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**UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM**
***FIRST PERSON* SERIES**
**THEODORA KLAYMAN**

REMOTE CART

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CART Services Provided by:
Christine Slezosky, CBC, CCP, RPR
Home Team Captions
1001 L Street NW, Suite 105
Washington, DC 20001
202-669-4214
855-669-4214 (toll-free)
info@hometeamcaptions.com

**ROUGH DRAFT TRANSCRIPT**
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>> Bill Benson: Good afternoon and welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Bill Benson. I am the host of the museum's public program *First Person*. Thank you for joining us today. We are in our 15th year of the *First Person* program, and our *First Person* today is Mrs. Dora Klayman whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2014 season of *First Person* is made possible through the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Helena Rubinstein Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue twice weekly through mid-August. The Museum's website, www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming *First Person* guests. Anyone interested in keeping in touch with the Museum and its programs can complete the Stay Connected card you'll find in your program today or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater when we finish our program. In doing so you will receive an electronic copy of Dora Klayman's biography so you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

Dora will share with us her *First Person* account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows at the end of our program, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask Dora a few questions. The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Dora is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with Dora's

introduction.

Dora was born Teodora Basch, January 31, 1938, in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Here we see Dora sitting on a park bench with her younger brother Zdravko. On this map of Yugoslavia in 1933, the arrow points to Zagreb.

In this photo, we see Dora on an outing to the zoo with her parents, Salamon and Silva. Salamon ran a brush-making factory and Silva was a teacher.

Pictured here is Dora's maternal grandfather, Rabbi Josef Leopold Deutsch. In April 1941, when Dora was visiting her maternal grandparents in the small town of Ludbreg, Germany invaded Yugoslavia. Ludbreg became part of a puppet state run by the Ustasa, or the creation fascists.

In June 1941, Dora's parents and her brother were arrested. Their house keeper got baby Zdravko out of prison, and from then on Dora and Zdravko were sheltered by their mother's sister, Giza, and her husband, Ljudevit. On the left we see Aunt Giza. On the right we see her husband, Ljudevit. The photo of Ljudevit was taken many years after the one of Giza. Later in the war Aunt Giza was denounced and sent to Auschwitz where she perished. Dora remained in Yugoslavia until 1957 when she emigrated to the United States.

We close with this portrait of Aunt Giza, Dora, and Zdravko that was taken to be sent to Ljudevit in the concentration camp where he had been sent.

In 1957, as Dora was on her way to Switzerland, she met Daniel Klayman who was returning to New York from a year of post-doctoral study as a Fulbright scholar in India. They were married in Switzerland a year later and together they arrived in the United States in the

fall of 1958.

By the following year, Dan and Dora came to Washington, D.C. and Dan embarked on a career as a researcher in medical chemistry at the Walter Reed Army institute of Research. His work culminated in his expertise in drug development against malaria.

After the birth of their two children, Wanda and Elliott, Dora resumed her education, getting degrees in French and English as a second language. She then taught in the Montgomery County, Maryland, public schools including 23 years at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School where she headed the English as a Second Language Department.

Dan passed away in 1992. Both of their children live in the Washington area. Wanda is Deputy Executive Director of an international association that deals with transportation issues. Elliott is a freelance videographer and owns a video and film production company. He is married to Iona and they have three children ages 19, 17, and 10.

After Dora retired from full-time teaching in 1999, she became active as a volunteer here at this museum. Her work here consists primarily of translating material from the Holocaust written in Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian. Her ongoing project is connected to the Jasenovac Archive. As we will hear later, Jasenovac was a major concentration camp. Other projects include a translation of a booklet that accompanied an anti-Semitic exhibit. And the captions are the photographs that had been gathered during the post-World War II trials in Yugoslavia.

Dora enjoys traveling. She has been to Israel several times and is about to go there again in two weeks. Some of her travels are connected to learning more about the

events in the aftermath of the Holocaust. She has attended several conferences at the International Organization of Child Survivors, including in Poland in 2011 when she visited Auschwitz for the first time. In 2013, she traveled to her former home in Croatia. During that trip she accompanied the Director of the Jasenovac Archive to the site of the concentration camp to view their current exhibit. And to add to her language skills, Dora continues to learn Hebrew.

With that, I'd like to ask you to join me in welcoming our *First Person,* Mrs. Dora Klayman.

[Applause]

Dora, thank you so much for joining us and for your willingness to be our *First Person*. You have so much to tell us that we're going to start right away.

You were just 3 years old when World War II came directly to Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941 when it was attacked by Germany. Before we turn to the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, tell us a little bit about your family and your community in the years before war began.

>> Dora Klayman: My maternal family lived in the small town of Ludbreg and my father's family actually came to Zagreb fairly recently before all of this happened and had come en route from Romania to Bosnia, to Zagreb. I did not know that family very well at all except for my parents' siblings -- my father's siblings. By the time I was born, only my grandmother was alive. I have almost no memory of her.

