INTERVIEW WITH DOBA SMOLANOWICZ

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INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Doba Smolanowicz. Did I pronounce that right?

DOBA SMOLANOWICZ: Fine.

INT: It's May 21st, 1995, and she's a survivor. I wonder if you could tell us your name -- probably pronounce it better than I do -- and where you were born, and your date of birth, please.

DOBA: Okay. My name is Doba. I have two names at the moment. (laughs) Doba Skillen Smolanowicz. And I was born July 24, 1928, in Lublin, Poland.

INT: Any siblings?

DOBA: Well, I came from an Orthodox family. Strict Orthodox. There is, there was immediate family only remaining my sister and myself. My mother. My mother's still alive. My father, he was killed unfortunately, by the Nazis in a camp. (pause)

INT: And you and your sister. Any brothers, or...

DOBA: No. There was a family who died before the war. Some sisters and brothers. So during the war, just us two remained.

INT: Are you married now?

DOBA: No, right now I'm a widow.

INT: How long have you been widowed?

DOBA: I had married for the second time in about 1975, and my husband just passed away September 23rd of 1994.

INT: Oh. That's very recent. So this is your second marriage.

DOBA: Right.

INT: With your first marriage, how long was your first marriage, and...

DOBA: Well, my first marriage, I met my husband in the camps, when I was in Germany in slave labor camps. I met him right after the war where people were looking for their nests, for the family, they were going back and forth. Was freedom, so one camp, many people from one camp visited another camp. To make the story short, I met my husband at that time. It took a half a year, and I married him. Married, and...

INT: Children?

DOBA: Yes, two boys.

INT: Okay. And what are they doing today?

DOBA: Well, they are both in landscaping, they're working for themselves in separate...one is in Media, and one is in Philadelphia.

INT: Oh, so they each have their own business?

DOBA: Yes.

INT: Uh-huh. And are **they** married? Could you give me their names and their ages?

DOBA: Yeah. My son, who was born September 14, 1948, his name is Ted. The younger one, Stanley, was born...what comes after July?

INT: August.

DOBA: August. He was born August the 18th, 1949. Also in Poland. .

INT: And are they both married?

DOBA: One is married -- Ted is married, has two children, two boys. And my younger one **was** married, but is divorced. No children.

INT: No children. Could you give us the names of your grandchildren and their ages?

DOBA: Adam is twelve, very good student. (laughs) And David is going to be five, G-d willing.

INT: Okay. Are you working now, are you retired?

DOBA: No, I'm not working at the moment, no.

INT: Do you belong to any organizations?

DOBA: Yes. I do belong to Hadassah. The Child of Survivors, the Holocaust Child of Survivors, and...whatever organization, I can't remember.

INT: Any synagogue affiliation?

DOBA: No. No, no...whenever I can, I go. I drop in.

INT: Okay. To what kind of a synagogue? An Orthodox, Conservative?

DOBA: Well, Conservative.

INT: Okay. How would you describe your economic level right now?

DOBA: Well, right now...it's not too bad.

INT: You're comfortable?

DOBA: Yes.

INT: All right. I guess we'll move on to before the war, if you can. Tell me a little bit about your town, what kind of town it was that you grew up in, and your family.

DOBA: Well, first of all, I had a lost childhood, and I remember not too much. My family was the middle...not rich. What would I...

INT: Middle class?

DOBA: Middle class? Lower, more.

INT: Poor? Struggled to get food on the table?

DOBA: I would say lower middle class. And my father was a shoemaker, and my mother had to help a lot.

INT: What were your parents' names?

DOBA: My father's name was Reuben; my mother's name is Kayla, Clara is in English.

I remember I had to go to synagogue. We were kosher. I could not eat any food in my roommates' and Gentiles' houses. I couldn't eat anything -- I wasn't allowed. And...my father was very good, and pretty soon, when I was eleven years old, then Nazis came in.

INT: Okay. What do you remember before? Do you have any earliest memory, or dreams of childhood, or anything like that?

DOBA: (sighs) I always wanted to be a teacher. That was my dream since I could remember, I could talk, probably. And...we were very clean. Poor, but my mother tried to prepare clean clothes for us, for me. Because I'm seven years older.

INT: Okay. Who were the siblings? So it's you...you were the oldest.

DOBA: My sister. I'm the oldest, then my sister, Helen.

INT: Seven years younger.

DOBA: Seven years younger. (sighs) Alive.

INT: Okay. Did your mother help your father in the store?

DOBA: Yes. Well, she did, she helped otherwise. She was buying things, selling things. In the summertime we were renting fruit gardens, that they could sell the fruit when it became ripe. So I was, I was born in the city. Quite large city.

INT: In Lublin.

DOBA: Lublin, yeah. And every summer I was able to be in the country, because of my parents were dealing with the fruit. (sighs)

INT: Where would you stay in the country?

DOBA: I would stay at the place where my parents would rent the garden from this particular people.

INT: I see.

DOBA: From this...from...well, it was in the vicinity, outside of Lublin, you know, that my family was familiar with.

INT: Do you have happy memories of that, going out in the country in the summer?

DOBA: I do have very happy memories. I remember myself sitting, sitting and picking strawberries. I could have a whole meal of it. I used to have long blonde hair. They would find me because I had blonde hair in the grass. Picking berries, or picking...in fact, when I was, oh, I remember this very well. I was able to recognize every fruit on the tree, by the leaves. By the leaves.

INT: Oh. You knew the fruit trees.

DOBA: By the...

INT: The bark?

DOBA: Not the bark. Leaves. Leaves. I was able to recognize the bushes, and whether there was berries, whether there was...I was even able to recognize mushrooms. (laughs)

INT: You knew which was poisonous and which wasn't? Who taught you that?

DOBA: Now I don't know. The lady of the house, you know, from that house where we were staying.

INT: Was she Jewish, Gentile?

DOBA: No, they were not Jewish. And she used to go with us to the woods, and I was, she taught us. And that was happy moment. I loved my father very much, and I remember he would share everything, whatever he ate, he would share with me. And I lost him very early in life. (sighs)

INT: What do you remember about your parents? Could you, what they were like when you were a little kid?

DOBA: My mother, my mother's still alive. She's in Philadelphia.

INT: Oh, how about that. How old is she?

DOBA: She's going to be 91. My mother, I could get along with my father -- not with my mother.

INT: Okay. Could you describe their personalities a little bit? Is it better if I sit over here, so you don't have to turn? (pause)

DOBA: If I sit still, it subsides.

INT: Your father. Describe your father.

DOBA: Well, he was a very warm, giving person. Didn't have much. But if someone would come -- he was making shoes by hand, and he would come, a person would come, didn't have shoes, didn't have money, he would go and buy his own material, and the next day he wouldn't have money for the other material. He would give them, he would give them the shoes without money. But there is some benefits out of it too, later on.

INT: Okay. We'll get to that, I guess.

DOBA: Yeah. Shy. Very shy. Never, I never remember, he was going a lot to synagogue, but I never remember that he was saying a loud word to anybody. And...

INT: Did he have a sense of humor?

DOBA: I don't remember his humor, I'm sorry. It was just...I guess I...I...it probably...it went with my memory, maybe. You know. Because I remember he was warm, he was always taking care of me. And when I was near him I always knew that I'm protected. In fact, even to this day I pray to his spirits, whatever is there. I pray, "Help me, please." So there is something.

INT: So you were very close with him.

DOBA: Yeah. Very close.

INT: Was he a religious man?

DOBA: Very. Very religious.

INT: Were you Hasidim, or not?

DOBA: No, no, no Hasidim, no. It was a mixture. The neighborhood...the neighborhood was a mixture -- Gentiles, Jews, but it was like maybe half and half.

INT: Everybody -- on the same street you'd have both?

DOBA: Yes, yes. Both. We lived in a house where my father's grandmother owned that house. And because of a shortage of housing, always been, probably -- I don't know if it's better now -- a family of four were living in one room. In fact, **we** were living in one room.

INT: Were you renting out the other parts of the house?

DOBA: Yeah. It was like a...this house was owned by two or three different owners.

INT: I see.

DOBA: So even the basement was rented out, and the attic was rented out.

INT: Where were you, on the first floor?

DOBA: We were, I was on the first floor, yes. There was a grandmother -- my mother's mother -- she lived in the basement. The family was like more together. And my father's mother, which is, she was the main balaboste (laughs) of the house, so she was doing all the favors, that we stayed there.

INT: Oh, so **both** grandmothers were living there.

DOBA: Yeah, at that time. I remember all of them.

INT: What about your grandfathers? Were they alive?

DOBA: I remember one.

INT: Your mother's, or...

DOBA: My mother's father, yeah. He died before the war. Just ironically, all three of them, right, shortly before the war...

INT: They all died.

DOBA: First my grandfather, my mother's father, then my...my father's mother fell down on the floor. I never forget, I was maybe seven, or six or seven, and she got a hemorrhage. How could I remember those things? My G-d.

INT: It made a big impression on you.

DOBA: I don't remember what was yesterday. And then, seven days later, for no reason at all, the other grandmother was very well, she got...lungs? Infection of the lungs, what do you call that?

INT: Pneumonia?

DOBA: Pneumonia, yeah. And she died. Seven days later.

INT: After the **other** grandmother. Oh, boy.

DOBA: Yeah. So I remember all those funerals, those three funerals. And that became very sad, sadness.

INT: But they all died before the war of natural causes.

DOBA: Yeah. Before the war. And maybe thank G-d. I don't know. They would be torn apart.

INT: So you had your grandparents living in the house, and your family. Anybody else living there? Cousins, or...

DOBA: Well, yeah, they also rented...cousins, no. They rented to another lady that was in the back something. Another basement in the back there. They rented out every little piece of this, you know?

INT: Do you remember being poor growing up? That you had a hard time...?

DOBA: Yes. I was...I was poor, yes, but I don't remember realizing this. Because I was going to a school where there was...a mixture of children from different walks of life. Parents. There were rich ones, and I used to be their friend. I used to go to their homes. If I would feel that I am so poor, maybe they were giving me things, I wouldn't take it. So I don't understand. Maybe that was my nature, or...

INT: Or maybe your parents...presented it so that you didn't feel...

DOBA: No, they didn't say that, not to take or take it. No, they did not. And just ironically, one of these friends, about ten years ago, I find out that her father, this, it's just ironic. Shlimak. Oy, the name, Shlimak. They used to own a lot in Lublin. He survived and went to Argentina -- I guess the rest of the family didn't -- and he was killed by...by bandits in Argentina.

INT: After the war. After getting through the war.

DOBA: Yeah. Just about ten years ago, just coincidentally, I met someone.

INT: From your school?

DOBA: No, no. From someone who knew the name, here, in Florida.

INT: And told you the story, I see. Before we get to your schooling, could you tell me, could you describe your mother? You described your father a little bit.

DOBA: Well, my mother was more of a nervous type. I guess she has difficult...she realized that there's more difficulties, that she has to take care of the family, and it was a bigger chore for her, because usually a woman, maybe, you know, it's more...more...

INT: Responsibility?

DOBA: Responsibility, thank you, maybe. And my father...you know. He was always quiet. I don't know, you never know what he had on mind. He was worrying, pretty worried. But he tried to make the children happy, as much as he can. (sighs)

INT: So she was nervous. How would that...

DOBA: My mother?

INT: Yeah, how would that...

DOBA: She, maybe she didn't have time to sit down and talk to us. Because she was always on the go. Sometimes I was very angry because, instead of (laughs) cooking dinner she was reading a book. (laughs)

INT: Oh, really? (laughs) What kinds of books did she read?

DOBA: All of them.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Yeah. I don't, unfortunately. That's...so she...

INT: Religious books, or not religious books? Everything.

DOBA: All kinds. All kinds.

INT: What kind of education did she have?

DOBA: She had, she was born in Russia. She had a high school, Russia high school [education]. And she learned Polish, apparently in Poland, just by talking.

INT: By living there. How did she meet your father?

DOBA: Oh, how did she meet, you know, I don't remember.

INT: And your father was from Lublin? Was he born there?

DOBA: Markuszow. He was born in Markuszow. This is not far from Lublin.

INT: Could you spell that? Do you know how to spell that?

DOBA: Markuszow? Yeah. Wait a minute, I have to (write it down). I think the state was Lublin, I believe. I have his birthday card.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: So this was a town near Lublin.

DOBA: Yeah, I believe it was not very far. (With a w on the end.)

INT: So they...you're not sure how they met.

DOBA: I'm not sure because maybe I've been told, but I've forgotten, and maybe I have never been told, because maybe I didn't ask.

INT: Do you remember anything about their relationship? How did you see their marriage? You were very young, but did they get along, did they...

DOBA: My mother...my mother...I'm sure they **loved** each other. But there was a lot of misunderstanding, you know. Maybe because the...the, what do you call it? Was not enough money. Yes.

INT: So that was stressful, probably. How was your relationship with...you spoke of your relationship with your father as being very close.

DOBA: Yeah, my mother, my mother not too good.

INT: Because she didn't have time for you?

DOBA: I cannot lie, I just...

INT: Yeah, yeah.

DOBA: Don't want to lie.

INT: Right.

DOBA: (Pause)

INT: Why not good? Do you know? Now we're talking about when you were a little kid. Not now, but...

DOBA: Oh. Well, when I was little kid I remember that my mother hit me many times. My father only one time. And maybe that's why I got this from childhood, you know.

INT: She hit you frequently, or...

DOBA: Yes, she did.

INT: But for why, what reason?

DOBA: Well, apparently I was not, I was not behaving. I don't know what I did. Maybe there's something that I shouldn't have done. Maybe I went too far out, and we were living in a main, in a main street. It was very dangerous. And you could cross, there's four, you know, four...

INT: Oh, an intersection. You were on the corner.

DOBA: Yeah, intersection, thank you. Intersection, so you can cross just a little bit, you were out in the road, and...

INT: So she would hit you for that, for going in the street.

DOBA: Probably. Probably, or something else, I don't know.

INT: But it seemed to you like a lot?

DOBA: Yeah, to me, still. Yeah. Mm-hm.

INT: What about your little sister, Helen? What was she like?

DOBA: My sister. Well, she was five when, and I was eleven? Is that it, seven years? That's when the war. Yeah. She...well, she was a baby; I used to babysitting her. When I was eight,

she was one, because my mother couldn't afford babysitters, so I used to babysit her. I used to carry her in my...my arms. When we used to go to pick berries in the woods, I would take her, and this woman would come along with us. And I never forget, I wanted to take her over, she couldn't walk. So I fell with her. I fell and she fainted. She only was a year old. And she fainted, and I thought she died. I start screaming. And this woman, it's a good thing this woman was with us.

INT: The Gentile woman on the farm?

DOBA: The Gentile woman. She was a grandmother of...of a family. And she helped to survive my sister. I never forget.

INT: What did she, what happened?

DOBA: We had a spoon. I don't know why we had a spoon. Maybe we were eating the blueberries. Why with a spoon? I never remember. I never...or maybe she had to feed her, my little sister.

INT: Mm-hm. So she had a spoon with her.

DOBA: Maybe, see? That's right. Maybe I had to feed her, or she had to...anyway there was spoon in her hands, and she opened her teeth with a spoon. Her teeth...

INT: Were closed tightly?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. Her teeth were closed, and she hit her head this way. I don't know what happened, because we never went to a doctor at that time. It was in the country. And I babysit her whether I liked it or not, but I had to do it.

INT: Was your mother there when this happened with your...

DOBA: No, no, my mother wasn't there.

INT: Where was she?

DOBA: My mother was taking care of, I guess she went down, "downtown." (laughs) Yeah, she went uptown, downtown, probably because you don't have a car, you don't have a wagon, you have to walk, miles and miles and miles. So apparently she had to do some kind of a...maybe she was selling the fruit. This was in the summertime.

INT: Mm-hm. But she would leave you there with this lady.

DOBA: Yes. Yes. Maybe she was busy, not just lying around. Yeah, she was busy doing things. So she let us go to the...maybe she was taking care of, yeah, taking off the fruit from the trees, maybe, you know.

INT: But that was your responsibility, you felt, to take care of your little sister?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: It wasn't the responsibility of this Gentile woman?

DOBA: No, no.

INT: Your mother sort of put the responsibility on you?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. Was not, she was just doing us a favor. Because we didn't pay her. She was a nice lady. Very nice lady.

INT: I see. So she was able to open your sister's mouth and get her to breathe, or...

DOBA: Yeah. Very tired, I never forget. And in fact, I have this guilt feeling till today. I thought I contributed to her sicknesses.

INT: She's had a lot of illnesses?

DOBA: Very, yeah. Very. Yeah. Lot of sicknesses. Because, later in the war time, we didn't have food, you know. The children were (sighs) were...I forgot the word.

INT: Starving.

DOBA: Starving. Deprived. Deprived from many, many valuable nourishments.

INT: Right. Vitamins and...

DOBA: Vitamins, yeah.

INT: So you had a lot of responsibility for your little sister from a very early age.

DOBA: Mm-hm.

INT: And you were seven years older.

DOBA: I thought I had responsibility. I don't know what **they** thought of it.

INT: But you **felt** it.

DOBA: Until today we never sat down, we never had a conversation.

INT: You and your mother, you mean.

DOBA: Sister, either.

INT: Sister, either.

DOBA: (softly) It's a different story.

INT: Okay. Okay so...school. Could you talk a little bit about that?

DOBA: My school?

INT: What kind of school you went to.

DOBA: Okay. I was a fairly medium student, okay? But I was eager for school. Like I mentioned, I wanted to be a teacher. I felt good in school. I couldn't wait till the morning. In fact, Saturday we went to school there, too.

INT: Was it a public school, like a...

DOBA: Public school.

INT: So you went with non-Jews also to school?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Jews and non-Jews together?

DOBA: Mixture, mixture. And...I enter, was it the fifth grade? Eleven, when I was eleven. That's when 1939. And that was it.

INT: You were only eleven when the war started. Do you remember what school was like? Was there any anti-Semitism among the students?

DOBA: Yes, there were. Polish children, I would say, I would say the majority, unfortunately, they were raised, and they were...brain-...

INT: Washed.

DOBA: Brainwashed. Brainwashed by their parents. They didn't realize what they were teaching them. A Jew. A Jew. Okay? I'm a Jew. The minute they got, we were playing together, okay? The minute they got mad at me of some reason: "Jew, get out of here." Okay? I was a Jew. And then a little bit later, we would become friends again. And they didn't know why they're calling me a Jew. Well, I'm a Jew, okay? And...and later on, there's some good people helped me. Gentiles.

INT: So it was sort of an up and down kind of relationship with the non-Jews.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Was there any physical fights with them, or...

DOBA: As far as myself...

INT: Rock-throwing, or anything like that.

DOBA: I was very tiny for my age. I was running away from whatever I saw. I was listening to everything. I was **curious**. But if I saw anybody fight, I would be the first one run away from it. And I guess, until today, too.

INT: You tried to avoid conflict.

DOBA: If I can help, yes. I will help. I would call, "Help," or whatever. But I would not get in. Get in and mix in, I mean, to make it worse. I would try to make it better.

INT: Do you remember any special friends from that time?

DOBA: Yeah. I remember this particular Jewish friend that, her name was Shlimak. I used to go quite often to their house, because I liked it.

INT: They were wealthy.

DOBA: They were wealthy, and they welcomed me. Okay, I used to walk a distance, I don't remember how far. I would sit and I remember that they were all reading something. So I took a paper, too, I was reading. It was like a silence, mostly. (laughs) But I liked it.

INT: So you'd just sit there and read in quiet. But that was nice, you were comfortable there?

DOBA: And we would talk sometimes. Then I had, I vividly? Is that in English?

INT: Vividly?

DOBA: Vividly. I remember a Gentile -- this time I don't remember her name. She was living in the same alley, where our house, and I was friends with them. With her parents, and with this girl, for quite a long time.

INT: Now, did she ever call you "Jew, " or...

DOBA: I couldn't remember that. I don't remember whether she ever say that word. We had differences, too, but I couldn't say that, apparently I didn't hear, because I wouldn't be a friend of such a (?) to her. I mean, with her. Because I would know, at that time I would know what's bad.

INT: So you were pretty close with her.

DOBA: I was.

INT: And she was a non-Jew.

DOBA: I was, yeah.

INT: Your parents...were there any messages from your parents about non-Jews? Apparently they let you play with them, and it was okay.

DOBA: Yes. But that's all. That's all. I was not allowed to eat, like I mentioned before, in their house. And...

INT: Did they come to **your** house to eat sometimes?

DOBA: I used to give them matzah. I used to bring out, I don't remember whether they used to come to my house. Maybe they did. But oh, yeah, they ate. They ate my food. Matzah I was carrying around, because for them, this was a novelty.

INT: Right.

DOBA: Yeah. And Passover, of course, I was not allowed to eat bread the whole eight days, and I would bring out, that's all. Probably I would bring out, maybe some special cake, you know, for that...but mostly.

INT: So you would share with your friends?

DOBA: Yeah. I would share always, always. Always share everything.

INT: So you had these two special friends. One was Jewish, and one wasn't.

DOBA: Yeah. The Jewish one, and maybe there was some more, but I don't recall.

INT: Were they in the same grade with you in school?

DOBA: Yes. Yes. The same grade, because how would I know this Jewish girl? Same grade.

INT: So you looked forward to going to school.

DOBA: Yes I did.

INT: You enjoyed learning. Do you remember some of your favorite things to do?

DOBA: In school?

INT: For in school, yeah, your subjects.

DOBA: You're talking about learning.

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: Writing.

INT: You liked to do that the best?

DOBA: Yeah, mm-hm.

INT: Creative writing, or just writing in general?

DOBA: Writing, yeah. At that time, you know, I was still a child.

INT: Did you have any Jewish education?

DOBA: During...

INT: Did you go to cheder at all?

DOBA: During the war, or maybe it was before the war, my father attempted to send me to this...Jewish teacher, there was a different name for them, I forgot the name they were using.

INT: Bais Yaakov?

DOBA: What is it?

INT: Bais Yaakov school? No.

DOBA: No, no, it was not a school, a private, a private person. Whether I used to go to his house, I remember it was so dirty.

INT: A melamed?

DOBA: That's it. It was so dirty, I'll never forget that. (laughs)

INT: Really? (laughs) His house, or him?

DOBA: Yeah, his house. And I used to go to his house, but my father couldn't afford to pay. That was private lessons. And I remember I learned at that time something, with the alphabet, but not for a long time.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: My mother some time ago, she would remember all these things, and now she already forgot.

INT: Yeah, okay. So you didn't get much Jewish education. It was mostly...

DOBA: No, no, I did not get. I just...

INT: Did you sense any anti-Semitism from the teachers towards the Jewish students? Were you treated differently...

DOBA: Yes I did.

INT: ...because you were Jewish? Yeah? In what ways?

DOBA: Definitely. Looked at us different. And he would say once in a while something -- I don't remember what -- but I know it was not nice. He would say -- it was a man teacher. Not too long ago I remembered his name; I forgot now. He was the last teacher that I saw in front of my face before I was expelled from school. The same guy, yeah.

INT: And he was an anti-Semite.

DOBA: I believe so. I believe so. Because he was saying certain remarks.

INT: Do you have anything you'd like to talk about, about those years before the war that we haven't mentioned, before we get into the war years? You were very young when the war started.

DOBA: Oh, so little. So little. Believe me.

INT: It was just you and your sister. We got a pretty good picture of your life.

DOBA: I had a few friends -- Jewish friends. There was a lady, a little bit older than me. I always admired. I admired her shape. I don't know, it came to mind. I admired how nice she looked, because I was so young, I was...(laughs) I was almost eleven. Just before the war, and I would admire, because I never consider having a nice shape myself, so I remember she had a nice shape, and I remember she was always in company. She had a lot of...

INT: She was very popular.

DOBA: Very popular, yes. Very popular. And I wanted to be popular.

INT: How much older was she, do you remember?

DOBA: Maybe a couple years, maybe. I guess she grew faster. And I could never have this popularity.

INT: You didn't feel that you were popular?

DOBA: No. No.

INT: How not?

DOBA: I don't know.

INT: You had friends.

DOBA: I didn't have enough. I didn't have enough.

INT: You wanted to have more than you had.

DOBA: I wanted, yeah.

INT: I see. Could you describe yourself as a little kid, what you were like? How would you describe yourself?

DOBA: I would participate to a certain play out in the street, because we were playing in the street. We were playing this jumping rope, and jumping steps, you know. How you call that, with numbers, put down numbers.

INT: Hopscotch.

DOBA: Yeah. I used to make, oh yeah, I used to be the cook. I used to make halvah. You know what halvah is. We put nuts together, some honey together, and then I remember, I took a bench -- I don't know who brought the bench outside -- and I cut in pieces, and I put in, I don't know, papers or dishes, and we would sell it for let's say for a penny. A penny a piece, or giving away. This I remember, too. Yeah, this was a delicacy. Yeah. And...

INT: But what were you like? Were you a happy child? Introverted, outgoing?

DOBA: Introverted.

INT: Introverted?

DOBA: Very. Very introverted. I would...I would like to run to older people. There was a lady living in the back of the house, a Gentile lady, who was **very** good to me. I would like to run to her house, and she would, I don't know if I ate there something. Maybe I would drink something. Oh, she used to make preservatives. I had that, yeah. I was allowed to have that. And she would give me, you know, she would look out for me. So rather, I would run to older people.

INT: So when you were having a problem, you would go to her? Or to your parents?

DOBA: I would not tell her anything.

INT: Oh.

DOBA: I would not tell her. But I would go...

INT: You'd just go there to hang out, sort of.

DOBA: Yeah, hang out. Just be like, feel protected. But in the same token, I listened to everything. And I kept it.

INT: Kept it inside.

DOBA: I knew so many secrets of different families. That if they would kill me, I would not. As a child, even.

INT: Did people tell you their secrets, or you just overheard these?

DOBA: They were talking to themselves, I overheard, no, not to me.

INT: And you wouldn't tell anyone about it.

DOBA: No, no. Not until today. So I would like to go there, but apparently, there was a lot of interesting things going on in that house. (laughs)

INT: Yeah?

DOBA: That I could listen to, yeah.

INT: Uh -huh, I see. Like?

DOBA: Well, she had some young ladies living there, I remember. There was some men coming in. And I would listen to all kinds of conversations, you know. And of course, I would not tell my parents that I went there to listen. And if I did go, I wasn't listening. (laughs) And then when I came back to my house, and I heard my mother talking to another person about this person, then I had to, you know.

INT: You had to hear that, too.

DOBA: Be quiet, yeah.

INT: And you'd just file it away? And you never told anybody any of this stuff, just...take in the information and keep it.

DOBA: No, never.

INT: It's interesting.

DOBA: Yeah. There is a, in the same alley, not a Jewish, oh, there was a bakery, right. A bakery, every Friday night, my mother made cholent. You know what that is?

INT: Yeah, sure.

DOBA: And I would take it to the bakery.

INT: To keep it warm.

DOBA: Leave it there. Somehow, I guess somebody came with me, because it was quite heavy. And I leave it there. And next door there was a man who would...you know, who would have a wagon and a horse, you know. I don't know the name in English. In Polish, called droshkas. And I was friendly with them. Yeah, them. And at that time, they had a daughter, and they had a grandson. I don't remember if there were any men, young men there. And I would somehow be friendly with them, because he used to take me on the wagon for free. I would ride with him, yeah, for a little bit.

INT: So you had a lot of older friends. You had a lot of adult friends.

DOBA: Oh, yes. A lot of adult friends.

INT: That's interesting.

DOBA: Then I was, by all the friends, I was not, I had this imagination that I was not...

INT: Liked, or...

DOBA: What is the name? That I was not, like...

INT: Popular?

DOBA: I was not hurt, like, by when the children would, you know, play and then would call me, "Jew."

INT: That didn't hurt you?

DOBA: No. When I went to **older** people, Gentile, Jews, they would never say that.

INT: I see.

DOBA: The people, the people that I went, they would never say, "Jew" to me.

INT: Was that man who had the horse and wagon, was he a Gentile, also?

DOBA: He was, they were Jewish, they were Jewish.

INT: Oh, they were Jewish. But the lady wasn't, in the back.

DOBA: No, but they were not prejudiced, either. They were not talking against each other. Because they were friends.

INT: I see. So you could be hurt by the children, but you couldn't be hurt by the adults, and that's why you went there.

DOBA: Yeah, I couldn't be, not by these. But they didn't have children my age, these particular people.

INT: No, I understand. But you would go to them because you felt safer.

DOBA: Yeah. I would run around the whole street. Maybe this is unusual. Maybe today people would tell you they were rich, and having things, and I just cannot lie. I couldn't tell you I had this, I had this. I had a large family, that lived uptown, that they were **very** rich, they were twelve children.

INT: How were they related?

DOBA: Very filthy rich. They were second cousins. But apparently, they didn't share with us. At that time they had lawyers in the family, teachers, professors, and you know...but...they hardly wanted to see you, you know?

INT: And they lived pretty close by?

DOBA: Well, no, it was not close by, no. No, it was uptown, and I don't remember how many miles, but it was a distance, yeah.

INT: Lublin was a big town. It was a pretty nice city, right?

DOBA: Oh, yes, it was big. In fact, after the war, I was looking for them. Yeah. I was looking for survivors.

INT: Do you remember your relationship with your grandparents at all? Could you describe them?

DOBA: Very loving.

INT: All of them?

DOBA: All of them. My grandfather, when I was four years old, he taught me the time. The same, the same way I wanted to teach my grandson. The same. Well, he was pointing out the, what do you call it, and he was saying, "This is the number, and when it goes to this," (laughs) I couldn't remember at the moment. And he taught me time. And two grandmothers were very much loving mothers. Both of them. Both. They took care of me, because my mother was always, you know, busy. So they...so my mother's mother. She was like an angel.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Yeah. I have beautiful memories from them. She was raising me, actually. The other one was helping, too, but mostly she was raising me.

INT: How old were you when **she** died, your mother's mother?

DOBA: That was shortly before the war.

INT: She was the last one to die, right? First the grandfather.

DOBA: Yeah, both practically in one week.

INT: So you were about eleven.

DOBA: That was before, before the war. Eleven when the war broke out.

INT: Right. But you were about ten when she died?

DOBA: Could have been, could have been, yeah.

INT: So you remember her pretty well.

DOBA: Oh, yeah. Both of them. I can see the picture, yet. I don't have pictures from them, unfortunately. Nothing.

INT: Did they get along, the two grandmothers?

DOBA: No. They didn't.

INT: No? They lived in the same house. So how did that work? (laughs) They just kind of kept their distance?

DOBA: You know, talking about pictures...I could have, if I would, you know, that's another story. I came to the States, I had to struggle, and I did not think of pictures. I could have called different families and get some pictures. I just thought of it.

INT: You don't have any pictures now?

DOBA: Not from grandparents, no. My mother's mother, nobody had it. But maybe my father's mother could have been preserved something, because there was one daughter here in Brooklyn, my father's sister. And...

INT: She might have had one.

DOBA: And when I got in here, about fourteen years ago, a cousin came to visit me for the first time. He brought a whole album. And he asked me, "Do you know this one?" I didn't know. He gave me my father's picture. Survived in his album. I still have it.

INT: And you have it.

DOBA: Yeah, so that's who gave me, and the other people I didn't know, because there was no name on it. Or maybe there was a name and I didn't know. And as a matter of fact I should have called up and ask him again whether he has, whether he has any place.

INT: Maybe you should. Maybe he has more.

DOBA: Yeah. Any trace of...of grandmother.

INT: So you have warm memories of them. Very close relationship with them.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: When you were having any troubles, if the kids were calling you names, or if you were just feeling sad or depressed about something as a little kid, to whom would you go to talk, or did you keep it all in? Could you run to your grandmother? Could you run to your parents? Who would you go to, for comfort?

DOBA: You know, I probably would go to my father.

INT: You'd go to your father.

DOBA: He had a store in the front of the house, and I would run there. And I wouldn't care whether there's a customer or not. I was not behaving myself. I had tantrums.

INT: Oh, okay.

DOBA: And I would come in. I liked chocolate. He didn't have any money. So that's when I came in, and probably I would tell him that a kid hurt me or whatever. I...they beat me, too, some of them.

INT: The kids did, yeah.

DOBA: Sure. I remember, yeah. And I had to run away. So that's where I would go to my father.

INT: And would he be helpful to you?

DOBA: Yeah, he would...(laughs) He would buy me chocolate.

INT: Okay. That's a good way to comfort you. Well, if **he** wasn't available, where would you go?

DOBA: Where would I go? Maybe I would go to one of the grandmothers, probably. I don't remember how I did this, because they were both in the house.

INT: But you wouldn't go to your mother.

DOBA: I don't recall. Maybe I did, but I cannot recall.

INT: All right, religion, how was that handled in your house?

DOBA: Religion. Very strict. Friday night, my mother was bentsching licht, bentsching candles. And nobody would be allowed to -- there was no electricity, by the way. Nobody was allowed to...

INT: Light a candle, or a match?

DOBA: Light a candle, or light the oven. We were having coal in the oven. Nobody was allowed. That's why the cholent was made. So next day nobody would...would light a match or something.

INT: Right. You'd go pick up the cholent from the bakery?

DOBA: Yeah. Pick up the cholent, and this was like one meal. And everybody ate. I remember, the dishes wasn't even washed.

INT: Yeah, because that was work on Shabbas.

DOBA: That's right. Yeah, that's right. And...

INT: Was your mother covering her hair or not?

DOBA: No, no, no. She was not a rebbetzin. No, she didn't cover her hair.

INT: Did your father have a beard?

DOBA: No.

INT: So they were a little more modern, maybe a little bit more modern.

DOBA: Yeah. More modern, yeah. No Hasidic, no. I never remember peyos. Apparently this neighborhood was not Hasidic, you know.

INT: Your father's education, I don't think we talked about that. Did he have...

DOBA: He was not educated, unfortunately, because...they suffered the First World War. My mother suffered -- the same age, they were.

INT: Your mother was in Russia.

DOBA: Yeah. So she had to flee from Russia. And he had some education, my father had, but I couldn't tell you. I couldn't tell you.

INT: Did he, would he read, or would he learn Gemora, or did you remember seeing him...

DOBA: As a matter of fact, I was teaching him how to read.

INT: Oh. Polish.

DOBA: Mm-hm. Polish, yeah.

INT: Could he read Yiddish?

DOBA: Yes! He did. Because he was davening Hebrew. He must have some Hebrew education, you know?

INT: Do you remember him sitting with a Gemora, or...

DOBA: Oh, yes. Yes.

INT: Yeah. He would sit and learn.

DOBA: Yes, yes. He was wearing tallis, Friday night, Shabbas. You see them here, walking, people come Shabbas you would see them. Yeah, he would wear that. And he would read, yes. So apparently he was educated in Hebrew.

INT: And he wore a kippah, or a yarmulke?

DOBA: Yeah, oh yes. Definitely.

INT: Yeah, he always kept his head covered?

DOBA: Yes. Definitely.

INT: Okay. So Shabbas was Shabbas; you kept Shabbas and all the Yontif.

DOBA: We were sitting, where were we sitting, up or down, I don't remember, in the synagogue. Not, we weren't sitting with the men.

INT: The women were separate, yeah, yeah. How did **you** feel about G-d? I mean, did your parents give you any messages about G-d? Did you believe in G-d as a child?

DOBA: About G-d? Oh yes, very much.

INT: You did.

DOBA: I believed very much. I still believe. That's a question they asked me in school when I speak.

INT: Yeah. Do you still believe after the war?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: And you do?

DOBA: I do, yeah.

INT: As a child would you, if you were in trouble, would you pray to G-d, or...

DOBA: I always say, "G-d," I know that. You know. Yeah, I always say that.

INT: Was your mother religious, too?

DOBA: Yeah, she was, yeah. She was. Same as my father.

INT: So would you go to shul as a little kid on Shabbas?

DOBA: Yes, I had to. I guess I went, and there was no problem. Whenever they went, I went with them, yeah.

INT: Did you look forward to Shabbas? Was it nice?

DOBA: Yes, I did. I did. The cholent. (laughs)

INT: Yeah, yeah. That was good. Did your mother make a cake, or...

DOBA: I don't remember that, because...I don't know if she...she was not a good cook, let me tell you that. (laughter) Cholent she made very well.

INT: She made that well, okay. What about your grandmothers, would they make cake?

DOBA: Maybe they did. Oh, I'm sure they helped.

INT: Would everybody sit around the Shabbas table together, the grandparents, too?

DOBA: Yes, yes. We were together, yes. It was a small room, though. Very small. That was in the same house, and...yeah.

INT: Okay...

DOBA: Oh, yes, cake, of course! Strudel. Of course, they made it, I was helping. And they were taking to the bakery, the same bakery. What do you call them, rolling the dough, and putting poppy seeds in it, or sometimes other fruit.

INT: Right. And roll it up?

DOBA: Yeah, strudel, yeah.

INT: Did you have cousins, aunts and uncles in the town?

DOBA: I had...like I said, I had a large family living uptown, with a lot of cousins. They had a lot of cousins. Occasionally I went there. Everyone was busy. In schools, and playing piano and all these things. And I was little. In town. That was in town. I had, my father had...two sisters and...one brother. Yeah. One sister was in Brooklyn, here. I don't remember how she got here before. And one brother in Belgium, who was perished with all the family, in the transport that it's written in the...German documents. And there was a, my father's sister, used to live in Warsaw. She had a large family. I met one of her sons came from Warsaw. They seemed to be richer than I, because I never forget, he took me to a movie. That was shortly before the war. And he was the one who went with me to the big family. Apparently, they had correspondence with them, more than with me, because they were a little bit richer. Richer goes to richer.

INT: I see, I see.

DOBA: And he went and he, they seemed to know him more than they knew me.

INT: So you were the "poor relations."

DOBA: Yes. Yes. And they were all perished, and I don't know what happened.

INT: All your father's siblings?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: All your father's siblings were killed? Both his sisters and the brother?

DOBA: No. A sister was in Brooklyn. She was the one who helped sign the papers for me to come here.

INT: I see, okay.

DOBA: And the one from Warsaw was killed, the one from Belgium, the whole family. Brussels, Belgium. And...and the family that lived uptown, (?), that's the name of the suburb of Lublin. They were, I think, ten or twelve children. There was two only survived. After the war I found one, and he was a lawyer. And then he had a brother who was in California.

INT: Two children out of the twelve.

DOBA: Two children out of the twelve, ten or twelve. But that's all the survivors, and there were some cousins of theirs, which were not cousins to me, but some cousins.

INT: What about your mother's side of the family? Did she have siblings?

DOBA: My mother, she had two brothers. Loving people. Zanek and...I forgot the other one. Zanek was very close to my age. That was apparently the youngest one. And they were all perished with families. I remember when Zanek, my mother used to tell him, "Zanek, try to do something. Look, you have this...German who is a friend of yours. Maybe he can do something." But the Jewish people were so close to the family, that it's not even funny. They took away the children and wives at one point, the beginning of the war, which is not, it wasn't that bad yet. And they told the rest of the family they're going to bring them back. But the Germans, they had their plans already. And he, he didn't want to go anyplace. "My family will come back here. They will come back. What do you mean, I'm going to leave? I'm not leaving." They never left, they never came, they went to Babi Yar.

INT: Oh. They were killed in Babi Yar.

DOBA: And the children, beautiful children. (crying)

INT: This is your mother's brother.

DOBA: This is my mother's...(pause, crying)

INT: Was your family Zionistic at all?

DOBA: You mean Zionist? My mother told me one time that my father tried to go to Israel, but because he loves his family, he also did the same thing. Then, when the war broke out, he wanted to go to Russia. As you know, many people survived in Russia. He was on the border already. Russia and Poland. He came back.

INT: I see. Was Lublin on the eastern, where is Lublin, eastern Poland?

DOBA: Yeah, eastern. Eastern, yeah. He didn't have to go too far, which he did. I don't remember the town. But he came back. He was there maybe...I don't know if it was a day or so. He came back.

INT: He didn't want to leave the family?

DOBA: No. It was so close. And I remember the beginning of the war, which we still lived in...I'm going too far maybe. Do you want me to...

INT: It's okay, we're about up to that anyway. We're about up to that.

DOBA: I remember in the house that we were living, there was a basement. All the people, the religious people with beards and, you know, the philosophers, got together in the basement, and I was there, too. Everywhere I had to be. And they were talking. "Oh, it's going to be such a war that we're going to be asleep." I never forget that. "We're going to fall asleep, and it's going to be over soon." (claps hands)

INT: Oh, they thought it would be quick.

DOBA: Yeah. I mean such a...that's why people didn't get out.

INT: They didn't believe it. They didn't know what was coming.

DOBA: They didn't want to believe it. They didn't want to believe it. And then, and so my father was back already, sitting in the basement and talking philosophy. They still had something to eat at that time, you know, so...nice people. Beautiful people. There was one man who was limping. My mother says I was, I was supposed to be so beautiful when I was little, that my mother says, that I would start limping, limping, because this friend was limping.

INT: You wanted to be like him.

DOBA: And he said, "What's going on with this little girl?" I was limping for days and days. (laughs)

INT: You wanted to be like him?

DOBA: Yeah. (laughs) She even told me not long ago. So they were philosophying that this will go over, little by little. It wasn't that.

INT: Before the war happened, do you remember your parents talking about what was happening in Germany, or the rise of Hitler, or anything like that? Was anti-Semitism getting worse in Poland? Do you have any sense of what was happening?

DOBA: Yeah, it was worse. (I'm sorry, I didn't even bring napkins) [Pause]

INT: Okay, I'm wondering if you could tell me how you, how things changed before the war. If you could sense that there was a change coming, that people were becoming more anti-Semitic, were your parents talking about this at home? Did you get any sense of it when you were a little kid, before 1939, of what was happening in Europe, and in Germany?

DOBA: There's a lot of things happening, because I heard conversations. People were, Jewish people were chased out from Germany. They would send them to Poland, and...and we tried to help the **German** Jews at that time. And...

INT: Your family personally?

DOBA: Yes, I myself. Yes.

INT: How? How?

DOBA: How little we were, had, even my mother reminded me. "Remember how you tried to hide from me some rolls and some things put on the side so you could go out and give it to the German Jews?"

INT: Oh! You did that as a little child?

DOBA: I did that, yeah.

INT: Where were these German Jews?

DOBA: They were nearby, some, you know.

INT: Where were they staying?

DOBA: Some with families. Some with...I really don't remember how they were, where they were staying, but I know they were nearby, yeah.

INT: And they needed food, so you would hide the rolls for them?

DOBA: Sure. They were worse off than we are, because apparently they couldn't bring out their possessions. And at that time, and I was always trying to help another guy, since I was...who knows? And until today, I don't know, I have such a bad habit. I may peel potatoes. There's one potato has to remain in the thing. This is a bad habit. Or I make...

INT: Has to remain in the pot?

DOBA: Remain a raw potato, I don't know why. And many, many things like this. I look at myself, I say, "What do I need this for? It's such a habit that maybe I need to take this, take to someone else." You know what I mean?

INT: Oh, I see. So you were helping them. So you were aware that there was a problem.

DOBA: Oh, yes, yes. Definitely.

INT: Would your parents talk about it at home at all?

DOBA: Oh, yes, they did. They did a lot, yeah. It was no good. It was no good. I know there were a lot of conversations, sadness. A lot of sadness. There was more anti-Semitism, I remember. Apparently probably they know more than I did know at that time. And...the air, the air was very thick. There were a lot of people already working, in a way, for the Nazis, in a quiet way. They were getting out from you words, and they were relaying to someone else, you know what I mean? And they were...because Lublin is not far from the Russian border, everything was not so far. All of a sudden I hear that...some Germans were coming into Poland, like not...it wasn't war yet. They were coming to live. And they had other things. They have good things. You know, they used to have better things than the German Jews. So there was something wrong, so we knew it was not going to be good.

