was a very, very expensive dresses there. Of course I couldn't do what she did. And I again went to work in a clothing store as an operator and until I met Sidney. I went to night school in Baltimore. I went every day.

INT: This is to get your GED or high school?

ROSALIE: This is to get, this is to get a little education and learn the language. And I went there for quite a while after work and this is where I met Sidney. And shortly after that when we went out for about a year and a half and we got married.

INT: Before we talk more about your marriage and family, when you came to the United States, I have some questions about your faith in G-d, your Jewish identity. Here you were faced with making a new life. What had happened to your faith in G-d during and after the war and how did you, how did it change? And what role did Jewish identity and tradition play in your life after that?

ROSALIE: We follow tradition. We follow tradition but truthfully I questioned is there a G-d? I didn't believe that there is a G-d although I was saved. And as I said, he was with me. But being we witnessed so many, so many tragedies, and so many deaths and so many children being killed I just didn't believe. But we did follow traditions, and we observed the Passover and Yom Kippur but we were not kosher in Czechoslovakia. Here we started to be kosher again. There were no possibilities there because there were no kosher butchers or anything. So we just ate whatever there was.

INT: This is during liberation?

ROSALIE: After.

INT: After the war.

ROSALIE: But here we resumed our tradition and we started to have a kosher kitchen again and, and go to the synagogue and-

INT: So it sounds like you don't account particularly for either a faith in G-d or a religious faith that helped you survive.

ROSALIE: No. No.

INT: What do you believe accounted for your ability and desire to live?

ROSALIE: Just plain luck. Plain luck I think. I was just plain lucky. I wanted to live and I was lucky 'cause it just, it was very close, very many times, very close. And I mean I was practically in the gas chamber. And I just got out of it for some reason. It was lucky. And was G-d with me? Maybe so. I cannot exclude that. I feel that my sisters helped me a lot that had they not been there I would have not survived.

INT: So having your sisters for support as well as them as family meant...?

ROSALIE: Just, just clinging onto them. Standing in Auschwitz let's say in April I was very sick once. I had a high fever. And I just wanted to sit down. They wouldn't let me. Stand up and they were holding me up. Nobody would have cared. I mean you want to lie down, lie down. Who cares? And as a result I would have been taken to the crematorium, to the gas chamber. They had no use for people that were sick. So, but they held me up and they said, "Get up. Stand still and stand straight." Constantly, even Lenka, I remember once I had such bad diarrhea and she used to just, I hate to talk about it. But she just was so nice. She used to take the underwear and, and go out and clean me and, and to do whatever she had to do to help me out. Whereas nobody else would have cared. So they were a big help to me.

INT: How do you explain your feeling of family that was also before the war you had a closeness?

ROSALIE: We did. We did. This was somehow the sisters were very close. We just, there was a big difference in age but of course I never associated with them. They had their friends, I had mine and everybody had their own friends. But we were a close family.

INT: And that really got tested in a time of crisis.

ROSALIE: Absolutely. Absolutely.

INT: Moving to more happier events, how did you choose Sidney? How did you feel about getting married? What did it mean to get married?

ROSALIE: How did I feel about getting married? (Laughing)

INT: Did you have questions or doubts, worries?

ROSALIE: Oh yes. Oh yes. I met him in school. He seemed like a nice guy and-

INT: About your age?

ROSALIE: He pursued me. No, he is six years older. He pursued me. I wasn't sure. I went out with other guys. I left a few times. But the guys, the other guys I went out with I wasn't too crazy about either. So I went back to Sidney and we, we didn't get along so well all the time. We fought a lot. Well, we decided to get married. (Laughing)

INT: So what attracted you to him?

ROSALIE: Oh, there were good times. What attracted me?

INT: What were you looking for?

ROSALIE: First of all, his appearance. He had a very nice appearance. He was very clean looking, well dressed. He was a gentleman. And I thought, I, I, I, he was ambitious. He was not a lazy person and I knew that he will provide for me and I'll always have whatever I needed. As far as birth control, I didn't know about that stuff. We got married, ten months later I had a baby. I, yeah, I didn't know. I wasn't educated really about those things. Nobody told me.

INT: So you had not really talked either to your mother or your sisters about your period and being a young woman and sex?

ROSALIE: I didn't get my period until after the war and my mother never told us about that. I just watched my sisters sometimes and I knew a period, I knew what it was. It wasn't like it was something strange to me. But as far as birth control, I really didn't know much about that. I, I should have gone back to school, that's what I should have done. And even when I got married I didn't have to have a baby right away and I could have gone back to school. But we make bad decisions in life and there is no turning back. And I do regret it very much, yeah.

INT: And that's because of what, your view of education?

ROSALIE: Yes, yes, yes.

INT: How that affected you?

ROSALIE: My view of education?

INT: Yes, I guess you had limited opportunities for education?

ROSALIE: Right, and I feel like I could have done a lot more than I did to advance my education. Although I can read, and spell, and write, and everything else, and I do read books, and but other than that. You can get education from books just as well. But I could have accomplished something more. I guess my biggest accomplishment in life is having my children.

INT: So how did your experiences in the war affect your desire to have children? What did it mean to you to have children?