My father had five siblings, two male siblings survived the war and one female. So

one aunt and two uncles. I can talk about them later. On my mother's side of the family, whom I knew much better, they were in the small town of Ludbreg and my grandfather arrived there from Slovakia. He was recruited by the community, a small Jewish community, to come and be a rabbi there. By the time war started he had served as a rabbi for 40 years in that small town.

So my mother was born there. She was the youngest of four children. And the two older children had been born in Slovakia but came fairly young. The one sister of my mother's worked in a bank and had finished a school that would allow her to do that. My mother finished a teacher's college. The older children did not have these kinds of professions. By the time war started, basically the family had, more or less -- the oldest son had left for Zagreb, but my mother's sisters were living in that small town of Ludbreg.

My mother had married by then, of course, and was living in Zagreb at that point. So this is how I was born in Zagreb. And that was generally the situation.

My grandfather was not only the rabbi but also served as teacher in the public school. The Jewish children would then have their religious education given through them in public schools. It was a fairly ecumenical town for that period. That was a Russian Orthodox priest who also taught children who were of that religion, though the town was almost all Roman Catholic. So that was, of course.

>> Bill Benson: You described to me that Ludbreg was an integrated community.

>> Dora Klayman: It was totally an integrated community. Basically Croatia did not have anything of the kind that Poland, let's say, had. There were no such things as shtetls. It was

an integrated community. Jews had not lived in Yugoslavia for nearly as long as some other western parts of Europe or eastern parts of Europe, actually, like Poland or Russia. They were basically integrated and on the whole educated, ran businesses, were reasonably well-to-do.

>> Bill Benson: We don't have time for you to tell us a whole lot more about that period, but your father had a small brush-making factory. But his real love was being a cantor which is how he met your mother, I believe. Right?

>> Dora Klayman: I think so, yes. He would come to the town of Ludbreg as a cantor for the holidays. That's how he met my mother. It seems to have been a totally cantorial family. Even my cousins who now live in Israel, one of them is really a professional cantor and the other one is very much into that. So it seems to be running in the family, yes.

>> Bill Benson: And hopefully that will continue.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: At some point.

When Germany launched its attack on Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, you were away on a visit with relatives in Zagreb.

>> Dora Klayman: In Ludbreg.

>> Bill Benson: I'm sorry. Tell us what you can about the circumstances that caused you to be away from your parents when the Germans came in.

>> Dora Klayman: Well, this is sort of a puzzle which I will never resolve. I don't really know whether my parents sent me to my grandparents because they knew that something was going to happen or that my brother had already been born and he was a baby and there were

neighbors who had come into town and it was an opportunity to send me by train to my grandparents.

I was definitely in Ludbreg by the time war started. And even though I was very young, only 3 years old, I sort of have memories and images of everybody being very upset because Yugoslavia fell in six days after being attacked by Germany in the spring.

>> Bill Benson: When that happened in April of 1941, the war had been going on for about 18 months elsewhere with the attack of -- when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939.

>> Dora Klayman: Only from talking to people and having studied about it. I don't have memories from it. From what I know, there were many refugees that came into Yugoslavia and through Yugoslavia.

In fact, we have a survivor here who actually works at the museum and has done *First Person*, Joanna. Her family came from Germany. They went through Yugoslavia to Albania. And apparently there were many people that had taken that route. Of course, once war started in Germany, these people were caught almost immediately and sent to concentration camps.

>> Bill Benson: Do you know if your parents had made -- with war happening elsewhere and very much on the horizon and then it happened, had your parents made any efforts to try to get out of Yugoslavia, to your knowledge?

>> Dora Klayman: No. No. I know that they didn't. It isn't that I don't know.

>> Bill Benson: That they did not.

>> Dora Klayman: Nobody made any effort. In fact, either they didn't have an opportunity or

they didn't believe that this was going to happen. A very good friend of mine who has worked actually at the museum, as a volunteer for a while -- she's now elderly -- she says that her family, they were much better to do than we were and had the means of leaving. They didn't leave until the very last day. They actually left the very last day.

>> Bill Benson: The very last day.

>> Dora Klayman: So I don't know of people who tried to leave before. Whether they didn't know where to or didn't have the means or just didn't believe what was going to happen. I don't know.

>> Bill Benson: Your Aunt Giza and Uncle Ljudevit and other members learned your parents had been arrested and then sent to a concentration camp but that your brother had been saved from being deported to the camp. Tell us some about your parents and what you know about what happened to them and what happened with your brother that he did not end up there with them.