INT: Were your parents talking about how they would deal with it? Or were they worried that Hitler would invade Poland?

DOBA: Of course, of course. But they didn't know that much. They did not know what he really did.

INT: You were saying that your father had left.

DOBA: They knew, they knew there's no good news. He left going to Russia, and...he was there all alone, like I said, he was not capable to be alone. He had to have his family.

INT: This was in 1939, before September?

DOBA: That was probably before September, probably, yes. Probably before. People, my...my mother had told me one time that they were talking about coming here in America. Coming to America, because he had a sister here, and she occasionally send us some money. But it was impossible to buy a ticket, or to go, or maybe the immigration was bad or something. You know, it was impossible. Couldn't, couldn't do it. I guess rich people did it, if they were smart enough.

INT: But it wasn't really an option for your family to do that.

DOBA: No, no it was not.

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

DOBA: And then you would make a copy?

INT: We will make a copy for you, yeah. At the end. And you'll get the copies and the book.

So when the war broke out, tell me how that affected you, and...

DOBA: Well, 1939, September the first, I went to school. Was a Saturday. I don't remember if it was actually September the first that I went to school. I know the war broke out then. I went to school, and I come in and there was, I never forget the name of, the number of the school was 17. That was the name. School 17.

INT: They numbered them, yeah.

DOBA: Yeah. And I remember there were two schools together. The other one must have been 16. I come to school, it was...it was cold. Yes. September was cold already there. And I remember I had some kind of a flannel thing on, it must have been cooler. And I came to the school, and I sat down. I don't remember whether I had a chance to sit down. But anyway, the authorities came in. They knew exactly who is who. "This one, that one, you get out. You get out."

INT: To the Jews.

DOBA: That's right. "Jew, get out. No more school for you." I start crying, very quiet, not...I don't know if I start crying in front of them, but I was crying all the way home. All the way home. School was so important to me. It was part of my life. And apparently I realized that my freedom was cut off. Eleven years old. Apparently I realized more than...any other child probably could. No school, what else is there? So I went, I was going home, and I cried, I don't know who gave me the...who was comforting me. I don't remember. I guess my mother, my father, all of them, you know. They were comforting me. Oh yeah, they were saying, "Oh," he says, "Oh, we're going to find a private tutor. You'll see you're going to learn something." I remember that, yeah.

INT: Trying to make you feel better.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. I remember that, they were talking about it. And that was the end.

INT: So now Jews couldn't go to school anymore.

DOBA: No more, no more. School, the private school, we were still living in the house. They were taking men hostages, Jewish men out, because here and there you hear somebody got hurt, a German got hurt, here and there, very seldom. So if one German got hurt, six Jews, Jews, **men**, were killed.

INT: So wait, the Germans came into your town?

DOBA: Yes.

INT: Okay, so you were in the western part of Poland?

DOBA: Eastern. Eastern part of Poland.

INT: But they still came into your town.

DOBA: Oh, yes. There was a factory next door to our house was, the back of, and they were bombing, they were trying to destroy that factory. But apparently they didn't hit the right spot, otherwise we would be gone, because right next...

INT: It was right next to you.

DOBA: Next door. It was a very thin wall separated. And this factory was making...for the...for the fields. What do you call it?

INT: Fertilizer?

DOBA: Machines, machines.

INT: Oh, machines.

DOBA: Culture, for...

INT: I can't think of the word either, right now.

DOBA: (laughs)

INT: Tractors, or...

DOBA: Well, yeah, they were making all kinds of things, yeah, yeah. Anyway, so...all right, so then...the bombs were falling.

INT: So they were bombing your city. They were bombing your city.

DOBA: They were bombing the city, yes. They were bombing the city.

INT: Did they come in in tanks, also, the Germans?

DOBA: They came in in tanks, they came in...the first thing I saw, their belt, and it says, "Gott mit uns." You know what that means.

INT: Good with us.

DOBA: That's right.

INT: But what does that mean?

DOBA: No. G-d. G-d with us. G-d is with us. A black thing. Immediately we had to start wearing the...the arm...

INT: Magen David on your arm?

DOBA: Yeah, the...what do you call it?

INT: Armbands?

DOBA: Armbands. Yellow armbands. Was it yellow? I think yellow. With a star. That's what I had to wear that. And you know, you couldn't go. You could recognize you anywhere, although I didn't look like Jew, but if I had this arm, I mean band arm, I knew that everybody knew I'm Jewish.

INT: You had to sew it onto your clothes, or you wore it over it?

DOBA: You had to...it was not sewn on, because I think I was taking it off. I could take it off, yeah. No, it wasn't sewn on. I think it was not sewn. Maybe it was. Not I recall.

So we were wearing that, and they were taking out men. One time they took out my father, but he came back. Apparently that day nobody got killed. We were living in the house for some time. Then they were forming a ghetto. It was uptown.

INT: Do you know what year this was? Is this still 1939?

DOBA: No, no, no, that was already (sighs) See, the dates, I'm very bad with dates. I have it written down somewhere.

INT: Okay. About how long were you living in your house still, before the ghetto?

DOBA: 1939. It could be almost a year, almost, I think.

INT: Was your father still able to work in his store?

DOBA: Well, the store, they...somebody took it away. They lived there. Polish people took over. Took over. We were living just in a little room, and they took everything over, whatever they could, they took over the store. So my father was just making in the cellar whatever he could make. Yeah, that's right.

So then, ghetto. So we went, Schwartig, that, I remember the name of this street, called, the vicinity was Schwartig. There was a ghetto there. My mother told me there was more than one ghetto. I didn't even know that. There was one ghetto that we had to go, all of the Jewish people from Lublin had to go to the ghetto, and many people run away, of course, and we went in the

ghetto, the barbed fence, you know? Barbed wires. And people already getting shortage of food, shortage of clothes. And people start getting out, slowly, making a hole in the door. Many people got shot.

INT: Where did you live, where...

DOBA: Oh, in one room...level, floor level, I mean ground level, I'm sorry. One room. And there was a cellar, I remember, that we had coal there, and my father had some leather, leather, and we took the leather, somehow we took the leather with us, and we put in that cellar behind, under the ground. Some leather, it was very valuable shoe leather. That's all we had, you know.

INT: How were you feeling through all this time? Were your parents explaining any of this to you? I mean, what was going through your head? You had to leave your home.

DOBA: I couldn't leave my friends, my home, my friends. I cried all the time. I was **frightened**. Where am I going? I have to leave my home where I was born. And my friends, Gentile friends, still, neighbors, school. After school, I didn't go to school, but they were still my friends, you know. Occasionally I saw them. Oh, they were not so friendly anymore, I remember that.

INT: Oh, yeah? How did that work?

DOBA: Yeah. They were afraid. Yeah, they were afraid. And I said, and how are we going to go? We have to leave everything. We just had small belongings. My father got a horse from someone, and a wagon, bought or paid for it. We put all our belongings. It was winter, okay? So it must have been...

INT: 1940?

DOBA: Was it September? That was September. I don't know if this was the same year. I don't know. It must have been the same year, it must have been, because it was **winter**. It was very cold, and we had to move. And I remember, I was frozen. I was sitting on a wagon, and I was frozen. And I had to run down. I had to run, all the way run, so my circulation came a little better, and I was crying, because I could never take pain. All my life I was very...a sissy. And we came there, arrived there, after hours and hours, in this little room.

INT: This was still in Lublin?

DOBA: Still in Lublin, yeah.

INT: All the Jews had to go into this section?

DOBA: Yes. So this one room, we all went there. And across the street was the hospital. It was a Navy hospital, some kind of a hospital. We were in the ghetto for a while. That was quite some time there. Maybe, maybe a year. Maybe some time, something like that. Because it was

1940. Yeah, I think it was a year. My mother told me how long. I wrote it down somewhere. I don't know where it is.

INT: But you were living in one room with your parents?

DOBA: Yeah. And at night I would go out in the little hole, I would go and get some food from somewhere, I don't remember how, and I get it back. And one day, I was later on...in the meantime, typhus broke out. Typhus broke out. Epidemic typhus, and they were coming to the houses. They were inspecting who's sick. The sick people had to be taken right away out.

INT: Who was coming to...?

DOBA: The Nazis...police. The Polish police, they were working with the Nazis already. And they had people, we called them Volksdeutsche.

INT: Right.

DOBA: You know what that means. They were coming, and they spoke both languages. So they come in the house, "Sick? Sick?" So my sister was **very** sick. I was sick, and my mother was smart. One thing I had to give to her: she's smart. And my father was able to walk around, and my mother walked around, and I walked around. But she was very ill. She couldn't get up.

INT: Your sister.

DOBA: Yeah. And by then I was already getting, what, twelve, thirteen, almost thirteen and she was a little bit older [younger] -- they took her. They took her to this hospital.

INT: Your sister.

DOBA: They took her away, yeah. And she was there, I don't remember what, a day, and my mother was getting **crazy**. "We're going to lose our sister. We're going to **lose** her." Because they would kill people there. Shoot, you could hear the shots and everything. And my mother went in the back, the back entrance, because we were familiar already with this vicinity there. And she went, and she took her out.

INT: She got her out of the hospital?

DOBA: She got her out. One day she went there. She went there, in the front door, "Oh, please take her, I'll take her." Because she was lying with another woman, in the same bed, another sick woman. "Oh, I make space. I'll take this little girl." They wouldn't **let** her, so she thought, next day, I guess, she went at night. Or maybe the same night, from the back, and somehow she got out. She went, her hair was already, everything was cut, you know?

INT: Why?

DOBA: Shaved off the hair.

INT: They shaved your hair?

DOBA: The fist, if a sick person with typhus, they shave your hair.

INT: Oh, okay. Your **sister's** hair was shaved off.

DOBA: Yeah, my sister's hair.

INT: Oh, not your mother, okay.

DOBA: No, no, my sister. She brought her back home. And my sister was telling me things. Sometimes -- I don't have much conversation with them, but -- sometimes she says to me she was lying, she was lying in this bed, and she saw blood running on the floor. They were shooting people there. Yeah, she saw that, and she was a little girl.

INT: They were shooting people in the hospital.

DOBA: Yeah. And as far as the ghetto is concerned, they were taking away the children. Before even that, they were taking away the children from the mothers, and I was witnessing the balconies, they were taking the children away. Many mothers threw their children, they **knew** already they're going to be taken away. They threw the children on the ground. One mother was...was fighting over the child and the Nazi, the Gestapo tore the child apart. And you know things like this you can never forget. And then...you know, a child couldn't do it. There were some children after the war came out, they didn't know who they were.

When I was, after the war I went to a Jewish organization. Some people came, and some Jewish people were...were...cross-examining, you know, me, too. I had to bring my cousin from Poland, they didn't believe me I was Jewish. And it was not so good, believe me. Jewish people gave you a hard time.

So this woman, I never forgot. I said to her, I will help her. I also, "Please help this girl. She's saying she's Jewish. She has nobody." "We don't know. We don't know, we have to investigate." Okay, that's the way they were working. So many children would remain, you know, in different orphanages, in different...convents. And...and she brought us all.

One day we already saw it's no good. They were liquidating the ghetto, they were going to take to the concentration camp. I walked out. I went to this hole where a Nazi was standing with a rifle -- I'll never forget that -- and looking at me. And I walked out. It wasn't even dark. I still don't understand why he **did** this. Why he didn't shoot me there.

INT: What made you leave?

DOBA: I mean, people were going **wherever**, **wherever**.

INT: Where were your parents?

DOBA: My parents, my parents, my father was gone already, he wasn't even there.

INT: Okay, so back up. So tell me...

DOBA: Okay. My, my parents were talking to us, and they were saying, "Look, we have to go each direction, because maybe one of us will survive. We don't know. We cannot be together," because togetherness, that was the worst thing. They got you all. And my mother, she, I'm repeating, she was smart. She says, "Look. Do whatever you think is right. Do whatever you go, G-d willing, maybe something..." So I was on my own.

INT: At what age?

DOBA: I was on my own.

INT: Thirteen?

DOBA: Well, actually at eleven I was already on my own. In the meantime, was about thirteen, already? Yeah. I must have been about thirteen.

INT: Well, you said, you were in the ghetto for a year.

DOBA: Yeah, something like that. I must have been about thirteen, yeah. I walked out.

INT: How were you getting food? Before you walked out.

DOBA: Well, I was getting in and out. We were very hungry.

INT: Did they give you food? I mean, how did people live there?

DOBA: I don't remember how it was, believe me. I know that there was a shortage of everything. I should have sit down -- my mother doesn't want to talk. My mother doesn't want to talk. My sister...she's too sick. She just got a heart attack. Before I couldn't talk to her, now I can't. You see what I mean?

INT: Because she's sick, yeah.

DOBA: Yeah, I can't. My heart, you know. To talk about it, I don't even know. She doesn't want to talk, either. I mean, she never goes to talk. So...whether...whether she...

INT: And your mother doesn't talk to you about this time at all?

DOBA: No, no. My mother's always trying...my mother's telling, giving me the guilt feeling: if not for her, I wouldn't be alive. You see? So you cannot...

INT: Have a conversation.

DOBA: No, you cannot, because right away, "if not for her, I wouldn't be alive." I mean, there's a **lot** of things. If not for you...for me, **she** wouldn't be alive. And vice versa. G-d was with us, you know? But anyway, when I come, I talk just a tiny little bit, and then she right away got...so I cannot.

But anyway, that time she says, "You're alone," I stepped out, and I couldn't go back to this ghetto. I had twenty dollars behind my leather here. My shoes. My father made the shoes for me. And was ripping me open, I had to take off the shoes, walk barefoot. I had no clothes, no food. I start...

INT: What time of the year was this? Spring, summer?

DOBA: That was...that was like summer. Summer, yeah.

INT: Of 1940, probably, or not? Maybe '41.

DOBA: No, must have been, was going to...was going to 1942.

INT: Okay. So it was the summer of '41.

DOBA: And it was summer, because we could get from the fields something, food, whatever, from the woods. Berries, whatever.

INT: You could get out of the ghetto to do that?

DOBA: No, we couldn't. One walked out and bring for others.

INT: I see.

DOBA: So they were shooting people.

INT: Did **you** ever do that?

DOBA: I did, yeah.

INT: You went out in the fields?

DOBA: I went, sure.

INT: By yourself?

DOBA: By myself. Of course.

INT: Weren't you afraid?

DOBA: No. I wasn't afraid of people, I was afraid of them. I was afraid to die. But I took, you had to take chances, you know? You **learned**. Your...life is the mother of invention. You have to learn. People were asking me at that time did I believe in G-d? I said, I didn't have **time**. I didn't, couldn't, I don't remember what I did or not. I had to...

INT: You had to survive.

DOBA: So I went, and...come back.

INT: What would you do? You'd go out in the fields and find food? What would you bring back?

DOBA: I found something. I went to houses, I went to houses, I went to the country, in the evening already, okay, so you weren't so much visible.

INT: By yourself?

DOBA: By myself. One time, a boy came along. I met him on the street. Maybe I knew him from the neighborhood, maybe not. We were walking together. But a man, it was difficult to survive, you know that. It was very difficult. So we walked together. We walked to...I remember one house in the country, they had a party, okay? What kind of party, I don't remember. And I already wasn't kosher then. Oh. (pause) Before that.

I went back to -- oh, that's important. I went back to...to my place where I used to live, because I don't know where anybody is. They were all over. I said, "Maybe I'll see my family there again. Maybe I'll find somebody." I go there, and this woman, she was Ukrainian, she was a nice woman. She says, "What are you **doing** here?" They were looking for Jews already, you know. I said, "Well, I came to look for somebody." She said, "Get! Get to my apartment. Get to my apartment, go..." She lived in the basement. Like I said, shortage of houses. She says, "Go there. I'll give you something to eat, and stay there!" I said, "Fine." I go to her basement, and she had to go to work, or buy some...I sit in the basement, and there was a tiny little window, you know, skylight. I look, and I see my friends playing, you know, from my roommate, schoolmates and all. I forgot about everything. You know? I was still a child. I ran out to them, to play with them. Stupid. I start playing with them not too long. I don't even know whether I start...there was a woman, a prostitute, walking with two Nazis. Towards her boudoir. I knew her, she knew me. And the minute she saw me, she says to them, "Jude! Jude! Jude! Jude!" You know, I'm a Jude. "Kill her!" And I start, excuse me for expression, I don't remember what was going on. The fear was unbearable. I didn't...I was...I didn't want to look back. I knew they're going to shoot me, you know? Apparently, they were not...it wasn't on their mind to shoot **me**. You know what was on their mind, going with her. So...and I didn't have a minute to waste -- that I know. I start running. Running, there was a river there, and farther in the alley was a river, and they fenced it up, all because the Jews were running away.

INT: Were trying to get away.

DOBA: I ran to this river, and I said, "I don't know what next." And there was a boy playing, and he used to call me, "Jew." That's the one that I told you he was an anti-Semite? There was nobody else. Let's say he's Joseph. I go to this fence, and I was **little**, **skinny**, and I couldn't jump. I had to go, if I want to be safe from those people there, temporarily, I had to jump over this fence. And I called this guy, I says, "Come and help me." Because I knew that someone will help me, I stand on his shoulders. He came, he helped me.

INT: The anti-Semite.

DOBA: **Amazing**. Amazing! Ah. This I told every time.

INT: What made him do that, do you know?

DOBA: I have **no** idea. He came and looked at me, not saying one word, and gave me his shoulder. I say, "Stand," and I put, and I jumped over. I never saw him again. Oh...

INT: Now this story you just told me, this story you told me is after what we were talking before. It has to be, because you were by yourself again, looking for your family. But before you were telling me a story about going out to the field to find food. Before your family broke up. You were going by yourself at night to look for food, and you said you went to a house, they were having a party or something. Could you just finish that story if you can?

DOBA: Well, I don't remember if it was before or after. Yeah. I came to this house in the country, with this young man. He...they used to have a restaurant, I remember that. This young man. He looked...no, no family. Everything went apart. And we were hungry and we went. And in Poland, when you walk in a country house, you have to...you have to bless G-d. Jesus. You know what I mean? You have to bless. At that time I wasn't familiar. And he taught me. He says, "Remember what you have to say." I walked in, we both said the same way. (laughs) And this guy was not stupid. He said, "I know who you are."

INT: Oh. Well, you tried.

DOBA: "I know who you are. Here is some food for you, and get lost." (laughs) So I got some food there. I walked in a few more houses with him, and then he disappeared. I don't know what happened to him.

INT: And then you would go back to the ghetto with the food, and give to your family? Or how did that work?

DOBA: Oh, no that was already after the ghetto already. What did I say?

INT: Liquidated.

DOBA: They liquidated, went to the concentration camp Majdanek.

INT: Okay, so we'd better go backtrack a little bit. If you could tell me what the ghetto was like, what happened there, and how your family got separated.

DOBA: The ghetto was horrible. There started being lice there, there were mice. They...

INT: The lice brought the typhus, right? That's how the typhus comes?

DOBA: I think so, yeah. And...people were still getting together -- when it's critical, people get together, you know. People get together, we would play some cards, I remember. I don't remember whether we got children's game. And this woman that I admire always, that she had a good shape, she was in that ghetto. (laughs) So I was glad to go to her, her compartment, wherever she lived, because they was happy, they was singing Jewish there, and I don't know why, I ran away always from home. And you can't, I can't remember too much of other things in ghetto, you know.

INT: Do you remember how your parents were coping with this time in the ghetto? Do you remember how they were? What was the atmosphere in your house?

DOBA: My father...occasionally got out. I don't know how he got out, to...get somebody, repair of shoes, get some food for making repair. He brought some food, too. I don't know how he did it, you know, until today. So...probably I will have to call my mother again, and ask her how long we were in that ghetto. She probably would remember.

INT: How was your mother coping with all this?

DOBA: You mean right now?

INT: No.

DOBA: Over there?

INT: In the ghetto.

DOBA: She was a fighter. Fighter. "We have to fight, we have to do this, we have to do that." And she was always a fighter. She was...

INT: She didn't want to give in.

DOBA: No. She never gave in. Never.

INT: How about your father? Was he the same way?

DOBA: My father would give in, yeah.

INT: Oh, I see.

DOBA: He was giving. He...he was...falling apart, yeah. That's why he could never go anywhere, you know, he was always around, and that's why he got killed. Maybe just destiny, I don't know.

INT: So your mother was telling you, "We're not going to give up, we're..."

DOBA: No. She used to tell me, she used to tell me, "Look, if anybody would live through..." And she was very religious. You know what she told me? "It's going to be like Jesus..." how do you say that? Arised? Came to life.

INT: Yeah. Resurrected.

DOBA: I never forget she used to tell me that.

INT: So she didn't think anyone would come back, is that what you're saying?

DOBA: Nobody thought. Nobody thought, no.

INT: She thought you were all going to die?

DOBA: We all thought, yeah.

INT: You did, too?

DOBA: Sure. I was scared. Every minute of the day, every minute of the night.

INT: How did you, how do you think you got through that time in the ghetto?

DOBA: You mean, in the ghetto? It wasn't that bad yet. Wait till later. (laughs) This was not bad.

INT: I know, but let's just talk about this part of it.

DOBA: See, I was still, I was still not developed, you know what I mean? Mind-wise. I don't remember, I don't know what I...I know I had to get some food. I know the Nazis was standing around. I know they were shooting. I was afraid my father. I was afraid they were going to take my father. My sister, when, I was afraid to lose my sister, because she was away in the hospital. Then they brought her back home.

INT: What happened after they brought her back home?

DOBA: She was home. She was getting better, you know. Yeah, she was home. Nobody know that she was missing there. Nobody know. They didn't care. They were not very strict over there.

INT: So you were just concentrating on getting food, getting through...

DOBA: Yeah. Getting through every minute. And...

INT: Did you think you would die then, in the ghetto, when you were a little kid?

DOBA: No. No. Not in the ghetto, no. They didn't...they didn't, the plans were not, people were not going to die in the ghetto. They were going to take them **out** first.

INT: But you saw people get shot, or you knew people were getting shot.

DOBA: Yes. Because they were getting, they were running out.

INT: Escaping.

DOBA: They were escaping, yeah.

INT: They weren't shooting them, just inside the ghetto.

DOBA: No, no.

INT: They were shooting them when they would try to get away.

DOBA: No, if someone maybe was very ill, you know.

INT: Did your parents ever talk about escaping the ghetto, or not?

DOBA: Yes, yes. They were, yeah. They were, we're going to get out. And my mother many times there was...a listing, I forgot the name of it. You had to show up a certain day. There was a line of people. If you didn't go today, you may be saved for tomorrow. Sometime my mother start thinking, and her name was misspelled. One day we were supposed to be there, and the name was misspelled. We weren't asked, it wasn't us. We didn't go. And maybe we were saved, you know what I mean? Certain times.

INT: I see. Did they take those people away?

DOBA: Yeah, they took them away. Right and the left. Go to the right, go to the left. When they take people, they send right away to a bath, public bath. You had to be undressed and running to the street naked. They would examine you. Men would not survive, circumcised. Jew, the Polish, in Poland every Jew was circumcised, the Polish were not. You know that. So

that's why there's a few men, unless they were in the woods, or in Russia, a few men survived. More woman survived.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: I know. A few ladies were in the convent. Polish people. Poland, did not want to take in the convent, Jewish people. Very few. France did. Belgium.

INT: Yeah. The church was very anti-Semitic in Poland.

DOBA: Yeah, very, very.

INT: So your mother was giving you some messages at home that, you know, "We're going to fight, we're going to try to survive."

DOBA: You don't have to give up.

INT: Right. And what was your father saying, do you remember?

DOBA: Quiet. Quiet. He always quiet. Whatever will be, will be. You have to push it. And that's maybe, I am a little bit slow, I don't know. I fought a lot, too. Very much. But I'm slow, procrastinator.

INT: What made you go out to get the food? Did your mother send you out?

DOBA: I was hungry myself.

INT: You just went by yourself. It was your idea to go.

DOBA: Yeah. I guess my mother sent me, maybe.

INT: Did you have friends in the ghetto that you'd go with, or...

DOBA: I was alone. It's dangerous to be with someone. Very dangerous. All alone. Here I am, all alone, lost. Nobody wants me. Nobody. Even I got thirteen, I'm still a child, nobody wants me. I'm forgotten by everybody, all alone, hungry. Cold. (pause, crying) I was sort of...my mother said that I had...there is a word for it -- that I blamed her that she abandoned me. I said, "No. No!" I **never** felt that. Some children **would**, you know. I never felt it. I know it's a war. I know everybody has to look out for themselves. I only pray for everyone separate, and my own, my own words, but we had to go, we had to try to...to survive another day, if possible.

So here we go, they liquidated the ghetto, they sent people to concentration camp, Majdanek. My father they sent over there. My mother was there, too. My sister was...left with a Polish person.

INT: What happened? The whole ghetto was liquidated at some point?

DOBA: The whole ghetto was liquidated. Remember, Warsaw ghetto was liquidated? I think, I don't know if they're the same time, they did this, all the ghettos were liquidating. Whether they did the same, or not.

INT: So they were coming in and taking everyone and sending them to concentration camp?

DOBA: Yeah. Taking different places. They're taking men to work.

INT: Were you all together at this point, still, before they took you?

DOBA: You mean, you mean...

INT: Your family.

DOBA: The ghetto, yes.

INT: But your family was still together. So when they came to liquidate the ghetto, they rounded everybody up, and then they started dividing them up? How did that...

DOBA: Yes. They start dividing them up. The children, they tried to take away. I don't know. My sister remained. [Front door opens] That's the doctor that I was expecting. Don't worry about it.

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with a survivor, Doba Smolanowicz. It's May 31st, 1995.

Mrs. Smolanowicz, the last time we talked, we were talking about how you were separated from your family in the ghetto. I was wondering if you had anything else you wanted to add about your time in the ghetto before the separation.

DOBA: Apparently I was in the ghetto for quite a long time. And I remember, but I cannot...now I forgot. I would have to get in touch with my mother. She **maybe** remembered. But anyway, I didn't have a chance.

We didn't have much clothes. We still had a little...we still had a little belongings that we took with us, whatever you could pick up on the little wagon. And we were wearing this. And my father, at that time, somehow he was slipping out also, in the evening, to do somewhere his

previous acquaintances -- Gentiles -- he would fix them some shoes, and he would bring a little food inside, and I don't remember how he did it. I don't remember...

INT: Wasn't it very dangerous to leave the ghetto?

DOBA: **Very**, very dangerous. Very dangerous, because everything was fenced, barbed wire. The name of this place where the ghetto was called Schwartig. I remember. Schwartig. My mother tells me that there was another ghetto, but I don't remember. Yeah, Lublin.

INT: There were two ghettos in Lublin?

DOBA: That's what my mother says. I don't remember the other one, where it was. So he would, he would go out, and he was a very close family man. Close family. He could have maybe survived if he wouldn't be so attached to the family. And he wanted to be together, and...anyway. And I was going out also through this little opening, and I was getting food, and I wanted to **play**. I still, when I went out from there, oh, I took off the band, the...David, star of David band?

INT: Yeah, Magen David, yeah.

DOBA: I took off, and I was, I was not recognizable by my face, but I had a very deep Jewish accent.

INT: Oh, okay.

DOBA: And in Poland, the Polish people recognized you immediately, who was Jewish, and spoke Polish. There was not, very seldom there was a Jewish person who had no accent.

INT: I see. You had a little bit of a Yiddish accent?

DOBA: Yeah. And one word was just turned...instead of saying feminine, you would say masculine.

INT: I see. They knew.

DOBA: They would grab you right away. So I was keeping my mouth shut, as much as I could. Because I was (laughs) I was afraid. Anyway, and then I came back again to the ghetto, and my mother, I remember, she was making a few, a few well, zloty. Zloty -- that's in Polish -- monetary, money. Zloty. By fixing stockings for certain women they would come there. With a special needle, she knew how to do it. And she made a little bit of money, or food, or whatever they brought. She was helping that way, **in** the ghetto. But...then, like I said, I don't remember how long. Finally they were liquidating the ghetto. And they were sending people to Majdanek, to different places. They were taking the children. Oh, the children were taken away before already. Some of them were taken away.

For example, my...my uncle's children, and the wives were taken already away before. And what they claimed, they took them to the Babi Yar, later on. And they were also a very close family, and one, and the other -- especially the younger one -- he had ...he had a chance, because at that time I heard that they were saying he had a German friend who wanted to help him, to somehow to try to go to Germany. Nobody knew whether he would survive, because he was circumcised, you know, how difficult it was. But he could have tried, but he didn't even try, because he was so attached to the family. He waited for the wife and the children to come back. I don't know, one or two children. He was young. And the same thing with the other one. So...they were in the ghetto, too. I don't remember how far from us. This I don't remember. But anyway...

INT: Did you make any special friends in the ghetto at all, or...?

DOBA: Yeah, I had a couple, yeah. This lady, I'll never forget. She had a very nice, very nice figure, and very popular.

INT: Yeah, you were telling me about her.

DOBA: Yeah. And I made so-called friends. I don't know if **she** wanted to be my friend, but I was like (laughs) being up to her, you know. And liked to be in their company. Yeah, I did make some. And beside this, I really don't remember. This, this...

INT: Did you play with your little sister at all?

DOBA: My sister was...excuse me. I was, by then I was already getting to almost thirteen, fourteen. Well, she was seven years younger. I always babysit her. I mentioned to you what had happened before the war. I always babysit her whether she liked me or not, but she claimed I beat her. Hit her. (laughs) Yeah, and...so yes, I do. I was watching her all the time.

INT: How was she coping with all this that was going on, do you remember?

DOBA: Very sick. She's very sick.

INT: She had the typhus.

DOBA: At **that** time, yes. She had the typhus. They cut, they had a chance to cut her hair off in the hospital. Came in with no hair. And my mother took her out. She was **very** smart. She was...I think at that time, she was seven years old when we had to, when we left the ghetto, when they were liquidating and everybody went different ways. And there was a gentleman by name Senkowski. Stanislaw Senkowski. He was a very close friend of my father. He was wounded apparently in the First World War, because he was limping. I never forget him limping, and trying to help everybody.

My mother and my sister and I went to his house...outside of Lublin, when the ghetto was...that's before we went to Majdanek or after. We were in Majdanek too, but we escaped.

INT: Wait, before that. You found out that the ghetto was going to be liquidated. They came in and...

DOBA: Oh, yes. Yes, they were liquidating the ghetto. And we left.

INT: Where did you go?

DOBA: One by one. Different...well, I went to...

INT: Is that when your mother said to you, "You're going to be on your own, and you just have to try to survive"?

DOBA: Well, not yet. At that time, she didn't, she didn't say it yet. Somehow it was still hope. There was a lot of hopes. We had hopes all the time. And we were just...I knew the friends that we had, so I knew where to go to look, in case I want to look for my family. In fact, I went to this, outskirts of Lublin where my parents used to rent gardens, I mentioned to you before. And I would go there, and they would give me some food, and I would look for my parents, and they would, my father would stop in one of the places looking for me, too. And...wait a minute, where am I? Oh, talking about my sister.

Yeah, my mother, we three went to Mr. Senkowski, and my mother ask him, "Could you hide my daughter?" My sister, she was little. See, I was able to walk around already, you know, and she was really very little. And he says, "Yes, but not for a long time," because they know they were in danger, too. And I was there a night or two myself, too. Excuse me. (Pause)

My father came there also. He was hidden a little bit in one of his, outside there was something, a little boudoir, or it was under the ground something. He was hidden there, too, with several other Jewish men. But not for long, unfortunately.

INT: Now where was this? Outside of Lublin?

DOBA: Outside of Lublin.

INT: How did you get out of the ghetto to get there?

DOBA: Okay, we went out one by one already. They were liquidating. We never went back to the ghetto. Because they were...

INT: So the Germans were rounding up everyone. And you escaped somehow?

DOBA: Well, apparently. Apparently. It was not so strict, apparently. So I went out from that little hole, and they, each one went out separate. I don't know how. I couldn't, my mother remembers; I don't.

INT: And you all met at Mr. Senkowski's house?

DOBA: Yeah. We met at this Mr. Senkowski. (pause) Shminik -- hey, I remember. Shminik. It's the outskirts, yeah. And they had a little house there, and at that time, his son was missing in the war, and he had another son. One never came back -- missing in the war. So he had a lot of trouble, too. So my sister, he took my sister, and I had to leave. I had to leave, and my mother had to leave. My father probably left also at that time, because they were rounding up and looking for Jews. The Polish police, the Gestapo. And my sister was standing behind one of his chest of drawers, or whatever he had, and they came to the house, and she didn't cry. They were looking, and she was there right behind that, and she was so smart, she did not cry. Only seven.

INT: They would have found her.

DOBA: Oh, yeah. She didn't cry. So he told us she didn't cry. And then she was there for a while, which I don't remember how long, and then...unfortunately, there were neighbors, used to tell on one another, and he said, "She has to go." So my mother took her. She took her out.

INT: Took your sister out.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Now where were you?

DOBA: Okay. I was in the meantime drifting...from...place to place. And...yeah. And all of a sudden I lost them all. I lost my mother, my sister, my father, I was all alone. And I think that's when my mother said to me just before she says, "You have to be on your own. You understand." I was a grown-up already; by eleven I was a grown-up person. "And you have to, because you see what's going on. If one of us survive, if any more than one, it would be a miracle," and all these things.

So I went. I never felt anything against her because of that. You know, sometimes children feel abandoned, but I don't remember that feeling.

INT: What do you remember feeling?

DOBA: That I'm all alone. And...and nobody's here to help. Nobody. Nobody. I saw the beautiful day, because it was fall. It was fall, it was still beautiful. Early fall, I think. And the children, the Polish children, they were even afraid to, when they saw me, they were afraid to play with me, because it was scary for them, too. There was a lot of anti-Semites, but there was some who were not. And I went to one of, this lady's house, maybe I mentioned it to you before, where she was treating me with a meal.

INT: The Ukrainian woman, and you hid in the basement?

DOBA: That was another one.

INT: That was another one, oh. So I didn't hear about this one.

DOBA: I told you that already.

INT: You told me that one.

DOBA: There was another lady, her name was Watras. That's what my name was during the war, because she had given us a birth certificate. So I went to her house, and she was like...

INT: Let me just understand something -- I'm sorry to interrupt you. Your mother and your sister went somewhere, you don't know where.

DOBA: At that time I didn't know. I didn't know.

INT: And where was your father?

DOBA: I didn't know, either. I didn't know.

INT: Okay. All right. So now you're just by yourself. And somehow you lost contact with them, and you didn't know whether you...

DOBA: Yeah. I lost contact with them. And I went, and I was still drifting. I was, this is my neighborhood, I went back. I was brought up there. And I thought maybe I'll meet somebody, a relative or a neighbor or somebody, to hang on to **something**.

INT: Right. And you saw this woman, Watras.

DOBA: Well, I went to her house. She lived in a basement also.

INT: Oh, in your old house.

DOBA: No, in a different house.

INT: Okay. Everybody was living in the basement then.

DOBA: Yeah, because of the shortage of things. She lived in this little basement. And I went there. The door was always open.

INT: How did you know her?

DOBA: Oh, they were friends. Yeah, they were friends of my parents, yeah, for years. My father was fixing shoes, they were doing something together, I don't remember. And I went to her, and I was, she said, "Sit down, sit down." She was making dinner or lunch, and there was a man sitting on the other side of the table. He was a Nazi. That was her lover. And she was fixing him the...he knew I was Jewish, by the way, but he wouldn't say anything. She was fixing a meal, and she was putting a meal on the table, and I remember it was some kind of a cereal, yaglana kasha -- that's in Polish -- a yellow cereal. And on the top were cut up bacon, or pork.

And I looked at this, I says, "I cannot eat." I was hungry, but I was Orthodox, very strict Orthodox. I **still** did not want to eat unkosher food.

INT: As hungry as you were.

DOBA: Yeah. I says, "I cannot eat this." Or, "I don't want to eat." I don't remember. And he looks at me, he says, "You don't want to eat this? You gonna look for this, and you will never find it." He knew the plans. He knew Hitler's plans already. He was a very high official of that caliber. And I didn't eat. I don't remember whether she gave me something else, or this I don't remember. But I was really, this remained in my mind, him saying that. And I remember, I never forget that in my life. It was true, yeah.

And okay. So at that time, he didn't know that she is going to give us the birth certificate.

INT: Who's "us"? You and who else?

DOBA: My mother. Later on. Later on. The birth certificate of her deceased sister, or whatever.

INT: I see.

DOBA: Yeah, my name was...Maria Watras, and my mother's name was Sophia Watras, and my sister's name was Helen Watras. Helen is Helen. See, this is Polish, could be Polish, also. So...so later on.

INT: So she got you birth certificates.

DOBA: She gave us a birth certificate, later on. We had to have papers to show up any place.

INT: So now you're going to pass as Christians, is that what...

DOBA: Well, not yet. Okay. Then she had a lot of children, that woman. In a different...

INT: Where was her husband?

DOBA: I have **no** idea.

INT: Okay.

DOBA: She had a lot, I remember at least five at that time. It wasn't with this guy. They were living by themselves. Apparently one raises the other, because they were old enough. And I remember she says to me, "Go to my children, where my children are." And this was a distance from her house. And I went there. And I remember, we were peeling frozen potatoes, and I was there a few days, and they were feeding me.

INT: One of her children, older children.

DOBA: Well, a lot of children. I was with them, you know? I was there for a while. I don't remember how many days. And...they were making -- I'll never forget -- potato latkes, from the frozen potatoes, you know, and I was helping, young I was, and the potatoes, that's all we had, nothing else, at that time. So I was there, and I knew apparently where they live and all. Finally...

My mother got in touch with her. And he was not there, this guy, at that time. I don't remember whether I was present. No, I don't think I was present. I was, I was, oh, I was drifting again in country. I went into the countryside. Or maybe I was with her children, that's right. I was at her children's house, yeah. And there was no telephone of course, but somehow we were in touch.

She says to my mother, "I'll tell you what you could do. And don't pay attention to anything." Because she had some tips from that Nazi, you know. He would tell her what's going to be and all. "Here is a birth certificate. You go with your children, if they're still with you, to Germany." My mother probably made a plan, too, but she was helping her, you know.

Now my father was in Majdanek already.

INT: They caught him, or what happened with him?

DOBA: Oh, I don't think. I think he went there. My mother went there, and I went there, and I don't know where my...oh, my sister was at Senkowski, that Polish man, the other man.

INT: So your mother brought her back there to be hidden?

DOBA: You see? She brought her back later, after this Majdanek. See, I'm sorry that I'm going back and forth. In Majdanek, I was a...

INT: How did you get to Majdanek?

DOBA: I went to look for my father and mother, you know. I was always going, wanted to be with my family. I went back.

INT: But Majdanek was a concentration camp.

DOBA: No, that was a...concentration camp, that's right. That was Majdanek, outside of Lublin. Okay, so...

INT: So how did your father get to Majdanek, how did your mother get there?

DOBA: I don't know whether they caught him, or he went himself. I presume they caught him, yeah. I think they caught him. He wouldn't go there. They caught him, he was there. And my

mother was there, too, and I don't remember how my mother went, and I went there later. I went to look for them.

INT: Was it very close to Lublin?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Was it close to Lublin, Majdanek?

DOBA: Well, it was not very close. You had to walk quite a bit, yeah.

INT: So you went to look for them in a concentration camp.

DOBA: I guess I went, yeah. I went because all the Jews were getting together.

INT: I see.

DOBA: They were like...lambs, okay? They couldn't, they didn't want to fight. (phone interruption)

INT: How did you get there?

DOBA: Yeah. Well, Jewish people were getting together. If they took them, or they didn't take them, they wanted to be together. At the last minute. They wouldn't...there was very seldom who fought, very seldom, I guess the religion taught them not to fight, I guess. And...okay. So my mother…

INT: So you were seeing people all around you not fighting, is that it?

DOBA: I saw, I didn't know whether they should fight or didn't, because I guess I was too naive. We didn't have any connection, no radio, no newspapers. We didn't know...we **heard** from one to another. Warsaw uprising, and all this, I don't remember whether the uprising was before or after. I used to know the dates and everything. And I was just worrying about how to get food, how to live another minute. They're going to come and take me to the oven, they're going to take my family. I'm not going to see my father. I loved my father tremendously. And without my father I was lost. When he was near me, I was like saved, you know.

So...I just vaguely remember that they were talking. They were getting together in the basement -- that's still in our house over there. Jewish people with beards, rabbis. "Oh, this is going to be over soon. It's going to be like they're going to put us to sleep, and we wake up tomorrow, it's going to be freedom," and things like this. You know, nonsense. And I was listening to all these things. And no fight. No fight. They didn't talk about defending, nothing. Nobody had that, weapon or not. There **were** people, but not in this, in the crowd that I was.

So my father would never hit anybody, you know. So they were in, we were in this Majdanek, and my mother, at that time...

INT: Well, what was Majdanek like? What happened when you got there?

DOBA: It was horrible. They were taking men to work. They were chasing them, and whoever fell, they shoot them right there. They were taking them out for work, for outside work. I don't remember what work was there. And...(sighs) and I don't know how I did this. I was always trying to help people. And don't ask me how I got some food. When men were walking to work, I run and I was running after them, I thought I'm going to see my father. At that time I didn't see him. And I was giving people food. The little that I had, I was giving them. I didn't see my father, so I give it to someone else. And I remember them running with the stripes, and the Nazi was beating them, and you know, strong persons survived, but the weak ones were falling. That was men; men only at that time.

And then they brought them back to Majdanek, I guess for the night, or whatever.

INT: And you kept looking for your father?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. I know...I know he was there. And my mother had a special privilege, I don't know why. She was wearing a J, and she was able to go out...oh, now I know. She was helping in the kitchen. That's why she had the privilege -- to go out, and I don't know why, what's the reason. You see, I would have liked to sit down -- I'm sorry, I'm jumping -- I would like to sit down -- she's going to be 91 years old -- sit down and talk to her. I cannot talk to her.

INT: Do you think I could interview her? Do you think she'd talk to me?

DOBA: Oh, my G-d, please don't. Please, no.

INT: No?

DOBA: I'll tell you later on. Not by you, please.

INT: Maybe somebody else from our team could do it.

DOBA: I'll tell you later.

INT: Okay. But you want to sit down and ask her the questions.

DOBA: I wanted to. So, I cannot talk to her.

INT: Why can't you talk to her?

DOBA: We're not...we're not...

INT: Close?

(interruption)

DOBA: Maybe remembers, but certain things she forgets also. But she remembers more than I do.

INT: Well, she was older.

DOBA: It's not because of older. She has a...

INT: Very good memory?

DOBA: **Very** good mind. Much better than I will ever...

INT: You said she was smart.

DOBA: **Very.** She remembers, she read a lot. Very intelligent. Very, very well read. She finish Russian high school, in Russia. She was born in Russia. But...okay, so where are we now?

INT: Okay, so we're in Majdanek, and your mother had some kind of special privilege.

DOBA: Oh, yes. To walk out. Occasionally she walked out, and every time she walked out, probably she brought something back. Or maybe she probably, maybe was getting in touch with me. This I don't remember. Somehow I knew, you know. Then I walked out from there, and never came back. I escaped Majdanek, too. I was little, for my height, and I was very skinny.

INT: How did you escape Majdanek?

DOBA: At that time, was not very strict, like I mentioned. People walking out with J, and they were taking out men to work, so someone can slip, you know, how you see in the movies sometimes. Slip through. And it was not, it was not a fantasy. It was a true thing. So I left. That's it.

INT: By yourself. Not with your mother.

DOBA: By myself.

INT: You left your mother there?

DOBA: Yeah. She went.

INT: Did she know you were going to leave?

DOBA: I don't know whether she knew or not. She says, "You're on your own."

INT: Oh, that's when she said it. Okay.

DOBA: She already said, "You're on your own," before. I was doing whatever it's possible to do.