ROSALIE: I wanted to have children. I guess even, even the fact that we got married it was having somebody. It was having somebody close to you. This one got married. Charlotte got married. She got married and I wanted to get married too.

INT: You were how young?

ROSALIE: Twenty.

INT: You were young and then you had a child within a year.

ROSALIE: Yeah, I wasn't twenty-one yet when I had the child. And the child was born with eczema and a, it was a hard time. It wasn't easy, believe me. The marriage had a lot of problems. We had a lot of straightening out to do. He came from another country where his mother used to wait on him hand and foot, my husband. And I didn't believe in that. I didn't see it in my house that the wife should wait on the husband: "hand, give me a glass of water or give me this or give me that." So we had, we had disagreements, but we loved each other and we straightened them out.

INT: I think it's an interesting point. You grew up, your mother was primarily the child caretaker and your father wasn't around very much

ROSALIE: Yeah, yeah.

INT: She was a traditional wife but your husband has also a traditional mother but just some different ideas about what he thought marriage would be, what-

ROSALIE: Exactly.

INT: ...her role was (of a wife).

ROSALIE: Exactly because he saw, he saw in his house in his home where the wife, his mother waited on her husband hand and foot. Give me this, give me that, and she obliged and she did everything, although she was a businesswoman too. They had a restaurant, and she cooked for the restaurant and he was the king. And whatever he said, that's, went. But I couldn't see that after we were married. I didn't see that side of him before. So after we were married he wanted the same thing and I said, "No, you have to get up and take it. I'm pregnant. You can take it." It's just one little example. But he, he got used to it. He's okay now. He doesn't expect anything anymore.

INT: So you've trained him well.

ROSALIE: I trained him.

INT: How did you make decisions between both of you? Talk more about what your roles were and how you solved problems.

ROSALIE: As a married couple? As far as business he never asked me for my opinion. He did what he thought was right and that's what he did. And I just, he told me, "Well, you have to stay home and watch the telephone in case I get phone calls." And even though I had a sick child who needed sunshine because he had a rash all over him, he had eczema, I obeyed because I knew this is the way he makes a living and this is what I'm supposed to do. So I used to take my little boy and hold him near the window so he would get fresh air and watch him. And it was hard 'cause I saw the children was outside playing and that went on for a short time. But I did it and then we moved to a, oh G-d. We moved to the chicken farm here in Atlantic City. And those were bad times. They decided to buy a chicken farm, all of them.

INT: Who is them?

ROSALIE: My husband, his brother and his father. And we moved to Atlantic City. That's not - he made a very nice living, by the way, in Baltimore, my husband. He was dealing with the scrap metal. And we used to come to a doctor here for Mitchell, for my child, a skin doctor because of his eczema.

INT: In this area?

ROSALIE: In this area. And he told us it would be much better for him here because of the beach, and the salt air and it would be better for his skin. So we moved here and we, all of us moved together in one house. And being together with my in-laws was tough, and the brother-in-law, and the sister-in-law and the children in one house was very, very hard to the point where I really got sick. Came a time where I couldn't even eat anything. And I used to beg him, "Let's just get out of here." I didn't care if we moved into a little room just to be by ourselves.

INT: What were you feeling with the family there?

ROSALIE: With, with his family?

INT: Yes, and those circumstances, you having a young child at the time?

ROSALIE: Yeah, they didn't do anything bad. They didn't. I just didn't feel comfortable living together with everyone. I wanted to be by myself with my child and my husband. She was born there.

INT: Your second child?

ROSALIE: My second child. And while she was born I also went through a hard time, very hard time. But eventually we got out of there and thank G-d we moved into a little house. We rented it and it was fine. It was okay. And then we bought this house in 1962, as we've been ever since.

INT: What were some of your philosophy or attitudes about raising children, discipline, school? What kind of life did you want to give them? What were some goals that you had for them? How did you view having a good time and working hard?

ROSALIE: When my children were little we never went anyplace, really. It was very important for me the children should do well in school and become somebody. And Mitchell always used to come and have to help him with the homework and I was very happy to do it. Ruthie kind of did it on her own, right Ruthie? Yeah, she did it on her own. She got together with her friends and they did it together. Billy was a toughie. Mitchell was tough when he was little too because he didn't want to do it. As far as going on vacations when they were small, didn't do much of that.

INT: Because the money wasn't there?

ROSALIE: No, the money wasn't there, and they went to school, and just stayed home, and I took care of the children and cooked. And, and even when they got older and I could have gone to work my husband just never believed in it. He just always wanted me to, "You have to be home when the children come home and you have to." And I obeyed like a good child.

INT: You accepted.

ROSALIE: I accepted. And now that I think of it I shouldn't have. I shouldn't have, I should have done what I felt was right for me and never mind how he feels. But, you only have one chance in life and if you pass it by it's gone.

INT: Do you believe that? It seems to me that you've done things for yourself but these were opportunities that (you did later in life)?

ROSALIE: I'm talking about school. I'm talking about school. Although maybe I could have taken courses later on. It's not that I, it's not that someone stopped me but I, yes. I did take a couple of courses, though.

INT: Was there support or encouragement from other family members, friends, other people you associated with?

ROSALIE: As far as what?

INT: Going back to school or working?