INT: And your sister was with Mr...

DOBA: Yeah. Senkowski, yeah. She was there, yeah. And then...

INT: And you never saw your father in the camp, before you left?

DOBA: I did see him later on, yet. I did see him twice later on.

INT: Okay. So you escaped.

DOBA: Yeah. Then after a while, my mother got in touch with this woman, and she gave her the paper. Okay.

INT: Mrs. Watras.

DOBA: Mrs. Watras. After Majdanek. She says, "You have another choice. You do this," and she...went by herself, or with me.

INT: Your mother escaped Majdanek, **also**, then.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

INT: Later, **after** you.

DOBA: She never went back. She never went back. There was, uptown, you have to register to go to Germany. You see, Gentile people they were catching on the street, and you can volunteer also. And we were volunteering, you understand? We couldn't wait till they catch us. Maybe it would never happen, I don't know. They didn't want children. For work? They didn't want children. So we went to register to this particular...

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

DOBA: I told you about this, when I walked out from the ghetto, the Gestapo was looking at me. I told you that, didn't I?

INT: Yes.

DOBA: Okay. And then I told you about this woman, and I was running to the river.

INT: Yes, and the little boy helped you.

DOBA: Oh, I did told you. Okay. Right. So, okay. Now we are supposed to go to register to this particular city hall uptown. Of course, we're Polish **now**. No band. But you...

INT: Weren't you afraid, with your voice, that that would give you away?

DOBA: Well, I was mostly keeping my mouth shut, you know. And my mother apparently spoke better than I did, you know. She went with me I think to register there. We register, and then you had to go to a certain school, which was a little distance away, to wait for a transport. Let's say this is a school, okay? We waited, there was already fenced, the whole fenced, because people **were** there, and they were escaping also, from that school. Because a lot of people were just caught on the street. You know, they were catching Polish people to take them to Germany. So fenced, and then...(pause)

Before that, before going to that school, I was working, did I tell you that, I was working as a shepherd? Okay. See, that...it's written in the papers, too.

We were, my mother took my sister away from...from Senkowski, because it was very dangerous. There was one family got killed because they were holding a Jew, and he was already afraid. He says, "Take her." So my mother took my sister, and we were drifting in the country. I was separate and she was separate. And I went again to the people in the neighborhood, where I used to know, and I says, "Can I work for you?" It was October, I think, October of '94.

INT: '44?

DOBA: Sorry. '44.

INT: '44? So it was almost the end of the war.

DOBA: Oh, **no.** Oh, '42. I'm sorry, '42. I'm sorry. 1942. I'm sorry. 1942. October, right. So I went to these people and I says, "Could you..." Oh, I met a woman. I was walking and walking, and my father made some boots for me, and I had to take off the boots, and my feet were red, and I was barefoot, because I couldn't, I hold them in my...they were tied up, I remember I was holding them like this. And I had twenty dollars -- twenty zlotys -- behind the sole. That's all I had, my possession. And I walked and I says, "Do you think that..." The woman from the country, she was walking towards the city to sell something. She was carrying on her...on her...what do you...

INT: Back?

DOBA: Back, something to sell to the market. And apparently she was coming back already, and I said, "Do you think that you might want to take me with you, and I will help you, just for food?" And I told her I'm Jewish. At that time I couldn't lie **yet**. And she says, "Look. I don't

need you, because I'm sufficient, whatever I have. But you can come for a day or two." So I went with her, and she gave me some food, and she says, "I cannot hold you here. I don't have myself much, and it's dangerous. But I tell you what. Go to this particular, another...another suburb nearby. Maybe there's a larger family." And I went to these people, and I walked over, and they took me. They took me, and I was there several weeks. But he had told me, "I can only keep you for the season, while the cows need to go in the grass and you can watch them. But then, we're not going to need you. It's going to be for two reasons: We don't have enough for our family and then..." -- I told them I'm Jewish, too. Of course, they knew. "They're looking for Jewish people. So I cannot afford that. You know, I have my large family." They were very nice to me.

I remember they had beehives. When I saw the bee...they had beehives. I was eating honey. Can you imagine that? The first time after...after...I had a meal together with them at the table, and I had honey on the bread, and all I did is watching the cows. There was a little boy used to come with me into the fields, and I think there was a dog. And I just watched them they should not run away. And then, I don't remember how many. Two, three, they didn't have. And I brought them back, and then I was milking cows. It's very difficult to milk. And I washed the dishes. And I was very slow. At that time I was a slow eater, slow worker. And...I was very clean. They always says, "Oh, you're so clean, but you're so slow. You even **eat** slow." But anyway, that was their complaint.

And of course, the time came. My mother came to see me. We were in touch.

INT: How did she know where you were?

DOBA: I don't remember. I tell you, I don't remember. Because she was cruising around also the neighborhood where we were hiding. Oh, my father, my father was in a barn, in a different barn.

INT: He got out of Majdanek?

DOBA: Yeah, he got out of Majdanek. He was in a different barn, and people were coming and fixing shoes for them, you know what I mean? And they were giving him food. But we couldn't be together. So my mother had told me, she came to see me, and this woman gave her honey for my sister, and she gave her more things, and she brought it to my sister.

INT: Now, was your sister with your mother now all this time?

DOBA: At that time she was already with my mother, because Senkowski said, "Take her away."

Did I tell you, before that, when I was still in Lublin, I met a young man, and we were asking for bread?

INT: Yes, you told me that story.

DOBA: I told you that, okay. I'm sorry.

INT: And you went to the house with the party, and he told you how to...

DOBA: Yeah, he disappeared. I don't know what happened to him, yeah. So, that's right. So, anyway...

INT: So your whole family is just separated, and just sort of going around and hiding in different places, but you're in the same basic area, and you sort of know where each other is.

DOBA: Yeah, part of the time, we knew it, yes. But I could not show up here, I couldn't, you know.

INT: Right. So you're staying with the cows now, with these people.

DOBA: Just a minute. I have to take medicine. (pause) The time finished, okay? That was before going to the school. I'm sorry, I'm going back and forth. The time finished, and he says, "You have to go." My mother had that birth certificate already.

INT: Right. Did you have yours?

DOBA: No, no, no. She only had one for the whole family.

INT: Oh, I see. The children were on it.

DOBA: Somehow, you know, for the whole family. Apparently I didn't have to have it, or went through. And while my mother was hiding with my sister somewhere in different place, she was still taking chances, because they need money. We didn't have any money, nothing. She didn't have, she was taking, buying milk from one of the country people, and carrying on her back, for miles and miles to the city. Imagine. Jewish.

INT: Did your mother look Jewish, or she...

DOBA: Yes, she had a long nose.

INT: She couldn't pass as Polish?

DOBA: But...she says no. She says I look more, my sister look Polish and I, but she says, I think she looks fine. To me, she looks fine.

INT: So she would go all that way with the milk on her back.

DOBA: She would walk. She needed a few...

INT: She wasn't afraid?

DOBA: Well, she **was** afraid. And she would carry this and she...she would tell me that in the woods, through the woods there was Gestapo looking for Jews. And I don't know if they were talking to her or not, and she was just passing by them, and she was shaking, of course, because she left my sister all alone. And I was at that time still in a different place. To sell this milk to make a few, very little, so she can buy some bread or whatever. And she came back with...she bought something in the city, I guess some bread or whatever, and she brought it back. So she was doing, many times that. You know. While she was going, you know. She was going into town. We were born there, and people **knew** her.

INT: And nobody told on her.

DOBA: Yes, they did! And she escaped again. They did. They...one Ukrainian woman, she was on the train one time, she says, my mother, one Ukrainian woman, she says, "Juduvka" means Jew. And she was looking. "I'll show you!" And she was looking for the Nazis, for somebody to get her. And while she was looking, my mother was very flexible, very quick...impulse, how do you say that?

INT: Reflex.

DOBA: Yeah, very quick. And she was, she escaped from one wagon to another, and she escaped from her. And she ran out. She ran out in a different station. Yeah, many, many times happened like that. So she was doing. She wanted to buy something, sell something. Anyway, while she was there.

Anyway, finally I had to leave the place. I never forget, we left a quilt there. A quilt there. I never forget, in that place. And she says, "I'll save it for you," this woman. She cried when I was leaving. "I'll save it for you. I hope you survive."

INT: Very nice people. Why did you have to leave?

DOBA: Because...

INT: They were afraid?

DOBA: Sure! They were taking people. One neighbor called on the other one, they were shooting whole families, when they find a Jew.

INT: They would shoot the Polish families.

DOBA: Sure! They would find a Jew, the whole family went, sure.

INT: How long were you there, do you know? A few weeks, or...

DOBA: Yeah, a few weeks. I think it was the beginning of October, or maybe late September. Yeah, it could be late September, because late October I had to leave, we were already going to

Germany. So everything happened quick after that. So that's for the last, before the last time, I saw my father.

I remember I was going up the mountain someplace, alone again, because I had to leave this place, and all of a sudden, I see my father. It was a miracle.

INT: Where was he?

DOBA: He was looking also. He was going from place to place, maybe looking for me. And you know that I didn't want to go away from him? Like I said before, when I was with him, I forgot about **everything**. And he says, "You cannot do that. Please. Go. Please, go."

INT: You wanted to stay with him.

DOBA: I do! Sure! I always wanted to stay more with my father than with my mother, you know that. I said, "You know that." You don't know that (laughs) but I'm just telling you.

INT: I'm starting to understand that.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: But he told you to go.

DOBA: He said, "Please go. Please go. Try. Try the best. Try." And he, I think he told me a few other names. "Try this one, that one." But to no avail. I couldn't do anymore, because it was already very risky, and...

INT: Were all the Jews out of the Lublin ghetto now? It was Judenrein?

DOBA: Yeah, out. Sure. They were out. And Majdanek, I am not sure whether it was already finished, they were liquidating or not. No, they were there. Of course they were there. They were still there. So that was the last time I saw him, and I cried, and I had to obey him. I obeyed him, you know, what he said.

INT: That must have been very, very difficult, to leave him.

DOBA: Then we went, we got together, my mother and my sister somehow, we went to that school already. Like I told you before. We went to that school, and we were waiting for the transport to go to Germany.

INT: Was your sister there, too?

DOBA: To go to Germany.

INT: Were you going to leave for Germany without your father?

DOBA: That's right. Without my father, yeah.

INT: Didn't your mother want to get back with you father, or it was impossible?

DOBA: Oh, you **couldn't**. No. They would take us all to the ovens! A man was circumcised. You know that.

INT: That's right. Of course.

DOBA: And when they took people, when they took us to the school, you had to get undressed first before. They would check you for any diseases, and you would run through the streets naked, from one place, to the public bath, to the school. And a man, it was impossible.

INT: Of course.

DOBA: You know that. And he knew.

INT: Did he know you were going to Germany, your father?

DOBA: Yes. Yes. At that time my mother told him, yeah. He knew. Oh, yes. Yes, I'll tell you why. She knew where we're going to be in school. And we were there a few days. And I always, I always look. Do you know for many years in Germany, when I was taking a walk, we weren't allowed to walk too far. In Germany I had to wear a "P" already. I was Polish. P, okay? So we couldn't walk too far. And I always look for my **father**. When I saw somebody, I went **close**. It's, it's silly. Ironic, even today. Even today.

INT: You still look for him today, in the street.

DOBA: I don't know. This is sickness. It is. But at that time, it was so close from the time I was leaving. And I was walking, I was always trying to be near the fence, to look what people passing by. And my father came. My father came to the fence. When I saw my father...

INT: When you were in the school.

DOBA: That's right. Maybe my father came to the fence to look for us, because he knew we were there. And I was the first one, my sister was someplace inside. And I run to him, I wanted to be with him again! And you know what danger this was. And he didn't say one word. He saw me running. He just, with his hand (holds it up) like, go back. And I did. I did.

INT: He just wanted to see you before you left.

DOBA: I wanted, yeah. Yeah, sure. So like that. Because...

INT: He waved you back with his hand, without saying anything.

DOBA: Yes, he said, "Go back!" With that. My father didn't speak well Polish at all. He was one of the least Polish speaker of the whole family.

INT: He only spoke Yiddish.

DOBA: Yeah, Yiddish, all the time. Very religious. We were not allowed to turn on the light. There was no electricity anyway, but...candles...

INT: Light the oven or...

DOBA: Candles, lamp, kerosene lamp, or put coal in the oven to make a meal. It was coal. And Friday night you were not allowed to cook anymore. You made this cholent, and you went to the bakery and the next day you picked it up, and that's what you ate the whole day. You were not allowed to wash this dish even. You know, very strict. So...and that was the last time I saw him, and we were there a few days -- I don't remember how long -- in this school. And who do you think comes in to this school? A family who recognized us. They were at the same registration where my mother was, and he was a smartie. He recognized. We were not his neighbors. He recognized Jews immediately. And he said, "I know you're Jewish." They came with a young boy, who they wanted to keep with them as a family, because family, they were sent to a farm, and if you were not a family, they would send you to ammunition factory, and you would die there faster. No food at all. In the ammunition factory. And in the country, there was always something to pick. So, and he was smart enough. He told the people there, that's their son. He wasn't their son. His name was Jusek, I have his picture, too.

And that's when the...what's the word? It started.

INT: Persecution?

DOBA: Yeah, inside persecution. I was afraid of these people who would tell the Nazis that we're Jews. But it didn't take too long, and...

INT: So did he say he was going to tell on you, or not?

DOBA: Not yet. Not at that time, but he says, "I know who you are." And we were praying, "Please, already, finish. Take us different places." And a few days later they took us in a different place, and apparently they took them to a different place. But that's not the end.

We were travelling...oh, we were travelling to Germany together in one transport. We were going to a camp, to a place called Katlenburg. And this was West Germany. And I think it was Katlenburg by Dussel, I believe. And when we arrived, when they sent us there, without these people. Unfortunately, we were there only, I think six weeks. It was not bad. We went, and we were eating in a kitchen. We were having some meals at a table. There was somebody cooking, I don't remember, and we were working very hard in the fields, very hard. My sister was home, she was a child, of course, yet. Wait a minute. I was fourteen, then she's seven years younger, so she was seven.

They, she had to pick wheat. Everyone had a job in Germany. So she had to pick a few hours wheat, or whatever. So she had that job. And I was working as an adult in the fields. So anyway, in there there was a man, Volksdeutsche. You know what that is?

INT: Well, could you explain it for the tape?

DOBA: A man who would, see, I forget the words. There was a Polish man, speaking German, who would give all the information to the Germans about everybody.

INT: Oh, he's like a spy, because he could understand Polish and German.

DOBA: Yeah, a spy. But there's a different word. Must be a different word. Volksdeutsche must be a different word.

INT: A Pole who's living in Germany, is what Volksdeutsche is, right?

DOBA: He was living in that camp, yeah. He had privileges, of course. And he smelled. He smells. And he assumed something with us different. I tell you why. I don't know where my mother got candles. I have no idea. We didn't have any food, we had little food, we had little clothes. She got candles, and she was lighting candles.

INT: Friday night.

DOBA: I don't know where she **got** them. Not only she was lighting candles. I had nightmares, and I spoke Jewish in my dreams. And he was listening behind the door. Because he smelled something.

INT: What kind of nightmares? Do you remember those nightmares?

DOBA: Oh, I **still** have them. My father, my father, where's my father? And my family? My uncles, the little children, so many, you know. Where are they? Where are they? Are they going to be here? Are they going to come, will I see them?

INT: You were having those nightmares back then, when you were fourteen.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. And I spoke Jewish in **dreams**. And my mother said to me, "You have to **stop talking**. You better talk German or Polish. Start learning German." And I started learning German. No books, no school. German.

INT: How did you do it?

DOBA: I don't know. With the people outside.

INT: Picked it up.

DOBA: Yeah. Well, actually we spoke more Polish, okay, at that time. So you know, you go to a psychiatrist today to -- what is the name? To forget something.

INT: Hypnotize, when they hypnotize you?

DOBA: No, that's not hypnotize. To...oh, my G-d. To forget. There's a word for it.

INT: Amnesia? When you have amnesia? When you've forgotten everything?

DOBA: Oh, G-d.

INT: I'm sorry, I can't...

DOBA: There's a name, and I knew the name. To forget the language. No Jewish.

INT: She just wants you to forget it, yeah.

DOBA: There's a name for that. I forgot it. Okay, I forgot Jewish entirely, after a while.

INT: Really?

DOBA: I **talked** to myself. "Forget it. It's a dangerous thing." At fourteen. And I was talking to myself, without psychiatrists, without counseling. "It's a dangerous language. Forget it." And I did. I did, I tell you why, how I know I did. But in the meantime he listened, and he opened the door. You were not allowed to close doors. He opened the door, he says, "I know you're Jews." I don't remember was it daytime or nighttime, I don't remember. And guess what, the second day they send us away. Right the second day. So he didn't have a chance to do anything.

They send us away to a different place. This other place...Norten-Hardenberg. That's a small farm also. Apparently they didn't need anybody there, to this particular, so they send wherever they needed. And we arrived to, what did I say? Norten-Hardenberg, yes. And we came there, also was West Germany, that was between Gottingen and Northeim. We were already appearing as Poles, you know. We were wearing the P. And in that camp we were a few, maybe a week or so, and I thought it's heaven. There was a very good man who was watching us at the beginning. Apparently he was still from the old generation German, who would take care. There was, not a prince, what is...

INT: Kaiser?

DOBA: Or somebody living in a castle -- there was a castle there. In this place called his name, and apparently at that time, he worked for him, he remained. And he was fairly nice to us. He thought we were Poles, anyway. And we had a good meal again. In the kitchen, the first day. I never forget, I had pea soup. Can you imagine I never forget that? Pea soup. And it didn't take too long. Who do you think comes in? That family. That the torture started. Three years torture. Three years.

He went, many times, to the Nazi boss, told him we're Jews. Any kind of argument -- my mother was **very** argumentative. And she claims because she didn't give in, and that's why she survived. That's **her** way of thinking. Maybe yes, maybe no. I don't know. And I was the one who was a peace-maker. The man from that family, they were not married, those two people. They were just living together. Common law couple. And this boy was with them. His name was Joseph, and he fell in love with me in the meantime. But we were children. I didn't want to bother. I was fourteen, he was fifteen. He would do anything for me, whatever was possible to do in the camp. He would bring me an apple from, I don't know where he stole an apple. There was no fruit there, you know, but he stole it and brought it to me.

When my mother had an argument, in the basement they were picking potatoes, the rotten ones from the good ones, and they had an argument for no reason. And they called her, "You Jew. You Jew." And the minute I could, I went to their apartment, and I made peace. I said, "Just leave her alone. Leave her alone." "Oh," he used to say to me, "You're not her daughter. You don't look like her. You're **my** daughter. You're our daughter." And I didn't say another word, and I sort of disappeared for a little while. Then started again and again and again. For three years. These people...made a report to the Nazi boss. And I found out after the war that there was a report, not only one, by another couple also, that we lived together. We lived in one room, less than half of that, much less than half of this veranda, whatever you call it. (Phone interruption)

INT: So he kept making reports on you. Why didn't they arrest you?

DOBA: Well, wait a minute. He was making reports, and the people were living with us on the same floor -- there was two floors. There were fifteen of all people. Ukrainians, Russian, and supposed to be Polish. Italian people were before us, and when Mussolini came to power, they left them free, so we took over the camp. There were bed bugs and everything there. You couldn't sleep a minute. Terrible. Oh, G-d, when I think of that. And I was sleeping on straw, there was no pillows. And I was sleeping with my sister, in a single bed. And my mother, I don't remember whether she was sleeping on the floor, there was very little. And the kitchen was outside of that little room, and that's where the family lived, in the kitchen. A woman with a little girl, with a husband, and she give birth to another little girl, in that camp. Ada, that little girl. And whenever I came a little bit late, she closed the door. She wouldn't let me go through. Okay, from...

INT: The fields.

DOBA: From outside. There was another apartment to go through, but they wouldn't let me go through either. So, it was horrible. And then he decided he didn't like my mother either. They all liked **me.** I don't know why. This one liked me, but they didn't like my mother, and they didn't like my sister; I don't know **why**. So they would, both of them, they would go and make a report. See, that other family, his name was Leon, and this one I forgot. I forgot his name. Leon Urban. I even have his picture. In the whole, I have a lot of pictures here. But the picture was made with him and other people after the war. So...the report was in the office of this Nazi. His name was Backhaus, the last name. He would beat me, because I couldn't work, a fourteen-year-

old, I was raised in the city. I never worked in fields except for watching the cows for a few weeks. And I couldn't do left. Like I would have to do something this way. (Throw something over her left shoulder) I couldn't do it. He would not teach me, he would just walk over, and would hit me with that heavy fork, you know? And I always had to watch out. He would be like a sneak. Nobody saw it, he came and hit you, you know he was afraid, too, this guy, to hit you in front of others.

INT: Is this the Volksdeutsche guy, or somebody else?

DOBA: No. We already left that place already. There was a different Volksdeutsche here, but apparently we didn't have much to do with him. It was a bigger camp. No, this was the real, real boss, the Nazi boss that took care of that camp, you know. Nothing belongs to privately. Everything was by the German government at that time, you know. But he has to take care of it. And he had a girl who was watching us.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: A girl was watching us, we should do the right work, and she would hear everything, and something she didn't like, she would...

INT: Tell him?

DOBA: Tell him, yeah. There was Joseph, this young man, and he had a big mouth. He wouldn't listen to me. He would call her names, because he didn't like her. Of course, he didn't like any Germans. And he would call her...Monkey. Monkey is in German (?). I remember, and he would call her Kolwa.

INT: What does that mean?

DOBA: This is an international word. Prostitute.

INT: Oh. He would do that?

DOBA: Yeah. So they would take him away, and they would take him to a basement, and they would beat him up, that when I saw him back, he was blue and green. I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I'd do it again." He was just **tough**. They took away one Ukrainian man and never brought him back. They took him to concentration camp, because he had a big mouth, too. And they told this guy. He said, "Do it once more, and you won't come back."

INT: Did you become friends with this boy? Was he like your friend?

DOBA: In a way, in a way, yeah. Yeah. In a way. Well, I did not want to go with him. I didn't have this in mind. I was young and I never thought, I thought how to get a piece of bread. How

to heal my wounds on my hands when I went in the fall to pick the beets -- we were raising sugar beets. So you had to pick them up already when it's frost. And I didn't know how to heal that with no medicine. All I know, I came home at night, you know what I did? Urine, I put urine. And this is a...it healed up.

INT: As an antiseptic.

DOBA: Antiseptic. And in the morning I went there and back again. And I had a lot of colds, with my tonsils. A lot of them, what do you call it, tonsillitis all the time. I got rheumatic fever. Ach, anything.

INT: So you didn't think to...you certainly weren't thinking romantically about him.

DOBA: No, no way! Oh, oh.

INT: But were you friends with him? In a way, you were.

DOBA: Well, yeah, in a way. He would be satisfied if I say a few words to him.

INT: Yeah. He really liked you.

DOBA: Just a few words. And I never forget, I was sitting on the steps, because I didn't know where to run from the bed bugs. You know, in the evening, they came out right away. So I sat on the steps, they found me there, too! (laughs) But I hear him walking. He was living with this family, you know. Walking, and I didn't want to talk to him for some reason, I don't remember. You know, like children. Something fell on my lap, an apple, you know? (laughs)

INT: He threw it down on your lap.

DOBA: Yeah, he thought if he brought me an apple, I'll talk to him. And I don't remember what happened. Anyway...so you know, we had also, in our camp, there was nearby a Russian camp, prisoners of war. There was seventy men of them there. And our boss, after a while, after a year, he gave us permission to have a little piece of ground to plant something. Do you know what I plant? Tobacco. I always thought of another guy. The people in this camp were worse than us. They were Russian prisoners of war, who they caught them, you know, at that time. And I would raise this tobacco, and I would pick up the tobacco, and I would bring them. They were fenced. I wasn't allowed to do that. Do you know what I was under? I took off my P; I was Jewish; I went there to give them food. For this alone, they should shoot, they could shoot me. For bringing to prisoners of war, food. Worse than us. We was slave labor, but they were prisoners of war.

INT: So they were treated worse?

DOBA: Oh, yes. Much worse. But in every camp, you get to know people. For example, we had stamps, what do you call, ration stamps, to...you're allowed to buy a little piece of, because

we would get a few marks for the work what we used to do. So we'd get a piece of bread. You could buy a piece of meat, and something else. So we never bought meat. Instead of meat, so we took a little piece of...fat. So you could share the fat and cook soup. You know what I mean? We had potatoes, because we had enough potatoes. And we had peas, dried peas. But the other stuff, we didn't have an egg. I didn't see an egg for three years. At that time eggs were important for children. Today it's different. And I didn't see it. And I used to love eggs. I used to love a **lot** of things I didn't have.

INT: Well, what made you go feed the prisoners of war?

DOBA: I don't know. I just felt sorry for them.

INT: Felt bad for them.

DOBA: I went and picked up bread for the ration things. And there was a very nice German lady, and she gave me two bread instead of one. But I paid her, money, I paid her. And I brought that piece of bread, and I gave it to them, too. And then later, I'll tell you, they never forgot about it. You know. That's what I always did. I was, when the German Jews were coming into Poland, before they chased...

INT: Yeah, you were helping them, too.

DOBA: I told you, I was helping them, too. And nobody told me that.

INT: So where did that come from?

DOBA: I have no idea. My father was good. My mother's not bad. You know, she will help a person, too. But my father was extremely good, you know. My children, the same thing.

INT: So you think you got it from your father, maybe?

DOBA: I think so. I don't know. I guess it's in you. Today...

INT: You felt sorry for people.

DOBA: Today if I can help someone, there was someone came in, a Jewish man, very poor. I says to him, "Do you think somebody can use some clothes I have?" I didn't ask him. He said, "Oh, yes, yes, I'll take it." He came and took it. You know, whatever I think, you know. Anyway, so I was taking tobacco and bread, and you know what they were giving me? There was a sugar factory. And they got, they got in touch with the Germans that they were watching them, and they were getting friendly with them. They would bring out sugar from the factory. They would give me sugar. You see, there was no sugar. So I had, one hand washes another. But it was dangerous.

I remember, there were...

INT: Didn't you think about the danger part?

DOBA: Are you kidding? I don't remember now.

INT: You don't remember how you felt?

DOBA: No, I don't remember what I was thinking or not.

INT: Because you know, the time that you went out through the hole, and the German guard was standing right there. I mean, how did you...

DOBA: I don't remember whether I was thinking of danger. Maybe I did. But this, what I did, was stronger, like today. I would have liked to go -- I'm just comparing -- I would like to go to see a play. I **love** theater. But my fear is so severe, that overpowers the pleasure of seeing a play. And maybe, I don't know if this makes sense or not.

INT: Your agoraphobia, and your panic attacks, yeah.

DOBA: And I'm afraid I'm going to die. So apparently that was stronger, that I have to help a person. That whatever the fear was, apparently. And I thought, my G-d, they don't have anything to eat. I have something, and they don't have anything. And that's probably drew me.

INT: And that was stronger than your fear of...

DOBA: Probably, yeah. Probably. They were very nice. Then there were camps worse than ours in the...ammunition camps. Somehow they were able to come to see us, and I would save them the potato peels. They would gladly take the potato peels. They would take it with them. So you see, in this camp, before that, I was very hungry, and I didn't have other things in this camp. But potatoes we had, and I would be very glad to give them. I didn't have enough to give them potatoes, but the peels I did. And whatever I did, gave them sugar. I got sugar from, so I gave them that, too. And I don't remember what, I always give them food when they... And they took it back to...they were risking, too, because they were not allowed to go out of the camp.

INT: Do you remember...do you remember what your relationship with your mother was like in the camp, then? Was she helping you? Were you helping each other, or were you just sort of...both getting through it on your own?

DOBA: In the German camp?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: She was watching me. There were young men there. I remember that. So she was watching me. So, whenever she had a chance, she was watching me. She thought I'm going to commit something. You know, if I would sit, if a man, there was a man I liked, as a person. Not Joseph. He was living with his boss. There was a little bit people that I got to know,

surrounding, German woman, you know. They always liked me there. And he would live with her. She was his boss. I remember her father was at the war, and I think she lost a son at that time. She was all alone. And he had no choice, or maybe he liked her -- she was much older. He lived with her. So he had it good. And occasionally he came to our camp to talk to us -- he was also from Poland. And she would always watch him, run after him. I would sit like...I wouldn't be allowed to be sitting next to him. My mother was watching me. She wouldn't step out. So she was watching me.

INT: Was she worried about **you**, or she was worried about **him**?

DOBA: No, about me.

INT: She thought that you might be...fooling around with him, or...?

DOBA: I don't know. I have no idea. She was watching me. She was watching me. (pause)

INT: Could you talk to your mother?

DOBA: Not very much. No, no. I could never...I could never have a conversation. She only says, "I hope we survive." And at that time, we find out about our father in 1942, when we were already in this Norten, what did I say, Norten-Handerberg? Yeah. In this Norten-Hardenberg. And this Leon, brought my mother the card -- did I tell you this?

INT: No.

DOBA: An open card. How people were stupid. This Senkowski, that my sister was hidden, and my mother, my father was hidden later, in one of the barns by him? He wrote this, my mother apparently was in contact with him. He knew where we were. Can you imagine? He knew where we were. He would not give out to nobody. My mother, how much we could trust this person!

INT: Why do you think he was like that? Why was he so good, and why was he so...

DOBA: He was a good man, a good family. Did you know that I was on television here, I was honored? I have a video.

INT: Really? I'd love to see it.

DOBA: Yeah. I was honored, Jewish people who were saved by Gentiles. I was honored on the podium on...

INT: Where was this?

DOBA: On the…

INT: In Philadelphia?

DOBA: Yeah, in...Holocaust Memorial, near the Parkway?

INT: Uh-huh. And it was about this man Senkowski?

DOBA: About quite a few of them, sure. I don't remember whether I mentioned names, but a few. Today I will stand up for anybody who would talk against the majority. And many, many people talk, you know. I says, "Oh, no." I argue. I mean, it's true, what they did to others, I understand, they did to my father. They did to others, but as far as I'm concerned, I mean, people helped me. I have to tell the truth.

INT: So you got this card. He sent a card to your mother.

DOBA: Yeah. He sent an open...I have such a headache.

INT: Do you want to stop? (pause)

DOBA: I wouldn't listen to her. Whatever she wanted me, I didn't want to listen, and my sister would listen to everything. See, it's a different nature.

INT: So that's why you think your sister's closer to your mother than you?

DOBA: No, no. It's a different story. My mother didn't allow her. Many years. Now, I think she's getting, I don't see her, but we phone each other. Closer. My sister. But that's another story.

INT: Well, maybe you'll tell us later, when we get to after the war.

DOBA: There's no, there's no, there's no reason for that, really. But...I don't even know the reason why she was like that.

INT: So would your mother help you a little bit?

DOBA: Oh, yeah, in the camp, yeah. She was helping. Of course, she was cooking. I would have to do everything. There was one German who was giving us milk, because children, my...I was going to say daughter. I never had a daughter. My sister, she was seven years younger, you know (laughs) she was entitled to a small amount of good milk, with cream. At that time cream was everything, you know. With the cream, not to take it off. Right from the cows. And I would go pick up the milk. And this man, this German man, he liked me, the one that milked the cows. And he would give me more milk. See, everywhere where you went, you could get acquainted, he would give me more milk for me. And my mother would get the milk without the cream. Today, you drink skim milk. At that time, you needed the full amount.

So anyway, we had that milk, we were making sour milk and all, you know. And he would give me this, and he would invite me to his apartment to listen to Polish radio. It was dangerous for him, too. And I would listen to Warsaw, Warsaw this, that. I don't remember the dates, but...when was the uprising? What year?

INT: I think it was in 1943. April, 1943. I think.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. I was listening to that, yeah. And quickly he turned off, of course. And shortly after, they took him to the front.

INT: How did that make you feel, hearing about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?

DOBA: (sighs) Oh, boy.

INT: Do you remember how you felt?

DOBA: Yeah. Do you know...(sighs, pause) I had, at that time I had such a mixed emotions. I says, How long, how long? Is anybody going to be left alive? Am I going to see any of my relatives? Am I going to be alive? It's still 1943, it's still who knows how long -- we never knew how long the war (would last). And where's my father? Oh, wait a minute. By then we knew. 1942, the card came, the open card. Senkowski wrote, "Reuben" a Jewish name. "Mrs. Rubinova. Reuben got killed."

INT: Leon was the one who brought the card to your mother, so he knew.

DOBA: Oh, yeah. I told you that name. That's right. He brought to my mother, and he says to my mother, he says, (pause) he says, "Here's a card. I don't read Jewish cards." (laughs) He already read it. "I don't read," you know, in Polish slang you can say that. And he knew. He knew before, but this card shows it. So that was 1942. Can you imagine three years the torture with this family, with this Leon in that camp. Because we actually find out in '42, at the end of '42, so it's the beginning. And my mother was fighting with her, with his wife, with his so-called "wife" always. They hit each other, too. Oh, my G-d. In the basement. (laughs)

INT: Your mother was tough!

DOBA: **Very**, very tough. (laughs) For nothing, I don't know. My mother had a wonderful voice, a solo. She would sing in the camps. This woman who was watching us, she says, "Sophia, sing, sing, sing." She would tell her, the melody's the same. And my mother would sing, with all this sorrow inside, with the heartbreak, she would sing. And they would love it. Then my mother lost her voice, I don't know why. But I loved it, too, you know. I heard her singing. She was very talented in singing. And...and she would sing in the basement with all the bombs falling, you know. We were running outside to the...to the halls, what do you call it? Bunkers. They were man-made bunkers. They were not real bunkers. They were digging out some holes, and they went into the hole. And she would sing there, you know. Like...

INT: Was it a way for her to calm herself down, or, how was she able to do that, when everything was so dangerous? How was she able to sing, do you think?

DOBA: She also was interviewed. I don't know. They wrote a book. I have some piece of paper, do you know, I never read it? Because I'm afraid she wrote something against me here?

INT: That's from her interview?

DOBA: I think so. She gave it to me. Her grandson has, I think, the whole thing, I think. She's very fond of her grandson, my sister's son. He's a doctor.

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Doba Smolanowicz. It's June 7th, 1995.

Mrs. Smolanowicz, the last time we talked we sort of left off when you had found out about your father's death. Leon had brought a letter to the camp that you were in with your mother.

DOBA: This was an open card, and people were so neglected, neglected to write about such a secret to us, that they knew that we were on Aryan papers, this Senkowski.

INT: So why did they do that?

DOBA: He was not too smart.

INT: He wasn't thinking.

DOBA: He didn't think. He send this card, and he just, Leon had it. You know, he was always looking at everything. And he brought it to my mother. I was present at the moment, I remember. He says to me, he says, "Here's your card! Here's a card for you." She says, "What did they say? What did they say?" He says, "I don't read Jewish letters." You know, in Polish, it's slang. It doesn't sound so nice, like you would say "Jewish," it sounds not nice. And she said, "I knew it anyway." And my mother always denied, my mother denied. I don't remember how, what she said to him that time, but anyway that was 1942, and that was the start of the torture, being...him and his wife in the camp.

INT: And always saying that you weren't Jewish to the guard.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: Now I wanted to ask you, why did you think that, why did the guard not, just ignore that information?

DOBA: Well, the guard had nothing to do with it. The Nazi, the boss, that's where it went.

INT: Why didn't he do anything about it?

DOBA: Now, there is a good thing and bad things. This particular boss, his name was Backhaus. He did not like people that come and, traitors. He did not like traitors. They tell on you to me, or...he didn't like it. He threw him out from the office.

INT: He didn't want to hear it.

DOBA: Didn't want to hear, but he took the paper, whatever's in there. The paper was stuck in his office.

INT: Which paper, the paper about your father?

DOBA: About that we're Jews. It had to be written something.

INT: I see.

DOBA: So...and then it went on, back to work, the regular routine. That was, that was already the fall, of course. A few weeks after we arrived there.

INT: 1942.

DOBA: 1942, yes.

INT: What happened when you found out about your father?

DOBA: Well, I was...I was falling apart. I still, I didn't want to believe. First of all, I didn't want to believe it. I says, I says, there's someplace, some kind of mistake. Some kind of mistake. And like I told you before, I was always looking. Looking for my father, looking in corners. Germany, somebody walks so slow -- he was like walking slow -- I had to come **close** to the person and see the face. And for many years.

INT: So you never really believed he had died.

DOBA: I didn't want to believe, but unfortunately I have to. I have to. Well...

INT: What about your mother? How did she...respond?

DOBA: Well, my mother, she expected. She expected, yes. She was expecting worse even with us. She always expected not to live through, you know, the whole thing. And she used to tell me a few things. She says, "Well, if we survive, if one of us survive, it's going to be like we're resurrected." Something like that. So I was like, this little support I had from her, you know? You know, that she gave me that support. And...

INT: She **did** give you support.

DOBA: Saying **that**, you know.

INT: How was that supportive?

DOBA: Well, I don't know. To me, it sounded a little bit of support.

INT: But she was saying she didn't think you were going to live.

DOBA: Yeah, well she was saying all along, but if we do, if we do it's going to be a miracle, and it's going to be like...

INT: Being resurrected.

DOBA: Resurrected. Yeah. Because there is only a few families that survived in a camp, the whole family, as you know.

INT: Very unusual.

DOBA: In a camp, in a Polish camp. Actually, Polish and Russian, Ukrainian, in Germany. So to tell you the truth, I don't know any others. I'm sure there are, but I don't know. So...and she knew about it. It's not easy. First of all, it was not easy to go, to be together, because children always, they took it away. They would send an adult to the factory, and the children they took away. But it just, we were just lucky, in a way, that they took us as a family, and they put us in a small farm.

So I was...what do you call it? I worked, I was...what, I forgot the word. Okay, my mother worked, I worked, and my sister was doing a little bit, picking the wheats there, and I think she was babysitting. I don't remember.

INT: But after you found out about your father's death, how did you cope with that information? Did you fall apart, or did you continue working? Did you put it out of your mind? How did you...

DOBA: Oh, no, I never. Never, till today.

INT: Do you remember how you dealt with that pain?

DOBA: I'll give you...I'll give you just a little example. Yesterday I went breast testing, you know?

INT: Yeah. Mammogram?

DOBA: With my girlfriend, no, not yet. Just a....

INT: Check-up.

DOBA: And you have to fill out some things. What is your race? I didn't answer that. And I had to explain to her, I **had** to get out of my system. I says, "You know why I didn't put what's my race? Because my family was burned in the oven because of questions like that: religion, race." I said, "**No** race!" And I was **mad**. She says, "I understand."

INT: So you...

DOBA: Just yesterday, sure. So you see what I mean? Because of my father being circumcised, and he looked like me, okay? But very heavy accent. Very Jewish accent.

INT: Yeah, he didn't speak Polish.

DOBA: Very, very little. Yeah. And circumcised. Couldn't do anything. That's the thing.

INT: So because he was circumcised, he was killed.

DOBA: That was the biggest danger, yeah, for a man to survive. More women survived than men, as you know. You know what? I did not allow my boys circumcised. And I hope you understand that, but most people do not.

INT: Did you feel strongly about that?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Did you feel strongly about that?

DOBA: Now, now, whatever they would want to do it, but when the time was, when **I** had a word to say, I said no. But when **they** had a word to say, that's another story, and they don't want to...I mean, they don't talk about it. So of course I would, for health reasons, I would want it. But the fear...

INT: So it was protecting your babies? Is that how you felt?

DOBA: That's right. That's right. I had nightmares. I saw them taking my babies. Taking my babies. Because all the scream was, "They're taking my children! My children!" Everybody screamed, taking the...my family was still separated, I mean, uncles, and the children were **gone**.

INT: Yeah, they took the children.

DOBA: And this thing, I mean, people say, "Forget." **How** can a person forget? I mean therapies this and that. You can't forget that. So as far as forgetting, no. Mm-mm. I can't forget because what was so much...part of my life, my father, you know. Such a short time together. And...

INT: Yeah. How old were you when that letter came?

DOBA: 1942. I think fourteen. Wasn't it?

INT: You were fourteen.

DOBA: I think so. Yeah, it was October, November, something like that. I don't remember exactly the month. And of course...

INT: Did it say how your father was killed, or where your father was killed?

DOBA: Yeah. The man who wrote, Senkowski who was hiding my sister for a while, and my father he was hiding for a while, and some other Jewish people, too. He says that he was, now, he assumed that he was...told by a Polish policeman to the Nazis to kill him. He's a Jew. Okay. That's the way he wrote it.

INT: That he was taken out of hiding. Somebody told on him when he was in hiding?

DOBA: Probably. Probably, yeah. Maybe he was walking on the street. Maybe. This I don't remember. My mother maybe remembers more.

INT: But it wasn't in a camp. He was captured while he was hiding?

DOBA: He was captured. Yeah. I guess he walked out from somewhere, or maybe they found him. It must have been in the same area, you know. It was not far. Because he was in Majdanek, out of Majdanek, in Majdanek. So...

INT: I learned that Majdanek is very close to Lublin. It's like a mile and a half. It's very, very close.

DOBA: I understand that there was more than one Majdanek, but I don't know what my mother was talking about. I know one, because after the war I went, I went to visit Majdanek, you know. So it was still not, everything was, you know, the shoes were there, the children's shoes were there, piles. It was not segregated like maybe today it is. I never went back again.

INT: We'll have to talk about that when we get to after the war. So, what happened at that point, in 1942? You found out about your father, and how did your family go on?

DOBA: Well, we had to keep quiet. We had to keep quiet in front of the Germans. We had to go back to work. You cannot afford not to go to work, because if you wouldn't go to work, and...well, I was sick a lot. And I went to a doctor, there was a nice doctor, German doctor, I forgot his name. He was so nice to me. There's some nice German people. He didn't know I was Jewish, he thought I am Polish. I don't know what would be different maybe, I don't know. So I went, I was very sick, I went to him to give me a paper. Medicine. There was no medicine for nothing. Paper that I can stay home for weeks. So I brought the paper, and he was devastating, the boss, that I won't work. He needed everybody for work. He was no mean. But he had no, see, they had the authority over him, the doctors.

INT: Oh, so he had to follow what **they** said.

DOBA: Yeah, he had to follow that.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

INT: So the doctor would give you a letter.

DOBA: Yeah, he would give me a letter that I have to stay. I have this angina, no, tonsillitis. Tonsillitis, yeah, always. And I have to stay home for some few days. So he was so mad, he couldn't wait till I come back. When I came back, he beat me up.

INT: Really?

DOBA: The Nazi boss because, because I was sick, yeah. And that was nothing. I find out in a very bad way. He beat me up, I didn't know he's going to do it. Next time this happened -- it wasn't one time, only, because I was sick a lot -- when I came, I was looking where he is. I was avoiding him, because I know that he wants to beat me up. At one time he was so mad at me, because I was sick and there was, I think it was summer, there was a lot of work. And they, they gave them fifteen people, and the German government could not afford to give them more, and these fifteen people, they had to do the job, whatever is necessary. Whatever. And if one person didn't come in, you know, he was angry. So one time I came back, and in the middle of the...it was not in the fields, it was on the territory where the cows were, the horses, you know. So we had to...load up the manura (manure) On the wagons, which such a big... (phone interruption)

INT: Loading up the manure on the wagons.

DOBA: Yeah, I was loading up the manura (phone interruption) So he was like, I was watching him. I was...I was on one side, and he was on the other side. He was holding one of the things, too. He was showing me how to do it. And I don't know whether he had one fork on the hands, or he didn't, and he was like coming close to me. I could see that. And I forgot whether I was Jewish. I forgot I was Polish, I forgot the danger, and I stood up. I stood up, that's the worst thing I did. (laughs) I said, "You just **try** to come close to me, and this is going to be on your head." I don't know why my power came. I didn't care or something. I just didn't want to be beat up by him again. And I never forget what I...

INT: What did he do? How did he respond to that?

DOBA: Excuse me? Nothing. He didn't do anything. He never did it again.

INT: He never, he never beat you up again?

DOBA: I was watching him, but he never hit me again. (laughs) He was afraid of me, I guess, I don't know. You never know. He was a coward, in a way. (laughs)

INT: Yeah. Sure, if he's going to beat up a fourteen-year-old kid, he's...

DOBA: Well, nothing's going to happen to him.

INT: Right.

DOBA: He could have **killed** me.

INT: He could do whatever he wants, sure.

DOBA: He could kill me, you know. He did nothing, they had the right of way, you know. But I stood (laughs). So this other guy stood up to him, too, this Joseph? I told you they took him away. They beat him up in a basement. They could do it to me, too. I didn't think of it. I just...I was...

INT: Maybe you were just...fed up or whatever.

DOBA: I was so frustrated, yeah. And maybe that was just right after my father was killed. Everything together, maybe, you know. I don't remember when, the time. So we were working there in the camp, and you know, suppose we're Poles, but they knew. They already knew that we weren't.

INT: Everybody knew at this point?

DOBA: Mostly. Maybe not everybody. Maybe the Russian people. There were a lot of Russian people. They...they didn't care. They listened, one comes from one side, but...I was friendly with them. They all liked me. All, all of them. In fact, the one that was cursing, he liked me. And the other person, the other family liked me, too. They were also, "Oh, I know you're Jews. I know you're Jews. You know what I can do with you. You know that you wouldn't be here. You would be burning." All the time. All the time. Three years. And then when the war stopped. It was horrible there. No clothes. They didn't give you clothes. They gave you ration stamps, I think I mentioned this before. So I went to a store, to a butcher store there in town. We had a few, we had marks, some marks we were earning. So I'm getting social security from that money that I was earning.

INT: Really?

DOBA: The social security came to $l00, not quite, about $90 -- something dollars a month.

INT: From Germany.

DOBA: Now, yeah. It grew already. It started with $50.

INT: This is not just from being a survivor. This is from working then.

DOBA: No. Social security from Germany, yeah, from the German social security, yeah. No, I'm not getting anything as a survivor.

INT: No, you're not?

DOBA: I lost the case.

INT: Why?

DOBA: I just, I wasn't lucky. Dr...what's his name, Kempner. I think he was more on their side than on my side. He...I tried. I got some money, one time, you know. Several hundred dollars, that's all. And I just...gave up. I had other problems here, so. I took this, whatever they gave me. It took years, after.

INT: So you worked there for...till the end of the war? You were in this camp?

DOBA: Three years, yeah. Three years. From 1942, October, till 1945, was it April or May?

INT: May.

DOBA: May, yeah. And then when the liberation came, this boss, thought we were still going to work for him. He needed. It was summer. And he came and called us to work. What a nerve. You know? "Come back to work." And my mother says, "Oh no, no more. No more." Some went. Some went. They didn't know whether they were coming or going. Some people went and they were still working there.

INT: Is there anything else you can tell me about that time in the camp, the three years you spent there?

DOBA: You mean, yeah, well, if you can ask me something. See, I didn't read this thing.

INT: Do you have any incidents that you remember, things that happened there, how you and your mother and your sister were coping with it?

DOBA: Well, I would hit my sister occasionally, you know. She was seven years younger, she wouldn't listen to me. I thought she has to listen to me, because I was taking care of her, I was babysitting whenever, whenever, you know. And my mother, she was, there was a creation, not a very friendly creation, not a very friendly atmosphere, you know. I'm no good.

INT: This happened in the camp?

DOBA: Yeah. In the camp, too. I'm no good. To this extent that I was always crying, if she was sick, I was crying. I said, "Mom, Mom, please do not die. Don't die. Don't die." She

would, her leg would stiffen up, you know. And she got upset about me, so she was, "Oh, I want to die, I want to die," you know. I said, "Please, don't, don't, don't." You know, I love her, you know. And anything which I could do, which was not much I could do. But...I guess she's a mother, you know, but I...(sighs) Just my father wasn't there. So I...(voice wavering) made friends. Friends. And I think this kept me going. I arranged, I wanted to go to work with this particular person, to the fields. Like I said, my hands were chopped up. You have to go to work. With no gloves, no gloves. And no warm clothes, whatever they gave us one pair of shoes for two people. Wooden shoes. Why one pair? Because there was one person stayed in the camp, the person was cooking soup for us. So, and then the person was doing something, on, you know, around there. Not in the fields. So those shoes were heavy, but they were warmer, like Dutch shoes. Sort of. Sort of, yeah. They were warm, and I put a lot of...no, no paper. There was no paper. No newspaper. You didn't see a newspaper. I don't know how I wrapped it up with something. I don't remember. And occasionally you could take your butter and go give it to someone. Germans, they had also ration cards. They had a little more than me. So I would go, give my butter away, and I would get a blouse or something, you know, so I shouldn't work naked. And like I told you about the sugar? I...

INT: Traded with the soldiers.

DOBA: I traded tobacco, so I had sugar, I had bread, I had potatoes from the fields, and sugar beets. You could eat sugar beets, too. Raw. And no egg. I didn't see an egg for years. And at that time it was very important, for children especially.

INT: What about milk?

DOBA: Milk, we were entitled to skim milk, a certain amount, and the child, my sister, she was entitled to a small amount of the good milk. So this man who was working there, he liked me. That was before he went to the front. He would give me more of the good milk, when I went to pick it up. And then he left. He was gone.

INT: Why do you think, you had said that this kind of a bad atmosphere was created between you and your mother. Do you have any idea why that happened, or how that happened?

DOBA: (sighs) I don't know, I don't know why. Always my fault, always my fault.

INT: She blamed you because you were the oldest, or she took things out on you?

DOBA: Oh, yeah. I was beating her, so she was claiming that I want to kill her. I want to kill her.

INT: Oh. Your sister.

DOBA: Yeah. I want to kill her. I wouldn't kill her, but...I loved them all. And I guess my sister until this day, you know, she was always close with my mother, and I wouldn't listen. I

would be, I would be an individual. If my father would be, I would go with him **anywhere**. See? But as far as he wasn't there, so I wanted to go my way because I just...

INT: You didn't want to **be** with your mother.

DOBA: I just felt **very** uncomfortable. Very uncomfortable. Maybe I did wrong, I don't know.

INT: Why did you feel uncomfortable?

DOBA: (sighs) She would say something, and I wouldn't want her to say certain things, you know, to my ear. She was talking against my father, also, you know. Many times, even today.

INT: Saying not nice things about your father?

DOBA: Not nice, no. I don't, I don't want to hear. About...

INT: Why do you think she was telling you **those** things?

DOBA: Well...he was not a progressive person. He was a good person, very honest. He would give everything away. But he couldn't make a living. And she was helping. She was the helper. A big helper. I couldn't deny that. And she would talk, you know. And my father sometimes got tired, you know, and he would go away. He would go away. Then she would accuse him, he had a woman.

INT: Where would he go?

DOBA: She accused him that he had a woman. I never knew whether he had one or not.

INT: Oh. This is when you were a kid, when you were little, before the war.

DOBA: That was before the war. I would have been probably maybe, my sister was one year old, so I was eight probably. She was one. Oh, she wasn't even one year old. She was still in diapers.

INT: So your mother suspected that he was fooling around, so she would talk about those kind of things to you?

DOBA: I wanted to tell you something, but...

INT: Do you want me to turn it off? (Pause)

So during the war in the camp, your mother would talk against your father, and that would make you angry. And you didn't want to hear that.

DOBA: Occasionally. No, I didn't. Maybe in a way, maybe in a way it was good for her, because when you think of a person, and the person hurt you at one time, maybe you can cope better, I mean...

INT: If you talk about it?

DOBA: Yeah. Psychologically, maybe. I don't know. I don't know. I'm just figuring it out.

INT: And she had you to talk to, because you were the oldest child.

DOBA: Yeah, well, yeah, and probably she was telling other people, too. You know, she probably told them, too. And maybe my sister, I don't know.

INT: So what else was uncomfortable about the atmosphere and the relationship? It was hearing about your father that you didn't want to hear. Your mother favored your sister, it seems.

DOBA: Well, I tell you what happened. I never told, I never told them, I never revealed. We had a little butter, not much butter. My sister had a little more butter. It is not her fault. I know now, but then I says, why didn't she give me more butter? You know what I mean? But you see, I was a child still. I loved butter. But she had to **share** it, she had to share it. She had to give, she needed more. And to me it was like, she was denying me, you know, in my mind, because I know she didn't like me, and she talked about my father. So that went through my mind. I never told her. Never did.

INT: So you resented that she had more, and she wasn't sharing.

DOBA: In a way, in a way, yeah. Yeah. Well, I found my friends there. Friends, I couldn't go too far, only a few miles, a few kilometers.

INT: Who were your friends?

DOBA: They were people working there.

INT: Yeah. Not just Joseph, you had other friends, too?

DOBA: I made, I made a few German friends, women, they allowed me to come to their house. They treated me a little bit with something.

INT: Again you're going to adults.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: **Again**. Just like you did before the war.

DOBA: Yeah. Adults.

INT: That's interesting.

DOBA: Mina! That was the name of a woman. She was wonderful. She was poor, and I would go to her house, and whatever she shared with me -- she didn't have much, either. She was a lost cause, too. She had problems. But I would go to her house, and even my mother today would give a good word about her.

INT: She was a good woman.

DOBA: Yeah, was a good woman. Yeah, I would go there, and I wasn't allowed to go. They were not allowed to bring in a...a foreign, how were they, Auslander. Auslander. An Auslander to their house. Because I wasn't their blood. So, but she did. Yeah. She did, and I was, I spoke fluently German by then. I learned. And I blocked out the Jewish language, I told you. Finally I didn't dream in Jewish.

INT: Do you still remember Yiddish?

DOBA: Oh, yeah, I speak almost well, now.

INT: But for that time you blocked it out.

DOBA: Oh, no. I just, I couldn't speak for many years. I learned when I came to the States, when I went to a factory, I wound up with Jewish people that spoke Jewish. (laughs) I learned Jewish. But if you knew one time, it comes easy, so, but I could never read. I didn't go to school. I didn't go to Polish school, but the Jewish school, you would have to pay privately, and I did start it at one time, but my parents didn't have money to pay. You had to do privately.

INT: So how do you think you coped through those years?

DOBA: I still cannot cope. Very difficult. Very, very difficult. I didn't know who to turn, what's better, so I went, I went to strangers.

INT: We're talking about the war years now.

DOBA: The war years yet? Even **then** I went to strangers. Okay, I went, I wanted to work with this Olga. Okay, she was funny. She was telling me jokes. So my day would go better. She told me jokes, I still remember them today. I'm still repeating. And she even looks funny in her picture. So I would work with her and another woman, Marisha. My name was Marisha then, too. Yeah. And this Marisha, she was beautiful. If she would be in the United States, she would be an actress. Gorgeous, gorgeous.

INT: She was the one that always had the parties? Was she the one?

DOBA: No, wait a minute. What parties? I forgot.

INT: Not parties, but people always liked to be around her? Is she the one you were telling me about with the nice figure?

DOBA: Olga, no. She wasn't pretty.

INT: She was just a lot of fun.

DOBA: Oh, that's another. Oh, that's a Jewish woman. That was in ghetto. Yeah, I know what you're talking about. That was another. That was in ghetto. But this was in the German camp, yeah.

INT: And these were non-Jewish people that you were friends with?

DOBA: They were non-Jewish people, yeah.

INT: How did you feel about being friends with non-Jews? Did that, did it matter? Did it not matter?

DOBA: Very well. Today, today I'll be friends with any non-Jewish, because...there's some bad things happened to me because, because my family the way they treated me. So I don't mind any kind. I'm not prejudiced a bit. Any person.

INT: But what about back then? I mean, here you were a Jewish kid, you grew up in...

DOBA: There was no Jewish people there.

INT: There was no Jewish people, so you trusted these people even though they weren't Jewish?

DOBA: No, I didn't, no, I didn't trust them.

INT: You didn't trust them, okay.

DOBA: No. I wouldn't tell them anything. Are you kidding?

INT: No, you wouldn't tell them you were Jewish, but I mean...

DOBA: Nothing! Nothing. I wouldn't tell them **anything**. My childhood, my family was burned, no! Oh, no, that was a no-no. No. I was just present time. Yeah, we talk about Marisha was having a lover there, we were talking about different relations, about people there. That's what we talk about. People in the camp. (laughs)

INT: That was safe topics.

DOBA: Oh, yeah. For me it was safe, yeah. No, I...this I know. This I knew.

INT: But you said that people liked you, a lot of people liked you there.

DOBA: They do. They did.

INT: And they did before the war, too. It was just your personality.

DOBA: Probably. Probably, yeah. Because I kept my mouth shut when they told me something. Nobody knew. And I was a good listener, maybe. But I...complained to myself that I wasn't popular enough. I didn't have enough friends. That's why I went to older people. Maybe that's why. Because I didn't have many friends my age. Because they did more than I did, and I could not compare with them. They went skating, I didn't skate, I was afraid. They went...doing some other things. And I wouldn't. They went to a movie, I didn't have money to go.

INT: This is before the war.

DOBA: Before the war, yeah.

INT: I see.

DOBA: So I was not that popular. But adults liked me. And some, I had some friends in school -- not too many.

INT: Were you a fearful kid when you were little? You were afraid of a lot of things?

DOBA: Very, very. Fearful of everything.

INT: Really.

DOBA: That's maybe the fears increased.

INT: Because...because in the ghetto, you **weren't** afraid, or maybe you were afraid, but you were doing very dangerous things all the time.

DOBA: I wasn't afraid in the camp, either.

INT: You weren't afraid in the camp.

DOBA: Mm-mm. I was going to hit him. I was going to hit this Nazi boss.

INT: But you...but you **were** afraid before the war, and after the war.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: So why do you think during the war you weren't?

DOBA: I guess, I guess if you have to do something, you forget about fear. Same thing happens today. If I have to do something important, I forgot about the fear. I don't want a comparison because it hurts me, the comparison. Probably, G-d forbid, if my child would be sick I would go on the bus, I would go anywhere. You understand that?

INT: Yeah, yeah.

DOBA: I would take a taxi, which I don't like to go in taxi either, but I would. That's why, I don't know how you compare this. How would you say that? How would you call it? And I guess to fear for life. The fears...diminished at that time. I was, of course I was afraid. I was always afraid they're going to come for my mother. Why would I be afraid they're coming for my mother? My mother had a long nose, she looked more Jewish. My sister didn't. She has a Polish name, Helena. I had Maria. And I was afraid they're going to take her. In fact, this Leon tells me, "She is not your mother." The way she's treating you, she's not your mother."

INT: Oh, other people noticed it, too.

DOBA: Yeah. Oh, I didn't **tell** them, they saw. They saw. I says, "She is my mother. What are you talking about?" "She's not your mother. You're **our** daughter. You're our daughter. If you want it, they can take her, but they won't take you." I say, "You're nuts. I will have to go with her." I mean, in a concentration camp. So I had fears about her.

INT: You thought something would happen to her.

DOBA: I didn't tell her that.

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: And I never revealed it.

INT: Why didn't you tell her?

DOBA: Do you think it's time to tell her now?

INT: I don't know. (pause)

DOBA: I'm scared to start, she shouldn't hurt me more. She was going to maybe say I'm selfish or something, I was selfish. I don't know. I really don't know. I don't go in conversations with my sister or with my mother, because I don't know what they would talk about. I mean, there's a lot to talk about. I would love it. Three years, every day, just in a camp. Work? Night, sitting and eating just a little soup, whatever they give you. And worry, worry about it. Let's say 7:00 was the curfew. After 7:00 they wouldn't come for you. That's a German declaration. But in the morning, like after 8:00, you were shaking. They're coming to get me. Because they knew we're Jewish. They're going to get me. Three years. Day in and day out.

INT: You were terrified every day because of...

DOBA: Day out and day in. My sister was worried, too, but I never had a conversation with her. She was quiet. She would like be, my mother told her, she listened to her. I'm no good, I'm no good. And I don't know what she wrote in this paper. She probably wrote, I'll read it one of these days.

INT: This is what your mother wrote.

DOBA: She gave it to me. How many years lying, and I didn't read it.

INT: And you've never read it, all these years.

DOBA: She did an interview. She wrote a book or something. She gave it to her grandson. He's a doctor. That's my mother's son.

INT: Your sister's son.

DOBA: My sister's son. I see it was thirteen years here.

INT: Thirteen years ago she wrote it?

DOBA: Yeah. Oh, is that thirteen years ago?

INT: Is that what you said? What's the date?

DOBA: I should have read it before you come.

INT: Did she have a date on there? How long ago she wrote it?

DOBA: I don't know. I didn't read anything. There's some words I don't understand.

INT: One day maybe you'll read it.

DOBA: Yeah. I don't see dates on there. Oh, she wrote the years when the war started, yeah. I think I'm going to read it next time. I can add something to the tape, can't I? If I find out.

INT: Oh, of course. Absolutely.

DOBA: I'm sure there's a lot of missing things.

INT: So tell me now about the liberation. What happened.

DOBA: Well, the liberation, 1945, did you say May? I have it written down in papers.

INT: April or May, yeah.

DOBA: Half an hour, like half an hour maybe, it was quiet. And we were in the bunkers. Well, it was not a regular bunker. It was just a hole in the ground. And they start alarming, so we went there. And we were sitting there. Of course, I was never undressed, I was always dressed. I had the belongings with me, always with me. I'm surprised my pocketbook's not here. (laughs)

INT: Yeah, it usually is.

DOBA: Yeah. My belongings, whatever I had was with me to go. And...

INT: How did you hear about, the war was over?

DOBA: We heard that that is close. (interruption) I'm in a different world now. (laughs)

INT: Just don't trip.

DOBA: It was a happy moment. We knew that English, British are coming this way, Russian coming Elba, and Americans coming somewhere. And it became quiet. After the shooting on the ground, it became quiet. There was an ammunition factory in our, on the grounds, where the camp was, and they were trying to get in. It was very, very deep, nobody knew about it, and they couldn't. So they tried to get in there. Shooting and shooting. And it calmed down. Calmed down, and I see daylight. Apparently I was there at night. Daylight, and I go out from the bunker and I look around, and look this way, all of a sudden -- I think I told you that -- in the back of me there was this beautiful soldier, American soldier, a tall guy. He spoke Polish to me, because he knew it's a Polish, Russian camp. Or maybe German, I'm not sure now how he spoke. And he like picked me, I was seventeen, you know. He picked my kerchief, I had a kerchief from Poland. One kerchief. And he says to me, "The war is over." And I look at him, and I said, "What? The war is over?" "You're free. You can go anywhere where you wanted to go."

INT: He said that to you in Polish?

DOBA: I don't remember what language it was. It could have been Polish, because I understood every word he said. So I start crying. (crying) You know, came a time that we didn't believe it, that it's going to be over?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: But I cried from happiness, and...and I said to myself, "I don't have to serve them anymore. Such a hard work, such illness, and no medicine." So he right away he says, "You're going to have food. You come out with me and show me who did you bad, who did you bad." Because they gave us two weeks of freedom. You could kill people, you could go in the house, take anything you wanted. I says to him, "Look. I don't want to kill anybody." In fact, my Nazi boss, in a way he saved my life. Because this paper that they brought it in never came out to the

daylight. If this would go in to the Wehrmacht, they would do something about it. But it stayed in his drawer. Luckily, that was one boss all the three years. They didn't change him. He beat us, Polish, but as far as taking traitors, he didn't like. So I had to thank him for that, in a way, and I wouldn't kill anybody. That's my nature.

INT: So you didn't feel any revenge, or bitterness...

DOBA: No, not on them I didn't. I didn't. Maybe I was happy. Maybe the happiness that I'm free, and I didn't want to mix this thing. I didn't know why. I don't know. I couldn't tell you why.

INT: But the Americans were giving you the freedom to kill whomever you wanted?

DOBA: Yes, yes.

INT: I didn't realize that.

DOBA: Yes, yes.

INT: Or to go in and take whatever you wanted.

DOBA: Yes. You want a rifle? Here's a rifle.

INT: Were people killing?

DOBA: Yes. Definitely were killing. Killing all the time, too. They went to jail later.

INT: Did you see that?

DOBA: Oh, I didn't see myself killing, but I know people who did this.

INT: You do. Did they get caught for it, or did they get away with it?

DOBA: Two weeks, didn't do anything. But after two weeks then they'd get to jail. Yeah, people were in jail a lot because of that. I met a Jewish man in the DP camp, I met a Jewish man, he was together with a Gentile. He's the one who take revenge. His whole family was burned, and he was taking revenge. He killed so many, counting and counting. They put him in jail. I don't know what happened to him.

INT: But he got out and was in the DP camp, so he must not have been in jail too long.

DOBA: Oh, he got out from the camp, but he was doing this when he was in DP camp.

INT: He was killing when he was in DP camp.

DOBA: Yeah. He was getting out and finding people, sure.

INT: Just any German, or people that he knew?

DOBA: Some people that he thought. I'll tell you...

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: I says, "I don't believe it is over." And he took me by my hand, and walked with me, and the German women were like on a row, like standing up. "Oh, Marisha, she's a good girl." I said, "Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you anyway." You know, they were good, they were bad. "I'm not going to hurt you. I'm not...I didn't come for hurting you. But I came, it's freedom for me, okay?" And like I said, this same soldier, American soldier, he says, "We're going to get food, you're going back to your barracks, wherever you live. We're going to, we're going to form DP camps." I was there for a while, and then they start forming DP camps, and I went to a...well, I was still there, and we went to a DP camp right, we were there for a few weeks. They waited for us to leave, because they had other people coming in to work for them. Germans. Okay? So they wanted us to get out of there.

INT: Okay. How did your mother and sister respond to the liberation?

DOBA: Well, I guess the same as I did, you know? I guess so. Because I was just...I don't remember, it was shocking. I don't remember. My mother says, "Well, we'll go to a camp, we'll go to see what we can do. Maybe we'll go back to Poland, maybe not. Maybe this, maybe that." And she had relatives here in America.

INT: Oh, she did? Who was here?

DOBA: Some cousins she had. And my father had a sister here. And she did also sign for me to come here.

INT: Had you talked, during those three years in the camp, had you talked about what would be after the war, what you would do?

DOBA: No. No.

INT: No plans were made.

DOBA: No plans, mm-mm.

INT: Because you didn't think...

DOBA: No plans whatsoever. No. No plans.

INT: So now you're liberated. And it's hard to believe, and then your mother's trying to decide what to do.

DOBA: Yeah. Well, she's trying to decide, and she even, believe it or not, this mean man, Leon, she even went to him, okay, because they were friendly enemies, friendly enemies. Leon, because we were from the same city, and he was like a gangster. And she had nobody there. She says, "What do you think? I have this man, he wants to move in with me." And he knew.

INT: Who was this?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Who? Who was going to move in with her?

DOBA: After the war, my mother had difficulties, all the time. We needed a man to help us move or whatever. So this man liked my mother. Another man.

INT: From the camp, that she met in the camp?

DOBA: No, from a different camp. From a different camp. They were coming to visit us, during the German occupation, a lot of people were coming from different camps.

INT: Oh, okay.

DOBA: Yeah. And another, nearby camps. A man was coming, he liked me, he would come, sit a little bit, talk to me.

INT: Not Jewish.

DOBA: No, none of them are Jewish, no. So she would say to him, "Look, my husband is dead, and I have this particular man." We called him "Uncle." "He wanted to move in with me, and he wanted to help me a lot, and I don't have a husband. I don't know what to do." She was telling **him**. She did not ask me for permission, because I was, I was...still a child in her...I could not make any decision in **her** world, you know, in her opinion. So she was asking this person.

INT: Leon.

DOBA: Leon.

INT: She was asking **Leon**, of all people.

DOBA: That's right. That's right.

INT: The Leon who was...

DOBA: That's right. That's right. Like I said, you were friends, and they were enemies.

INT: But he was an **enemy**.

DOBA: That's right. He was an enemy, he didn't know **what** he wanted, really. He could be sometimes nice, too. To her, too. And he would say to her, "You know what? Your husband is dead. You know, if you can make it better yourself," I remember he said that.

INT: You're better on your own?

DOBA: No. You accept what is easier for you. Yeah. Yeah. So we went to this DP camp called Hanover-Minden, near Castel, a very large camp.

INT: Hanover-Minden?

DOBA: Hanover-Minden. Mm-hm. A very large camp. It was 10,000 people. All kinds of nationality. All kinds. And...

INT: Mostly Jews, or non-Jews?

DOBA: No. All kinds. There were Jews, too. Very, very few. You didn't know. The Jewish weren't Jewish, they became Christians, they became...some never wanted to be back Jewish. Some went. Only this man wanted to be Jewish. I don't know what he did with his wife. He had a Christian wife. I don't know what he did.

INT: Which man?

DOBA: My mother remembers more, but I cannot talk to her. I would like to go and talk to her.

INT: What did you do about your Jewish identity after the war? Did you, as soon as liberation, you were Jewish again, or you continued...

DOBA: I was still under the same name. My mother was on the same name. We were still on the same name, Watras, going there. And the Jewish identification, no, we didn't go yet. We went to this camp. It was very dangerous -- even after the war they were killing Jews, you know that.

INT: Especially in Poland.

DOBA: No, that was in Germany, yet.

INT: In Germany, too.

DOBA: Yeah. Polish people were killing Jewish people. In Germany.

INT: In Germany?

DOBA: In Germany. That's right. That's right. You had to hide your identities **still**. So anyway, my mother went with me, and my sister went to this DP camp, Hanover-Minden, we were living there for a while.

INT: Excuse me, why did you pick this camp? Or you didn't pick? People just...

DOBA: No. Because it was this was the largest camp, and apparently they told us to go there. Apparently, yeah. Yeah.

INT: Was it nearby? How did you get there?

DOBA: Oh, no, no. They provide us with transportation. I don't remember how we get it, believe me, but provided it.

INT: Did they give you clothes or food or anything?

DOBA: They gave us. Later, they gave us, sure. They gave us...from UNRA, what does it goes for?

INT: United Nations Relief Workers.

DOBA: That's it. United Nations. We were getting packages. Dried fruit, dry food. And I ate like, I ate and ate and ate. And I had those eggs, dry eggs. I started, because I loved eggs, I start eating those eggs, three times a day. Do you know what? I cannot look at an egg up till today.

INT: You can't eat eggs?

DOBA: I cannot. (laughs)

INT: You ate too many.

DOBA: I **hate** them! You know, because when you...

INT: You went from none to a lot.

DOBA: Yeah. You can overeat...sure. (laughs) I don't like, I eat once in a while, with force. (laughter) So I ate those eggs. And they gave us meat, and conserve, nothing fresh. You know.

INT: Yeah. It was in cans, or whatever.

DOBA: So you know what they were doing in this camp? I had some friends, still from the other camp. I had two girls that I was very friendly with them. One called (?), and the other one

Nina. We always went together. During the war, and after the war, we wind up together in the Hanover-Minden.

INT: They were your age?

DOBA: My age, yeah.

INT: They were Polish.

DOBA: They were Polish, yeah. They were my friends. And her husband, she met a man, and she got married. Nina. She was from Warsaw. And her husband, with other people went to hunt for livestock (laughs) because there was no meat.

INT: Nothing to eat, yeah, right.

DOBA: You know what they did one time? And they lived on the fifth floor somewhere, up in the attic. It was a big camp, tall buildings. And they went in the fields. You're not allowed to do it. That was after the two weeks. Much more after the two weeks. And they got this bull. (laughs) They got this bull, and they took him on those all floors. Do you know what, they came, the British came. The British occupied that place. They came and they filmed, he had to show them how he did it. You know, they killed him up on the fifth floor, and they give pieces to other people.

INT: They brought him up to the fifth floor and killed him?

DOBA: That's right! It was hysterical. They were showing them, the British came to **film** that, because how did you get meat there? They find out. They wanted to arrest him, but they didn't. They didn't arrest him, because what they did, however they did it. You know how they did it? One was on the top, pulling his horns, and the other one, with a big fork, and digging him, excuse me (laughs) and that's the way, step by step, he went. And it was ridiculous. They were showing movies and everything.

INT: Oh, boy.

DOBA: So we got some meat from here. And then we went out and a chicken someplace, you know, you took a chicken, you know, from German people.

INT: Now, what was the camp like? What was the DP camp like? A lot of people. You said 10,000 people?

DOBA: A lot of people. Going here, and going back. And they had dances. They had all kinds of...the...the British were there, so there were, they wore skirts. What are they?

INT: Kilts?

DOBA: Kilts, yeah. There were soldiers with kilts, and we were making fun of them. You know what happened, there were gays there, too. And it was funny. It was really funny, and it was lively. I gained ten kilos in nowhere. In no time.

INT: Were you very thin after the war?

DOBA: Very thin. Very thin. Very thin. And there were, you know more women than men, apparently. You know what happened, what was happening in there? Oh, my G-d. They were fighting over me. They were fighting. Practically, literally fighting. They were making bets.

INT: There were more men than **women**. More men than women and they were fighting over you.

DOBA: More men than women, I'm sorry. That's right. There were more men in that camp. They were not Jewish. Few Jewish. And I was there a half a year in that camp.

INT: What was the living conditions like?

DOBA: They gave you an apartment. Was not the best, but wasn't the worst. I had my own bed at that time, and my mother, I think my mother slept with my sister, I think. She had another bed. And at that time she got, she got...involved with this man. Remember when I told you?

INT: The man from before.

DOBA: The man that wanted, liked her, wanted to...

INT: Wanted to marry her.

DOBA: No, he didn't marry. She, he was living with us.

INT: In the apartment.

DOBA: He was not Jewish. So I had nothing to say.

INT: How did you feel about it?

DOBA: I had nothing to say. He helped her, helped me, and I didn't say, but later on, I resented it, because what she did to me, I resented it. Later on. What's good for the goose is good for, you know, how do you say that?

INT: What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Because of what she did to you? Because of how she treated you?

DOBA: No, the way she lived with a man. She **has** to. He helped her. He made an oven for us, a stove. You had nothing. Everything was bombed, you know. It was bombed. So he made this. I remember he made a stove so we were able to cook there. He was very helpful. And he liked us, I remember.

INT: So they had a relationship?

DOBA: Apparently they had, you know.

INT: Did you think about going to look for your father, or you just, at that point you...

DOBA: Well, the thing is that...like I said to you. There was more men than women, and I, and a man who knew us from the camp yet, he was a friend of this man that my mother...he favored me, okay? That's another man. His name was Joseph, also. Just happened to be. And he was a musician, and he liked me, he says he wants to marry me. He also was an alcoholic. And I really didn't want him.

INT: You were only seventeen.

DOBA: Seventeen when...seventeen and a half, already seventeen and a half. This was half a year later. No, not quite yet. Seven and a half. I was married at seven and a half. So I didn't want him, you know, and...

INT: How old was he?

DOBA: Twenty-something. Twenty-two maybe.

INT: He was young, but older than you.

DOBA: He was also in camps. He's Polish, camps. (pause) So to make the story short, I wanted to get away from him, somehow. I thought I'd get away from him, and I went to visit...you know who I went to visit? I had nobody else to visit. I went to this Leon. He was in a different camp. I went to this Leon. They liked me. My mother was already with them, you know, talking. And they were living about 100 or 200 kilometers away. And everything was bombed. You had to wait for a train sometimes three days for a train, that's ready to go someplace. And I managed to go. While this guy was doing his things, I run away from him. I thought maybe this way he'll forget about me.

INT: What was he doing? He was just after you all the time?

DOBA: He was a musician. He was a musician and a soccer player, so he was doing one of those two things. And I sneaked out.

INT: Snuck out, right.

DOBA: Sneaked out, and my mother knew where I'm going. And I went to this Leon. And like you running away from a...how do you say? You're running away from rain to a fire, or vice versa?

INT: Yeah, from the frying pan into the fire, or whatever.

DOBA: So I met this man over there. I met, that was a military camp. That was a Polish military camp, a volunteer Polish military camp after the war. A smaller camp. And this camp was (?). Beautiful place. Four hours up to the mountains. It was in the Hart mountains. I have a picture from that. So they were there in that camp. This was a camp, Hitler Youth had the camp. Before they were leaving, they ripped everything apart. All the electricity. Because they know that...

INT: The Americans are coming in.

DOBA: Yeah. So there's still things...

INT: How did you know Leon was there?

DOBA: Oh, we were in touch.

INT: Okay.

DOBA: Because from the camp that we were working, mostly everyone said where are they going to go. And he decided to go to the Polish army volunteer. So he's going to go to that place. So I knew, and my mother knew. And I went there, and while I was there...

INT: Your mother wasn't worried about sending you to a military camp, as a young woman?

DOBA: Me? I went away.

INT: You were running away from this other guy, because...

DOBA: Yeah. She knows I was running away from this guy.

INT: Couldn't you just tell him, "Leave me alone, I don't want to have anything to do with you"?

DOBA: Oh, no, no, no.

INT: Why not? Why couldn't you just tell him to back off?

DOBA: He wanted to kill me.

INT: He wanted to kill you?

DOBA: He was carrying a knife like that.

INT: Oh, boy. He was bad news.

DOBA: Carrying a knife, he wanted to kill me. Because I said a word that I'm going to go with him. My word meant everything, and he kept me by that word. So I went there, to this other place, and who do I meet? I meet my husband to be, in that other place. And he was very nice. My mother met him. And he says, "Please take care of my daughter," to him, because she was afraid of the **other** guy. The other guy was very dangerous. He didn't care. And this one, he had a lot of friends, and he could protect me.

INT: What was his name?

DOBA: My husband's name? Lucjan.

INT: L-u-c-j-a-n.

DOBA: L-u-c-j-a-n.

INT: And he was Polish?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: And how did you meet him?

DOBA: He was in that camp, too, in that military camp. He was in a camp before, and his boss wanted to kill him.

INT: He was in a labor camp like you were?

DOBA: Yes, yes. In a different labor camp.

INT: He wasn't Jewish.

DOBA: No. He wasn't Jewish. He was, they caught him on the street. He was 21 and I was seventeen. I was seventeen and a half, and he was 21. Yeah. So they caught him, they caught him on the streets in Poland, you know, and they took him to the camp. He was in this camp, a small camp, and his Nazi boss wanted to kill him, after the war.

INT: Why?

DOBA: He did something bad. Against the Germans.

INT: Can you talk about it?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: What did he do?

DOBA: One of the things, he had a girl, a German girl, that's a no-no. And I don't know if it's true or not. He said he had a baby with her. He showed me a picture. I don't know if this is true. So this, the Polish police was looking for him, and just before the war he was hiding in the bunkers. Here and there. Because they were after him. Finally, finally the war finished.

INT: Because you weren't allowed as a Pole to have a relationship with a German girl?

DOBA: No. No way. He had this relation. Her...apparently her...boyfriend or whatever was on the army, you know, front, and I don't know, was a neighbor, neighbor of his boss. He was in a small camp, like. A one-man camp, was working. And I was where fifteen [were working]. So this was, there was a lot of things after the war, too.

INT: So how did you meet him? You came to this camp to be with Leon, to....

DOBA: I was...

INT: You were running away from the other guy who wants to kill you, and did Leon introduce you to this guy, or you just met him?

DOBA: No, no.

INT: Were you the only woman in the camp?

DOBA: No, no. There were a lot.

INT: It was a military camp.

DOBA: They had a dance downstairs. You know, they had a dance. They had in every camp dances. So I went downstairs, the music, you know. And that's when he was, my husband. And I got to know him. And I told him that I am here, running away from someone, and he might show up any minute, I knew him. He came.

INT: He **did** come after you. How did he find out where you went?

DOBA: You know...I, he knew where Urban, Leon was going to go. And he knew that I was in contact with him. Nobody told him I went there, but he surmised.

INT: Yeah, he figured it out.

DOBA: Sure. He surmised that. And he went. He came, and I knew, I expected him, because I knew him. And I had, I was protected, see, by this new person. It was a military camp anyway.

I don't know if they had guns or not -- I have no idea now. But sort of, I was more protected there, in my mind, than I would be protected being where my mother was.

INT: Even though you didn't know anybody here.

DOBA: Well, I knew Leon. Then I made friends with others. There were some friends, oh, I made friends very fast. Yeah. And...

INT: What did you like about this man?

DOBA: Very nice. He was...he was...my mother liked him, see? That's more so. I liked this man because he was, he was an orphan. He had not a good life, too. That's a long, that's another story. And I had met him right after when he had this terrible accident, like it was two weeks. After the two weeks that they had the freedom, like they were taking revenge, he was one of them with the friends, that they were going to take revenge for the Nazis. And they went to one house, he was a very mean Nazi. He killed a lot of people. And they knew where he lives. But also, the Nazi knew they gonna come. He was tall. And they went there, five or six Polish people, they were already not allowed to do it. They went, and they wanted to kill him. They came with all kinds of weapons. Not shoot guns, just quiet weapons. And they come into this...he had a hallway, a very narrow hallway. This guy. And while they were coming close, he turned off the lights. The German turned off the lights. He knew his territory, but they didn't. It was not easy. So they came in there, and they were looking for him. And the guy, the Nazi guy, had an ax in his hand, and who do you think goes first? My husband goes first. He wanted to kill his head. So he got his arm. Cut his arm [above the wrist].

So while he cut his arm there, I tell you already what I find out later. Another guy, a Polish guy was killed, too.

INT: By the Nazi?

DOBA: By the friends. They didn't know who was who. He was on the bottom. He had a...

INT: (?)

DOBA: Yeah. That's what happening, a terrible thing. But they killed the Nazi.

INT: They did kill him.

DOBA: Yeah. Finally killed him. But now my husband, the blood is running, and the rest of them, you cannot take to the hospital, you cannot call the ambulance, you're not allowed. They go in the fields to wrap this. It's streaming, the blood. Go to the hospital, and there was a hospital, I don't know how far. And he was in this hospital, but in a quiet way, and there's a Polish doctor goes over there, looks at his arm. He had a nerve cut, and the vein.

INT: There's a major vein where he was cut.

DOBA: Three together, yeah. It went here. Yeah. So this Polish guy says, "Let's cut off his arm." And he was fainting. You couldn't give him nothing. So he was fainting, and he heard that the Polish guy says, "Let's cut his arm off, because gangrene comes in any minute." And he looks at him. Can you imagine how strong he was? He looks open his eyes. He says, "You butcher." In Polish. You know why, there's a German, another Nazi was a surgeon there. They were keeping him under guard. They needed that German surgeon. So he saw this thing. He came over, and he looked at my husband -- at that time I didn't know him -- he looked at him and he says, "I'll take care of...I will save your arm." He did. I mean, this is things, you know. And I met him, he was just out of the hospital, just a few weeks, and his arm was shaking like that.

INT: He would have lost his arm.

DOBA: Yes. And he was a left-handed person. [The wound was on the left hand] And that's when I met him, and all the things what happened to him. And I said, "Look, I'm Jewish." We didn't talk about marriage right away. He says, "I like to be with you." "I would like you to meet my mother," I said. "My sister. They are in Hanover-Minden, and I don't know whether we go there." Anyway, to make the story short...

INT: Did you fall in love with him? Were you in love with him?

DOBA: Do you know that I don't even know whether I was in love? I have **no** idea.

INT: It was so fast.

DOBA: I needed a father image. I needed a father image, and I said to him, first of all, I told the surrounding friends that knew him, I said, "How old is he?" So he told them to tell me that he is ten years older, and I believed him, and that's because I was looking for a father image. I wanted an older man. And I was under the impression that he's older.

INT: So you thought he was 27 and he was really 22 or something?

DOBA: That's right. That's right.

INT: And he had lost his whole family? What happened to his family?

DOBA: Well, that's another long story. He...he was raised in Poland, and his parents died in one year. He was five years old. They both died in one year.

INT: Of disease, or some sickness?

DOBA: His mother died first...she didn't want to have more children, she went for an abortion, and she died, because it was not legal. And his father had appendicitis. He didn't want to go to the hospital, went too late, also died not natural.

INT: So who raised him?

DOBA: The...there was an aunt. His father's brother's wife. They took him in. In fact, I lived with them. Very nice to me. Very wonderful people. So he knew I was Jewish, of course.

INT: Now, how did he feel about that?

DOBA: Nothing.

INT: Nothing.

DOBA: He helped a Jewish girl. Before he went to the camp, he helped another Jewish girl who was in a camp before, in the ghetto. He was helping her.

INT: What was he doing?

DOBA: He was giving her food. Before they took him...

INT: So he wasn't an anti-Semite like a lot of Polish people were.

DOBA: Oh, no! Oh, no, not at all!

INT: So it didn't bother him that you were Jewish.

DOBA: Oh, no. Oh, he...when he heard somebody talks about Jews, well, he was defending all the time. I mean, if he would be an anti-Semite, I would never go. But you know, I didn't know what I was doing. I needed, he was like...what is the word? Comforting me. Comforting me, you know.

INT: You just came out of a war, and you're seventeen years old.

DOBA: Seventeen and a half I was already, yeah. You see, I...there's no, there was no people to talk to me. No people...

INT: No guidance.

DOBA: No guidance. My mother...she had to watch my sister, and that man, I told you. And she came. She came one time, it was my birthday. She came. I left after my birthday that year. She came and she said, "Do not go. Do not go. Maybe we'll go together. I'll go with you." And I did want to do that.

INT: Where were you going to go?

DOBA: To Poland. "Maybe I'll go with you." And I do want to go, but at that time, meantime I was married. Oh. This guy came in who wanted to kill me, and we had a talk with him. (laughs) That was before that. (sighs)

INT: But you had no one to really tell you what to do, or...

DOBA: No. No one. No one. No one. Jewish organization, I didn't know where they were. I did not even look for them.

INT: What about in the camp, in the DP camp? Were the Jews in one section, and the Poles in another?

DOBA: No. You didn't even know who is Jewish or who not.

INT: So a lot of people were still afraid to come out and say whether they were Jewish?

DOBA: Oh, yes! Oh, years later. Even today. I met survivors, I met in London when I was travelling four years ago, in London, I had addresses of survivors, a British. He even today, he's hiding his identity if he can. Jewish. I mean people, people do different things. See, this is...I guess everybody does what's better for them. And who knew? Did I know if this is better for me? I tell you the truth, I didn't see a Jewish man for years and years there. Didn't see Jewish men even in Polish, after I was married, I didn't see.

INT: No, they were all killed. There weren't any Jews in Poland.

DOBA: Sure, sure. But I got married young because I didn't have a support. I needed support. I didn't have the support. My mother knocked me always down with everything. Occasionally she was nice, but I guess she has a hard life herself. She had...she had to go through a lot of things. She always had these two other people on her neck. You know, me and my sister. And she did want us to survive, no question about it. And this was not easy. She...people who had hard life. Why...(sighs) Some people soften up, and some never don't.

(END TAPE FOUR, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

INT: Okay, this is a continuation of an interview with a survivor, Doba Smolanowicz. And it's June 12th, 1995.

The last time we were talking, we spoke a little bit about some of the revenge that was going on after the war. And I had a few questions, if you wouldn't mind asking, if you wouldn't mind **answering** them. One of them is, are there any other incidents that you can talk about of...was it only the two-week period that you were telling me about, that it was sort of a hefker period where you could just sort of do things freely and you wouldn't be punished for it, or was it also going on after that period?

DOBA: Afterwards. Much, much afterwards. But they were punished, unfortunately, you know.

INT: By the authorities.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: Now, was this just Jewish people, Polish people, or everybody?

DOBA: Everyone. Everyone. There was a few Jewish people. I don't know if I mentioned in previous, that there was, in the camp, in DP camp...

INT: Which DP camp was this?

DOBA: (Pause)

INT: Hanover-Minden?

DOBA: Hanover. Near Kastel. Near Kastel.