ROSALIE: None. No. If I had someone that could encourage me, and talk to me and say, "You want to do it, do it." But I had no one.

INT: Your husband didn't really understand what this meant.

ROSALIE: He didn't believe, no, he didn't believe that. He didn't understand and it wasn't really worth it to me the fights, and the disagreement and so I just didn't.

INT: How did you both make decisions about the children, their problems, any fears or worries that you had for them?

ROSALIE: The truth is that being here in Atlantic City my husband was so involved with buying the land, and other businesses and everything else that he, the decisions were all mine. I used to go to PTAs and, and if someone needed to go to school because there was a problem with a child it was I. And of course when they really didn't behave I used to tell him when he came home from work and he straightened them out. Other than that it was really my responsibility as, as far as raising the children.

INT: So would you say that your husband was more strict than you? How did you handle discipline, expectations for the children? How were these discussed, handled between both of you?

ROSALIE: He, when he came from work it was late and the children were kind of in their rooms by then either doing homework, or watching television or whatever. And so they really, it wasn't like we discussed things like a family. Unfortunately, should have been but it wasn't.

INT: Different times now.

ROSALIE: Because he came home late and by the time he came home it's already they were doing their own thing. But yeah, we'd Sundays sometimes we did do things together.

INT: Do you have memories of happy events of the family?

ROSALIE: Of my family?

INT: Uh-huh.

ROSALIE: Of course, a lot of good memories. Good memories are when they were born, when, when they were growing up, when they started to walk, when they started to speak. These are all good memories. Graduations, bar mitzvah, oh yes, we have a lot of good memories.

INT: Happy occasions with your extended family, your sisters, your father, these occurred, get-togethers and family reunions?

ROSALIE: What do you mean by extended family?

INT: I guess your sisters, and their children and your father?

ROSALIE: Oh yes. Oh we used to get together, uh-huh. Yeah. Used to get together a lot and go to dinner to one another. And yeah, I have a lot of happy memories.

INT: How did raising your children change as they got older? How did you deal with the war with your children?

ROSALIE: It wasn't really discussed. It wasn't really talked about. My husband was more verbal about these things and he used to go into a long story and Ruthie was not old enough to handle it. She got very upset. So she walked out of the room, and I knew it was painful for her so I never talked about it.

INT: With your other children or your older son?

ROSALIE: Billy never asked me and Mitchell never asked me either.

INT: Did you have beliefs about what they should know or shouldn't know and how knowing would have affected their welfare in some way?

ROSALIE: I would have told them. I would have told them had they asked, and if they would have really been interested I would have told them. But you have to, she was just too young. She was just too young to listen. But you know, I did tell Mitchell here and there about things but as much as they wanted to know.

INT: Do you think it was important to protect them in some way from your experiences? Did you want them to assimilate and for that reason they were maybe not talked about? I am interested in you talking more about that.

ROSALIE: I don't know what you are driving at. Could you?

INT: I was asking in terms of what you shared about your war experiences and the combination of protecting the children as well as recalling, you know, painful events in your life.

ROSALIE: Having gone through what I went through, protecting them I was, I guess I wasn't overprotective. I wasn't really. I used to, now when Ruthie was, let's say eleven years old, she wanted to get on the bus and go see her cousin and I thought she was too young for that and I wouldn't let her. But she persisted until she went. Do you call this overprotective? I don't think so because which mother would like an eleven-year-old child to go on a bus? As far as overprotective, I don't think I was. I let them ride their bikes all over where, of course not anyplace far.

INT: I was only particularly meaning your war experiences. The reference, I'm sorry, I wasn't clear in terms of what you told them or didn't tell them. Was it in some way to protect them?

ROSALIE: I see what you mean.

INT: I'm sorry, that was a little confusing.

ROSALIE: Okay. Yes. Yes. I didn't want to tell them unless they want to know. So if they would ask me I would tell them. If they didn't ask me I never, I never tell them, no.

INT: You said your husband was more verbal or open?

ROSALIE: He was. He was, yes. He constantly spoke about his Partisan. He was not in the concentration camp. He was in the Russian Army. He was in the Partisans. He was, a, hiding in the woods and he witnessed his brother was there and he, he and his brother were running away into the woods. His brother was caught, and he was tortured to death by the Germans and he was very bitter. He was because he was very close with his brother and therefore he used to tell when he was in the army what he did with the Germans when he caught them. And he did some things that he, just to cool off. He shot them. He, he did whatever they deserved and she, she couldn't hear that. They couldn't. They didn't like to hear that. To them it was killing because they really didn't understand that he did it out of revenge what they did to him and to his brother. Now they-

[Tape 2 - End Side 2] [Tape 3 - Begin Side 1]

ROSALIE: Don't you want to interview him and he should tell you?

INT: Yeah, I do, you mentioned that your husband talked more about his (war) experiences to the children.

ROSALIE: Yeah, he just likes to talk about it and I don't.

INT: And so that, what was that like in your marriage when he would bring up stories?