INT: It was a DP camp.

DOBA: Yeah. That's why I already told you. Yes, it occurred for a very long time, whoever wanted to take revenge, and they could, they were doing...the best what they wanted to do for themselves. In other words, revenge, there was not enough for them. Whatever they did.

INT: These were Jewish people?

DOBA: Not...no. Polish people. Polish, Russian people, there were a lot of...

INT: In Germany.

DOBA: In Germany, yeah. They were, they were tortured. Polish and Russian people were tortured by the Nazis, too. So they were taking revenge. Sometimes an innocent person got it, too. They were, they went to houses, rape all the women. German women, you know. And the Russian occupation was **horrible**. I was fortunate. I was American occupation, because I don't know where **I** would be, because they didn't care, you know. They didn't care. The soldiers, the Russian soldiers, when they came into Germany.

INT: What did they do?

DOBA: They were murdering, they were raping, and...like Polish, sometimes Polish people got it, and Russian people. But mostly they were aiming at German people. German. There were a lot of people, they were not Nazis, and they were aiming on whatever they could.

INT: These were people who had lost family members, or...

DOBA: Yes. They were, they were...you know, from...fighting. In other words, they arrived to Germany. Like the British, one, they took one section. The Americans took one section, and the Russians. And the worst, (laughs) the worst they did was in the Russian occupation. That's where they did the worst.

INT: But what zone were you in? What DP camp Hanover-Minden was in the American Zone? The British Zone.

DOBA: For a while I saw British, but then American took over.

INT: Okay. So this was happening in the American Zone. They were coming out of the DP camp, and taking acts of revenge, or they were...

DOBA: Well, yeah, they did. They did. Yeah. They were coming out, and they took revenge, but not as much as with the Russian occupation was, because they were wilder there. But they were coming out from the camps. Not everyone was in the camps. They were still living in different places, in small places, people. And they were, for example, there was a shortage of fresh meat for example. They would go in the fields, they would rob animals.

INT: Yeah, we heard about the bull last time.

DOBA: Yeah. So they would take chickens, whatever. They wanted some...we were getting packages, but nothing...

INT: Fresh.

DOBA: Fresh. So they were doing all kinds of things.

INT: And how did you hear about these...how did you know that this was going on, the...Jews and non-Jews going out and killing Germans?

DOBA: Well, I was, I was talking to these people, sure. I tell you what **I** did. I didn't want to **kill** anybody. I don't know if I mentioned this to you. When the Americans came, and they asked me if somebody hurt you, you go, and maybe I did say, I don't remember. I said to them, "I'll tell you what I would want. I want a bicycle." Did I tell you this?

INT: No, you didn't tell me.

DOBA: I says, "I don't want anything. I just want a bicycle." You know, I was seventeen. And they took me into a very rich home, to a Nazi home, and they opened the doors for me, and closets, there were fur coats hanging there, wonderful clothes. I never had anything. And I says, "I want a bicycle." I didn't want to touch jewelry. I didn't want any of it, can you imagine that? So they go to the basement, they find a bicycle, and the Germans stand there and they put the air out. You know, they knew things what's going to happen. They put the air out, and they said, "Oh," he says in German -- I spoke German perfect at that time -- "It's broken." I said, "Never

mind." I already know something about the bicycle, and I saw that it only needs air. I said, "I'll take it." And that's all I took it from, that was my revenge.

INT: I see.

DOBA: That was **my** revenge, and that's all. I didn't do anything else. And I said, "Let me go with my bicycle." "Don't you want something else? Look, look! Everything's here." The American soldier. I said, "No, I don't want." (laughs)

INT: That's interesting. So you didn't feel these, you didn't have these feelings of revenge, really. And you didn't give away your Nazi boss, either, because you felt that he may have saved you.

DOBA: Yeah, he may, and there was ladies, German ladies standing there like, they were watching me whether I'm not going after them. And they would say to the American..."Oh... Marisha," -- that was my name, Maria -- "Oh Maria, she was good. Oh, we liked her." You know, because...I said, "Don't worry. I'm not going to touch you. I'm not going to tell them to touch you. I have nothing against you. I don't want...I don't want anybody to be hurt, anyway. I'm happy the freedom. I don't' have to work anymore, and I will have something to eat." In a very short time I gained maybe ten pounds. In a very short time. Yeah. Because I had food. So as far as this revenge. But I met a lot of people who did a lot of revenge.

INT: Do you remember what they talked to you about? About their feelings? Do you remember any of that, what they were thinking and feeling?

DOBA: Against the Nazis?

INT: Or how they felt **after** they took revenge, or...

DOBA: They were very happy what they did. They were in jail. They put them in jail. They went out, and they did again.

INT: So they didn't put them in jail for long periods of time.

DOBA: Apparently not. Some escaped. It was still...people going back and forth.

INT: Chaos.

DOBA: Okay, there were...guerrillas. German guerrillas? Can I say that?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: After everything, I was still living in the...in the place where I worked, because we were waiting for some time to get to a DP camp or something. I was still there, for I don't remember how long. And I liked, I like fruit. I was raised...my parents in the summertime they used to rent

fruit gardens, I did mention this. So I couldn't wait to get some fresh fruit. So it was still, it was still on the field, things. So this American, two...two soldiers said, "We'll go and find you some food. You'll go with us in a jeep." And I and a friend, I had a friend at that time, a Polish friend, and we both went with them, and I see some growing things. I don't remember what it was. Strawberries or something. I went wild when I saw that. I said, "Oh, that's right, that's right there." So we went and start picking. The German...what did I say? Guerrillas? They were hiding and they would start shooting at us.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Yeah. You see, that's what was happening all over. So we got something and went right back.

INT: You're lucky you didn't get shot.

DOBA: Yeah, sure. There was danger all around. So that's what, that's what kind of revenge I was taking. Taking some fruit from...

INT: Strawberries and a bicycle.

DOBA: Yeah. A bicycle, fruit from a garden, and...

INT: But these people you spoke to, they were happy after they...

DOBA: Yes.

INT: They felt good.

DOBA: They were happy, they were happy. I met a Jewish man in Israel who lost...I did, too, but he lost, and he was in the, in some kind of an army which I don't remember. Finally he wind up in Israel. He told me that he murdered so many Nazis. And he said, "That's not enough." He was telling me that. And I was just listening, you know. I met him. Oh, wait a minute, where did I meet him? I'm sorry. I met him in Poland.

INT: In Poland.

DOBA: In Poland, I'm sorry. I met other people in Israel, also, but they were in Poland. Apparently he was with the Russian army. Oh, yes. He went, he was in Russia, that's right. He was saved in Siberia, somewhere. His whole family was killed. So when he went in the Russian Army, he was doing one murder after the other.

INT: I see.

DOBA: Against the Nazis. And he had told me.

INT: After the war was over.

DOBA: He says, "I would not **blink an eye**. I could cut them in pieces!" That's the way **he** expressed himself. And he felt that, he felt that he **had** to do it. You see, that's...but I was just listening. I don't remember how. I didn't feel too good about it, you know, because I could never do, I couldn't even **watch** it, anybody does this. But there are people with that nature. I mean...

INT: But you don't feel that it's your nature?

DOBA: No. No. It is not. It wasn't, and it is not.

INT: Okay. (sighs) Do you remember anything about your feelings right after the war, at that time? You know, you didn't **have** much time after the war before you got married, but what were you feeling? Do you remember at all what you were feeling and thinking after the war? When did you find out what had happened to the Jewish people, and how many had been killed, and...

DOBA: I didn't know numbers. I...I was just, we were just listening once in a while to radio. I don't know who had a radio, I don't remember. But there was a freedom, but we didn't have any...any means, any things that we could get our hands on, because they bombed the whole Germany, and you could not go from one place to another free. There were all the railroad stations, they were bombed. For example...I wanted to take a trip somewhere, after the war, from one place to another. I had to wait three days. Every day I went to the station, and they were still repairing. Repairing. So I went like every day for three days. Finally, the third day, I was able to take that train. You know, and then I didn't know how I would come back, because you know, there were bombs still, you know. Mines. All over. Many people got killed after the war, as you know. So it was dangerous no matter how you did it and when you did. So we still didn't have...for example, you couldn't go to a store to buy. I needed a bobby pin. I never saw a bobby pin for the whole war. I wanted to buy, you couldn't. I had some money afterwards. You couldn't go to a store and buy...there was **none**. And I remember just this may be a little incident, maybe I did tell you.

In Germany, still in that small camp I was, people were coming and going different directions, and there was this man came with a motorcycle, and he was from Poland, and he had some kind of a paper that he had privileges, better privileges than we had. I don't remember what. So he said, and I wanted so much, I wanted to ride on the bicycle, on a motorcycle, oh, my G-d! I didn't realize, the person I didn't know, I went on that trip. He said, "You want to go? I'll take you for a ride." And I went, and I said to him, well, he went and got a hair cut somewhere. I said, "Well," I was...wondering what kind of privileges **he** has. He went to a shop, a barbershop. And I says, "You think you can get me some bobby pins?" He said, "Yeah!" He went and he got a few for me. That's the first few. So I don't know. He had some kind of privileges. Maybe he was some kind of an officer, maybe an American officer. But he was in civil clothes. Maybe he was...a spy. Maybe, you know? I don't know what he was. So little things like this, so they didn't have.

In fact, when you wanted to take a...photograph, they didn't have the right paper. They would only take half of you. You couldn't pose the whole thing. In fact, my marriage is only half. I have a picture. That was already half a year later. Yeah, I think so. Maybe a little more than half a year, maybe.

INT: Do you remember making plans, or...

DOBA: Plans? No plans.

INT: No plans? After the war.

DOBA: No plans.

INT: No. What were you thinking about?

DOBA: (sighs)

INT: You're seventeen years old.

DOBA: I wanted my father. Since I didn't have my father, I wanted to belong to someone. To a man. As you know previously, that my mother and I, we were not in a very warm relations since day one, I remember. So...a man's...to belong to an older man. That's what I wanted. That's what my, that was my plan.

INT: You remember that, you remember thinking that in your head.

DOBA: Yeah. So...

INT: But you were so young, still.

DOBA: Yeah. Seventeen, seventeen and a half, you know, already. And...(pause, sighs)

INT: Did you want to get away from your mother?

DOBA: Yeah, yes I did.

INT: Did you want to get, did you have in your mind to get away from your mother and to get married?

DOBA: Right. Right. Yeah. But in a way I didn't want to get away, but I wanted her to be different, and I could not find a difference. I could not express myself. Everything was boiling inside. I didn't talk much at all. You wouldn't recognize me if you saw me then.

INT: You didn't talk?

DOBA: No.

INT: You kept everything in.

DOBA: Everything in. Mm-mm.

INT: Even when you made all those friends? Because you were always making friends.

DOBA: It was not easy for me to make friends, you know? I had difficult, difficult time to make friends. If I did make friends, and I was disappointed in them, they did something against me, then I would be hurt, very badly hurt. But at that time, I was still searching, and...many, many years later, I think I'm just starting recently to be careful with my feelings. But for many years I just, a friend, I mean, I would be open, I would share anything with a friend. And I'm sorry, when you say, I make friends...

INT: Well, you said that...I just want to try to understand this, because the picture **I** have of you is of, you know, even as a child before the war, you made friends, people liked you and you made friends easily, but you seemed to gravitate to older people.

DOBA: Older people, yeah.

INT: And...the same thing during the war pretty much. Although you did say that you had made a couple of girlfriends in the camp. At the work camp.

DOBA: At work. Yeah. They were all older than me.

INT: Polish girls. They were older also.

DOBA: I was the youngest girl there. Yeah.

INT: Now, when you made these friends, and people did like you, and it seemed easy to make friends, although now you're saying that it wasn't easy for you to make friends....

DOBA: No. No. The way **I** would like them to be friends, it wasn't easy. They were...

INT: Well, how did you want them to be?

DOBA: They were so-called friends, but they were not open 100 percent.

INT: Superficial friends.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Like today, I recall that.

INT: You couldn't talk, you didn't feel that you could talk...

DOBA: Trust them?

INT: Trust them, or talk to them about...

DOBA: Many I couldn't, no. I did, unfortunately I did, and I was...

INT: Got hurt.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Many.

INT: When was this? Was this during the war, or...

DOBA: It was in Poland, also. And even...well, Israel...I'm not sure, no. No. I was not hurt. No, I made some friends in Israel. Oh, I made **many** friends in Israel. Beautiful people. I don't know whether there's different people there. Yeah, many friends. They would do, they would do things for me. They would probably do for anybody at that time. They went out of their way. They were poor people, and they...when I came, when I was ready, when I was ready to go to Israel many years before, and the Polish government didn't allow me. But finally, when I was trying harder and harder and harder, and just coincidentally, I met somebody in the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw, when I was applying, and at that time I didn't know anybody in Israel. And there is a certain space in the form that you have to fill out who is inviting you. I didn't have anybody. There was a man standing next to me, I needed a pencil, and I asked him, "Can I get your pencil?" And, well, there was a problem. I couldn't write, and he looks at me, and I couldn't fill out that thing. He says, "You don't have anybody?" I says, "No." He says, "I tell you what you do. You write my brother's name. I have a brother there." It was different names. This particular Jewish man was hidden in a dog's house during the war. A Christian lady was hiding him in a dog's house. He married her later. That's who I met. And he had a different name change. So many things.

INT: **So** many stories.

DOBA: Yeah. And he was writing. I don't know what he was applying to go to Israel or whatever, with her, or without her, I don't remember. But anyway, he was in the Israeli Embassy. And he gave me the name of Brayman. Jacob Brayman. Now I'll never forget. But, at that time I wrote it down, I sent it out, I didn't make any copies.

INT: You didn't remember the name?

DOBA: And I didn't remember the name. I just remember "Bray" and that's all. So...I got a letter. This is going to be something, you know. I got a letter. Oh, then I didn't know who this man was. He didn't give me his address, he was afraid the wife would see that he talks with a woman, you know. So I didn't ask him where he lives. In Warsaw. He lived in Warsaw. And I went back. I used to live in Leschno, near Pozny. And I got a letter from Israel, and I see...oh, no. I wanted to look for these people. Later on I...I couldn't, I couldn't believe how I did this. Send out, and I didn't write it down. So you know what, I wrote down to these...oh, I did

something, by myself, without lawyers. I wrote down to the Israeli government, "I'm so and so, and I'm looking for a person," and I wrote, I only wrote down "Bray, Tel Aviv." I remember Tel Aviv. "Bray, Tel Aviv." Guess what? They found him. Israeli government is unbelievable. I got a letter from the family, Brayman, Jacob Brayman, and they wrote me and they're saying to me, "Whoever you are, please answer us." They were hoping I'm their cousin, the same name Maria. And I'm not too good at writing, but I wrote it right away back, and I sent my picture. And I said, "Unfortunately, I have to disappoint you. I'm not the person that you're looking for. I'm so and so." I told them the story, and they wrote me back a letter quickly. "When you come, you come to our house. Our house would be your house." They didn't even **know** me. That's what I'm talking about, the Israelis. They were from Poland. They immigrated before, much, much before the war, and you know, they were the aliyah.

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: So I did get treatment, beautiful treatment, when I write to Israel, from them and others.

INT: It's a nice story.

DOBA: Others. Do you know anything about the Lavon affair? Lavon was a prime minister, and then there was a big affair, he was in waiting, and there was some kind of a...Lavon. I forgot his first name.

INT: I don't know. I should no, probably. It's politics.

DOBA: Lavon, I forgot the first name. He was a prime minister in Israel for a while, and then there was some kind of an affair, and they put him away, not they put him away.

INT: Put him out of the government?

DOBA: Yeah. He was out of the government. Do you know who was my friend just...making friends. Certain times. In Poland a lady send something, a little gift, and she happens to be, the wife of Lavon was her friend.

INT: Oh.

DOBA: When I came to Israel, do you know what they did for me? The Lavon family? They took me with a car wherever it's, was necessary, to put my children in school, whatever they could do it. So friends. So I'm just giving you a little example.

INT: But before, I think it was 1961 or something you went to Israel?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah.

INT: Before that, the friends that you **would** make, could you, did you feel that you could open up to them at all? Because you had said that you were kind of a closed person, I wouldn't have recognized you.

DOBA: Yes, I was. I was a very closed person. No, I couldn't open up.

INT: So you had no one to go to. Because your mother...

DOBA: No.

INT: You couldn't talk to your mother.

DOBA: No, I didn't have anybody to go to.

INT: You couldn't talk to your sister, and you really couldn't talk to your friends.

DOBA: I had nobody to go to.

INT: So how did you...

DOBA: Because, if I went to, oh. They were not in Poland. You're talking about, wait a minute. When, what time is it?

INT: I'm just talking in general, just before the war and after the war, and right after the war, and during the war.

DOBA: Oh, yeah. Elderly people.

INT: You'd go to elderly people. Could you cry to them about how your mother was treating you, or...

DOBA: Yes, yes, I did. Yeah.

INT: You could. You could talk to them.

DOBA: Elderly people. But not the same age.

INT: People who were the same age.

DOBA: No, no. Not from school, no, no.

INT: But you **had** people to talk to about...

DOBA: Yeah, I did. I did.

INT: How about during the war, also?

DOBA: During the war, also.

INT: What about after the war, in the DP camp?

DOBA: After the war...not as much, no.

INT: Not as much. So you had to stay kind of closed up.

DOBA: That's right. I stayed closed up, yeah. But then...when I married my husband, I did tell him things, you know. Yeah, I did tell him. But other than that, I don't remember. Maybe there was somebody, but I can't remember.

INT: Okay. But how do you think you were coping with all those feelings after the war? Before you got married -- it was a short time after the war, but --

DOBA: Yeah, a very short time.

INT: You didn't have...

DOBA: Well, the overwhelming of freedom took up my...my mind. I was overwhelmed, and I was...**glowing** with the freedom. I did not...probably did not want to think about bad things at that time. I don't know how I **did** this, but half a year, I was overwhelmed with freedom. I had **two** bicycles. (laughs) I met a young man then, and he lent me a bicycle, another bicycle. So I had friends, I always shared. I gave him the other bicycle, and we were riding. We were riding away for miles and miles, and coming back home again. "Home." That was still in the little camp. My mother was frightened. But I did on my own whatever I felt like it. And that's maybe why we don't agree. Yeah. I...

INT: You did what you wanted to do.

DOBA: Mostly.

INT: But you described yourself as **always** being like that.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: You didn't really do what your mother told you, wanted you to do all the time.

DOBA: No, mostly I didn't.

INT: Very independent.

DOBA: Yeah. Mostly I didn't. But if my **father** would tell me, I would do **everything.**

INT: Yeah. It's a different story.

DOBA: I don't know.

INT: So you feel you were overwhelmed with freedom, and that kind of put the bad things out of your mind?

DOBA: I was going to...to...like dancing affairs, you know, everywhere was a dance, and there were Russian dance, Polish dance, Jewish. I didn't meet. I didn't meet. Just that one man in the DP camp later. A Jewish man? I didn't meet Jewish people, because I did not go to a Jewish camp. I don't remember whether there were already Jewish camps at that time or not. My mother went to a Jewish camp later on.

INT: But this particular Hanover-Minden, there weren't any Jews in it?

DOBA: Maybe there were, maybe there were, there were just that one, and maybe there were. I was not too long there, because I was going back and forth, you know? And I think my mother was there. Maybe over a half a year or something. And I was there for a while. I have a picture of...of...I wasn't there, somebody gave me. Most of the, most, a lot of the people in that camp, on that picture there's my little sister (laughs) looking out, little, just little, you know? And there's a friend that I was running with bicycles back and forth. And there was a...if you wanted to open up, you could. You didn't have to be afraid whether you're Jewish or not at that time. So there was probably, there were. Some people were still afraid. I was...

INT: Were you frightened? Were you?

DOBA: Yes. Yes. Yes, I was afraid for many years.

INT: So did you keep the name...

DOBA: Maria Watras for many, many years. I was so afraid. I was so fearful that...to identify myself, that when I came to the States I was still fearful. My job here. I...I was working in the factory for a year, and it was horrible. Then I took a very short course in manicuring. And I went to school some English. Manicuring, and had two children, you know. I had to do things. I don't know how I did it. But...I had fortune, people helped me again. Strange people helped me. I met this lady who took me in, Mrs. Katz. And there's a gentleman that I met, also. He was just a wonderful friend for all these years. Maybe he saved my life here, too. Anyway...what I was pointing out? Oh, yeah. About the job.

Somebody told me there's a very good job working with men only, and that was much better than working in a beauty shop. But the person who was working there, he was Italian. He knew me, who I was. He says to me, "Look. This new boss doesn't like Jews. If you need a job, I know you need it. You have two boys to raise. Don't tell him." Okay? I didn't tell him. I was working there for six years, that he didn't know I was Jewish. Finally I got tired of it, because I had mostly Jewish customers, and they all were on my side, and I got very tired with **lying**

already. I took off Yom Kippur. And I never forget. (laughs) I said, "I'm taking off today." I was very busy that day. They couldn't afford to let me go. (laughs) So he says to me, "What do you mean you're taking off?" I said, "That's my holiday." "What holiday?" "I'm Jewish and this is my holiday." That was so many years later. He said, "Don't tell me that -- you're Polish." I said, "Whatever you think, go ahead. I'm Jewish, and I'm taking off, and that's it." And that's the first time, and I start opening up later, see? It took so...

INT: What year was that? Do you know?

DOBA: (sighs) Six years after '63, so it would be...

INT: Oh my gosh, so not until 1969?

DOBA: Something like that.

INT: That you came out as a Jew.

DOBA: Oh, no, no. People **knew** I was Jewish, but he didn't want to know. I have a friend, a German friend, who worked with me there. She's a wonderful person. I'm still friends with her, she helped me a lot. She would, she would get a bigger tip from certain customers, and she would throw the money on my tray. She said, "You need it more than I do." Because she had at that time a husband who [had a good job].

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: No, Tony knew.

INT: Oh, so you only hid it from certain people.

DOBA: Yeah, from certain people, that I need a job. I needed, that was my bread for the children, bread and butter for children. So you see how it is? People, some people, "What do you mean you were hiding? You were..." I says, "Look. Everyone does the best what they can do at times." Today, I just, I'm just open. I don't care. Who did this, and whatever situation I find myself. They're starting against Jews, I speak up right away.

INT: But for many years you were afraid.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Can we talk a little bit about your husband? You met him and married him kind of quickly.

DOBA: Yes, I did.

INT: And could you talk a little bit about why you married him, and what attracted you to him, and what he was like, and...

DOBA: Well, like I told you, I was...wanted (sighs) some...maybe not financial support. By that time nobody had anything yet. I wanted the support, belonging to someone and my father. I missed my father constantly. And I thought, "He'll give me, like almost a father, you know." And he would **protect** me. Protection. I needed protection, yeah. And that's why, the main thing I did. Well, maybe there was some attraction. Without this, you know, it wouldn't go. And he was pushing me, of course. I didn't want to marry yet. I wanted, you know, find out things. But he was pushing me because I was at one time very pretty, and young, of course. And there was more men than there were, you know, but they were non-Jewish men, of course. There was no Jewish men there. And this one was the most...good-hearted. He used, he helped a Jewish girl in Poland, in the ghetto. He was giving her food. You know, and I believe him, because he never talked against Jews, never. I would, you know. I could...so...so...since he was forcing me, not forcing me. He was **pressing** me. Because he wanted to go back to Poland to help his parents out, because they were all alone there.

INT: I thought his parents had died.

DOBA: Yeah, but this is the person, the people who...

INT: Who raised him? I see.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. There was an aunt and an uncle. We called them mother and father.

INT: Yeah. Because they really raised him. He was young.

DOBA: Yeah, they raised him, so, they had a big restaurant, and a hotel. And they just...they were thrown out by the Nazis to a different city, and they took away their possessions, and after the war, they gave them back, but there was nothing in there. They had to buy everything. I don't know how they built the restaurant. But anyway, they came back where they were before the war. And they really needed somebody to help them, so, he wanted. That's the first thing he wanted to do. Come back and repay them some, by being there. And he says, "Well, I'm going back to Poland." That's the reason would be good to get married, you know. And I was...torn. I wanted to go back to my mother. And then...then there was...this man who was living with my mother, you know. He was making fun of me. And he says, "Oh, he will never marry you." And he was...comparing, I never forget, "My hair would grow on my palm if he's going to marry you." I don't know what the reason. And I was like frightened. I didn't want to lose him, I didn't want to lose my mother, and I didn't know, and he, he says, "Well, finally, I am going to Poland." You know, things like this, so...I decided to go.

INT: Were you in love with him?

DOBA: (Sighs) I really don't know. I don't know. Was maybe a desire to belong. To belong to someone. I don't recall real, being in love. I don't think I could say that. I just...

INT: But did you enjoy being with him, or...

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. I was comfortable. And he was very...very humorous. Well, I didn't know much about him, you know. I just...

INT: How did you feel about him not being Jewish?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: How did you feel about marrying someone who wasn't Jewish?

DOBA: Well...(pause) I would prefer a Jewish man. I know that at that time. There was no Jewish man. And I was scared to be alone. I was scared to be alone, and scared to be with my mother. Because we did not...we did not...

INT: Communicate.

DOBA: Communicate. Communicate, and this man was there. Not that he was in my way, but...(pause) I didn't want to go back to that camp again, because I was threatened by another man. I told you that before. And all these things.

INT: Yeah. So you were kind of trapped.

DOBA: I was trapped. And there was **nobody** to sit down. Today, you go to a psychiatrist. You counsel. You go someplace, they talk to you. I didn't have anybody to talk. There's some people told me that they were instigating me against my mother more, more, because they knew her.

INT: Who was instigating you?

DOBA: People who were working **with** us in the camp. Some people. They knew how she was, you know, with me. She was always, my sister was of course much younger. She was always...I, maybe I was jealous. Maybe, I don't know. She was favoring my sister all the time, so...maybe part of jealousy. I really don't know. So I just want to...

In fact, I came back after I got married, I came to visit her. And I did want to be with her. I thought that she changed a little bit, you know? And I found, I stayed a few days there, and I, I actually was trying without even telling anybody, I was trying, maybe I can still leave him. And I couldn't.

INT: Why not?

DOBA: (Sighs) She didn't treat me right. I'm...I don't want to talk on the tape, you know, about certain things. (Pause) Choosing, I was feeling that I have to go back. Because maybe it's going to be better the other way.

INT: Now, was this soon after your marriage, that you tried to go back with your mother?

DOBA: Yes, yes.

INT: How soon, do you remember?

DOBA: We were there for a half a year, after I got married, though, we were still half a year in a small camp where he was, it was a Polish army camp.

INT: Oh, that's where you stayed after you got married?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Until I left.

INT: Did anyone come to the wedding?

DOBA: From my mother? No. Nobody came.

INT: What did she say about your marriage?

DOBA: She didn't want it. She didn't like it. She was very much against it. And...well...of course she didn't want me to marry a non-Jew, but then again, she was **living** with a non-Jew.

INT: She was living with a non-Jew, right.

DOBA: Nobody should know that. I should keep quiet about it, you know.

INT: Oh. She never married him?

DOBA: Oh, no, no, no, no. Apparently she didn't have in mind to marry him, or...anyway. After a while I think, they left him, or he left them, I'm not sure. But that was after I left the country, after I left Germany. She went to a different camp. I think it was a Jewish camp, probably, which I don't remember.

INT: So after you got married, you stayed with your husband's camp, in your husband's camp, for six months.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah, for about six months.

INT: And then you decided to leave him, and go to your mother. And that didn't work.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: And why did you decide to leave him? It wasn't working out?

DOBA: (sighs) I noticed that he did something that I didn't like it. He was partying with friends. He was drinking. There was no work to do for any of the people in camp, except to show up in the morning for the waking up thing, like the army does, and they did some marches, they did some things, I don't remember what was done. And he was...there was no work, and they were just, you know, getting together. And I...I was left much alone. Again, you know. But then I found some friends in that camp, but I couldn't open entirely. But I would like to tell them, like I would do today, you know, no.

INT: So you were unhappy again.

DOBA: I was unhappy.

INT: So when it didn't work with your mother, and she hadn't changed, and she was being just as...

DOBA: So I went back. I went back, and I decided to go to Poland.

INT: With your husband.

DOBA: Yeah. So we went to Poland. And...and then my mother wrote me letters. "Oh," she says. "Maybe I'll come. I'll come to Poland. Maybe I'll do..." You know, she wanted to be with me. I guess she has a lot of problems, and she did the best **she** could. And the way...to keep the relation with me the way **she** could. I...I **presume** she loves me, you know. Her way. I love her **very** much. And...(pause) I don't know. (sighs) There's many things maybe I shouldn't have done. But I cannot go back to.

INT: So what town did you go to in Poland?

DOBA: Leszno. Leszno. This is near Poznan. A city, a small city near Poznan. And...

INT: How did you feel about going to Poland after what had happened there?

DOBA: Well, I was there for many years incognito, I mean, if that's what you call. Yeah. And that was a life again, living a secret. There was not, I met only one Jewish man in that city. It was primarily Polish people there. A Jewish man, and I couldn't even tell **him** I was Jewish. He was leaving. He was leaving for some country. I don't remember which country he was leaving for. I don't know how he survived. Because...I never went with anybody personally, you know. I just...we were just coming to the restaurant, and I know he was Jewish.

INT: But you didn't talk to him about how he survived?

DOBA: No. No. And I don't remember if he would tell people there or not.

INT: How did that feel, being...being Jewish in a town where you can't even tell the only Jewish person that you're Jewish?

DOBA: Horrible. Horrible. Horrible. Horrible. I took trips to Lublin where I was born, to look for survivors. I found one cousin who was...who was an attorney. They were, before the war they were rich people.

INT: Oh, yeah, you told me about that family.

DOBA: Yeah. And I found this Adam. His name was Adam. And I told him the whole thing. I says, "I would like to get away. But I have two children." So he was ridiculous. He says, "Why don't you leave one with him, and take one?" I said, "What are you, who are you kidding?" I said, "I couldn't do it." He was still a bachelor. Quite old bachelor. And who he would go out with Gentile girls. He married a Gentile girl. You know what I mean? Later on, he married a much younger, 25 years younger than him. And who do I go for rescue? To him? He would sit, wouldn't let me talk. He said, "Take a book, and read a book." There's only one relative. I mean, relative. At that time, they were rich people. They were not that much in contact with us, you know. But he was second cousin. My grandmother and his grandfather were brothers and sister. You know. So...

INT: That was your only relative that you found?

DOBA: Yeah. Only one relative I found in Poland. And then he says, "Well, you have an alternative. You have a choice. Why don't you leave the children with him? And you come live here in Lublin," which, you couldn't get an apartment there. It was worse than in Leszno. And he says, "I'll get you a job." You know what kind of job he was going to get me? I should clean a house and cook for somebody. Okay?

INT: He wasn't very helpful.

DOBA: No. Oh. He was helpful later on, when I was leaving for Israel. I ask him for a loan. (laughs) I wouldn't do it myself, but I had wonderful, oh, wonderful friends in Poland. Oh, talking about friends. See? One Jewish family I met working in that...pocketbook factory. She was from Russia. Story about her, that's another story. But anyway, we became very friendly, and she had a husband, and a son. They were very friendly. She helped me a lot, and he, he was my lawyer. I mean, he wasn't a lawyer, but he was directing me, to say that, to do this. He says, with this cousin, he inherited a lot of things there. Buildings, and he was able to sell it. And he was, he had money. So he says, "Why don't you ask him to give you a loan?" And I did. (laughs)

INT: Did he give it to you?

DOBA: Yes.

INT: Oh.

DOBA: 10,000 zlotys. So I was able to buy some things to take it to Israel. And I left.

INT: Tell me about your children being born. What year was that?

DOBA: 1948 and 1949.

INT: Uh-huh. One right after the other.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: And you got married in '46?

DOBA: '46.

INT: So what was that like, being a mother? How did that feel?

DOBA: Well...I was, I wanted to be a mother 100 percent, and I had to help out in the restaurant, and nobody sat down and taught me how to raise a child. I was afraid they're going to catch a cold, and I was covering them, always afraid to take them outside. And my older son was sick a lot. That's why he was getting colds and everything. I didn't know anything. This mother, my mother-in-law, she was a **wonderful** woman. **Wonderful**. She actually raised my children.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Beautiful person. Never forget that. And...she was teaching me whatever she could. But then again, she didn't have her own children. (pause) My pressure probably is up. (pause)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Doba Smolanowicz, and it is June 20th, 1995. You had some things you wanted to add.

DOBA: The reason I married that early in my life, because I was lonely since I lost my father, and I didn't talk to anybody, because actually there's nobody I can talk to. All those years I was still searching for his shadows, and I thought I need a man, some kind of security, and I was looking for an older man, of course. And because there was not, there's only a few Jewish men, which unfortunately I didn't meet **any**, and I was in **several** camps: Hanover-Minden, Erholungsheim bei Dassel, Norten-Hardenburg, and another one which I forgot. All those camps. And I was traveling, I did not meet any of the Jewish men. I met Jewish women, and I...I sort of...the freedom was so overwhelming that people went crazy. I didn't know where I'm going, coming or going. I don't know if I want to go to Poland. In one way, I wanted to stay in Germany and wait for a better time to go maybe to the United States. But because of the loneliness, I had a personal, personal experience a little bit. I had to run away from somebody. So I run away from one place, from one person, then I met another person, which was my husband.

So...so I got married in Germany. And we went back to Poland.

INT: Could you tell me about the wedding? Did anyone come?

DOBA: No, my mother didn't come. No, no, my mother didn't come, and I didn't have anybody else. There were friends. There were friends living in that camp. They were there. It was not a huge wedding, it was just a civil ceremony. And there was a few people who were in that camp. It was actually a small camp. It was a Polish army camp after the war, a small camp. I don't remember the number of the people.

INT: When you say that you were, you had said this before in our last interview that you were "overwhelmed with freedom."

DOBA: With freedom, yeah.

INT: And you said that when I asked you how you dealt with your feelings after the war. And you said you were so overwhelmed with your freedom. Could you explain that a little more?

DOBA: Well, I couldn't believe it for the longest time that I'm free, because the war, the war lasted so long. And I was so...what is the word? Oppressed? Oppressed. (pause) I was deprived from so many things that a young person my age needed so badly. I didn't see an egg for three years. I didn't see fresh meat. I mean, little tiny piece, which we had a rationing marks, so we didn't even take the meat. We took a little grease instead of the meat, because meat is just a little bit. You couldn't do. This grease, what we bought instead of the meat, it lasted a whole week, whatever. The ration cards. So I really, not only myself, a lot of people didn't know what they're doing. Many people went to Poland, they came back again. They went to a different country again. Different people. They came back very soon. At that time you could travel. Was able, you were able to travel. The open roads were everywhere. But then it didn't take too long, they closed up the borders, and you couldn't come back. I wanted to come back after a year. I wanted to get out from Poland, but that's, I had to forget about it.

And the loneliness drove me to...I realized that I'm young. I was...I was an adult already when I was ten years old. And I know a lot of things that, maybe children today know, but at that time, they were not **supposed** to know. And I didn't disclose to anybody, I was just listening, and understand everything. So (sighs)...I guess there's some, I'm repeating loneliness. I think that's the worst thing in my life. When I'm lonely, the depression overwhelms. (phone interruption)

INT: When you're talking about the overwhelming feeling of freedom, and I guess what I want to ask you again is, after the war, your feelings, all the pain you'd been through, all the trauma, where did you put it? Did the freedom sort of take over, and at night did you cry? I mean, what did you do with...

DOBA: I had nightmares all the **time**. Terrible nightmares.

INT: After the war.

DOBA: Sure. I **still** have them. But maybe not as many as...as the beginning. I was screaming at night. Did I tell you that during the occupation I was talking in Jewish in my dream?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: So I was screaming. Then, I was talking Polish in my dream, and German (laughs) because I learned German in the meantime. Really...I didn't know what I was doing. I really didn't know. Nobody could sit down with me and tell me, I should do this, I should do that. I was...I didn't have a boss. I didn't have an advisor, like today you go to a psychiatrist, they talk to you. And of course there was none of that. And friends, there were some friends there, and they taught me different things. Wherever **they** were, they, just I should be there, because they wanted me around so. So they did not suggest the right thing, I imagine.

INT: Were you hanging around with older people?

DOBA: Yes, mostly with older people.

INT: After the war.

DOBA: Mostly. I had that one friend, during the war and after the war a little bit. She was my age. I had another one, also. I don't have a picture. Two of them. I was running around with. They were my age. But the older people always were better to me. The young people, they were only trying for themselves, and I was...I wanted to be in their company. Because I always looked for friends. I always did.

INT: So you had this overwhelming sense of freedom, but you had the nightmares at night.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: And did you think back on what had happened to you, or were you trying do you think...

DOBA: Very. Very much. Very much. It's a matter of, maybe for one reason I didn't know what to do. Because I couldn't believe that we were already free. Certain times I thought it will come back. The misery. Many times I thought of it. That it will come back. I had a nightmare, of course, I was there all the time. And always...when I...when I had my children, that's when I had nightmares that they're taking away my children. After, yeah. I don't remember whether I had any nightmares, well, I must have had nightmares that they were taking my **father** away all the time, and the rest of the members of the family, but as far as children of my own started after I gave birth to them. Yeah.

INT: So what were the nightmares before then? Of your other family members?

DOBA: Before, during the occupation, that they're coming and taking my father, because at that time, I still didn't know whether he's alive or not, until 1942, and the end of 1942, I think. October, or November. Something like that. That's when I find out. But I didn't want to believe. I still was telling, I was telling my mother, how can this man be sure? He was telling us that someone **else** told him that Reuben was killed. He didn't tell us that he saw himself. So I was under the impression that he probably doesn't know for sure. And this, I had a little, you

know, fantasy. A little fantasy. That maybe he's wrong. Maybe he's still someplace. And many years after, in Germany when I was working in the fields, I was, when I saw a man, looked a little bit like him, I was sort of coming closer and look at the person. And that was just nonsense. I wouldn't even, I would be ashamed to tell anybody what I was looking for, you know, at that time. Because they would laugh at me. Because where, where? Germany and Poland. He was in Poland. (sighs) I'm sorry that...there's certain...

INT: So you thought a lot about the war right after the war.

DOBA: Oh, yes.

INT: You didn't just put it away.

DOBA: Mm-mm.

INT: Even though this sense of freedom was there.

DOBA: No. No. No, people really...they were traveling back and forth. You saw, every, every half an hour you saw new people passing by. Passing by. Staying for a day or two in the same camp, and if I would ask them, "Where are you going?" "We really don't know where we're going. We're just going. Anyplace, you know."

INT: They were lost, also.

DOBA: They were lost. It wasn't just myself. They were lost. A lot of people were lost.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about your mother right after the war and...I get the sense from you that she wasn't very helpful after the war, either. Before you were involved with this man, was she giving you any guidance? Could you go to her with your nightmares or your fears?

DOBA: No, no. I don't even know whether I had told her about my nightmares. I don't recall that. See, there's, I would probably sit down and tell my father, but I just couldn't sit down and talk to my mother. No. It was a different mentality, and I...maybe I couldn't get to her. Maybe I didn't try hard. I...who knows? Many times I feel guilty. Maybe I did wrong. Maybe I should have done different. But then I try, different, it didn't work out. I went right back to the old stuff. I visited her, you know, after the war. I visited her. And when I was very sick, I got rheumatic fever right after the war, and I was...my right arm and the left leg was stiff. I was lying in bed. And nobody took care of me, so I went to my mother, and I said, "Maybe I'm going to be next to her. Maybe she'll take care of me." I left. I had to leave.

INT: She didn't take care of you when you were sick?

DOBA: No, I did not. I didn't, I expected something which I didn't...didn't, didn't find it. She has her problems. She had her problems, you know. She had a little girl, my sister. She had to, she was always with her. And...she had problems. She had to take care of her. She still, you

know, she was still searching. She find out that she's a widow, but you know, it was difficult. She was alone for so many years. Alone. So I understand that, too. But I was alone. I was alone **alone**. (laughs)

INT: Did you have anybody to talk to, after the war?

DOBA: No. Occasionally I went to Leon Urban, to the wife, to the woman, and I was talking to her about certain, about quite a bit in fact. Quite a bit.

INT: Was that helpful?

DOBA: Apparently to me it was helpful, because I would go back and talk to her again.

INT: They wanted to adopt you at one point.

DOBA: Well, yeah (laughs) they did.

INT: It was kind of a strange relationship.

DOBA: Yeah, they did.

(END TAPE FIVE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)

DOBA: Nightmares after they were threatening. This man and another man over there. I started having nightmares that they took them away from me. And here I...I had dreams that here I am all by myself. And what am I going to **do?** Shall I go with them? That's the war again. When we **couldn't** go with one another. So again, the nightmares. Shall I go with them? Or I should stay where I am and keep quiet? That was after the war. All kinds of nightmares. Yeah.

INT: So you had nobody to talk to, really. Except maybe Leon Urban's wife.

DOBA: That's all, but they were just, you know...actually I couldn't talk **very** sincere, you know, with all my problems. I was just talking to them to make me feel better. Maybe they would say a thing, they would tell me, "Oh, it's going to be alright, you're a good girl," or whatever, you know. So that's all they were telling me. And occasionally she would give me a meal, because we didn't have fresh...a lot of fresh food. Everything was dry at that time. So they were able to get food from somewhere. They would share with me. Especially (laughs) fruit.

INT: Yeah. Your favorite.

DOBA: Yeah. That's my favorite thing. I could have a whole meal from fruit. Blueberries, raspberries and this wild strawberries. Mix them together and give me a piece of bread with butter.

INT: That's all you need, huh?

DOBA: Excuse me? (laughs)

INT: So tell me, tell me a little bit about your husband. Could you talk to **him**?

DOBA: Well, I was talking to him certain things, yes I did. Yeah.

INT: About the war?

DOBA: Yes. We talked about it. He was telling me about his war time, of course. That's why I find out a lot of things about him.

INT: Could you talk a little bit about his war experiences, what happened to him?

DOBA: His war? Yes. Yes. He was telling me that they caught him in Poland, in Leszno, on the street. They took him, and he was, I believe, was he seventeen at that time? He was about four and half years older than myself. And they took him on the transport, and they took him...

INT: But why? He wasn't a Jew.

DOBA: He's Polish. They were taking Polish.

INT: They were also taking Polish people.

DOBA: Yes. Of course! I was as a Pole, you know, under the Aryan papers. And they were taking them, they were taking them to work in Germany, you know, and he was caught one day.

INT: So he wound up in a German labor camp, too, like you.

DOBA: Yeah. He wind up in a smaller farm than myself. His farm only...had two people working there. He and another person. Where the farm where I was, was fifteen people. So it was a bigger one. Where he was, they were calling one family, one family Bauer. Bauer, I think it's a boss or something. I forgot already. I think it's a boss. Bauer is boss. Yeah. Yeah. I called my boss Bauer, too. So they were bosses. And he was working, taking care of the cows, taking care of a lot of, by himself he had to do a lot. And it was not near where I was. He was...in that vicinity, not far from this vicinity where I met him. That's where his labor camp was, in that vicinity. In fact, right before our wedding, we needed some wine. And you couldn't get anything yet. So we walked where he was at one time there, and who did we meet? His Nazi boss. He was still alive after. My husband wanted to kill him, but I guess he couldn't do it anymore, you know. So when he saw him, he would start shaking, because he was afraid. So he said, "Don't worry. Don't worry." And I was present. "Don't worry. I'm not going to hurt you. I'll tell you what you can do for me." He knew what kind of wine he had in the cellar. The best wines. "I need fifteen bottles of wine." And he went there and he took fifteen bottles of wine. You know, I don't like alcohol, but you know that wine I was able to drink? And the funny thing

happened. We took the, he took the wine up to that camp, and we were saving it for the wedding, okay? And before that, the...the British took over. The Americans, and the British took over, and because a lot of people were making this whisky from sugar, from, how do you call it? Bootleggers? That's it. They were bootleggers, because you couldn't buy it. So one time they had...a raid, a raid, yeah. That's what you call it? They came and threw out all the...