ROSALIE: I listened. I listened but I couldn't make my children listen if they didn't want to. And sometimes he just went too far. I think they were a little too young to understand. So, but he did. He did tell them everything. He told them how he found this German and he captured him and he, he shot him. And the German, this German soldier, he asked him, "How many Russians did you kill?" And he said, "None," this German soldier. "And how many Jews did you kill?" He said, "None." And how many Partisans did you kill? He said none. He says, "Do you know what? I'm in the Jewish SS now." And he, he just had his brother in his mind how they tortured him 'cause he was told that he was caught alive after they shot him. He wasn't dead, and they tortured him to death, and he just couldn't, he just couldn't forget him because they were so close. So, a, this German took out a picture out from his pocket with a wife and two little children and he said, "Don't kill me. I have two little children. I want to see them." He says, "Yeah, you'll never see them again." And he shot them.

INT: So it sounds like you were more concerned of what was appropriate for the children to understand about the war.

ROSALIE: It was just too harsh for them to, to grasp. It was too much. They didn't go through this and they couldn't. Maybe they had a bad impression that their father killed a person, not understanding, perhaps, that he did it out of, out of, what's the word?

INT: To survive.

ROSALIE: That was after the war, though. Out of-

INT: Hatred, anger.

ROSALIE: Anger. Anger, yeah. Out of anger, what they did to his brother and the others. He watched his aunt. He was in a ditch somewhere and the, the aunt and the uncle had a little baby and to save the rest of them because the baby was crying, they took the baby out and as soon as they took the baby out. First of all, they told them, "You must kill this baby. Put a pillow on that baby's head, something because we are all going to get killed." He says, "Instead of doing that I will just take the baby and go." And as soon as he walked out of there he was shot with the baby. And he saw all of that and, and you know it builds up so much bitterness that catching one of those people and shooting them means nothing. And I, I justify it. But they really didn't understand it at their young age. So Ruthie used to cry and walk out of the room. Also, when she saw when they were showing a lot of other movies on television about the Holocaust she couldn't handle it. So.

INT: Talk more about rebuilding your life in America, what was it like coming to this country? How did you come to start a new life? What did you trust? What were you suspicious about? What were you worried about?

ROSALIE: What I was suspicious about? Can't think of anything. No.

INT: How do you cope with hardships and starting a new life with nothing? Sounds like there were many struggles?

ROSALIE: There were many struggles. I have become a very, very serious person. I don't know why and I wonder myself if I am not worried about this I'm worried about that. I am always worried about something. And, and as a result I'm not a very happy, happy person. I'm a very serious person and that's not so good either. But whether it is the result of what I went through in the concentration camp, it may be. And I am wondering sometimes why I am the way I am but I never had any counseling, so, which maybe I should.

INT: So it sounds like you learned to rely on your own self. There is some issue about how much you could trust the outside world to help you. You have some worry, you explain having some worries about yourself and your family. Is that all related to your war experiences?

ROSALIE: Maybe not. No, not all of it. Certain circumstances, you know. Of course I'm upset, my son has a little boy that has cystic fibrosis and that I'm very upset about. Hopefully he'll be okay because they really have developed some good medication to help the cystic fibrosis children, so hopefully they'll find a cure. But I think about it a lot. I think about my son being so upset all the time, and so hyper and nervous about a lot of things. I think about Ruthie. I would like to see her settled down, and have a home, and have children and be happy. (Tearful)

And I think about Billy, too. Where is he going? What is his, what's his future going to be like? And a, so I think about everybody.

INT: But it wasn't easy starting a new life, and who could you rely on?

ROSALIE: You couldn't rely on anybody. You had to really build it for yourself.

INT: So to what extent did you trust your community, your Jewish community, America, the world? To what extent do you trust now?

ROSALIE: As far as now, if you want to talk about Roosevelt. Do you want to talk about Roosevelt?

INT: Whatever you would like to talk about.

ROSALIE: I think he was the worst, the absolute worst. He could have done so much for, for, in saving Jews but he didn't. And I don't think we are liked. I don't think they like the Jews. We are not liked here, in the United States either. I have a neighbor here that never talks to me. I've lived here for thirty years, we never talk to each other but that's only the one neighbor. We are very friendly with everybody else but not him. He seems to like a, he seems to a, really hate the Jews for some reason, or whether it is something personal against us I don't know.

INT: You didn't have a direct or a specific experience with this person that would cause you to feel this way?

ROSALIE: We had one experience with him. He is selling gas, gasoline. And he forged my husband's name on the bills and he used to send us bills until we told him about it. Never since then he doesn't even look at us. But his wife is fine and his children were fine with the children and his wife. Maybe they don't know about it but we don't talk to him. And as far, as far as the American community, some people like us and some people don't. Would they, if G-d forbid anything would happen like it happened with Hitler, would they stick up for us? Would they hide us? Would they risk their lives for us? I don't think so. There is a lot of jealousy going on. The Jews have this, the Jews have that. The Jews work very hard for what they have.

INT: It sounds like you and your husband had to do that.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: Did you experience a conflict of values between how you were raised in Europe and how you raised your children here in this country? Were you worried about your children growing up in American society?

ROSALIE: Was I worried about my children? No. No. I think they, they were pretty safe and I felt like they were pretty safe here and they had their own friends and, and they were all nice children and I really wasn't worried about it.

INT: Did your family's economics affect your life here?

ROSALIE: Like what do you mean?

INT: Well, I guess your early struggles with money. You mentioned this, when your husband moved to the farm, that was difficult and so there must have been, there were subsequent moves and so it was difficult until he, his work became more stable or secure and that affected you?

ROSALIE: Well there is a lot, of course. Of course it did. I have insecurities as far as a-

INT: Paying bills?

ROSALIE: Yes, yes, yes, and there were times even now. Not right now but recently that things were very tough because the economy was down and nothing was selling as far as land. And if you have land you have to pay taxes, and of course I was concerned and there were some problems worried me a lot.

INT: But you were able to cope with hardships and get through them.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: And how do you account for that?

ROSALIE: You just say to yourself this is what it is. It is going to get better and you just have to deal with what you, what you get. And if I talk to my husband and then sometimes I nag a little why this or why that, he doesn't want to get into this. People sometimes make mistakes in business. Well, then when the economy was good things could have been sold but they weren't for certain reasons. Maybe he expected something better and then they just went down. And of course I was worried about it. But we are doing all right.

INT: Do you still experience regrets or disappointments about what you could have done had the war had not changed your life so dramatically?

ROSALIE: What I could have done?

INT: Uh-huh. Regrets or disappointments? The war happened and it changed your life.

ROSALIE: I don't think I could have done anything. The war happened. I couldn't have escaped. I couldn't have done anything that I did except for that I mentioned before after the war that I could have done a lot more with myself than I did.

INT: Who do you talk to about your own difficulties, decisions and feelings?

ROSALIE: Who do I talk to? No one. I really, I really I talk to Ruthie a lot. I do talk to her a lot. Every time I have a problem she always is there to listen. Although it may be a burden to her and she a, doesn't like to hear it all the time. But-

INT: If she does I'm sure she tells you.

ROSALIE: Yeah. But I, to tell you that I have a real close friend that I could really confide in, I don't. I don't. I can talk to Charlotte pretty much or my sisters. I do tell her a lot of things. But as far as friendships, we have friends. And I have a sister-in-law and we have our friends and, but not really to the extent where I can pour my heart out, and be totally sincere, and tell them how I feel and, and know that they will not tell anybody and keep it to themselves. I don't have it.

INT: How do you take care of yourself, and balance your needs and those needs of your family? In taking care of everyone else, how do you take care of yourself?

ROSALIE: Actually, they kind of take care of themselves now so they are on their own. And as far as Sidney and I, we, Sidney likes to garden and he likes to, he likes to go fishing. He hasn't gone fishing in a while but he likes it. And what do I like? What do I like?

INT: You have a lovely home.

ROSALIE: I like a lot of things that Sidney does not like and he likes a lot of things that I don't like so.

INT: Do you get to do some of those things for yourself?

ROSALIE: I walk in the morning. I get up like 6:30 and I beg him to go with me but he wouldn't. I like movies. I like to go shopping. He doesn't like any of that. Of course I like to go on vacation too. That he likes but he can't always get away. So he does his thing a lot and I do mine.

INT: What do you see as successes in your life and how you have achieved them?

ROSALIE: My successes in life? What successes? (Laughing) My children. This is really my biggest successes, my children. And I can say I am very proud of them. And this is the best part of my life, honestly. My grandchildren, my children and I love them dearly. And there is nothing on this earth I wouldn't do for them. My left arm, my right arm, whatever.

INT: But this is a family trait.

ROSALIE: Yeah.

INT: What do you see as mistakes that you've made in your life and how do you think these happened? Have you forgiven yourself? Things that you blame yourself for?

ROSALIE: Mistakes. (long pause) I have a lot of things that I blame myself for. (long pause)

INT: School, education? You've talked about that.

ROSALIE: About myself you mean? Well that's for sure a mistake that I didn't pursue it, that's a mistake. I made some mistakes with my children, I'm sure, didn't always do the right thing although I thought I did. But as I see it now I didn't. And whatever I did I did out of because I love them. And they were my successes. This is what I see in me. I see they are established. She, she can stand on her own two feet. She doesn't really need anybody to a, a, depend on although it would be nice to have someone. And Mitchell the same way. And hopefully Billy, when he gets out of school he will be self-sufficient and provide for himself. We will help, whatever he can do. But they are pretty, will stand on their own two feet. They are okay. They are independent. They are good kids.

INT: Do you think that there are things that they learned from you and your husband?

ROSALIE: If, if, if, I'd like to think so. If I contributed anything and then I am very proud that I did a fairly good job.

INT: What has been the role of faith and tradition in your life, particularly Judaism and how this is important to you and the religious education for the children?

ROSALIE: It was very important but it was important for us to send the children to school, to Hebrew school. But for us to take the children on the Sabbath and go together, this we did not do. And that was wrong too. If you wanted instill religion and Judaism in a child you have to show by an example, not by telling. And we didn't. We did do it on holidays but not as a rule every Saturday or Friday. So that's, that was a mistake also.

INT: You choose to have a different kind of religious practice than from what you were raised?

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes. I write on Shabbas. I go to the stores. I eat in a restaurant. I don't like, I am not going to eat pork and I am not going to eat anything, I don't like this. I will not eat chicken, or pork, or beef or anything like that. I will eat the fish and I will eat anything else that is not so kosher too. And I guess it's maybe that the friends that you associate with, everybody else is doing it and it's hard in the beginning, but then you get used to it and you do it too. And I will not stop my children if they want to do the same thing or if they want to do, whatever. I, I feel they are grown up and they have to do what they think is right for them.