INT: Oh, raid, yeah.

DOBA: Raid. All the liquid, what they were doing, they threw it out. And they came to...to his apartment, and they found those bottles of wine. So they took them all. Because they didn't know what it is. You...if they knew it's wine, they wouldn't touch it. You were not allowed to touch wine. But whiskey, you're allowed to confiscate.

INT: Confiscate.

DOBA: Confiscate. So anyway, so I said to them, I said, "This is not whiskey. This is not cognac. And I **know** you're going to bring it back." I knew the rules there at that time. And the wine was so good, that they drank a whole bottle there, and there was one bottle missing. So they brought it back, guess what? They brought us French cognac, a bottle of French cognac, because they had to replace. (laughs) That was an incident, okay.

INT: So he was in this labor camp.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: And what happened to him during the war? He worked there all through the war?

DOBA: Yeah, he worked there. He even was caught before 1942, I think. Much, much before. I don't remember the year he had told me. Yeah, he was working all the time there. And he was hungry. He didn't have clothes to wear. And he got involved with this German girl, which her husband went to the front to fight. And she was helping him a little bit, he told me. They didn't have too much, the German people at that time, but whatever they had, it was a little better than we did. So she was helping him, bringing some food or whatever. I don't remember. And apparently he had relations with her, because that's when...they find out about it, and they were looking for him. He was hiding. Yeah. You know, sometimes I can talk, and all of a sudden I get stuck. Block. Block. Unless you want to ask me something.

INT: I'll ask you more. I wanted to ask you about his war experiences, and then your marriage, if you could talk about it.

DOBA: You mean, my husband's war experiences? Well, since I didn't know him then, so I was just, from his stories he would tell me.

INT: Would the two of you talk about it a lot, the war?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Would the two of you talk a lot about the war?

DOBA: Not, not a lot, no. I only was telling him who I am, and he knew about my family.

INT: He knew you were Jewish.

DOBA: Oh, sure. Yeah, right away.

INT: And you said that didn't bother him.

DOBA: Oh, no, no. He had told me that he was going out with a Jewish girl. Apparently when he was very young, in Leszno. And Leszno is a city that is on the border with the German border, so it was not a primarily Jewish city. It was not too many. He had told me that. But somehow he knew somebody, he was going out with her, and he tried to, at the beginning of the war he had told me that he tried to help her out a little bit. Because he was, she was already...she was persecuted, yeah. The Jewish people. But then they caught him. They caught him and they took him away. He doesn't know what happened to her. That he told me some...some stories about her.

INT: So he was not anti-Semitic.

DOBA: No, not at all. All the years I was with him. You know, I was like...**looking** for it, that he should say it one time, you know? And I had, I would have a reason to...finish with him or whatever. Not even **once**. When people were talking about, against Jews, I was afraid to say anything, to...to defend. But he would. He would defend. In a very intelligent way. He was...an educated person. Yeah. And I was present when he was talking about it. He didn't even look at me, watching me on my face. He was just doing his...so I didn't have anything against him as a person.

INT: Did your mother ever meet him?

DOBA: Yes, she did. She met him when I met him, recently after I met him. She came to see, to visit. And she met him. And I never forget. She says to me, "Would you please take care of my daughter?" And she left. Because she had my...my sister. She left her in Hanover-Minden. And of course she was afraid because she left her alone there with this man, you know. I don't want to talk about it. (laughs) Yeah. So she liked him. She liked him quite a bit. And all of a sudden, she changed. Because apparently, she didn't know it's going to become so serious, and because she's Jewish. Well, in a way I don't blame her, in a way. But...my situation was different altogether, and I was broken-hearted because there was no closeness with her. She tried to help us, of course. During the German occupation, whatever she could do for me and for my sister, she did. I think every mother would do that. Well, she talks about it a lot, today. There's not one time she wouldn't mention what she did for me, she saved my life and all. But I think we saved each **other's** life.

INT: It sounds like you did a lot to save your own life.

DOBA: To each other, yeah. Because what, what would happen? She'd get in an argument. I don't know who started it. It doesn't matter who starts. She knows who she was, and she should be quiet. So she got in a very, very...big argument with this person or that person. And of course, the first thing, they wanted to, you know, "Zydowa, Zydowa!"

INT: And you had to try to make peace?

DOBA: Yes. Every time.

INT: Because it was so terrifying.

DOBA: Every time I went through what I went through, inside. I couldn't wait till I get away from work, because we have to work a certain time. So I would run, at night I would run to their apartment. And I would, I don't remember what I was telling them, but I made peace. Each time, I made peace. I made peace between Leon Urban and his wife, between my mother. Then another time I made peace between Laboshewsky, which is the other guy, and his wife. The wife instigated the guy, and he would go on. They liked me also. I made peace with them, because their baby loved me very much. And then this little Juzik, Joseph, **also**, you know? My mother threw his hat down on the ground. Did I tell you this incident?

INT: No. It was on the other interview with Dr. Brenner.

DOBA: Oh, okay. So you know.

INT: But tell a little bit.

DOBA: We're going to work on a wagon, horses and wagon. We're on the top, and they're going fast, and she got in an argument with him. I don't remember why. How it start. He had one hat. That was his whole...that's the hat.

INT: The one in the picture.

DOBA: Yeah. She took his hat and she threw on the ground, and the horses went. You know what I did? I think I told. I jumped from a speeding wagon -- I could have been killed, too -- to get his hat because I know the consequences. I knew what could be the consequences. He was hollering, "Zydowa!" everywhere. Germans didn't understand. But all the people on the wagon knew. Okay? That was his revenge, like. So I took the hat and I gave it to him. I says, I said, "Be quiet." I said. "Be quiet. You know, she's nervous and all. She went through a lot." So I kept him quiet. And every time I...if I wasn't there, I don't know how (laughs) You know, but mostly I was there.

INT: So she was putting your lives in jeopardy by her own temper, and...

DOBA: She did. She did. Yeah, my sister doesn't realize that. Well, I don't talk much with my sister about the war, or anything. In fact, I did ask her, "Would you like to talk?" Because I told her about you. I didn't tell my mother, but her I told. I says, "Please don't tell my mother, because she's against everything, and she's going to say that I'm a liar." So she says, "No." She says, "Not for me." I think I mentioned this.

INT: She's never told her story to anyone?

DOBA: No. No. Some people can't do it, that's all. She remembers a **lot**.

INT: As young as she was. She remembers.

DOBA: Very. She was very bright. Very bright. Did I tell you when she was hiding behind some chest of drawers?

INT: And she was very quiet.

DOBA: Yeah. The Germans came in, the Nazis came in, and she didn't cry.

INT: She was five years old when that happened.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: So your mother in the beginning liked your husband.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: Because she didn't think it was going to, anything was going to come out of it, that you were going to get married.

DOBA: She brought me flowers. It was about my birthday. It was a little bit early. She came, and she brought me flowers. And she asked him, "Please take care of my daughter, Marisha." My name was Marisha. And he says, "I will." He promised her. "I will." And in a way he tried, you know, but he was young, and he was raised without family actually. He was always...even when he was in the restaurant, nobody raised him. He raised himself. And...he had a tendency, I don't know whether it's a family, of drinking problem. Drinking problem. He would not drink by himself, but he always wanted company. And he would have **loved** to drink with me. But I **never** wanted. I never. I **hated** whiskey. And I'm allergic to whiskey, even to wine. And he had no choice, so he was finding always friends, to be with them, and have a drink.

INT: This happened early on in your marriage?

DOBA: (sighs) Not too early. Later, later on. Maybe five years later. Five years later. Well, I had children, so...I didn't have time to pay attention to too much. I was very...some mothers, they have a plan how to raise the children. I didn't have a plan. I was just working myself, and I

had two children in one year. So it was not easy. And...there was no instruction to go. Today you go to Parenthood, whatever. At that time, there was nobody, nobody could tell you how to do. I did many, many wrong things. I...I was afraid that my older son would catch a cold, so I bundled him up, and that's the worst thing I did. That's why he was so sick. Yeah.

INT: Why do you think that caused him to be sick?

DOBA: Because I bundled him up, I was afraid to take him out. He was not outside for a whole year, because I didn't have a carriage. I didn't have any money to buy it. And I was afraid to take him out, somehow. I had, you know, like I said, two, it was probably difficult to carry, or then I had to help them in the restaurant, too.

INT: You married your husband in Germany, and how soon after your marriage did you decide to go back to Poland?

DOBA: I think after a half a year.

INT: Half a year. And you lived in that camp for half a year with him?

DOBA: Yeah. Half a year in that camp.

INT: Did you get pregnant right away in the camp?

DOBA: No, no, no, no.

INT: No.

DOBA: When I was twenty.

INT: Okay. So you got married at seventeen and a half, you stayed there till you were about eighteen.

DOBA: Something like that.

INT: And then you told me I think in our last interview, that you left him for a little bit and went back to your mother.

DOBA: Yeah, when I was still in Germany. I didn't leave him because I wanted to leave him. I was sick, and I...

INT: Oh, it was the rheumatic fever?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Was that when you had rheumatic fever?

DOBA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and I wanted my mother to pamper me. I still was hoping that she's going to pamper me.

INT: So you weren't leaving him necessarily.

DOBA: No, no, no, I wasn't leaving. But (laughs) I actually had mixed feelings then, already, you know? Mixed feelings.

INT: Regrets?

DOBA: Some. Some. Because my mother was talking to me, talking to me, "What did you do? What did you do? You couldn't meet a Jew? You could wait a little longer." You know. My mind was only so, could only, you know, take it so much, and then I start thinking different. And I say, "Why didn't I wait? Maybe I should wait." And then he was saying to me, "If you're not going to go with me, I'll go myself." And I was scared that he's going to leave me already, when I was seventeen and a half, I was afraid. Because this man, who was with my mother at that time, he was saying that, in fact, before marriage, that he would never marry me. He was like, he was like making fun, you know. So this, this went in my mind. That maybe he's going to leave me. And where am I going to be? My mother doesn't want me, okay? So I'm going to be alone again. So that's the fear I had.

INT: So you went with him.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: What was that like, going back to Poland?

DOBA: Well, first it was excited. I was excited. I never, I was never in that city before. I guess because I was young, and by the way, I had rheumatic fever, I was sick for a half a year. I was mostly lying in bed. And when I crossed the border, guess what? I got better. I crossed the borders, I find myself in Poland, I got better. That's the climate. I never forget. I was able to walk. I had pains, I still have pain. But it was not, it was much different.

INT: How did you catch the rheumatic fever?

DOBA: During the occupation, I was sick with tonsils. I had, I was a lot. What do you call it?

INT: Tonsillitis?

DOBA: Tonsillitis, yeah. Antzindung, in Jewish. Antzindung. How do you say in English? (laughs) Anyway. So I was sick a lot. There was no medication. I went to work in the wet and everything. And it was like, I guess, my tonsils were infected all the time. And little by little, I guess, I went and my...my system, and I got rheumatic fever. And then, oh, I had to take off my tonsils, right away after the war. That's when I got rheumatic fever. They took out my tonsils, and right away after the operation, I got rheumatic fever.

INT: Where did that happen, in Germany?

DOBA: In Germany. While I was in the hospital, with the tonsils, operation of tonsils.

INT: So you, you went to Poland, you felt better. You got better from the rheumatic fever.

DOBA: Yeah, I did.

INT: And you were a little bit excited about going back to Poland.

DOBA: Oh, yes, because I'm going to meet, I was scared, too. You know, because...I didn't know what I'm going to tell strange people, his parents, you know.

INT: About being Jewish?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. So...

INT: Did you talk to him about that, what you should do?

DOBA: To them?

INT: To him. To him. Did you ask him?

DOBA: Oh, yes. Yes. We talked. We talked. We sat down and we talked, and he had told me, he says, "You can do it whatever you wish. Whatever you wish, I will honor it. But, if you want my advice, you have a choice. You can always change your mind later on. Try out not to tell them. Because after all this is a city where there's no Jewish people there. And apparently anti-Semitism is worse." And I, that's what happened. I waited and waited till I...till I tell them, and it passed time, and I didn't. And he didn't, either. We didn't. He never mentioned anything to me, about telling them or not, and I...I don't know if I decided at that time, or I just, it was just timing, or...I just forgot the word. It was just pending. Pending. Whether I'm going to tell them, or I'm not going to tell them, or what is going to be the consequence if I tell them. Maybe I would have to leave after I told him. Where am I going to go? I have no family of my own. Because my mother stayed in Germany. And...so it went through years that I didn't tell them.

INT: How many years?

DOBA: Many years. You know, at that time I didn't realize, but today, the people living in Poland, and they still, assimilate? Assimilate. And I understand perfectly. Every one has some reason. I met this Holocaust survivor in London, I think I told you that? He's a doctor. Do you know that he doesn't talk about being Jewish? Still now. He told me. We had a nice beautiful conversation. He came to the hotel, and he understood me, and I understood him. Yeah.

INT: How did you feel then, not telling anyone, all those years?

DOBA: You mean over there? It was horrible. Horrible. When I hear a Jewish song, "Shtetele Belz?" I was sitting near the radio, I was crying, and I couldn't say anything. I was telling my husband about it, but I couldn't tell. I was afraid to tell. The fear, my whole life. Fear of a **lot** of things. And that's why probably I'm so sick today from all kinds of things. I have a fear of...walking by myself. I have a fear of going on a bus, unless someone will be with me. I don't travel. I don't like to go someplace. I'm afraid. I have physical pains, also, of course. But the fears are overwhelming.

INT: When did those...I guess it's agoraphobia. Agoraphobia that you have.

DOBA: Everything. Everything.

INT: When did that start? Did that start back in Poland?

DOBA: It started...I probably had it in Poland, little by little, but I didn't realize. But actually it started on full speed...about 1971. About that time. My first attack was when I was going to work, and I got very upset that morning with my older son. I didn't sleep. And I started getting the palpitations. Horrible palpitations, and I couldn't walk one step. I sort of froze. I stayed next to the wall on Walnut Street, you know? Broad and Walnut. Next to the wall. I had to go to work, because they were waiting for me. It was Seventeenth and Walnut, a few blocks. And I never forget. This man who knew me from, I guess from Rittenhouse Square, where I used to go for lunch to Rittenhouse Square. I was young, so you know, men walked over, talked to me. And he saw me standing there. He looks at me. "Can I help you? Can I help you?" I never forget. He was a Frenchman. And I said, "No." I refused. I don't know how I made it to work, but when I got to work, my palpitation didn't want to stop. Apparently I didn't take my medicine. I was, at that time, I was very careless with taking medication. I'm supposed to take for blood pressure medication. And I wind up in the hospital that morning.

INT: So you have high blood pressure.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Now, today, you have it also.

DOBA: Yeah. Very.

INT: And you had it back then, in 1971.

DOBA: I had it when I was in my twenties. It started when I was in my twenties.

INT: Can you remember any feelings of...of the agoraphobia in Poland in those early years?

DOBA: I remember when I...a few years after I arrived in Poland...I was on a dancing floor. You know, in Poland, they had a lot of parties. I didn't appreciate to go to parties. Sometimes I have to. And I am on the floor, and dancing with someone, and I got scared. I thought I'm

fainting. So at that time, I didn't know whether my pressure was high, and that's when I remember. Yeah. I had to stop, and I couldn't...

INT: It was like a panic attack.

DOBA: Yeah. That was a panic...I couldn't tell anything, because I was scared to tell. At that time, who heard of panic attacks?

INT: Nobody ever heard of them, no. Nobody knew what it was.

DOBA: I didn't even know there were such things, myself. So...but I was going on and on and on, and then the second palpitation I had when...oh, many years later. I was living in a different city already. They took away also in 1956, they took away all the properties from the Polish people, from everybody, from this Leszno, and the whole Poland. They came at 8:00 in the morning, and they took away, they closed up all the pharmacies, private pharmacies, and they closed up all the hotels. They took over. The Polish government, under Russian rules. And they took away the hotel from my in-laws. But we were living...she was, why she was good. When I arrived in Poland, and I had nothing. I had one dress, and whatever else, I don't remember. And when I came, the first thing, she opened the doors, and she, they prepared, I told you that? They prepared an apartment for us.

INT: No.

DOBA: With beautiful white furniture? I'll never forget. I loved. And I walked in, and he says -- I never forget -- he says, "This is yours, my daughter." Her husband.

INT: Wow.

DOBA: "This is yours. Enjoy it. You're going to live here with us." With us, we were separate. We had...

INT: You had your own apartment in the same...

DOBA: Yeah. One bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen. And they were living on the other side, towards the front. You could go in either way. You could go through them, or from three sides you can get in.

INT: But you had privacy.

DOBA: Yes, yes, if I wanted, of course, I had privacy. And they had given me everything. They gave me clothes and everything.

INT: So your in-laws were very kind people.

DOBA: Very kind. At that time, I didn't realize. I thought it's coming to me. But when I start realizing, when I came to the States, how good they were. Here, I, such a thing, I wasn't treated with.

INT: Tell me about having your children. Can you talk a little bit about that? What that was like, and giving birth to them, and...

DOBA: Yeah. In 1948, my son Ted was born. You know why I gave him the name Ted? That's another story.

During the occupation, still German occupation, I was in this camp, and people were...the war was coming closer to an end, and the Germans knew...

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SIX, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: The boss of those two people was related to my boss. The Nazi boss. When the Russians were coming closer, so German people got scared. Very much scared of the Russians, more than of the Americans, and they start running. Wherever they could, they run away from one part, going closer with it, where the Americans were going to come in. They knew. And they were there, those two men, and one of them, I met. His name was Tadeusz. And I think he was Jewish, but he didn't say anything. My mother says he was Jewish. I don't know how she knew. And I don't know whether I was in love with him, or...just...wanted to belong. Very attraction, or something. When the bombs were falling, and we went to the bunker. There was actually not a regular bunker. It was just a hole in the ground, and we jumped in there, I never forget, and I think he kissed me. (laughs) That's the first time. And he had given me this bracelet.

INT: The one you're wearing now?

DOBA: (nods) And I don't know why, I don't know whether it was love or not, but I decided if I had a child, a boy, I'm going to give him that name.

INT: Tadeusz?

DOBA: And my husband agreed to it.

INT: Did he know who the man was?

DOBA: Yes. Yes, he knew. So that's the story about it, but...

INT: So you call him Ted for short.

DOBA: Yeah, well, here, Tadeusz. Here is in America, Ted. But that's where the name comes from. And he was just for a short time, and I was young, I was very careless. I sort of liked him, but I never told him, and he left right after the war, he left. I understand that he killed him, this Nazi boss. He took revenge on him. And people told me, I didn't want to listen to it. He was a high Nazi. He lost, at that time, I knew him, because he came to our camp. He had only one eye. He lost this on the war. His boss. And when the Russians were coming closer, they start running again, okay? They went from us, running someplace else. And I don't know what happened to both of those men, Tadeusz, and the other man. But then after just a little bit, the war finished, I see him back. This Tadeusz came back to this camp, and I had mixed feelings. I don't know why he came back, whether he came back for me, but also, there was a lot of jewelry. They were hidden under the ground. And he helped to hide the jewelry. Okay?

INT: Whose jewelry was it?

DOBA: That was the Nazi boss's jewelry. Probably from Jewish people, taken, you know. So he made sure that he gets some out, or maybe all of them, and he gave me this from that.

INT: And why do you still wear it?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: You've worn it all this time?

DOBA: I didn't wear it for many years. I started wearing, you know when I start wearing? About in the late seventies. I don't know why. I had it all the time with me. It was lying there.

INT: What's it made out of? It's beautiful.

DOBA: This is amber and silver. It's an antique.

INT: It's beautiful.

DOBA: Yeah. And he gave me two rings. One ring was...what is the very, very expensive metal? Gold, platinum. With beautiful black stones. And another ring. I gave it to my friend. Right away, I gave it away. He had given me silver, or gold money. What kind of money they had. You know.

INT: Coins.

DOBA: Coins, yeah. A lot of coins. He wanted to give me. I said, "I don't want it." He gave it to someone else. You see how little I care about...about...

INT: Material things?

DOBA: Material things. I didn't care.

INT: Why do you think that is? I mean, you didn't **have** anything.

DOBA: I didn't have any, and I never cared for material things after the war. And it took me many, many years until I start caring. Many years. I just didn't care. That's why I didn't grab fur coats and jewelry when...

INT: Why do you think that is, though?

DOBA: I have no idea. I never find out why. I don't know. Maybe you know.

INT: Like how do you feel about money now? Is it scary when you don't have it, do you feel...

DOBA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I am very sick when I don't have food in the refrigerator. And when I find myself, I forget some money in my purse, I'm getting scared. But mostly not as much as money. As food.

INT: Food is important.

DOBA: Yeah. This is the more important than money. But again, of course, if you don't have money, you don't buy food.

INT: Right.

DOBA: But...my brain's working a little different.

INT: Do you keep your refrigerator pretty full most of the time?

DOBA: No. I think I'm getting away from it already, slowly. I happen to have more today, because I just...I had it delivered.

INT: But how about after the war, right after the war?

DOBA: Oh, after the war. Well, like after the war we still didn't have fresh meat, you know, so we had those pictures. I have plenty of them. We had cigarettes. They were giving me so many cigarettes. I tried one time, I didn't like cigarettes, so I gave it away. Every time I gave it away. So, did I tell you about the eggs?

INT: You ate too many. And you don't eat them now, because you get sick.

DOBA: Yeah, I don't like them. Yeah. But...

INT: Okay, so you named your son Ted, after this man. So what did that feel like having a baby? You were twenty when you....

DOBA: Yeah. I was twenty. And...I was pregnant, and I had a lot of pains. I had tremendous pains when I had the menstruation. I had, like every time, like someone would go give birth to a child. Terrible pains. And then when I was, when I got pregnant, I had worse pains. In fact...for some reason I didn't know for two months, and I was going to different doctors, I had to go to Poznan at that time. And they wanted to do surgery. They thought I have a...

INT: Tumor? Or a cyst?

DOBA: That's it. The doctor decided I have a tumor in that local hospital in Leszno. I was in the hospital preparing for an operation. They didn't give me anesthesia, but they prepared me, and all of a sudden, there was an older doctor and a younger doctor. The younger doctor, he says, "Well, I mean, it's not an urgent thing. Why don't we let it wait another week?" In the meantime, in that week I went to Poznan to a specialist, and the specialist recognized right away. So they almost did a big mistake. And then I came back from Poznan, and I went back, I started hollering on those doctors. They almost did something very bad. But...

My labor was very hard, very hard.

INT: Did your mother-in-law help you a little bit?

DOBA: My mother was here.

INT: Your mother-in-law.

DOBA: Oh, yes.

INT: She helped you?

DOBA: Excuse me. (pause) She took over the whole raising of both children.

INT: Why did she take it over? Was it hard for you?

DOBA: Yeah. I had a lot of fears. When my child got sick -- Ted was sick a lot -- I was able to stop any car on the drive, on the...on the road. "My child is sick. You **have** to take him to the hospital." I didn't care where he was going, this particular man. Usually men were drivers there, women very seldom so, drivers in Poland. And you know, I stopped like this.

INT: You stood in front of the car and just...

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. And I was twenty, a little bit more than twenty.

INT: Were you scared?

DOBA: Yeah. That my child's gonna die. And I says, "You have to take him to the hospital." As soon as I got to the hospital, then my mother-in-law came. You know what I did? I left her. I left my mother-in-law. I could not face it. Is this normal?

INT: You left...I'm sorry.

DOBA: I left my mother-in-law with the child in the hospital, and I went back, I had another one at home, you know.

INT: And you went back, because you had the baby at home. You couldn't deal with him being sick?

DOBA: I couldn't deal. I couldn't. And every time he was sick, my mother-in-law would take over.

INT: You got scared.

DOBA: Yeah. I mean, I'm asking myself today, is that normal? To...when I see other mothers today, they do certain things, and you know what? I sympathize with them. It's different nature. Different...

INT: What things? What things do they do, do you mean?

DOBA: They leave children. I wouldn't leave my children forever. But when I left a sick child, I know that he had tremendous care. My mother-in-law. She would do **everything**. And she knew better than I did. So that's why I don't know why I was doing that all the time. Couldn't face it.

INT: Was that all through their childhood, your two boys?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Did that last all through their childhood?

DOBA: You mean the fear?

INT: When they would get sick, you would get very frightened?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Mostly my older, yeah. I would run to the doctor with them. I would, the First Aid, you know what I mean? I would run, I would do the most. And then sort of, I was calmer, because he was there, where he was supposed to be, and my mother-in-law took over. That's my...my brains were working that way.

INT: Where do you think that fear came from?

DOBA: I have no idea. Maybe because I had so much losses, I just couldn't **face** it. I just couldn't face...G-d forbid, I just...just...

INT: And when did the nightmares start? Was that soon after your babies were born?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Right away.

INT: And those were nightmares about the children in the ghetto?

DOBA: (whispers) Yeah, sure. They're taking away the children, and they're tearing them apart. The mother pulls to her, and the...Gestapo pulls to him.

INT: Did you see that happen?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: You saw that?

DOBA: I did, yeah. In ghetto. It was the Lublin ghetto. (sighs)

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Doba Smolanowicz. It's July 6th, 1995. The last time we left off we were talking about you giving birth to your children, and your fear for them when they were sick, and a little bit about what life was like in Poland after the war. I'm wondering if you could talk to me a little bit about your relationship with your husband, and what it was like in those early years when you were, when you became a mother, and what your married life was like in Poland.

DOBA: Well... number one, the reason I got married, I wanted to belong to someone because I was so, I thought I was...all the time abandoned. My father was not with me. And I was looking for a male, and I really wasn't in love. It was attraction, but I was not in love, and I married this person. I felt that he's, I felt that he will protect me.

And what did I know? I was seventeen and a half. For a while I was still in Germany in that...in that Polish camp. And then, and then a half a year later...he decided he wants to go back to Poland because he left his parents there, and he felt like he's obligated to be near them, because they had a business, a restaurant, a hotel, and there was no other relative near them, and he wanted to go back.

Well, I had mixed feelings already. Very soon I got mixed feelings. I didn't want to go to Poland. And on the other hand, I was afraid that he's going to leave me alone. He's going to leave me, abandon me **again**. I will be abandoned again. I already mentioned that my mother and I, we never had good relations. And there was no other relative that I can turn to. And I was having my own battle with myself, because I couldn't even talk to anybody.

Finally, with crying and begging that please, let's not go now, maybe we'll go later, my husband decided -- well, I don't know if he **would** go, but he told me -- if I don't go with him, he'll go by himself. And I got scared. I wanted to go back to my mother in that big camp, but at that time she had a companion. Well, she had a companion before, but she still had that companion, and I didn't like the companion, and I couldn't get along with my sister, either. She was...still young, but...(sighs) Well, I felt like I'm a black sheep. Today I know what that means, but at that time I didn't, but I can translate it now. So my only...solution at **that** time, I **thought**, to go with my husband, go to Poland. I knew that I would have a place where to live. I knew that, because...he described me the parents, and I knew they're nice people. So I left.

In fact, it helped my health in a way. It's very ironic. I had rheumatic fever right after...well, soon after the war, I think. I was, I had my tonsils removed, I got rheumatic fever, and for many, many weeks, I was, I don't know what you would call here. My left arm and my right leg. I couldn't move. There was no medication at that time. And when I left, when I left Germany, -- and I don't know what happened -- my pains went away. Maybe the time just worked itself, I don't know. Well, I had some pains left, of course, and I still have problems today, but not as I was sick when I was in that, in Germany in that camp. So I was thanking G-d for that. I was able to walk around and do things.

And when I arrived to his parents was Leszno. The name of the city is Leszno. It was near Poznan. And they...received me **very** warm. **Very** warm. They prepared already for me an apartment. Ready to move in and stay there. All...did I mention this to you before? All in white. And she was looking at my hands. And I had a wedding band at that time, because I exchanged with a friend, with a person. I had a beautiful ring, and I couldn't buy a wedding band, so I exchanged with her. She gave me this wedding band, so, they look at my fingers, and I had this wedding band, but my husband didn't. So they went out and they bought him. The first, they think it's important.

And they gave us the first clothes, and they gave us food, and they gave me some money, not much. So I thought I am in heaven, because...after the war, I was...I felt terrific, but the time I was in Germany after the war, we didn't have fresh meat for example. We were getting the packages. We had enough food but, I was...I missed a lot of things. And when I arrived there, I had many things that I didn't have before.

INT: Did they know you were Jewish?

DOBA: No. No, they didn't. Well, my husband and I had a conversation soon as we arrived. We had a conversation. And he asked me which way I want it: would I want to tell them right away that I'm Jewish -- it would be fine with him; or, we can go the other way, not to tell them, and he explained me the reason. It's a city...I don't even know whether, I met one Jewish person over there. I didn't look, but I met him. I don't know any other Jewish people there. If they were Jewish, they were under different names. I think my surgeon, I think, was Jewish. I think. Very much. But he, he was...

INT: Pretending not to be?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: Was it because of the anti-Semitism in Poland?

DOBA: Yes. It was a very, well, yeah, it was already, it was near the German border, and so I decided not to tell for a while. I didn't know what to continue, maybe I'll change my mind, and it went on, it went on that they didn't know. Maybe they knew, but I thought they don't know.

Later, years later -- I'm jumping now, because there is a reason -- years later, when I already, when I was in the United States after being in Israel and coming to the United States, there was some mail sent to her. (pause) Okay, years later, she received a letter from one of my relatives. I didn't know about it. This letter was sent back with another letter enclosed, a letter written from my mother-in-law. Her name was Helena. That "I knew anyway that she was Jewish," because the letter was describing that I was Jewish, and she's saying that she knew that I was Jewish anyway, and it never bothered her. Very smart lady. And it doesn't bother her now, "and here are back, is back your mail."

INT: Wow! She was a good person.

DOBA: Very. This letter came to my hands. I never showed this letter to my relative.

INT: The letter that you got from your mother-in-law.

DOBA: It's in my heart.

INT: It's in your heart.

DOBA: And it's not only that was written. Other things, very bad things, which wasn't true. Other things were not true. And...oh, I did, I did, yeah, I did face this person, and I said, "Why?" Well, the answer was, "Why shouldn't she suffer? I suffered."

INT: Why shouldn't your mother-in-law suffer?

DOBA: That's right. I said, "Well, she didn't do anything to **you**." But nevertheless...

INT: This was many years after you'd already left your husband, right?

DOBA: When I was in Philadelphia. 196...the end of 1962, or the beginning of 1963.

INT: So that was the first time you ever...did you ever feel that your mother-in-law knew when you were living there that you were Jewish?

DOBA: At that time I didn't want to think about it. I had other problems. I don't recall that I was...that I was...(pause) what's the word in English? That I was aware of it, to think this way or that way, because I was going on. I had two children. In one year I had two children. My oldest

one was very sick all the time. I was wrapped up with raising them, and I had, I didn't know how to raise. I didn't have any teaching. And my mother-in-law, actually, she never **had** had children, she never had children.

INT: Right. She adopted your husband.

DOBA: She didn't adopt him. She was just raising him. He was her husband's brother's son. Who he became an orphan at an early age.

INT: So she never had her own children.

DOBA: No, never.

INT: But she was showing you how to raise children. She was teaching you.

DOBA: But I thought she's not right, because I knew she didn't have children, and I wanted to raise my way. I was wrong, too. Because I was afraid to take him outside, my baby, that he's going to get a cold, and I was...putting a lot of clothes on him. That's why he was sick.

INT: Now you were explaining last time that you think the reason for your fear for your children is because of all the losses that you suffered in the war.

DOBA: Yeah. That's true. That's very important. I was always afraid that I shouldn't lose them in **any** circumstance. I was afraid I'm going to lose. Either way, I had nightmares; I still have them today. And it went over to my grandchildren, even. I have nightmares about my grandchildren, now. Because I, consciously, semi-consciously when I dream, I know I have grandchildren, and now I'm afraid of them, that they should not...be taken away.

INT: What's going to happen to them? You're afraid they're going to be taken away.

DOBA: That's right. I mean, in dreams.

INT: So that's your nightmares, are always the same?

DOBA: Well, no. Different. It went over to my grandchildren, now.

INT: How frequently do you have these nightmares, by the way? Would you say?

DOBA: Not too...I don't think I have as often as I had before. I think it's a little less. Maybe because I'm taking a lot of...

INT: Tranquilizers or sedatives?

DOBA: Sedatives. I take a lot of sedatives.

INT: So you don't dream as much, because you're on the sedatives?

DOBA: Yes, probably. I don't know. Because I've been taking, because of my high blood pressure and all.

INT: When you were, after the war, when you were in Poland, and you had your children, did you have nightmares very frequently?

DOBA: **Very**.

INT: Very frequently?

DOBA: I even...I screamed at night. And...

INT: Did your husband help you with that at all? How did you deal with those nightmares?

DOBA: He woke me up, yes. He woke me up. He was always...protective, how do you say?

INT: Protective? Comforting?

DOBA: Comforting. When he would be **there**. Because (laughs shortly) many times he wasn't there. But if he would be there, only him knew what I went through in the whole family. My children didn't know.

INT: How would he comfort you?

DOBA: He...he says, "You have to realize that there is no war anymore. It's freedom." Because he went through, he went through a lot. He had a...he had **his** Holocaust. Even he wasn't Jewish, but he went through for, because he was taken from the streets, when the Nazis took him from the streets and took him to Germany.

INT: Right. You told me in passing -- not on the tape, I don't think -- that, and you showed me pictures, that your husband had lost his hair soon after the war. All his hair.

DOBA: Yes, yes, he...

INT: And he said it was from standing in the water, hiding. And I was wondering about that, and I thought, did he get malaria? Because malaria will cause hair loss.

DOBA: I don't think so. I'm not sure, but he didn't mention that. He was saying because of the water, but actually he didn't determine that.

INT: Did he ever say he had malaria or anything?

DOBA: No. I don't remember that word malaria, no. But he was pretty sick. He was...a lot, he was sick.

INT: Did he have nightmares? I'm just curious. Would he also have?

DOBA: (sighs, pause) I don't remember whether he was telling me these things or not. I don't remember.

INT: So you must have been afraid to go to sleep, even.

DOBA: I, yes. Yes. I was afraid to go to sleep. Well, I did mention what during the war was. I start speaking in Jewish in dream. And then my mother told me, she gave me some good lessons. She said, "You have to..."

INT: Forget that language.

DOBA: You have to...see, I forgot the name.

INT: Dream in Polish, or...(pause)

DOBA: Have to block it out. We don't know whether we're going to survive, but you have to block it out. And I took this to my mind very deeply, and soon enough I learned to speak German, because it was a necessity there, and I spoke Polish to my mother and my sister, and then I learn Russian also, so I spoke all the other languages. And I **did** block out the Jewish, altogether. Without a psychiatrist.

INT: It's amazing. How did you do that?

DOBA: I have no idea how I did. I guess, the mother is, adventure? How do you say that?

INT: "Necessity is the mother of invention."

DOBA: That was in my case one of them.

INT: You figured it out, how to do it, because you **had** to.

DOBA: So then I start dreaming in Polish. Yeah. The nightmares came in Polish, and if I ever spoke in my dream, it was Polish.

INT: But you had the fears for your children, that they would be taken away from you. You have fears now for your grandchildren.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: And your husband...

DOBA: I was so scared all the time that I would not permit my sons to be circumcised. I told you that?

INT: Right. You told me that.

DOBA: And then I left it to them. When they were older, I left it to them. "If you want it, you can do it." But I did not want to do it, because the fear.

INT: How could you have done it, though, anyway, because in Poland...

DOBA: I could have done it, of course.

INT: There was no rabbi or anybody to do it.

DOBA: I'm sure if I would look for somebody I would find somebody.

INT: I see.

DOBA: And it would be easy.

INT: But you were afraid they would be identified as Jews.

DOBA: That's right. That something's going to happen, and they, because there were pogroms there. How many pogroms. I went to visit Lublin where I was born, and there was a pogrom the same day!

INT: Really.

DOBA: Mm-hm.

INT: When was this? What year was that?

DOBA: I think 1948 or 49. There was quite a few pogroms.

INT: You were there when there was a pogrom?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: What happened?

DOBA: Well, they were killing Jewish people wherever they could find them, sure. I was not staying too long. I was staying a few days. I was not staying in the house where I was born. I just went to visit. Maybe I slept one night to a very nice person, that she helped me before.

(END TAPE SIX, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

INT: Interview with Doba Smolanowicz. It's July 13th, 1995. What I'd like to start with today is your married life in Poland, how those years went, and a little bit about the Jewish identity issue. That's been a big issue in your life. You had to hide during the war your identity, you had to pretend you were a non-Jew. You wound up marrying a man who was not Jewish. You had to hide your identity in Poland. You had mentioned in one of the interviews that from time to time you would...it depended on what city you were in, that sometimes you would "come out" as a Jew in some cities. Could you talk a little bit about your Jewish identity and how that's changed, or affected you during your life?

DOBA: Well, mostly because I still have, I had the fears, which they are still with me not as much, of being persecuted. But then when I got into the situation, I married a non-Jew, then at that time -- it was always temporarily, but it took so many years -- we decided not to reveal in that particular city where we used to live, because I was there, I never met another Jew. Well, I met somebody just casually. But he was already leaving the country at that time, who didn't know I was Jewish. I just happened to meet him. He was coming to the restaurant. I didn't know anybody else. I thought that the surgeon that I...that he did some surgery on me, I think that he was Jewish, but he was not. He was under...under...he didn't identify himself as a Jew. And that's all. I never met another Jewish person in that whole city, for so many years.

And I...you know, when I went to Bratslav -- which is a large city in Poland; it used to be called Breslau, and it used to belong to Germany before -- when I went there, I actually lived in the Jewish community. I, for about a year or two years, I lived there. I lived in two places, actually. In Bratslav, and Leszno.

INT: Did you live with your husband in Bratslav?

DOBA: No. At that time, he was...he was arrested. He was in jail. When I moved to Bratslav, at that time, he was in jail, for the politics. A combination of a few things. So I was, I was always, battling my life, and trying the best that I know how. I didn't have too many people who were...who were advisors. I couldn't talk to anybody practically. When I did go to this city, Bratslav, and I went to the Jewish community, I...had told them some of my...of my experiences, but they were quite prejudiced. They were...

INT: Prejudiced?

DOBA: Prejudiced, yeah. So I was very careful what to tell them and what not to tell them.

INT: Prejudiced about what?

DOBA: For example. I told them that I wanted to go to Israel, and that's one of the reasons I came to Bratslav, to the large city, to register to Israel. I didn't want to do it from that small city that I used to live. When they find out that I want to go to Israel, they were Communist. This was an organization, Jewish people, they were Communist. And I didn't realize -- I was never in

politics -- that it was against their wish. They didn't want me to go to Israel. They wanted me to stay there.

INT: And build the Communist country.

DOBA: That's right. And well, I made a mistake at that time. I lost a lot on that, because they were going to help me financially. If they didn't know I was registering to Israel, they were willing to help me, and when they found out, they rejected me. They rejected me not only, they gave me a hard time, because they didn't believe me I was Jewish. I had to...bring my cousin from Lublin, who maybe I didn't mention before, that I found him.

INT: He was from the wealthy family, right?

DOBA: Yes. Did I mention this, that he came to Bratslav?

INT: No. You mentioned you went to visit **him**, though.

DOBA: He came, and he was a witness. He went to the Jewish community. He...

INT: Swore, or vouched, said you were a Jew.

DOBA: Yes, yes, he swore. Yeah. And that's when they came to believe. But it took a long time. And that was, I went through that, too, you know.

INT: This is interesting to me. It seems like through your whole life, you've been rejected by Jewish people.

DOBA: Yes, yes.

INT: And accepted by non-Jewish people.

DOBA: That's true.

INT: So that must affect in some way the way you look at...Judaism, Jewish people?

DOBA: Well, no, I wouldn't say. I, my heart is bleeding. I always been, always, but unfortunately, that I met people like this. And maybe I went to the wrong places. My family rejected me, too.

INT: Yeah. That's what I meant.

DOBA: You know. Well, that's number one, who rejected me. It just happened that...everyone, I'm not prejudiced. I love everyone. But it seemed that I had a hard time whenever I went to a community, I had to...I had to battle. I had to lie, because I wasn't able to exist otherwise, at that time. So...well, I used to go to Bratslav quite often, and then as I mentioned, that I lived there.

But I went, I was going to see my children, because at that time, my mother-in-law raised my children.

INT: Okay, let's back up then.

DOBA: Yeah, I'm sorry.

INT: We'll have to interrupt from the Jewish identity story for a second, and just fill in. Your marriage was...okay when you got to Poland. Things were okay.

DOBA: Yes, it was okay, for quite some time.

INT: And then what happened?

DOBA: Well...my husband was a...an orphan from his young age, and actually he raised himself, because...the people who were supposed to raise him, they were related to him. They were an aunt and an uncle. And they had a restaurant, and usually when you have a restaurant in Europe in a hotel, there's a lot of work, and I could see, because I was there for many years, and I was helping them in the hotel. The restaurant, hotel. That it's impossible to give the children so much attention that a person who would be normal, you know, a mother would stay home. Because there was not much time. So there were people. For example, I had, I had...girls to help for my children. Governess, I had all the time. So I know that she had also. When my husband was growing up.

Well, unfortunately, he start drinking. Apparently he had this problem before. He start drinking, and he never wanted to drink by himself, always company, and that was the biggest problem started to be with me. He would...he would go away, and often didn't come home, a day or two. And that's when it started already not so happy. But that was years later. And my children were sick a lot. My older especially was **very** sick all the time. And I, I was all the time, full-time mother, and I was helping in the restaurant.

INT: And your husband wasn't around.

DOBA: Was not around much, no. He was helping them a lot, but...it seemed that...he wasn't a family-oriented person. You see, today, I look back, and I see it. At that time, I didn't know. I didn't know better. Well, life generally was not bad. I had to eat, I had everything I wanted. I had...I had...they were buying me clothes. They gave me furniture when I came in, everything was ready for me. So I felt wanted. So I was glad in a way that I was there, even that my husband was away sometimes, you know. And...they were very good to my children. Excellent. This woman...sometimes you cannot compare a mother to her. A real mother, that what she was doing for my children. And I was always thankful to her. Years later, when I already left the country, I always tried to help her. I always wrote to her. And that was my...my appreciation. She was good to me, too, but even if she wouldn't be good enough to me, but she was good to my children, that was everything for me.

INT: So then what happened with the marriage? Things were okay, then...

DOBA: Well, the marriage was still a marriage, but he was, he was very polite to me. **Very,** very. He would even carry me in his arms. I didn't like that. Today, you know, years later, I missed it, of course, because he, he was very...emotional?

INT: Affectionate?

DOBA: Affectionate, yeah, thank you. Very affectionate, but whenever he was there. Very affectionate. Whatever he had, he would share, but unfortunately, when someone is drinking, he, a person cannot do the job right. He was very intelligent, very bright. He was...he was an engineer. He was helping to...plan...I forgot, gardens, he would plan, he would do the plans for them. I forgot what you call it in English. Creshlosh is in Polish. Anyway. But...

INT: How was he as a father?

DOBA: Yeah, he was a good father whenever he was there. Yeah, he...and he is the one who told my children, I didn't mention that before? Yeah, finally...I registered, registered to Israel a long time before, but one time I was refused. The Polish government would not let me go. I reapplied again, and finally after a year or so, I was accepted, the Polish government gave me permission to leave the country. Then, I sat down with my husband, and I told him that we are going to Israel. And I didn't tell my mother-in-law that I'm going to Israel. I told her I'm going to America. And the children had to find out, and I did not know how to tell them.