INT: So they are able to make their own decisions about religious practices-

ROSALIE: Absolutely. Yes.

INT: ...observances.

ROSALIE: Yes. I would like to see them observing the holidays. I would like to see them join us going to the synagogue on holidays but if they don't, they don't.

INT: I want to spend some more time talking about memories, looking back at your life and there are some questions I have about how you yourself deal with the Holocaust in terms of either reading books or seeing films. How important is this for you, for your children, for your grandchildren?

ROSALIE: Very important. I see every movie there is on the Holocaust. And I recently saw "Schindler's List" and I just found myself being in that position all over again. When they had the selections and certain things they did, I just sat there and watched and cried. And I want to see it again because I was so totally, totally excited, or how should I say it? Tense with the whole thing that I couldn't even grasp the whole, the whole movie. So I want to see it again when I'm a little more relaxed.

INT: So what was going on for you?

ROSALIE: It's just the whole thing turned back, the whole thing relived again. And they were watching me, they told me, the people that I went with, they were watching me from the sides and they saw it in me how I just relived the whole thing. And I did. The selections, Mengele, a lot of things that were exactly happening to me. And it brought back memories and it was really very sad but I, in spite of it I want to see it again.

INT: How do you feel about your children being educated about the Holocaust? What do you want them to know?

ROSALIE: I want them to know everything. I want them to know everything. As a matter of fact I'm really a little disappointed in my youngest son that he never asked me, or never wants to know. I'm a little disappointed because I want him to know, although I'm sure he has seen all these films. But directly he never asked me. So.

INT: I believe he may be ready at some point in time.

ROSALIE: Yeah, as a matter of fact, I wrote a letter to my grandson on his bar mitzvah and I told him a little bit about the Holocaust. And I said, "Billy, would you like to hear me read it?" He, not at that point he didn't.

INT: This is your grandson?

ROSALIE: No, this is my youngest son.

INT: Oh, your youngest son.

ROSALIE: My grandson read it and he called me up and he said, "Bubbe, I was very touched by your letter. Thank you very much."

INT: So you are saying you wrote a letter to your son at that time of his bar mitzvah?

ROSALIE: My grandson.

INT: Oh, your grandson.

ROSALIE: Yes.

INT: What do your grandchildren know? What would you like them to know about you and your husband?

ROSALIE: I told them, I told them about the crematoriums. If you want I can read it to you if you want to. Okay.

Dear Jared,

As your bar mitzvah is approaching I am overwhelmed with a special happy feeling that I have never felt before. My first grandchild being thirteen years of age I decided you are old enough for me to tell you a little bit about how I spent my thirteenth birthday and to tell you how lucky you are to be surrounded by loving parents, grandparents, brothers, relatives and friends to share in this special day with you. You have the freedom to choose, the opportunity to go to school and achieve the highest possible goals. It is almost fifty years ago that I was the age you are now. Therefore I think you are mature enough for me to tell you a little bit about my thirteenth birthday. It was July 25, 1944, my bat mitzvah day. I was in Birkenau Auschwitz surrounded by barbed electric wire fences, no one to turn to and no place to go. It was a very hot day. I was forced to sit outside in the heat, hungry and thirsty, separated from my parents and brother. My lips were blistered from the hot sun. We were only allowed to go into the barracks to sleep. Night after night I saw the burning flames coming out of the chimneys of the crematoriums where they burned millions of our people including my brother, my mother. One day we were all ordered to line up and told to get undressed. Dr. Joseph Mengele showed up for selections. We heard that he was selecting women to be transported to another camp to work in an ammunition factory. Everybody was anxious to leave. I was particularly nervous about passing because he was looking for healthy looking young women and I was small and skinny. I so desperately wanted to get out of this hell. When my turn came to stand in front of him he stopped me, put his hand on my shoulder and shoved me on a side. At that moment all of my hopes had vanished to ever get out of there alive. My sisters passed the selection and begged Dr. Mengele to let me go with them but of course he refused. I was locked up in a little room crying bitterly. At that point I knew that I will never see tomorrow. As I was looking out the window tears running down my face, scratching on the glass, trying to get someone's attention, a woman came over, unlocked the door, risking her own life, pulled me out of there and told me to run. I was running like a wild animal, confused and scared when I heard someone call my name. My sister saw me and hid me in the back of their row where they were standing ready to leave. Before we went to the train Dr. Mengele showed up again to look us over. I was standing on my toes to look taller and I pinched my cheeks to have

some color in my face. It was a miracle he didn't recognize me. G-d was with me. We were all given a small piece of bread for the trip.

[Tape 3 - End Side 1] [Tape 3 - Begin Side 2]

That was another major tragedy as I could have starved without, without it. Again, my sisters came to the rescue and shared their portion of bread with me. You see, Jared, how important family is. You can always count on them being there for you as I'm sure you would be there for them in a time of need. As I am approaching my senior years I realize how lucky I am to have lived through the Holocaust and witness the bar mitzvah of my first grandson. It is the most special and happy occasion for Zayde and me. Remember to always love and respect your parents and set a good example for your younger brothers. Set high goals for yourself and aim to achieve. There is no limit as to what you can accomplish if you are really determined. Keep in mind to be a good and decent human being and never forget your heritage. Zayde and I love you very much and are very proud of you. May G-d bless you with a long life filled with much happiness, good health and success. Happy Birthday.

With all our love,

Bubbe and Zayde.

INT: A beautiful letter.

ROSALIE: Thank you.

INT: How does the Holocaust affect you in your political views, in your view of the world? Worries about Europe and Israel, relationships right here in the United States, how does it affect you?

ROSALIE: About view of the world?

INT: Uh-huh. Your political views, how does the Holocaust affect your political views?

ROSALIE: I just felt that really nobody cared about us. I don't know if that's the answer you are looking for, probably not.

INT: There is no right or wrong answer here.

ROSALIE: I, I just felt that the whole world knew what was going on and, and, nobody really cared because I think Hitler saw that the Jews, that he can do whatever he wants, that nobody really got involved and he had a free hand to do what he wanted even though everybody knew what he was doing. So especially Roosevelt. I just got a book by Rabbi Wyman where he writes, I didn't read it yet, I started it. It's a, I forgot the title of the book but it just tells all about how it was written in the paper, it was written in a little corner in the "New York Times." It was

not an important issue that the Jews were being murdered by the hundreds of thousands and it was not front page news.

INT: This is an event which affects you.

ROSALIE: And as I said, I said yes, I think about it a lot that we were so unimportant to the world that nobody really tried to do anything about it. Nobody gave a damn. I said there were some righteous Gentiles that did give a damn. But as a majority they didn't. And we see so many now, it's the skinheads. And they say that the Holocaust never happened and they are wearing the swastikas on them. And sometimes I watch that show and I wish I was there to tell them. I mean they are totally ignorant people. And it is good that they are on television because it just exposes them how ignorant they really are because it did happen and everybody knows it happened.

INT: So the deniers are particularly disturbing.

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes, particularly. And the ones that want to see it continue and Hitler did the right thing they say. And they, that really bothers me. How could they? Well even the Ku Klux Klan, that's on television they teach the little children how to hate, that this, the Jews are not good. The Blacks are no good. And don't talk to a Jew and don't talk to a Black, and that is poison. How could they teach children to hate like that? So that really bothers me.

INT: Did you have any of these experiences with life here in the United States and did your children have any experiences of an anti-Semitic nature?

ROSALIE: I don't know if they have gone through any experiences in school where they were called Jew or something. Did you? (asking her daughter)

INT: I can talk to them (about this).

ROSALIE: Yeah.

INT: I was just wondering if you felt that there were any instances of anti-Semitism.

ROSALIE: No. I was never really in the outside world where I went to search for a job and I had to be refused because I was Jewish. So I didn't, I didn't encounter any of these experiences.

INT: I want to spend some time looking back. What have been some of your happiest moments since the war and what have been some of the most difficult moments since the war for you?

ROSALIE: My happiest moments were, again, the birth of my children and my most difficult? The hard times we had. The struggles. It was very hard.

INT: How did your family background influence you in how you lived your life since the war, your roots, your family background?

ROSALIE: My family background. Well, it was instilled in me to believe in G-d, to be a good person, good human being and accept the things I cannot change and do the best I can.

INT: It sounds like a philosophy that you've had. So looking back over the past forty, fifty years, how do you feel about your life, your marriage, your children, your grandchildren, other family relationships?

ROSALIE: I have no complaints really. I have no complaints. But yet like I said I always, I am secure as far as, as far as making a living. But I'm too serious, I think. I'm just too serious all the time. I should laugh a little more. I should enjoy life a little more, go a little more and do things a little more and I don't. And I will try to look into that and really make my life a little happier than it is, just to have a little more fun. I deserve it.

INT: So perhaps, you are saying that the past has been very powerful, has had a powerful influence on you?

ROSALIE: Absolutely, yes. I can't say exactly whether having gone through the Holocaust made me what I am but that's, that's, that's what I am.

INT: Looking back, how would you describe the mechanisms by which you were able to rebuild your life? What did you use? How did you cope?

ROSALIE: We, we coped so if anything bad came along it's not like I never experienced bad things before. So we coped with the bad things. And if something good came along that was all the better. That was wonderful. So we just learned to cope with the good and the bad. That's what life is.

INT: Some of your experiences were so difficult it's almost as if you could cope with anything after your experience.

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes. And I'm not afraid of anything right now. If G-d forbid something should happen to me now I could only say one thing: I lived my life and I was supposed to have been dead at the age of twelve, and here I'm sixty-two and I'm still here. So that's, that's good.

INT: Looking back, how do you cope with the memories of the war experiences? You saw the film, it was very difficult for you talking about the feelings?

ROSALIE: I came home and I, and I, and I sat down and I, and we talked about it, Sidney and I, we talked about it. He got all boiled up. He got just so mad. And we talked for a couple hours about it and the experiences I went through and the experiences he went through and I, I couldn't forget it the next day. It just didn't leave my mind. I just thought about it a lot. And that's it. And I would really like to see it again, as well as other films about the Holocaust. I, it's not that I saw it once, I don't want to see it again. I do want to see it.