INT: Your husband was willing to go to Israel with you?

DOBA: Yes. Yes. He couldn't go that time; he was on probation. But that's another story. (laughs) I didn't intend to...to bring him. That's another...

INT: You didn't intend to bring him.

DOBA: No. No.

INT: Okay. So he **thought** he was going, but he wasn't really going.

DOBA: No.

INT: So you had planned to leave him at this point?

DOBA: I lied to him for the first time at that time, because I had to do it. And I had to do it all on my own. Nobody gave me advice, nothing. I fought a battle by myself, without lawyers. I had to, I had to go through three different court cases, before I left the country. Number one, I had to take a divorce. It's not because I wanted to divorce, but the Polish government wouldn't permit at that time to leave one parent to take the children if they wouldn't be divorced. Every so often there are different rules in Poland. Not only that, I had to change my name. And had to go

through court. And that's why my cousin was a witness, also. By the way, he was a lawyer, but he did not do anything for me as an attorney. I did my own things. Except, he was witnessing. He sign on the paper who I really was, and I had two other witnesses. They knew me from before the war. That's the people who helped to...to hide my sister and my father for a while. Senkowski is the name.

INT: And they helped you.

DOBA: Yeah. He still helped me after the war. He was...he was limping. He was injured during the First World War. And I remember I didn't hire a taxi, I didn't have money. They had these wagons at that time, mostly, they were horse and wagons. I did not, we walked quite a few miles, and this man walked, I never forget. Poor guy. Was pulling his leg. And he...to that particular court. And he signed, and I still have a copy somewhere.

INT: So what did you change your name to?

DOBA: Okay. Because my name was not my real name. The whole German occupation, and after the war.

INT: Oh, okay. You were still Watras.

DOBA: I was married as Watras. I had to change my name to straighten out, through the court. I had to get a divorce, and a third one, which I forgot what it was.

INT: Did your husband give you a divorce, without...

DOBA: Yeah, he did. Yeah.

INT: Why did you decide to divorce him?

DOBA: Because, oh, I didn't decide. I didn't **want** a divorce. It's because they wouldn't give me permission.

INT: They wouldn't let you leave with the children.

DOBA: They would not leave me; they would not let me go. A married woman could not leave.

INT: So your husband was agreeing to the divorce only because he thought you just wanted to get out of the country, and then he was going to join you later.

DOBA: Yeah. Apparently that was his thought, because he didn't want to give me the children. That was another case. He did not want to give me the children.

INT: Well, let me understand this. You decided in your head, without talking to anybody, that you wanted to get away from your husband.

DOBA: That's right. Because of his alcoholism.

INT: What was the reason for that?

DOBA: Alcoholism.

INT: Because of his alcoholism.

DOBA: Alcoholism, and a few other personal problems. And I told myself, well, Israel, there's something, I was still young, I was...about how old was I? Thirty, thirty-one, I believe.

INT: So how many years of marriage was this?

DOBA: Oh, my G-d. Since I was seventeen and a half. Quite a few. So I thought to myself, Israel, it's a new country, it's a new life, I will be Jewish again, and that was my main purpose.

INT: And where was your mother at this point, and sister?

DOBA: My mother was in the United States.

INT: In the United States. And you didn't consider going there.

DOBA: Oh, I **wanted**. I couldn't.

INT: You couldn't get out. They wouldn't give you permission.

DOBA: What is the numbers, the numbers, the...

INT: Quota.

DOBA: Quota, that's right. The quota was not for me. And...

INT: So Israel was your **second** choice.

DOBA: Yes. That was my second choice, because I went with the children. My children. And I had to have a signature from him, for the government, for the Polish government. (interruption)

He had to give a signature so I could present to the Polish government, that he's giving me, releasing the children. Yeah. And all these things, I did it. I don't know how I did it. I had some nice people who...I met. I was living, in Bratslav, where the Jewish theater was, so I met very nice people there.

INT: Wait. So you took the children and moved to Bratslav?

DOBA: No. The children were living in Leszno. In the meantime, I moved from Leszno to another city, because they took away the hotel. The Polish government took away the hotel and the restaurant in 1956. So...so that was...a horrible thing, when they took away my things, too, by the way.

INT: How did you feel about that?

DOBA: Oh, my G-d!

INT: Did it feel like the war was happening again?

DOBA: My G-d, I thought that there's another war. You know, they came, and 8:00 in the morning, 1956, I don't remember the month, 8:00 in the morning, they came and they took over all the hotels and the pharmacies, that they were private concerned. They were, everything was...and you had to leave like you stood. So, you know, the hotel was one of the largest hotels in that city, but considering to America, it was a small hotel, only 24 rooms. For that little city, it was...it was one of the best.

So you know how if you live with the same...on the same floor where the hotel is, sometimes you will have to give all what you have to...to, what is the word? To accommodate the rooms. For example, you got guests 2:00 in the morning, and there was no chambermaids, they were gone. You have to get up and do things, too. So at that time, I even loaned them my linens. And here I stay with, you know almost, like they took over like the Germans, almost. Except they didn't beat us. That's a different. So I had a...battle with them, too, to get back my linens. And that went through the court. Oh! (laughs) So anyway, I got my linens back, but that's all. They took everything. The rest.

There was quite a bit. My father-in-law passed away because of that shock.

INT: Really?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. Very shortly after that. Because business was his life, and they took away his business from him, and have to thank them for that.

But anyway, my mother-in-law, she was **very** strong. She was...she was the...the...boss and everything. So she was strong. She went through the whole thing. She said, "Well, we went through the Germans." The Germans through them out, too. They had to go to a different city, and leave everything. Now, she says, "Well, again the same thing. I lived through." And that's the way she was talking. She was building **me** up.

Do you know that -- I'm sorry that I'm jumping -- I had so much confidence in her, when I was sad, being here, I made a call to her. I didn't tell her exactly the truth, but, and she was, she kept me, she gave me moral support.

INT: It sounds like she was a mother to you.

DOBA: With letters and with letters, and occasionally I made a phone call. I didn't have much money then. So I couldn't afford of the phone calls. But in letters, I still have some of them.

INT: Did you talk to her about your decision to leave your husband? Did you talk to her about that?

DOBA: She didn't know that we were divorced. Everything was done...

INT: Secretly.

DOBA: Secretly. She never find out that we were divorced. I would not, I would not want to hurt her.

INT: That would hurt her too much.

DOBA: No. She had enough. She didn't know I was Jewish. I thought she didn't know, but she knew. So she didn't know about that. But she knew that we're leaving for a purpose, to better ourselves, and she helped all she could to...to put us on our way.

INT: And what about your husband? He was still in there.

DOBA: My husband? He stayed free for a while, and then he had to go back to jail, because he was on probation.

INT: Oh, why was he in jail?

DOBA: Well, he was in charge of quite a few people. He was taking care of...it was already, everything for the government, like...a farm. Not a koholz, a koholz is Russian. I forgot the name, what they were naming in Polish. It was not owned by any person, by the government, and they had a name for that, but I forgot. So he was in charge of those workers, because they didn't have any more jobs in the hotel, because they took it away. So he had to find a job. So he was like engineering there and planning to build things there.

So anyway, so in Poland, this probably is still now, but it was, every second person, every second man winds up in jail, because they catch him stealing something. People had to do it, because they didn't have enough for food. There was shortage of everything. So my husband was responsible for it. And he would not give out anybody, that's the way he was always. And that's why they arrest him. Because they stole things there. It was missing, you know. Some, quite a few things, and that's why he was in jail. But...

INT: How long was he in jail?

DOBA: Well, he had a three-year sentence, and I worked so hard, and they released him after a year or a year and a half. They released him on probation, because I went and I spoke to the main prosecutor. I cried, and on my...compensation they released him. But then he had to go back. So while I was getting ready to go on a trip, he was out.

INT: I see.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: But he wasn't going to go with you.

DOBA: At that time, he couldn't.

INT: He couldn't get out, because he was on probation.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: Okay. So you were going to leave with the kids.

DOBA: Oh, yes.

INT: And **he** thought, in **his** head, that he was going to follow you?

DOBA: That he'll come, and better yet, I planned to come here. I didn't realize that I was going to be a whole year in Israel, which I was. He was going to come here later on.

INT: I see. And meet you here, in America.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. But it did not happen.

INT: What happened?

DOBA: That he never came here.

INT: How come?

DOBA: Because of my decision. I decided not to.

INT: So wait. So you left with the kids in 1961?

DOBA: '6l. For Israel.

INT: How old were the children?

DOBA: I think eleven and twelve, I believe, or ten, eleven. I just started about telling them my real identity.

INT: Oh, you did.

DOBA: Well, anyway, I talked to my husband, and he says, "I'll take care of it." I wasn't even present, because I couldn't take it. I didn't know **how**, and my heart was pumping, my pressure was high already then.

INT: Why did you decide at this time to tell them that you were Jewish?

DOBA: Because we were leaving for Israel.

INT: Going to Israel, okay.

DOBA: You see?

INT: Right.

DOBA: I had to tell them. We had to tell them. And I remember he went to a barber with them, to cut their hair. And how long it took, I don't know, and he did the job. They understood so well, it didn't change. Nothing changed, except he asked them not to tell grandmother, which they did.

INT: They told your grandmother.

DOBA: They didn't. They didn't.

INT: They kept the secret.

DOBA: That's right. So I was under the impression, I didn't care whether she knew already or not, but most of the time I was under the impression that she doesn't know. And we left. We left for Warsaw. And...she took us to the train. We went on the train to Warsaw first. And he took, I think I have a picture somewhere. I looked very bad, because, oh, I went through a lot. And we arrived in Warsaw, and that, and that's where...we left on a plane, from Warsaw to...oh, no. I'm sorry. No, no. See? From Warsaw we went on a train to Italy, and Vienna. Okay. Four days we were travelling on that train. See how I forget already? And we arrived in Vienna, and that was a congregation of Jewish people, that they were leaving for Israel. We stayed there one or two days in Vienna. And from there, we left to this small plane to Lod, Israel.

INT: Now, who was there for you? Was there anybody there to...

DOBA: No. Nobody. Nobody. I had nobody. I thought I don't have anybody, but there were some cousins, that I never saw them before, distant cousins. But because I was lucky, always in

my life, to strange people. I mean, to, not my...I met people in Bratslav that they connected me…

INT: Oh, you told me that story. When you were signing up, the man that was standing behind you?

DOBA: That's another story, but they also connected me with very important people, I think I told you that. With Lavon, the family of Lvon? And they helped me a tremendous lot, being in Israel, and I happened to have this luck, you know, in my life, and especially when I was young. So...

INT: Of hooking up with strangers.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. And they treat me like...

INT: Where do you think that comes from?

DOBA: I have no idea. I really don't know. But maybe now it's less, because I'm older, and I think...youth has a lot to do with a lot of things. Attraction, and the personality went with it, of course, you know. And just this.

INT: What was it like coming to Israel? Here you were...

DOBA: Oh, my G-d.

INT: You'd lived as a non-Jew for so many years.

DOBA: I have the chills now. (rubs her arms)

INT: What was it like? Being in the Jewish state.

DOBA: I arrived in Israel, it was a **very** hot day. It was the 25th of May. May, it was already hot. And I cried. I couldn't stop crying, because I couldn't breathe. The heat on the airport. It was so tremendous that I was crying, I want to go back. And people were there -- I never met them. They tried to buy things from me. By the way, I brought some sausage from Poland. I knew that, I sold them for food, for other food. I sold them right on the airport. And they were asking me whether I have this, whether I have that. Later on I sold **all** that I had. I had bicycles with me. I had...carpets, beautiful carpets. I couldn't afford to keep them. So I sold them. Because I was allowed to take with me so much from Poland. Each person was allowed to take a certain amount of things.

I'm going back to Poland. I was always thinking how to...how to...do things. Because I didn't have money to live on. So when I moved to Bratslav, and I had an apartment, I was registered with the city, that I lived there, but you're not allowed to be living in two places. They wanted to take...

(END TAPE SEVEN, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE SEVEN, SIDE TWO)

DOBA: Why do I have two apartments?

INT: This was after the '56 takeover.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry, I'll go back. It wasn't easy. So I had a little apartment in Bratslav, because I already exchanged my apartment in Rawicz that time already. It was not Leszno anymore. Because my husband had the job in Rawicz at that time. So I had to move. And I exchange the apartment in Leszno with Rawicz. And you were not allowed to do **that**. I don't know how I did this. I wrote in the paper, announced in the paper, and somebody came up, and I did the exchange. You couldn't get an apartment. **Very** difficult. So I lived in an apartment in...in Rawicz first, exchange, and then I looked for somebody to exchange with Bratslav, another, another...not legal to the Polish government.

Okay, I lived there already, and I got some money from the person who moved, because that was considering a better section in Poland, Rawicz from Bratslav. So they paid me money for it. And for this money, I hold it, and I bought this sausage, to take it to Israel at that time. And some...and my cousin loaned me 10,000 zlotys that time. And I bought some bicycles, because I knew that I can sell it, and live on it. So, I'm sorry, I'm going back and forth.

INT: And this was all in **your** head, how to do this.

DOBA: Oh, G-d.

INT: You figured this out yourself.

DOBA: I had certain people who helped me. I met a wonderful family, I was working in Bratslav, also. Their name was Kastro, I never forget, and this husband of this lady, he helped me a lot. He gave me advice. How to do it, what to do it. Later, you know, in certain things. And he says, "Why don't you ask your cousin to give you some money?" He had money. He just sold...a big property in Poland that his parents had. So he had money. He said, "Why don't you ask him?" And I did. So he gave me 10,000 zlotys. And that's why I was able to get together things.

Now, I'm jumping, I'm sorry. I'm jumping.

INT: Okay, so back to Israel. Your reaction to being in Israel. What was that like for you?

DOBA: Oh, yes, it was very hot, and...

INT: You went from no Jewish people to all these Jewish people.

DOBA: Yes. There were some dealers, business dealers, and they were living in Israel for quite some time. They knew Israel. And when I told them where I was assigned to, the name called Afeka, near Tel Aviv, I had no idea what kind of a place. I thought I'm going to die from heat, and I didn't care. I wanted Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was cooler, and was I lucky that I did not go to Jerusalem.

INT: Why?

DOBA: Because I got such a beautiful apartment in Afeka, that today, millionaires only live there. You see?

INT: The government gave it to you?

DOBA: The government gave me, yes. But I couldn't buy it. I didn't have any money. They wanted from me 7,000 pounds only, Israeli money. Do you know what today, a million dollars cost a shikkun.

INT: Where is Afeka? What is that near? Tel Aviv?

DOBA: Afeka, it's between Tel Aviv and Tel Baruch on the way to Herzliya.

INT: Okay.

DOBA: A beautiful place.

INT: Yeah, Herzliya's a very wealthy area. Yeah.

DOBA: Until I found out, it took for them to convince me, the people that were surrounding, and seeing me crying, and one man who was with us, and he knew geography better than I, and he said, "You don't want it? I'll take it! I'll take it!" When he says, "I'll take it!" I start waking up. If he was, he was much older than myself that time, and he knew. I said to myself, "If he said he'll take it, let me think about it." And I calm down, and then the people told me, "This is a beautiful place. Are you kidding? We could never get that place!" And in fact, it was. Of course, there was no furniture there, no air conditioning, no, you know.

INT: Could you see the Mediterranean from there? Could you see the sea?

DOBA: Yes. It was right...

INT: Right on the beach.

DOBA: Sure, it was right, not far. It took time until they took us, you know, like everywhere. And my luggage didn't arrive until (laughs) days later. It was all the time, I don't know, my life is a complication. The second name is complication. The plane, was a small plane that took us, and they couldn't take our luggage. And we had a choice. This guy who was in charge, he was

from Italy. No, he was living, I'm sorry, what am I talking about? He lived in Jerusalem, he was a sabra, and he spoke several languages, and I got acquainted with him. That's another story. And he asked me, I had a choice. I don't remember how many people the plane took. All of the people were waiting, except for the luggage. So he asked me if I wanted to stay and go on a boat, which I always wanted to, I wound up in Jerusalem, then. And he says, "If you're going to stay a few days, you'll catch a boat, and you'll take all your luggage with you, or your luggage stays, and you go." I was going to do it. But my son, at that time, got acquainted with a girl, a Polish girl from Warsaw, and he did not want to stay. So that...for me, was better. That I went, because I wound up in a beautiful apartment. (laughs)

So anyway, I waited for the luggage, I didn't have what to wear, and at that time, I met already the Lavons, and they introduced me to a millionaire, and this millionaire was from Poland, took me to his factory. And they were making clothes there. And he says, "Whatever you need, you can take." And I never forget, I took one pair for the children, underwear, and I took, or they gave me two forks, and two knives, and the utensils, I didn't have any utensils, and something I took for me, I don't remember what. I had only one dress on me. I don't remember. Something of one. I didn't want to take any more. And I was able to start, and some other people that I got acquainted through the mail. They invite me, I went to visit them, and they gave me electric stove, they gave me an iron, and they tried to help me whatever is possible.

INT: Did you get a job?

DOBA: No. No. I did not look for a job.

INT: You were still planning on going on to here.

DOBA: That's right. I didn't know the language. I didn't want to go to ulpan, because I had my children with me, and I could not place them in a mossad. You know what's a mossad?

INT: Moshav?

DOBA: No, mossad. Mossad is a...a place that children are there, I think till fourteen years of age, or twelve, I don't remember. Until a certain age, and then the children have to leave. It was a school there, and they had to go without me. And I had this nice apartment. If I would go to an ulpan, for six weeks, I would learn the language, because you learn very quick. But I didn't intend to stay there, or it took some time until they located my children. It took about four weeks or so. It took time, and they took them to this mossad. And at that time I was freer, but I was running to Tel Aviv every day to the offices, to the American Embassy. "Come tomorrow. Come tomorrow, to sign this." And it took a whole year. And I sold everything I had, all the bicycles and the sheets, and to live for it. The whole year. I mean, I didn't have a refrigerator. I remember I bought a piece of butter, and I kept it on the...it was cool there. (interruption)

INT: How did the children adjust to being in Israel?

DOBA: Well, they knew they're going to America. They didn't want to stay there, because they were under this impression, I mean, this desire to go to America. Are you kidding? America, you know.

INT: Yeah, the golden land.

DOBA: Sure. And...and I was there, if I would have been there a little more than I was, I was already hesitating to leave or not to leave.

INT: You liked it there?

DOBA: I got to like it so much, you grow, you grow to this land. It grows with you, or you grow to it. It's unbelievable to even explain. But my children, they didn't want to stay.

INT: Can you explain that a little bit more, what you meant by that? You grow to the...

DOBA: Okay. Israel, I get the chills, because I experienced such a warmness from people, from the government. They gave me some money, they loan it to me, because I didn't have any. I had five dollars that I was able to take it from Poland. That's all I had. They loan me some money, and they gave me the apartment. I didn't have to pay for a certain time, and then I had to pay some kind of money, a small amount. And then they asked me if I want to buy, I'm entitled to. But unfortunately, I couldn't. People like, they were visiting me. They would not let me stay Friday night alone, ever. I met beautiful people. They came by car, they picked me up, they took me wherever they went. They took me with them, because at that time my children were in the mossad already. So...so you know, and I learned the language a little bit, but not much. But you grow. You...the...the land pulls you. It pulls you. And that's what I was already debating, because I was corresponding with my mother, and one time she says, "Come over," and the other time she says, "If you want to stay there, this cousin would help you. She's going to visit Israel, you're going to meet her, and maybe she can help you to buy a refrigerator." You know? Little by little. So I...had to make a decision. And again, there was nobody who, everybody was talking. They didn't want me to leave. Are you kidding? My children were very valuable young men there, and I could meet a man. I already **met** several there, too. I couldn't tell the Israeli government I want to leave. I had to tell them I'm leaving, but I'll come back. Because they didn't know I would not come back. I mean, I'll come back to visit, but not to live.

It was very difficult. Very difficult climate for me, and I wouldn't get a job. I would have to scrub floors or something, because I didn't know that language. I never finished school in Poland, as you know. And...especially a different language and all. It would have been very hard. You know. I thought that here, I don't know. It would be easier. My mother is here, the family. I thought they're going to help me, you know.

So I remember, I knew a man, I met him on the bus...

INT: Excuse me. Meanwhile you had divorced your husband?

DOBA: Yeah. I was divorced, yeah. I met a man, which I met every day on the bus people. They talked to you. They don't sit still. And I was quite attractive, of course, young. And men, mostly, start talking to me. Well, this person happens to be from Warsaw, and he was a son of a rabbi. And he, I was going with him for a while. And that's all I knew a man that I could tell him everything about my identity before, and all. And...

INT: And you could speak to him in Polish?

DOBA: Yes. Polish, of course. And he was sort of a little advisor for me, because the other people didn't want me to leave. And he looked different. My children, I don't have a husband, and he says, "You would do better in America." So one day I called him up to his office, he was working in an office in Tel Aviv. And I asked him, I says, "I'd like to see you." That's another story. "It's very, very important. I have to make a very important decision. I have the papers, and now I have to decide it, whether I want to go or not." And I wanted him to give me some kind of a light, or something, you know. And he couldn't make it at that time. He had to work late, or....or something. And I was very sad, because he couldn't meet me, and I had to decide it on myself.

And in the meantime, living in Israel, my sister's husband had a cousin there. And of course I met them, and they were very helpful. They came to visit me. And he was the one who I...oh, he took me to the port.

INT: In Haifa?

DOBA: Yes. To the boat. I was going with the boat to New York. The boat called Israel. Small boat. They took me. I think he, without the wife, the wife was ill at that time. What was his name? I forgot his name. Oy, I forgot his name. Brezina. Brezina. That's his name. That was his name. So he took me, with the, oh, excuse me. I couldn't take my children.

INT: Out of Israel?

DOBA: I couldn't take them, because they didn't have the quota. I lived through a lot. I couldn't go with them. But I knew they were safe in Israel rather than in Poland.

INT: Who was watching them?

DOBA: Just a minute. They were in the mossad, and they were fine. My cousin was watching them, you know, coming to see, the cousins, wasn't my cousin, but he calls me cousin by then. They were going to visit them, and they were helping them by bringing them things. So I knew they were fine, but I lived through, I was, I had nightmares. Are you kidding? Again, the concentration camp came back to me, that I'm losing the children. It wasn't easy, but I had to do it, because I knew by coming here, it would take four months for them to come. I signed. Which did happen. Okay? I even paid for it. But, okay. They took me to this boat, and because I didn't have my children with me, I couldn't prove that I have children. Do you know that I was under the age that I was...for the army? For the Israeli army? They wouldn't want to let me go.

Oh, that was another thing. And I didn't have papers of my children. I didn't know I needed. So this cousin was watching for me. How good he was there? He was an Israeli citizen. And he says, "She has children in the mossad. What are you talking about? She's coming back." And they let me go. There was a strike on the boat, too. (laughs) Everything was, a strike, an Israeli strike. In Haifa. In Haifa. Yeah. That was Haifa.

INT: So the boat wasn't leaving?

DOBA: It wasn't leaving right away. It was, I think a day or so it was waiting. (laughs)

INT: So you went to New York?

DOBA: I tell you, I'm a complication person.

INT: You went to New York on the boat?

DOBA: Yeah. I went on the boat to New York. It took fifteen days, and on the boat I met a man. From Warsaw, another man, who was in concentration camps, and believe it or not, he fell in love. It was fifteen days of sailing, you know, when you're together, I mean, not together. On the same boat for fifteen days, it's like you know each other a **year**, maybe. You know. So he knew by then that my children are on the mossad, and I wanted to bring them here, and I didn't know how to take them out from the mossad, because the Israeli government didn't know that I'm not coming back, and I wanted to steal my children. He helped me. (laughs)

INT: How did he do that?

DOBA: Okay. He came here, he had a secret mission. He was with, believe it or not, with Wiesen...who is seeking for Nazis.

INT: Oh, Wiesenthal?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Yeah?

DOBA: He had told me a little bit. And he was travelling from South America. He was travelling to help out.

INT: He was looking for Nazis?

DOBA: Yes. Now, he was in that company, you know. I don't know how much he did, because he wouldn't tell me anymore. He had a son in America who was with his ex-wife. And she was married, York, Pennsylvania. This woman was married then. It was a beautiful woman, I saw the picture. And this man, they took the son. Her son had polio. When he was nine months old, he had polio. And he wanted, he went to see him. He was coming quite often to see his son.

INT: And he lived in Israel.

DOBA: Yeah, he lived in Haifa. Hashmal, he was working for the Israeli electric company, Haifa. He wanted to come, for **me**. He wouldn't want to leave Israel, but because, if I wanted to accept him to marry, he would come to, whatever I wanted to go, that was, he made the decision. But that's another story, again. I wasn't ready for a man, for another man, (laughs) I thought **forever**. You see what I mean? So...oh, yes. He told me, "Don't worry. Your children will be all right. I'm going back in a few days, and I'll make sure they'll be taken care of." He went to the mossad, that's another, some stories. He had a woman living with him at that time. (laughs)

INT: Boy. Smooth operator!

DOBA: Do you know what he did when he went back? He paid this woman to get an apartment, because I, he told me already the truth. And I says I would not give permission my children to come into your apartment and a woman's there. He made sure, bought an apartment for this woman, I don't know what the rent, probably rent (laughs) and took my children out from the mossad, gave them five hundred dollars from his money, and he told them that they're going to live with him. (laughs) So anyway, they were there in his apartment. You could talk to Ted, and he'll tell you. He still remembers. They both remember. He was so good to them.

He made sure when my children were leaving Israel, a friend of his was going on the same boat. He made sure that this person, which I forgot the name. My friend's name was Chaim. Chaim Poznanski. And his friend, he gave him to be my children's guardian. But that's another, a thousand and one night stories.

INT: You're lucky you ran into him.

DOBA: Yeah. That's another story.

INT: So he got them safely over to America for you.

DOBA: Yeah. But I had nightmares. By then I met some other people. I got a guitar (laughs) and he was with this guitar, my oldest son. And he was keeping like his partner, this guitar.

INT: In New York?

DOBA: No, in Israel. Somebody gave me a guitar for my son. A director of a Jewish theater again. (laughs) I met people there, beautiful people. So, of the Israeli theater. They were all Jewish, anyway. So this year I went through so many things.

Okay, here I am in the United States, and I'm waiting for my children in New York. They came on the same boat, "Israel," and I knew that this man, who's going to be on the boat, a friend of Chaim, that he's going to take care of my children. When I came to pick them up, and I saw them, don't ask me. It was like a...another freedom. When I told you, when the American army

came to liberate us, almost the same, the same impression, the same feelings I had. Because my children were safe.

So what happened on the boat they told me. Instead of him taking care of my children, they had to take care of him. He was drunk all the time. (laughs) So they had to watch him not to fall off the boat! (laughter)

INT: Great. Big help, yeah.

DOBA: And here, when I saw my son with the guitar on his arm, oh, my G-d. The same guitar. And then, by then I had met, I was with my mother's house at that time. And she had a boarder, his name was Rubinstein, Wolf Rubinstein, who became a life friend to me. Lifetime friend. Thirty-five years, until he died four years ago. And...

INT: How was the reunion with your mother and sister when you came to America?

DOBA: Well, for me, you know, my sister and her husband, they were waiting on the...oh, and I had an aunt who lived in Brooklyn.

INT: Your mother's sister?

DOBA: My father's sister. She came with her husband, also.

INT: Before the war, though.

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: She got here before the war.

DOBA: Oh, yes, oh, before. In fact, they were trying to get my father, but it did not materialize, I don't remember why. They were the ones who helped sign the papers for me, to bring me here. So they came also to the port. New York port. And I met them all. My mother, my sister. So you know, this man who lived in my mother's house, a boarder, he was the one who drove his car to pick me up. Pick me up, and then pick up the children. Same person. So...oh, going back when I saw my mother. To me, it was very warm, but unfortunately, it didn't last too long, and...well, we were seventeen years in separation, seventeen. And this takes its toll, too.

INT: But maybe it made it better? Or not. It made it worse?

DOBA: Yeah. Well, she...she had...what do you call this, that I married a non-Jewish person.

INT: She was still angry with you?

DOBA: Very, very. Well, she told me that everything is fine. I was single then, you know, but it wasn't so like I was hoping. It wasn't so. And I start another...another hardship, you know. I had to, I went to school.

INT: Were you living with your mother?

DOBA: Yeah, for four months.

INT: And your sister was some place else with her husband.

DOBA: Yeah, they had a house. They had a house already.

INT: How was the reunion with your sister?

DOBA: As long as my mother was present, it was okay. She was always not...well, (sighs, pause) Yeah, she invited me to her house, and they were very warm, I had dinner here, they took me to some of the friends. In the beginning, it was okay. Then...then little by little, of course, they are kosher. I could have been kosher anytime, because I was, I come from an Orthodox family, but during the war I was not kosher, I mean, I went away from all these things, and after the war. But then I...I asked my mother, I said, "If you want it, I can be kosher. I still remember everything." But it didn't please her. Nothing pleased her.

INT: How was she towards your children?

DOBA: Well, at first she was warm, and then she didn't want to have us there. She did **not** want to have us. She...she, I don't know. I don't want to talk harsh words. I hate to go on the tape, harsh words, but I was, I was forced to move out, four months later. And at that time already, this person who lived in her house, he introduced me to this wonderful woman, Mrs. Katz. Dora Katz. Did I talk about her? Mrs. Katz, Dora Katz.

INT: Excuse me one second. Had your mother remarried?

DOBA: Yeah, oh yeah. She was a widow again. By them, a widow. I never met her husband. No, because he died much, much before I came to this country.

INT: But she didn't marry the man she was living with in...

DOBA: Oh, no, no. No. She left him, or he left her. I don't know. Maybe she left him because she decided, excuse me, she was watching my sister, and she wanted to be in the Jewish community, which I, you know, it's okay.

INT: So did she marry a Jewish man?

DOBA: Here. In Philadelphia.

INT: She met someone here.

DOBA: Yes, yes. A widower here. And unfortunately he was not well already. He was much, much older. And he lived, he did live a few years, and he died.

INT: So Wolf Rubinstein, the man who lived in this...

DOBA: He was a boarder in her house.

INT: And he introduced you to this Mrs. Katz.

DOBA: Yes. He was a television mechanic, and he had some customers, and one of them was Mrs. Katz. Dora Katz, who he was a very good judge of people. He says, "I will introduce you to a lady, and I think she'll take you in." Right away he said that. I came with my two boys, and a woman who never knew me, she says, "Come in, children. Come in, you live with me in this house, but I want to sell the house. I have a sign already. If the house is going to be sold, you will have to look for an apartment." And I agreed to all this. Are you kidding? I was not in the street. My G-d. And this woman has a son who is a federal judge in Philadelphia. Marvin Katz. Maybe you...

INT: Oh, sure, I've heard of him.

DOBA: You know him?

INT: I've heard of him, sure.

DOBA: Yeah, that's her son. Then, at that time, he was an attorney, and she has another son who lives in California, where she is now. He was a professor over there. At that time...

(END TAPE SEVEN, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE EIGHT, SIDE ONE)

DOBA: Oh, in the meantime, my children start going to this special school called...I forgot the name. On Spruce Street, there was a...oh, my G-d, I forgot already the name. A special school for children from a different country, to learn the language, and from there they went straight to Olney High School. In the meantime, I was working in the factory, making $25 a week in a very hot place. Very hot. It was a lot of, I couldn't breathe there. And in the meantime I went to learn English, and I had to raise my children, living in Mrs. Katz's house, and I also went for a course, a manicuring course. That was the fastest course I could take at that time, to be able to go to work. And I had people advise me for that, too. And this Mr. Rubinstein, he was a great help. He had a car, and he would come and take us for dinner.

At the beginning, living with Mrs. Katz, I was afraid to touch her dishes, because I didn't know whether she is kosher or not. The first thing when I came in, I says, "Are you kosher?" I ask her,

"Are you kosher?" She says, "No, I'm not kosher." But I was afraid to touch her dishes anyway. So I would go out in a restaurant, and he would buy us food, this Mr. Rubinstein. But then she noticed something, that I don't cook. She says, "What do you eat? What are you doing?" I didn't want to tell her the truth, and I was afraid of everything. I was so fearful all my life because I was afraid that when she'll find out that I couldn't stay at my mother's house, maybe she wouldn't want me, either. So I was afraid of that. My children. Are you kidding? The **children**, that's the important [thing]. So finally, little by little, she asked me, "Why you're not cooking?" I said, "Well," she says, "You feel free in this house. Anything you need, you take it." And I started slowly cooking. Because I was a very good cook at one time. I learned from my mother-in-law. So I started doing that, and...and I, for about several months, my children didn't want to talk to my mother. Chaim came back from Israel to visit his son again, and he made the peace. He asked me, "Please, make peace." And he was present, and we went to my sister's house, and he made peace for us.

INT: Between you and your mother?

DOBA: Yeah, that's right. Chaim Poznanski.

INT: Why wouldn't your children talk to your mother?

DOBA: Because what she did.

INT: Kicked you out.

DOBA: Mm-hm. So...they went to school, and...

INT: How was your mother, how was your mothering doing at this time? Because you told me that when you first had your kids, you really didn't know **how** to mother. You really didn't know what to do. And that your mother-in-law helped you a lot.

DOBA: Oh, yes.

INT: And when the kids would get sick, you'd be frightened, but she would take over.

DOBA: She would take over. She would take over.

INT: So now, I mean, not only now in America, but in Israel, it was just you and the kids. So how did you...

DOBA: But I had a lot of people.

INT: You had people to help you.

DOBA: Oh, my G-d.

INT: Well, first of all, they were in a mossad, right?

DOBA: After a while, you know. But people were coming and bringing me things. "What else you need?" Whatever they could afford.

INT: Not just what you needed, but I mean, how did you, how did you...mother your children, I guess? How did you relate to your children?

DOBA: Whatever I could. Whatever. Well, I was very, always fears. I was pleading with them. When I went to Tel Aviv, I said, "Please, do not leave the apartment. Do not go too far." They wouldn't listen. You know, the bicycles that I brought, the new bicycles, that I was selling for food, so they went on each one of them, and you know, when a bicycle wasn't new, you couldn't take the price any more. So they used all three bicycles. They gave it to a friend there, to use it. (laughs) Of course, boys. They wouldn't listen. So, because when I had to go to Tel Aviv, it took a half a day, to go on a bus, and wait in the different offices there. I learned a few words, Hebrew words. Machar, machar. Come tomorrow. You know. That's the first word.

INT: (laughs) That's the classic, that's the first thing they tell you.

DOBA: Rega and machar. (laughter)

INT: That's right. (laughs)

DOBA: Yeah, so you know. "Oh, savlanut."

INT: Savlanut. Yeah.

DOBA: Patience.

INT: Patience, savlanut.

DOBA: "Oh, Savlanut." I forgot how is come. "Tomorrow." (laughs) You know, they live a...at that time. Now, it's probably different. A slow, slow life. It was hot, anyway. But everywhere was...

INT: How did you discipline your children? How did you deal with them when there was a problem?

DOBA: Discipline, unfortunately, they didn't have any discipline.

INT: They didn't have any discipline. They could just do what they wanted pretty much?

DOBA: Well, in a way. When I was there, they couldn't. It...you know, I just, because I was always...shaking over them. Especially my older one. He was so sick all the time.

INT: Even as he was getting older, he was sick?

DOBA: Yeah, still sick, sure.

INT: What kinds of things were wrong with him?

DOBA: He had three times pneumonia. His heart was almost stopped. Oh, my G-d, I don't want to think about it. (sighs) Oy.

INT: He had bad...even as a teenager.

DOBA: Well, when he was little, yeah. Yeah, that was most sickness.

INT: So he was seriously ill.

DOBA: Yeah. He was seriously ill, yeah. And...

INT: So you were always afraid for them.

DOBA: I was always afraid. I was, you know, no discipline. I couldn't...couldn't give them discipline.

INT: Did you ever yell at them?

DOBA: Oh, yeah, yelling, plenty. (laughs) Do you think they listened? I remember one day we went in Tel Aviv. I walked to Tel Aviv, and I met these people already, and they were walking with me. And he wanted something. My son wanted something. I don't remember what. My older son. And this woman was with me. And I couldn't give it to him, or I didn't want to or something. She says, "Leave him right there." (laughs) She had a son, too. And I look at her, I said, "What is she talking about?" Do you know, I did that?

INT: You left him there?

DOBA: I left him at a certain spot, but he run. He run to us later. (laughs) But I wouldn't do it myself, you know. Yeah, this woman, I forgot her name. But she was the one who gave me those things in her factory. And Mrs. Lavon, the...the sister of, wait a minute, sister-in-law, or sister of the Prime Minister. He was, at that time, you know, the affair and everything?

INT: Yeah, you were telling me about that last time.

DOBA: Yeah. I don't remember how exactly. He was in politics. Of course, he was not in the office, then. He was like, I don't know, like probation of something. I don't know. So she was helping me a lot. She had a car. And she took me to the mossad to talk to this...

INT: So you had nice people to help you.

DOBA: Very nice. And the director of the mossad was from Poland. (laughs) He wanted to give me two/thirds that time. I had to pay, I didn't have any money. He said, "If you want them to learn the language, you have to hire a tutor, and I will find it for you." But I didn't tell him that I don't intend to stay there. See, I couldn't tell him. And I did my things, you know, always did my things.

INT: So how were you coping as a mother, though?

DOBA: At that time?

INT: In Israel and in America, when you first got to America?

DOBA: (sighs) When I go to America, well, my first fear was that I don't have a place where to live, so that was my first fear. And then when I lived with Mrs. Katz, it was just temporarily. I knew I had to look for an apartment. I went to work, and they were with Mrs. Katz. She was offering that she would make meals for them and other things, but they didn't behave themselves, and she was a very disciplinary person. She was **extremely** disciplined. They didn't show up on time, she didn't want to do anymore. And in fact, she was a concert pianist, and she wanted, there was a piano there, and in fact she gave it to me. I sold it later. She wanted to teach them piano. And they show up for the first lesson, they didn't show up on the certain time, the second. And that was it. (laughs) She would not cope. I mean, she would not...

INT: Put up with it.

DOBA: Tolerate, yeah. Very disciplined. And she had two boys, too. At that time, she was a widow already, long time before. And she was from Russia, born in Russia. That was, if you talk to my son, Ted. He's a talkative person. Stanley maybe not, but he will tell you about Mrs. Katz, and all the other things about his grandmother. Are you kidding? Grandmother in Poland, sure.

INT: He remembers her.

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: He remembers her.

DOBA: Oh, yes. I didn't even realize that he remembers everything. He does. And...what else?

(PAUSE)

INT: This is a continuation of an interview with Doba Smolanowicz. It's August first, 1995.

I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your relationship with your children over the years. We talked last time about your difficulties when you first came to Israel, and then coming to America. Starting out, your relationship with Mrs. Katz, and living with her. And a little bit

about your relationship with your kids. And I wonder if you could just kind of fill me in on some of those years, and talk a little bit about your children.

DOBA: Well, the relation with my two sons, I'm always trying to feel guilty because I always think that I didn't know how to raise them the way I should. Maybe because I couldn't sit down and talk to them like some other mothers have...different psychology, and they can sit down and talk to a child. I had always difficulties in my life. When I came to this country, I had to go to work right away, and I was always afraid that I'm going to lose my job. And all the energy I was keeping for work. And I am...making an excuse for myself for that reason, because if I had to, I had to...have so much energy so I should be able to work five and a half days and go to school. And also I picked up a course of manicuring, because when I came in I was working in this factory. I couldn't breathe, in the attic somewhere, without air conditioning for the whole year. And all I was trying to, because I didn't have any profession, I tried to think of something, and I had wonderful people I met here, and thank G-d for that, because otherwise I don't know. And they gave me some advice, and they tried to help me. So I wound up in this manicuring school, where the course didn't have to take too long, and I said to myself, G-d will, I will find myself in an air conditioned place, and I'll be like a human being, maybe.

And it took a while, and I learned this trade. And I wind up in a very, very good place. I was there for twelve years in Center City. Seventeenth and Walnut, and that was at one time a very good section.

And my children, they had to go to school. I had to try...I wasn't allowed to be sick, because I worked for somebody who didn't believe in taking off from work, and because it was a good job, I was always scared to lose. And in fact, talking about anti-Semitism here in America, I was hired by this person, and I was told by another co-worker there which I knew from before not to tell the guy I'm Jewish, because he would not hire me. So again, I had to lie. And I don't know if I mentioned that to you.

INT: You may have in passing, yeah.

DOBA: For six years he didn't know. So I had to save my energy. That was my excuse, and maybe that's why the relationship with my children...I did, I think I did everything I could. I was cooking, and I was pushing whatever I could. Food meant a lot to me. I didn't have to buy a dress, it was not important. But food was the first thing on my list, always. And I think it has to do with the Holocaust time. And even today. If I don't have a full frigidaire, I'm sick. So slowly, I'm trying to get away from that. Slowly.

Going back to my children (sighs), well, I know they love me, and I love them. I would do anything for them. So, but I...I still feel guilty about it, that I didn't spend more time with them.

INT: But you were still, all those years when they were in...they came here when they were like ten and twelve.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: And you were the breadwinner of the family, you didn't have anyone, so...

DOBA: That's right. And not only the bread, but I didn't have a place where to live, and then I was afraid when I start with Mrs. Katz, I was afraid to reveal to her the truth. I needed some place where to stay, and that was another fight. But in time she find out herself the whole truth what happened to me here. And thanks to her, I lived with her seven years. She sold her house, and then we went together to an apartment.

INT: Did you get, did you have any contact with your mother and your sister at this time?

DOBA: In the beginning, in the beginning I didn't. I actually didn't want it. That was my first impulse. But a gentleman from Israel who I met on a ship, I mentioned this before, he came from Israel for a visit, and he made peace. He took me, we took a taxi, and he said, "You have to make peace with your mother and sister." And that's what happened. And then I was in touch. I was in touch.

INT: But they were in New York, and you were in Philadelphia?

DOBA: Oh, no, no. They were in Philadelphia.

INT: They were in Philadelphia, too.

DOBA: They were always in Philadelphia, yeah. And...

INT: Now, your children's adolescence. How was that, when they were teenagers? How did they adjust to life in America?

DOBA: They liked it very much. Yeah. It was difficult for them to be in Israel. Very difficult. Because...I had told them originally that we were going to go to the United States, and because it took a year to be in Israel, to get all the papers, which I didn't participate that long, and they were very impatient. In fact, it took them more than a year, because I came here first, and they came four months later. So they were very happy to be here. Mm-hm. I think they adapted very well.

INT: What about friendships for them? Did they have friends?

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah. They, right away they came. They had friends in Olney. First they went to McCall, I think, school. Special school for English for that age. And then they went to Olney High School. And they had friends right away, yeah.

INT: Jewish friends? Did they have any Jewish friends?

DOBA: A mixture. They had a lot of Jewish friends. In fact, some of those friends are millionaires today. Maybe one is a billionaire. And I'm looking, I say, my G-d, my older son is so smart, but they didn't continue school, college. Well, I didn't have the money anyway. But they could, they could have done a little bit.

INT: So they finished high school, but they didn't go on to college?

DOBA: They went for two years to community college.

INT: Both of them?

DOBA: Yes. My younger one even started at Penn State. I think he went a half a year there. And he dropped out. He was accepted. He dropped out. And that's a different story. His personal story, you know. Fell in love.

INT: Oh, did he?

DOBA: Yeah. Nothing happened.

INT: Which one was this, the second?

DOBA: My younger one, mm-hm. Fell in love with a lady who was Chinese. They went together for four years. I mean, they were going for four years. And then nothing happened. I...I did not **object**. I, well, it would be, you know, it would be nicer if it would be a Jewish girl. But then I didn't...but then again, he went with a Jewish girl, also, later on. She left him.

INT: How did they feel about their Jewishness?

DOBA: My younger son talks more. He's more open. My younger son keeps a lot inside. Does not reveal.

INT: Your older one talks more.

DOBA: Yeah. Ted, the one that I gave you the number. The younger one doesn't want to worry me, and I don't know what's inside of him. He never complains to me, and it worries me. Because he would have need therapy for years and years. Both they would need, and they don't attend to any therapy.

INT: Why do you say they would need therapy?

DOBA: Because my youngest, my youngest son, my youngest son, I never heard him saying, "I love you." The words, "I love you." He's afraid, or I don't know. And I don't know, I would like to talk to him about it. I don't know how to approach him.

INT: He can't say it to you, or he can't say it to anyone.

DOBA: Maybe to girls he says, but to me, no. No. But my older one says, yeah. But he needs therapy because he's very nervous.

INT: Your older one.

DOBA: Oh, yes.

INT: He's nervous.

DOBA: Very nervous, yes. Very high blood pressure.

INT: Like you.

DOBA: Higher even. Higher.

INT: Really. Is that a hereditary thing?

DOBA: I have no idea. I don't know what it is.

INT: So your older son got married.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: And he's married now, and he has two children.

DOBA: Yeah. He has two boys.

INT: Two boys. And what does he do for a living?

DOBA: Well, he's with the landscaping. He works for himself, but it's very hard work. Very hard. And I try to help him financially, but he never asks for anything. But I try. I try whatever I can. I spoke to my daughter-in-law today. They need a refrigerator. And I mentioned to her, I says, "Look. If you cannot fix that one, I'll help you." So she says to me she needs other things first. But I was afraid to discuss with her any more. (laughs)

INT: Yeah. The woman he married, she's Jewish?

DOBA: No. She's not Jewish. She's Hungarian.

INT: She's Hungarian. Was she born in Hungary?

DOBA: Yeah, she was.

INT: Oh, she was born in Hungary.

DOBA: She had told me one time there was somebody Jewish in her family, but nothing was mentioned later. I don't know exactly. I don't want to ask.

INT: When you were raising your boys, how did you handle Judaism in the house?

DOBA: Well, are you talking about Poland or here?

INT: Well, in Poland, I think we talked about it. You were pretty much hiding in Poland your Jewish identity.

DOBA: Yes. Yes, yes.

INT: But here.

DOBA: Oh, yes. Here. Very much, very much Jewish. Of course I...I am not like I was raised. Because I was raised Orthodox. And I don't go to a synagogue every day, or even every...I would go if I drove. If I had a car I would. I love to go Friday night. Especially. But unfortunately I can't do it the way I would want to. Occasionally I have somebody who offers me a ride, and she invites me, even today.

They know about it, and my son talks. He feels Jewish, very much. My older son, the one that talks more. And he would fight if someone would talk against, he would fight the way I do. But he is, he respects every...every race. Every religion.

INT: Did he get that from you?

DOBA: I have no idea. Because I do. I do respect everybody. (laughs) Maybe he did, maybe. I don't know. But his father was very, very liberal. I would say very liberal. I never heard, all those years, I wouldn't have been married to him anyway, if it would be other than that. Never said against any religion, anything.

INT: And not against the Jews.

DOBA: No! I was purposely listening to it all the time, because I was under the impression sooner or later he'll say something, and then...

INT: Never did. Even in an argument.

DOBA: Never. Never.

INT: After you came to America, did you ever get into contact with your husband, your ex-husband?

DOBA: You mean the first one? Yes. Yes. We were corresponding some. From here and from Israel, too.

INT: Did you ever regret leaving him?

DOBA: No. No.

INT: Did he ever see the boys?

DOBA: Afterwards? No. He died very young.

INT: He did? He died, he passed away?

DOBA: Sure.

INT: When was that?

DOBA: He died when he was 45 or so.

INT: Oh. Of what?

DOBA: Heart attack. And...(sighs) well, I didn't wish him **that**. And I kept in contact with my mother-in-law all the time, until she died.

INT: That was a close relationship.

DOBA: **Very** close. Until she died. I even have, I don't have them, but my son had tapes, you know, they spoke on the phone. And I always, that's funny that she always gave me inspiration, even from such a distance.

INT: She could comfort you and guide you a little.

DOBA: Letters, or some...yeah.

INT: How did your boys handle the separation from their father?

DOBA: (sighs) We never talked about it. I did not know how to...how to approach the subject, and I was scared. Oh! I did. I'm sorry. I did talk to them. **Many** times. I says, "I just wanted to know whether you think it was my fault." Especially my older son. He says, "No, Mother, you did the best you could." It made me feel good.

INT: Was this recently?

DOBA: Even recently. Sure. Because so often I, because of guilt still, I didn't know what I was doing. I did whatever I could do. And well, that was the best thing. He says, "That was the best thing you did." He says.

INT: To leave your husband.

DOBA: Leave him, yeah. Because he knows more. He remembers more than I even remember. He remembers such details about how...how...the relation was, my husband and I. (sighs) I guess children, they observe. You never expect how much they observe, so...

INT: How about your younger son, does he...

DOBA: My younger son I talked a few times about that, too. And he did say also that I did the best I could. But he's the one who doesn't talk. He doesn't talk much.

INT: Keeps it all in.

DOBA: Yeah. He was hurt too much. Mostly by women.

INT: In his relationships?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: He was married and divorced, right?

DOBA: He was, yeah. He was married to a lady who always said to me she would never take a divorce, never. And (laughs) she was the first one who...

INT: She wanted the divorce?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: Was she Jewish?

DOBA: No. She wasn't Jewish, either.

INT: How long were they married before...

DOBA: A very short time. I don't remember now.

INT: And he was hurt by that?

DOBA: He tells me he wasn't, but I know different. That's why he doesn't want...he says, "Oh, we didn't have a marriage, anyway, and it's good that happened," things like this, you know. But she had, she was going with a man. You know. She...

INT: So he's had bad luck with relationships.

DOBA: Very bad. And he doesn't talk about it.

INT: How about your older son's relationship with his wife? How do you think that is?

DOBA: Well, very nervous. They have a lot of arguments, unfortunately. He's nervous, his life is very difficult. He **makes** it difficult for himself. Makes it difficult. (Pause)

INT: So could we go back to the Jewish identity a little bit, and did you have any observance in your home when you were raising your kids in America?

DOBA: You mean here in Philadelphia?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: (sighs) Yes. Yes, I made Seder dinners. And I even managed, I still have those books. At one time, my son, my both sons were working for a very religious man here. He had a store, Broad Street, and they were working for him, so I got acquainted. In fact, I still see him, because he belongs to this little synagogue. And he had given me the books. And I used to observe them. I mean, maybe not very strictly, but my son was reading. And if I invited somebody, the other person was reading, also. In fact, how much I wanted to be Jewish. When I met my second husband, because my mother -- she's very prejudiced, very.

INT: Against?

DOBA: Against anybody who's not Jewish. And I wanted to do this for her. I went to, I talked to a rabbi. I wanted to get marriage by a rabbi to satisfy her and myself. And we were already talking to a rabbi and all, but it didn't work out, unfortunately. And then I realized that it wouldn't make any difference for her, either. Because I wanted to win her love. I would do anything. But it never worked. (sighs) So...oh, yes. And I made my husband here, I didn't make him, he was willing to do, to go along whatever I wanted. He took me to synagogue, he drove me to synagogue, picked me up from synagogue.

INT: Where did you meet this man, your second husband?

DOBA: That's when I came out from the hospital. I was very ill.

INT: You were ill.

DOBA: Very ill.

INT: With...what? What year was this? (pause) How did you meet your second husband?

DOBA: I was all alone after all the hospitals, and the same time, Mrs. Katz had to leave. She had a personal problem, some illnesses in the family, and she was advised by...by her very close relative, to leave the situation, to go to California.

INT: California? Wow. That's far away.

DOBA: And that's what she did. And that's where she made her home. So in other words, my dear person went away. I came back from the hospital for the second or third...

(END TAPE EIGHT, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE EIGHT, SIDE TWO)

INT: They were grown up.

DOBA: Yeah, well they left, they left me, too. That happened, the whole thing together.

INT: The whole thing all at once.

DOBA: The whole thing happened. They left, I was...

INT: What do you mean, they left you? They moved out?

DOBA: They moved out, yeah.

INT: They didn't break off relationship with you. They just moved out?

DOBA: No, they moved out. I was living in Logan, in that apartment that I was occupying with my lady.

INT: Mrs. Katz.

DOBA: Yeah. So I stayed there. At that time I was able to pay a hundred dollars. Before, I was paying half of that. So I was forced to pay myself a hundred dollars. Okay, so Mrs. Katz left. My children left. I wound up with several hospitals. Came back home. And I used to go to the Catskill Mountains, before. And that was my...I would say I felt very well, very good there, for a week I went. And that was my vacation, and...

INT: Did you used to go every year?

DOBA: Mostly every year, yeah. That was my escape from hard work, and very pleasant people I met there. Very pleasant. But anyway, one of those years, oh, I went after my illness. I actually didn't want to go. I had very nice friends in different, in different parts of the country, because I had met them in the Catskill Mountains. I had a very, very good friend in Bronx, New York, who was a Holocaust survivor, too. Unfortunately, he died a few years back. And he came to my rescue, because he had called me occasionally because I had met him before, and he says, "Would you like to go on vacation?" because I hadn't been for a few years. I said, "I can't." I didn't want to reveal to him, I didn't want to leave the house. I had tremendous fears. So I didn't want to tell him about it. I said, "I just can't go." He said, "What do you mean, you can't go? I'm going to come and pick you up." And that's what happened. He came all the way from, he didn't have a car, he rented a car. He came from the Bronx, and I guess he knew, you know, he could read my mind, what was happening. And he took me out, actually over there, you know. And that was (laughs) ironic. That's where I met my husband. That year.

INT: In the Catskills? That year?

DOBA: Mm-hm. That year.

INT: That was in 197...something.

DOBA: '71, or, wait a minute. Later, later. I think I met him in 1974. Because I got married in 1975. So the year before. Yeah, that's what happened. Because I didn't go for a few years.

INT: So you met him in the Catskills.

DOBA: Mm-hm.

INT: So what was he like?

DOBA: And...well, all the good things. Up till then I didn't have any man. I was always surrounding with...in fact, that was a Jewish, they were catering to Jewish people mostly in that camp. And...I didn't meet a person, until then, who looked at me in about a few days being there, he says, "I have...serious...I forgot how to say it, about...you know, marrying me."

INT: He just met you.

DOBA: Yes. He has serious....

INT: Feelings, intentions.

DOBA: Yeah, intentions. Thank you. Serious intentions, and I...I really was stunned, because I said to myself, Here, I'm walking around sick, still sick, and I don't know how I looked. (laughs) I lost a lot of weight at that time. And here comes a person who just met me, college graduate, having a very good job. And he says the one thing he wants to do, live in New York State. He had to do it, because he was working there.

INT: Was he about your age? How old, you were in your forties when you met him?

DOBA: Yeah. I think 42 or something.

INT: And the same with him, or he was older, or?

DOBA: He was younger.

INT: He was younger than you.

DOBA: A little bit younger.

INT: What did he do?

DOBA: He was an auditor working for a publishing company, private publishing company, in Chicago. That was the main office.

INT: He was not Jewish.

DOBA: No. By the way, he didn't know who he was. He was an orphan.

INT: Oh, really? That's interesting.

DOBA: He never knew who he was, that's right.

INT: Didn't know who his parents were.

DOBA: No. He never met his parents. That's right. A couple adopted him, took him from an orphanage.

INT: That's interesting, your first husband, the same thing happened.

DOBA: Well, he knew his parents.

INT: Well, I mean, he knew who his parents were, but he was also adopted.

DOBA: But the parents didn't abandon him. See, that's a different story.

INT: Right. That's true.

DOBA: But the characteristics, a lot the same. The same ability. The same left-handed people.

INT: Really.

DOBA: Mm-hm.

INT: Did they look similar?

DOBA: No. Looks, like night and day. And nature, like night and day. But the ability...

INT: Intelligence, you mean?

DOBA: Yes. The counting, they were super in mathematics. Super. Yeah. My first husband was even, had more...(phone interruption)

INT: We were talking about the similarities in your husbands. Did he know you were Jewish, your second husband?

DOBA: Oh, definitely. Of course. There was thirteen people at the table, twelve Jews, and he was the one person who wasn't Jewish. (laughs) I don't know why he came there, in the first place. I don't know. I forgot why he came. I guess he was lonely. He had, his wife had left him. It was like two years he was divorced at that time, yeah. Yeah, he had problems (sighs) but he never want to talk about it. Well...

INT: So you were attracted to him, or...

DOBA: Yeah, well, yeah. You mean I liked him?

INT: Yeah.

DOBA: Yeah, I did. Yeah. Somewhat, yeah. Somewhat.

INT: Didn't fall in love, it doesn't sound like.

DOBA: No. But I guess...thoughtful, you know. I was thinking about a lot of things. And I say, I like to try that. But the characteristic is that up till then I didn't meet somebody who was worthwhile. But then, same time, other things came up, it's always like that. But I had to choose something.

INT: So there were other men around.

DOBA: There were, yeah, I mean, the same time. But I think he had the most...the most serious. Yeah. And he would do anything. He lived four and a half hours away from Philadelphia, and he would come every weekend. And I didn't even **want** him to, and he would. And then he would go back to work. He used to work in Greenwich, Connecticut. And I guess he cared, I don't know. So I saw all those things, and I saw what he can offer, and **because** I didn't have family, because everybody abandoned, not everybody, that I was hoping people abandoned me. So there was nobody I could talk to for advice. I didn't even go to therapy, any therapy at that time. I had to solve all by myself. I had a few people. Mrs. Katz was in California. I had told her about it. I think I talked to her, and she couldn't...in fact, she says, "Yes, it's a good idea." She did say that. "It's a good idea, I'm very happy for you." Because she didn't want me to be alone. She had come...she came here for a visit, because she came to see her son and her grandchild. They were in Philadelphia. And at that time, exactly that time, I came out from the hospital. I never forget. And she didn't want to leave me, because she knows there's nobody to help me, and I couldn't do anything. I just had a gall bladder operation, and nobody could give me some food. And at that time, I wouldn't have money to order from a restaurant. I didn't even, I couldn't even think about it. So she says to me, "You have to promise me, I'll go with you to a nursing home, and you're going there for a week. You don't have money, and I spoke to my son, and he's **very** willing to pay the money." At that time her son was a lawyer. Now he's a judge. And I didn't take it. I had some money at that time. So I went, I went with her. Because my dear friend Mr. Rubinstein drove us. We went to this nursing home, and she says, "Now I know that I can go home in peace. Because you're going to be there at least for a week, and I know you will recuperate, because the meals and everything."

But talking about nursing home, that's another story. (laughs) And she was, we always were in touch. You know, always.

INT: So you could ask her for advice.

DOBA: Yes.

INT: She was probably your closest friend.

DOBA: Oh, definitely. When I was coming from work, she was always sitting and waiting for me. And I told her all the story about work and everything. Oh, boy, did I enjoy that. And I liked my job so much, that I couldn't wait till I wake up in the morning and go to work. Because away from the factory, are you kidding, in a civilized place? I learn English right away. Over there in the factory I didn't learn English. Jewish came back, I think I mentioned to you.

INT: You learned Yiddish. (laughs)

DOBA: And I was a human being, I could wear a dress, or no. No, that's right, a dress. I didn't wear slacks. And I met very, very nice people there, celebrities, and all kinds. And I was, I thought I'm alive again. It was hard. Five and a half days work, and still go for English. I went to learn English.

INT: So how was your marriage? Your second marriage?

DOBA: You mean this marriage? Well, for a while it was...okay. But then...because he had emotional problems, you know, he was abandoned by his parents, and the mother, who took him, mostly the mother, I would say, she was not good to him. And he lived through a lot, because he didn't experience love. And those problems, you know, when you have problems, you always, you always somehow backfires to a closed person. And I guess I didn't want to understand, either. Because I had my problem.

INT: So you didn't want to listen to his problems.

DOBA: I listened somehow. He didn't want to talk, and that was a problem. He didn't want to talk.

INT: Was he an affectionate man, the way your first husband was? You had described your first husband that way.

DOBA: I think yes. I think he was.

INT: Do you think he loved you?

DOBA: I think he did, yeah. I think he did. He always **said** that. Yeah, I think he did. And it was difficult, because there's a daughter. And the mother would instigate her and all. It was

very difficult. I tried to help. We took her on vacation. But no matter how much I did, did not, did not...benefit anything. I tried to help. Whoever I could. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. A constant battle, and my family still didn't want to accept me. Many times I prayed, and I still pray. Wouldn't that be nice if you go to your own and tell them a few things, and they look at you? I'm just hallucinating sometimes. They look at you, and give me a little bit of advice, or...or...sympathy, you know. And I always think of it, but it didn't happen. I'm here, what, 35 years. It didn't happen. So, when I went...

INT: You're talking about your mother and your sister?

DOBA: Yeah. I went to therapy, of course, counseling and all. And every counselor I go to, they tell me, "Why don't you forget? Why don't you forget?" I said, "How can you? How can I? I cannot..." "Divorce. Divorce them." That's the famous, famous advice they give you. All of them.

INT: Divorce your family.

DOBA: Yeah. Divorce your family.

INT: But you can't do that.

DOBA: No. No, I can't.

INT: So you never give up hope that maybe you'll reconcile with them.

DOBA: No. I'm trying very hard. I visited a few days ago my mother. (sighs)

INT: How did it go?

DOBA: It went all right that evening, for a change. It went all right. It was not too much hurt, actually. It was none. Because it was a short evening. I made it. I had the fear, you know, that I don't want to get hurt anymore, so I made it pretty and short. And I'm in contact. In fact, I'm in contact with my sister. She became very ill, and I did send her flowers. And I am still reaching out. And she calls me occasionally.

INT: What about your children, your sons' relationship with your mother and your sister?

DOBA: Well, my older son, he's too good for his own bad things. He always told me, "Why don't you forget about the whole thing? Just keep in contact with her, and whatever you can do." Because he was going to visit her. He would go. She would tell him things against me, a lot of things. And he always, he doesn't want to give me the satisfaction ever. He says, "You have to, you have to forget. You have to understand that she's not young." But if a person is the same way that was young, and never changed, so that's not an excuse. But (sighs) I'm trying. And I tell her, I even told my son just Sunday, you know, because I saw them. I said, "Would you please visit your grandmother?" I ask him a few times. I said, "Please do that." He says, "Yes,

you're right." Right. (sighs) He doesn't have the time now, but before, he would go and bring the children there. Now, he has a lot of problems at home. (sighs) So anyway.

INT: So what happened with your second marriage?

DOBA: Well, we were married for 21, I believe. 21 years or 22. And he passed away. That was last year, September.

INT: Just last year.

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: How was that? How did you handle that?

DOBA: It was not easy. He became ill, I think March of '94, and he died in September of a brain tumor, cancer. So it wasn't easy. He died here.

INT: In the house.

DOBA: I had the...what is their name? Hospice. Hospice. (sighs) I had a horrible battle, too.

INT: To keep him home?

DOBA: It's not that. It's his daughter came in the situation. I had a...if you call that I had a Holocaust before, this was **really** Holocaust.

INT: She gave you a hard time.

DOBA: I was very ill. I wind up in Abington Hospital a couple weeks. She was here, doing whatever she wants. She threw out my things. She wanted to put me in a nursing home. I don't know how I overcame that. And again, I didn't have anybody to help me. Nobody. I don't know. I don't know.

INT: How do you do it?

DOBA: I don't believe it that I did.

INT: You don't think you got over it?

DOBA: No, I mean, I don't know how I did this. How I fought it over. She got, I asked the hospice to come in here. So they were, she knows how to talk. And...what she was fighting for is between the hospice and my husband, the father, which she never wanted to see him before, but now, since she sees that there's money involved...all she wanted, to take him away from here. And I said, "If you want to go, fine. I'll fulfill your wishes." But he **didn't** want to go. He didn't want to go, because he knows, he never wanted to go back to the house, to his mother's house.

He had a fear of that, tremendous fear to go back to that house that he was raised in. And he had told me a few times, "I don't want to go back there," before. And now he was sick, and he would have to go to the third floor, and he was quite heavy, and he was thinking about all these things, and he says, "No, I don't want to go." So she had gotten in touch with a lawyer, in New York, and I heard a conversation she was talking to her father. "Daddy, let's get out. Let's come to live with me, and we'll get her for everything." And I was ill in bed. (sighs) So you see.

INT: But did he agree with her?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: Did your husband agree with his daughter?

DOBA: Yeah.

INT: He did.

DOBA: Mm-hm. Yeah, but he didn't want to go. He didn't want to go, and...when he died, she still wanted to take him. So the hospice was trying to fight with me to give her everything she wanted. And I says, I was willing to give him whenever he wanted to go. But he died here, he was dead, and she said between her and me, she says, there was a car, and I wouldn't give her the car, because I had to pay for the car. It was a loan for that purpose. And I said, "One thing I'm not going to give you is the car." And what the horrible did, they said to me, the hospice, a Jewish lady, by the way, a social worker from that particular, I'm not afraid, you can put this everywhere. I would like to write this in the papers. Delever, Delever. The Hospice from Delever. That's right. She says to me, "Well, if you…" I said, "No, I'm going to bury him here." She said, "There is a grave in New York." And I said, "No." I put my foot down, and I said "No, everything is not going to go your way, now. He's going to be here in Philadelphia." I said, "That much I can..." Apparently, his wishes was that, because he never wanted to go in New York. To be here. And he even told us what should be done and everything. And I did everything he wanted. So, so this lady from the hospice says to me, "If you didn't want him to be buried in New York, so give her the car instead." I said, "You son of a gun," I says, "Get out of here! I have enough of it." I said, "That's already enough." And I just left and went to my bedroom. I mean, that's, that's a **nerve!** To change for a person a **car**? Supposed to be loved him and everything? So, a witness, I should put on the tape that.

But anyway, it was difficult, and I still don't have peace. She still bothers me.

INT: The daughter does.

DOBA: Mm-hm. Bothers me. So I don't know when it's going to be peace. Peace.

INT: But those years that you were married to your husband, were you more financially secure than you were previously?

DOBA: Yes. Yes, I had this. Although I never knew what the next day will bring, because there was all kinds of scare, you know. He might leave me, he might this, might that.

INT: Your fears within yourself, or...

DOBA: Yes, myself.

INT: The reality of the situation.

DOBA: The reality, too.

INT: Yeah. So your relationship wasn't so good?

DOBA: It was okay for a few years.

INT: So why did you stay with him for so many years?

DOBA: Oy, I was ill. I was ill. I was ill. He...in a way, he...gave me support. Emotional support. You know, at least expect, he gave me emotional support. Partially of the time. Like he always gave me like, "Oh, you'll be all right, you'll be all right." You know. And he always said, he'll die young. He always said that. I don't know why. And, "You'll be alright. You'll be alright." And for me, if someone says to me only that word, you know, it meant a lot. So I had to, I was thinking about that, too. And I said, "Where I'm going to go? I'm not well, I don't drive. Where I'm going to go?" So it was secure, because he paid the expenses. And apparently he cared, you know? He cared, but he had his problems. But I shouldn't say that it was entirely bad, because of him, I managed to travel a little bit. I think, did I mention this to you?

INT: No. Where did you go?

DOBA: I went to London. His job send him. He had a very responsible job. Very, very good job. They send him to London, Amsterdam, and Mexico. I went to all those places. That was the last trip I did for him. And of course, I wasn't able to travel. I was just staying in a hotel, you know. And walking a little bit, a few feet away. But I visited, you know, London, and Amsterdam was very, very interesting. And then Mexico afterwards. And he was travelling. He was a field auditor. So that was his job, travelling. He never had a stationery job. And...I probably wouldn't have the occasion to do that otherwise. You know.

INT: When did your agoraphobia start, or your fears?

DOBA: When I came back from the hospital, from the gall bladder operation, maybe half a year later or so.

INT: You don't think you ever had it when you were a young mother in Poland, or back in those times?

DOBA: Maybe I had one episode, but also my pressure was high.

INT: It could be your blood pressure.

DOBA: Was high, and it could be my pressure jumped up, and I got dizzy. See, I remember, I was at the party.

INT: Yeah, you told me about that.

DOBA: And I got dizzy.

INT: But that could have been your high blood pressure.

DOBA: It could have been, and many times it's now, too. Yeah.

INT: So now it's many years later, and you developed this fear of going out, or fear of...

DOBA: Yeah, well, it's not as bad now, but it was. It was great. It was...(sighs) Sometimes I don't believe that I haven't been travelling lately at all. Because I have physical ailments. I haven't been on a train in many, many years. I haven't been on a train, and I wasn't, I cannot go by myself, let's say I would have liked to go to Atlantic City. Okay? I haven't been. If someone would go with me, maybe I, maybe I would try.

INT: Somebody that you knew well, or just anybody?

DOBA: Yes, it's better yet if I know somebody. I have to trust. Emotional trust. Yeah. But it didn't happen yet. I was offered by one person, but these people didn't know about my problems, and at that time I really couldn't, physically I couldn't, when they were asking, they ask me to take a trip, or whatever. So I haven't been...

INT: So how do you cope with all your difficulties now in your life? Do friendships help? Are you in therapy, support groups?

DOBA: Friends, I'm still going to this support group whenever I can. As far as friends, acquaintances. I don't think I have friends. I don't have any friends. When I was able to do things for them, I had a lot. A lot, I was much younger, and I was capable to help a lot of people, I don't know how I did this, in many, many ways. Many ways. And to those people, they saw I cannot do anything for them anymore. So they abandoned me.

INT: Well, that doesn't sound like friends.

DOBA: No, they were not friends anyway, but they were, at that time, I thought they were friends.

INT: But the people that are always calling you here are friends, when we're here. I mean, do you call those people acquaintances, and not friends?

DOBA: I wish I knew an example. I mean, there are certain people just to talk on the phone. For example, Margie, she cannot walk, and who else? All the other people there that call, if I need a driver, I pay.

INT: But is there anyone you can talk to, and sort of spill your heart out to? That kind of friend?

DOBA: I can talk a little bit to a certain person, and a little bit to another person.

INT: I see.

DOBA: One person doesn't have the same understanding. People have different problems. They don't understand my problems. For example, there's one person, I talk about being lonely...

(END TAPE EIGHT, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE NINE, SIDE ONE)

DOBA: Can I mention something? I don't know if I mention to you before. That I didn't want to talk about the Holocaust for many years, and I'm realizing today, so many years later, maybe I was trying to deny, and maybe I was trying to suppress, because the more I see, and I understand why I didn't do it, could have been a combination. And there's many things, maybe today I'm trying to suppress, you know, but they say, "Talk, talk." But you cannot talk about everything, or tell everybody. So.

INT: Just last week you spoke at the University of Pennsylvania, to a group of college students.

DOBA: Yeah, yeah. But I'm very anxious now. But then I don't remember. After I spoke I said, "Oh, I didn't say this, I didn't say that." Because I don't make notations. And I don't know of anybody who does, but...

INT: Is it difficult for you to do that? To speak in front of a lot of people?

DOBA: To talk? No. Oh, by the way, I can talk. You gave me the work, do you know I cannot read it? That you made the whole thing?

INT: That I typed up?

DOBA: That's right.

INT: You can't read it.

DOBA: Nope.

INT: Because your English isn't good, or...

DOBA: No, no, it's not. I cannot, I fall apart. What's the difference? I can talk, but I can't...

INT: You can talk, but you can't read it. That's interesting.

DOBA: I thought I mentioned to you. Because the first that I, these eighteen pages, same thing. After I did this, well, a lady helped me, and I had to talk about it in one of the groups, I thought I would be able, and I started, I broke up. I asked somebody else to do it. And if someone else does it, it's different, to listen to it. Different.

INT: You can listen to other people's stories.

DOBA: Well, more. More than I can read my own. More. Yeah.

INT: That's interesting.

DOBA: Yeah, I don't know, I don't know why. I lived through more when I read. And I want it very much, because I want to see it. Maybe I'll do it in time, maybe, little by little. Because I want it. And someone came in here.

INT: Maybe it will be easier to listen to the tapes, because...

DOBA: Yes, yes it will be. Then I will probably be angry at myself, maybe the stupid things I've said, I shouldn't see. (laughs)

INT: But you think the act of reading it on paper...

DOBA: It makes the situation worse for me, yeah. Yeah. And some people walked in, and I had it on top, and somebody looked in, and I see the interest they got, they wanted to read. But I said, "My G-d. I can't do that."

INT: Why do you think now, or recently, you are able to talk about the war?

DOBA: Why? Maybe because somebody has to say it. Somebody has to keep up. Because I realize the time is later than we think. In fact, one of my cousins that I met him just once, a second cousin, just sent me a family tree, and he's asking me to add to it, from Boulder, Colorado. And I'm keeping this thing, and it has to be done. And this person says, tomorrow might be later than today, or something like that. I just remember what he said in the letter. I didn't even answer him yet. I'm very anxious to do it. In fact I have some names, I gathered some names from my mother. From my mother. Do you know that I don't remember some things that happened yesterday, but one of my grandfathers I never met, my father's father. Never met, because he died when he was very little. Do you know, the other day when I was talking to my mother, I remember his name, Yonah? "Oh," she said, "That's right!" And I wrote it up quickly on a piece of paper.

INT: It just came to you.

DOBA: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: That's interesting.

DOBA: This was really, I was so happy. That I was able to remember that. Other names, I remember, too, but they were people that I met. And I want to do that, too, the family tree.

INT: So you think it's easier to talk now because you're getting older, and you want to...

DOBA: Well, I started talking the thing about, about six, seven years ago, I think. And I guess slowly I was encouraged by different people. And I went to listen. I cannot see pictures yet.

INT: You can't go to films.

DOBA: No.

INT: Like "Schindler's List," or something like that.

DOBA: No. Mm-mm. I cannot do it.

INT: How about books?

DOBA: I had a survivor here, the book by Jack Eisen, and I gave it to someone, and I'm very angry. The person never brought it back. I was going to read that book, because Jack says to me when he gave me the book, he says, "It's not horrible. You can read. There's a lot of comedy in it, too." And I promised him I'm going to read, but I never did, yet. And it's gone from my house.

INT: That happens when you lend books.

DOBA: I called...my name is on it. I called the person who used to come here to counseling, and he left the job because he had to finish. He's going for a Ph.D., so he doesn't have the time. And he says he's going to bring it. He forgot. So I called his supervisor today. I said, "Would you kindly check it in the office, maybe it's still there, or call him?"

INT: So you can't see films yet.

DOBA: Excuse me? No, no.

INT: But you're able to speak to groups.

DOBA: Yeah. What's the difference, I would like to know why is that.

INT: Do you still get nightmares?

DOBA: Yes, I do. Last night even, I got one. I cannot watch anything, any killings in the evening. Any dramas. Because right away I get those nightmares.

INT: What nightmares do you get?

DOBA: (sighs) That I'm closed in somewhere. Fire is there. I want to get out. My children. I'm afraid they're going to take me with my children, again and again and again.

INT: That's a recurring theme, that they're going to take away your children. Because you've had these dreams for many, many years.

DOBA: I even, I even dream about my **grandchildren** now. They will never, you know, my children were not in the Holocaust. So, I'm trying my best not to watch dramas. Or wars, you know. Especially in the evening. Wars I don't watch. I don't like it. A history I like. I was watching today, "War and Peace." (laughs) I happen to like Russian history. But I hope it does not backfire tonight. It was four hours, I think.

INT: Is it difficult, do you have nightmares after our interviews?

DOBA: I don't think so, no. That has nothing to do with it, because if I would experience that...if I had experienced that, I would probably try not to do that, maybe. Or maybe a different time of the day. But not that I remember.

INT: That's good. Looking back on your life, how do you think you coped as a young child, an eleven year old, when the war started, and then getting through the war. All those years in Poland, all the difficult years in America. What do you see as your coping skills through those times?

DOBA: Well, most of the time I suffer from abandonment, because when I was eleven, I thought the whole world abandoned me. The whole world. I know that I did not feel anything against my parents, because I realized they did the best they could to try to survive, each one separate. But all total, every time when I get used to a person, I can get used to an animal, anybody, and I suffer tremendously when the person leaves me. Even today. Little things. So all my life, I was so afraid that the relationship that I had with my husband, in fact, with my first husband, I was so afraid to leave for many years. That I didn't want to be abandoned. I thought I'm going to be (pause) abandoned again. So I took difficult time and everything. Not to be left. Not to be alone. And I still suffer to be alone. I would do, I am trying to do so many things not to be alone, it's not even funny. Sometimes I'm so desperate that, last Sunday in fact, I went, well, I didn't want to see that movie, "Apollo 13." I didn't want to see that, but because a friend called me, actually I called her first. I wanted to play bridge with her, but she promised these people that she's going with. So she said, "If you want to come, I'll pick you up." And I went. You know, I went, and I wind up with...eight other people in a certain restaurant, where it was just an argument. Because of desperation. And I didn't know who am I going to go with. So

(laughs). I mean, this is, I could have stayed home and read a book. I can't read. It would be more productive.

INT: Do you enjoy reading?

DOBA: I would enjoy it, but I cannot concentrate. That's my problem. That's one of my illnesses, I guess. Concentration. I can't concentrate.

INT: What happens when you're reading?

DOBA: I start reading, and my mind is going all over. The war time, the living. I try, when I see somebody suffers, I say, "Oh, how can I help this person?" All those thoughts. Negative thoughts. (Pause) Positiveness. And when I read a book, all the negativity. I'm going, I'm entirely away from that story, I mean, those sentences.

INT: Are you able to enjoy life? What do you do for fun?

DOBA: That's a question. (pause) I like to play bridge, okay, which I don't do it too much. Because I don't have partners anymore.

INT: You need four people, right? Can you do it with two?

DOBA: Well, I cannot do it here, because I'm physically unable. If I could do it here, I would have people definitely, because they always like to come here. And you would have to serve, you know, and I cannot do that.

INT: You have to make food and meals, and all that.

DOBA: Yeah. It's just...not big meals, but even this is...I did it a few times, and I was exhausted. In fact, I had to stop. My pressure went sky high. And I had to tell. So people like this, when they see it, they don't even invite you. I was invited one time to a group of people, and I had to lie down there. I mean, would they want me there? No. They wouldn't want me again.

INT: Because of your blood pressure.

DOBA: Yeah, I got very sick. So, my spine, I couldn't sit any more in that uncomfortable chair. So I'm still hoping that somehow, somewhere, I'll be able to do it at least home. This would be my enjoyment. And I would like to see a show, but I haven't been lately. And friends. I love friends. I enjoy people. I mean, if there is such a thing like friends.

INT: What about your grandchildren? What's your relationship with them like?

DOBA: Well, unfortunately, I cannot do much for them, so they cannot come here and leave, be here with me, because I am afraid of the responsibility. The little one is very, very active. **Very** active. And I have the fear. So I would not, I would not ask him to come and stay. I would like

to see them, but they don't have the time just to come over. Well, (pause) but when I go there, they're nice. They're very nice, yeah. And I try to help them to babysit. So I bring all kinds of things for them, for the family. Because they need, they need financial help.

INT: But getting back to coping.

DOBA: It's not easy. I'm very depressed.

INT: But you got through the war.

DOBA: Yeah. And that's ironic. I was able to work for about ten years straight. I don't know how I did that. And I was ill when I was young. I had rheumatic fever when I was seventeen from the war time. And I had some surgeries. And my blood pressure, since I was in my twenties. And then when I wound up here, it was a master work. I guess it's a...how do you say...

INT: Advantageous? No.

DOBA: Mother of adventure.

INT: "Necessity is the mother of invention."

DOBA: Yeah. Necessity is the mother of invention. So I worked because I probably **had** to do it. Then, when I didn't **have** to work, that's when I became ill.

INT: I see. (Doba laughs) So it's almost like work kept you going, because you had to do it.

DOBA: Yeah. I mean later here, even, from 1962 to about 1971, or even a bit later, because I had to leave my job, of course. I had to quit. And after awhile, I even continue part time. I went back part time. Not the same place. They would not give me the same place. I had the beautiful following and everything. So someone else took it over. But I tried. I even worked, I moved to New York, White Plains, New York, for about seven years. I lived there. I managed to find myself a job in Port Chester once a week, and I used to, my husband used to drive me to work like Saturday morning. The one day only. It was nice, very nice. And I met wonderful people in West Chester, New York. Wonderful. I started going to school there, and the teacher, who is Jewish, fell in love. What she did for me, ah!

INT: What were you going to school for?

DOBA: For English. And she introduced me to another retired teacher. I forgot her name. And she introduced me to Hadassah. She would come to pick me up every meeting to take me there. And invited me to stay this to her house. I experienced a lot of friendship there. And then I started going, started learning how to play bridge at that time, too. And I used to have people that they used to come to pick me up from my apartment. And drive me back and forth. Very,

very nice people there. So I experienced a few years of pleasantness among my problems, you know.

INT: What about your belief in G-d, or...

DOBA: Very much. Very much. I think the last speaking a lady who was, I don't know whether she was a student, or maybe she was just a guest there, she asked me, "Do you believe in G-d?" She did ask me, still. And of course.

INT: So how could He let the Holocaust happen?

DOBA: Excuse me?

INT: So why did He let the Holocaust happen?

DOBA: Well, I said G-d was always with me. Always led me through all kinds of things. And I always believed. I don't agree with other people that they say they don't believe. I don't agree with them. That's their beliefs. I'm not going to deny their beliefs, but I do believe, and I always did, and I do. I do. I pray all the time in my own words.

INT: Does it help you?

DOBA: Very much. I wish I can have more meetings, like synagogue. In fact, I called up one synagogue, they advertised. Friday night. I forgot already which one it is. And I talked to the rabbi, and he says, "You're welcome. Come any time." And he gave me such a warm, on the phone. But again, I need somebody to drive, to go with me, you see? I can take a taxi, but I'm going to be left alone there. That fear again. So I am, I have to get back to this person, I didn't hear from her in a long time. She goes to synagogue every day.

INT: So did G-d help, did your belief in G-d help you through the war years, also?

DOBA: Yes, definitely.

INT: Anything else you can think of, of how you got through it?

DOBA: You mean the war? The hope. The hope for a better tomorrow. And I always believed in G-d. And where people lost their beliefs in ...in the future, that peace can be one day. I, in semi-conscious, I believed in a better tomorrow. Although when the war finished, and I told you this episode, I was shocked. I couldn't believe it's peace. But that's, I think that's natural. But I always was hoping. And I couldn't share with anybody my thoughts. I didn't, not even with my mother. Because I couldn't sit down and talk to her anyway. And of course, it was a different story, being there in Germany.

INT: Do you think the Holocaust could happen again?

DOBA: Definitely.

INT: You do.

DOBA: Yes. And that's why I fight over, when I talk to the students, I said, "Please, do not be prejudiced. And if you see something is going on, speak up." And when I see a parent comes in as a guest, I applaud them. I thank them very much for raising these beautiful people that are willing to come and listen. And I have letters from some students. One even written in German, I don't know why. Thank me, please continue doing that. This is, this is inspiration. This calls for going more and more. So it can happen because who knew it's going to happen there? Because people were quiet. They didn't, they did not talk. That's another story, about people. I find myself in company last Sunday, and they were all Jewish women there. This particular friend of mine, her name is Sylvia, and I met her through bridge, but she's a very good person. And she says, she wanted to start making me important in front of the people. And she said, "You know, we have a celebrity here?" And I'm very shy about it. I said, "Stop it." She said, "Yes, we do have a celebrity. Do you know, there's a lady writing a book about her, and come to her house, just last Sunday." What do you think? None of them was interested in it. None of them.

INT: Other survivors?

DOBA: Some Jewish people. No, no survivors. Some Jewish people, until today, they didn't know about the Holocaust. And I am **furious**.

INT: They don't want to know.

DOBA: I'm furious. We're not talking about other religions. I mean, Jewish people, they just...they were just quiet all the time here. They didn't voice their opinion all the time. There was certain people who brought people from Europe, but they were just a few.

INT: But they didn't want to know. I thought the other survivors...

DOBA: No. They didn't want to know. Just last Sunday. We don't have to look far for it.

INT: Do you see anti-Semitism in America?

DOBA: Definitely.

INT: Do you think it could happen here?

DOBA: Yes. And we have to...there should be a lot of lectures about it. It definitely should be taught in school. Definitely. It should be a must. Because I'm scared. I'm scared for my children and grandchildren. Yeah. People are so...

INT: Are you still afraid if your grandchildren identify themselves as Jews, is that still scary to you?

DOBA: My grandchildren?

INT: If they identify themselves as Jewish children, is that scary to you?

DOBA: But they know. They know about everything. Sure.

INT: Yeah. But that doesn't frighten you the way it frightened you about your boys?

DOBA: No. I don't think so. No more. I think on this particular, I feel safe, you know, as far as this is concerned. But the nightmares, they never finished. But as far as the reality, no. And I'm glad what you're doing. I'm very happy that you're donating your time, and you're doing a terrific job. And I told all the people, survivors, I'm telling about you. And...what else can be done to prevent, everybody should do.

INT: Is there anything else you'd want to add to this interview that we haven't touched on, and that you feel is important?

DOBA: If you can ask me something. Maybe my mind is not, no, very much on that. I'm sure there's a lot.

INT: Well, I had a question, which is, would you consider yourself an optimistic person now or a pessimistic person? How do you look at life?

DOBA: Pessimist.

INT: Pessimistic.

DOBA: Unfortunately, I was always this type.

INT: Even as a child, do you think?

DOBA: Yes. Even as a child. (sighs) I guess I was always searching for a friend, for friends, for love, and I couldn't get it. And only from my father I was getting it, that's all.

INT: And you lost him.

DOBA: And grandmothers. And grandmothers. Yeah. I had very short, both grandmothers died just before the war, and very short, I remember, they died, maybe when I was ten or nine, something like that. Both of them. And I got from them a lot, I still remember. And my father.

INT: But you lost him so early.

DOBA: Yeah. So...when I lost them, then I couldn't get any other person to show me love, and I guess it is, it was very important to me. Been always important. I would do things that other children, or other people would never do it. I would be ready to give everything away what I had, just for a little friendship. Yeah. I didn't have much, but whatever I had, I would be ready to give. And for a long time, years later, I did the same thing. If I see a friend that I could maybe, maybe have as a friend, I would do anything that they would ask.

I could, for example, in Poland, okay, I didn't have much. Especially clothes, I didn't have much. It was very expensive. And I would get something from my mother, she used to send me packages, used clothes. And someone would like a dress, I would take it off and I would give it. (laughs) Because they liked it. Friend. So I wasn't paying attention that I liked it, too, but she liked it. Go ahead and take it.

INT: So where did that generosity come from?

DOBA: My father I think. Yeah. My father. He never, he was, he couldn't earn a living, because he would give everything away. And I guess from him.

INT: You also said that your father made you feel safe when you were a kid.

DOBA: Yes. Yes. Safe.

INT: Has anyone else ever been able to do that?

DOBA: Nope. Nobody that I remember.

INT: Your husbands, either of your husbands?

DOBA: Mm-mm.

INT: Not really. Do you feel safe now?

DOBA: Maybe temporarily, maybe. Temporarily. Short terms. But...I got old, and I didn't experience, unfortunately, that. I am, I'm not jealous of anybody. But I'm very happy for another person who experienced this type of love, or being safe with someone else. I'm very happy, but I didn't have that. (Pause)

INT: Anything else you'd like to add?

DOBA: (sighs) I can't think of anything.

INT: Thank you very much.

DOBA: And I thank you. I'm sure there is a lot of things that would have been important, that I did not say. Maybe I took little things as important, and...

INT: No, it was all important. Anyway, thank you for your time so much.

DOBA: Thank you, thank you, very much.

(END OF INTERVIEW)