INT: Well, looking back, how do you sustain the energy to work hard and look towards the future?

ROSALIE: I take care of myself. I get up in the morning. I do, I did four miles 6:00 this morning. And I try not to, I try to eat the right things, the right food and whatever needs to be done, you know. I'm aware.

INT: Your ability to cope with good times, and happiness, and success? How are, you are able to cope with those?

ROSALIE: Oh yes. Oh yes. We go out and I like to dance, and I like to have a good time and enjoy myself. We do that. It's not like I'm always sad and crying. I like to have a good time.

INT: What memories are the strongest for you? Are you aware of feelings of guilt, shame or anything else like that?

ROSALIE: I have nothing to feel guilty about. I didn't do anything wrong and I'm not ashamed of anything I did either. So no.

INT: So as a true survivor, which you are, what do you think the impact of the Holocaust will be on future generations and your own children and your grandchildren?

ROSALIE: I am glad we are doing this. I am really happy we are doing this because if we wouldn't, we are going to die soon. You know it's we are all in our senior years and it would have been forgotten, really. But with this what we are doing now it's going to, it's going to go to our future generations and they will, it won't be forgotten. And that's good and I want them to remember that the six million that perished didn't die in vain, that they are being remembered. So that that is a good thing we are doing. And thanks to Ruthie, really, she really got after me to do this and it's a good thing.

INT: Well it's also that you have a legacy of, I believe strength and other qualities that have to be understood and so by also doing this we learn about your experiences and what became transmitted. Related to that is how you make sense out of life and all the unpredictable things that happened to you, the random things that have happened, how do you make sense of it all?

ROSALIE: All the things that happened?

INT: Uh-huh. And how you came to survive.

ROSALIE: How can you make sense of something like that? It just, it's just a brutal thing that, that he did to all the Jews, and it doesn't make sense and what I don't understand that he got away with it. And they got away with it. They could do all these things and get away with it. Look at Germany how they rebuilt now. Why do people hate the Jews so much? I don't know. What did the Jews ever do that was so bad? There are some very good Jewish people. Of course there are

some not so good like every other race. But to accuse a whole race of people, and kill them, and get away with it and he should be allowed to do that? That is something I don't understand.

INT: Yes, and it won't be forgotten.

ROSALIE: And it shouldn't.

INT: How would you summarize the impact of the Holocaust on your life and the lives of your children?

ROSALIE: I think as a result I have become a much more serious person and I think the children are suffering as a result also because they, they, they are kind of going through the same thing, feeling. I know Ruthie does.

INT: You mean by being pessimistic rather than optimistic and hopeful rather than not as hopeful? Can you talk more about that?

ROSALIE: About as far as the future?

INT: Yeah, well you describe yourself as being serious and what does that mean?

ROSALIE: As far as-

INT: And your own children.

ROSALIE: It's just my nature. I'm not pessimistic. I, I don't foresee anything bad. Hopefully it's all going to be good. It's not that I think, "Oh, tomorrow something terrible is going to happen to me or to my children." I don't see it that way. I, I hope for the best and I'm optimistic about the future. And it's not that I, I'm always serious, I just take everything. I don't say, "It's nothing, forget it. I'm not going to think about it." I do think about it and I do take it seriously but sometimes I can't help it. There is nothing you can do and you just let go for a while and some other problem pops in and you think about that problem. Well, I think, I think it's pretty much with everybody. We are concerned about our future and the children and we wanted them to have it better than we did.

INT: So you have been a worrier. You will always remain a worrier.

ROSALIE: Yeah, I am. Yeah, you can describe me like that.

INT: But when things go well in your life?

ROSALIE: I am very happy. I am capable of laughing, and I'm capable of singing, and I'm capable of dancing and I can be happy too.

INT: I think you touched on it that you feel hopeful as well. You can be trusting rather than suspicious that good things will happen to you and your children.

ROSALIE: Yes. Yes.

INT: Do you generally feel safe or frightened for yourself, for others?

ROSALIE: No. I'm not really frightened for myself. I'm frightened sometimes for the children. Let's say if I call a child and he's not there, or G-d, I'll say, "Where are they and what happened? G-d forbid something happened maybe and are they okay," and yeah, I jump to conclusions.

INT: Do you at times feel sad or depressed and are these mostly associated with your war experiences?

ROSALIE: A lot of them are and a lot of them are situations that occur now or in the past but not always the war situations. And I just like to deal with it in private and work it out.

INT: Any other comments or that you'd like to add?

ROSALIE: No, not really.

INT: I thank you very much. (Pause) with further comments.

ROSALIE: Oh, you are welcome. I, Rosalie Simon dedicate this brief testimony to my children, Mitchell, Ruthie, Billy and my grandchildren. Also in loving memory of my mother, my brother, and the six million Jews including one and a half million children who perished in the gas chambers and other atrocities performed by Nazi Germany. We, the survivors have reached our senior years and eventually there will be no survivors left, but our testimonies we leave behind will live forever. A special thanks to my daughter, Ruthie, who inspired me to fulfill her wishes in leaving this legacy to our future generations.

INT: Thank you again.

ROSALIE: You are welcome.