>> Dora Klayman: Actually, I should probably back up a little because in talking about my family in Ludbreg, I failed to mention that my Aunt Giza was married to a Catholic fellow and that that marriage -- we saw earlier. That marriage did not occur until practically before the war because whether for reasons of different religions or other reasons, they had been friends for a very long time. At this point Ljudevit was born in 1885, and Giza was 10 years younger than he.

>> Bill Benson: And Giza was considerably older --

>> Dora Klayman: Than my mother, 15 years older than my mother. So they did not marry for

a long time. There was no civil marriage in Yugoslavia, either. And neither was converting. I think his mother was still alive and her father being a rabbi, neither converted and so this was what was going on. But they married.

There was a great acceptance, it seems to me, on the part of my grandparents. And I can judge that by the fact that in all the photographs -- and I have a lot of photographs. Many of them are on our site at the Holocaust Museum. In the photographs you can see him almost all the time with the family.

>> Bill Benson: With the family.

>> Dora Klayman: With the family. So, for example, there was the younger sister, Blanka's wedding, where my mother is still a teenager, sitting in the picture. Ljudevit is in the picture. So even though they weren't married --

>> Bill Benson: And he was a different religion. He was accepted as part of the family.

>> Dora Klayman: He was accepted. Right. They were not living together. That wasn't being done in those days.

>> Bill Benson: Period.

[Laughter]

>> Dora Klayman: In fact, when I asked him why they never married earlier, and I did ask that question, he said, “Well, she was quite happy living with her parents and I was fine living with my mother. It was ok.” That's it. He never, never said that the reason they didn't marry was of the different religion. He never said that.

So going back to your question about saving my brother, by that time they were

married. He was really a highly respected member of that community.

>> Bill Benson: Uncle Ljudevit.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. Ludva was his nickname. He was director of the bank. He had the means to go and do something about it, had the transportation. So when they heard about my brother, they were actually in Zagreb in sort of a holding space, a gathering camp, until people would be taken to camp. He was 9 months old at the time.

>> Bill Benson: How did they learn that your parents had been sent to a concentration camp? Do you know?

>> Dora Klayman: Well, it was just sort of common knowledge where everybody was going. It wasn't -- it wasn't going very far away. Jasenovac is just a few hours away from Zagreb. It's in Croatia. It wasn't something that was not known by everyone.

>> Bill Benson: It wasn't a secret or under the cover of darkness or anything like that.

>> Dora Klayman: No.

>> Bill Benson: You told me that even though you were very young, you do have a vivid memory of your aunt and uncle bringing your brother home.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. Somehow that memory stayed with me. I remember him arriving with them to my grandparents' house. I think I was just so shocked by the looks of this baby who was crying and crying and crying. So I sort of have a memory of that.

>> Bill Benson: So you and your brother are now with your aunt and uncle. Your parents, they've been sent to the concentration camp. And then in 1942, your uncle with whom you were living was arrested and sent to the Jasenovac camp.

>> Dora Klayman: Actually, we were at the time -- to begin with, we were with my grandparents.

>> Bill Benson: Ok.

>> Dora Klayman: We were with my grandparents until they were sent away. And they were sent away -- there was a general, sort of a raid, in Ludbreg at the time. And it was 1942. You are right. That was before Ljudevit was sent. All the Jews were sent.

My brother and I were left behind. At that point we were left. People often ask me, and I ask myself: Why not me? Why not my brother? But I always think that it was because we were not members of that community officially. Everybody was making constant lists. You know, Schindler's lists. There were lists of people. So they were ordered to make a list of all the members of the community, I'm sure.

And prior to people being sent away they had to fill out a lot of papers. And the first thing that happened, they were confiscating worldly goods. So I have papers -- there are copies of it. The museum has copies of it. It says, you know, you had to put your name, what you owned. And there was such things like my cousins, for example, have things like one gold necklace, two dresses, three pairs of shoes. Just everything. Everything had to be accounted for and given away.

So back to the business of lists. They knew who everybody was, especially in a small town. That was very easy to do. So when they came, they would go, bum, bum, bum, everybody on the list. And I wasn't on the list. And I think that that's the reason why we were left behind.

>> Bill Benson: And you were not on the list because you were not from that community.

>> Dora Klayman: That's my only thought about why not. So this was the first business of everybody going away. I heard many people -- it's interesting because we have an exhibit here in the museum at the moment that says "Some Were Neighbors." Everybody was there watching it happen. And I have heard from many people afterwards telling me how horrible it was and they saw people going away, but, of course, nobody did anything. At that moment, anyway.

>> Bill Benson: Is it likely, though, that in that small town there were others that knew you and your brother were there and knew that you were Jews?

>> Dora Klayman: Everybody knew who we were. Everybody knew who we were. So the people who conducted the raid were not local townspeople. So they didn't know who we were. In the idea of some were neighbors, yes, some were good neighbors. And in my case some were very good neighbors.

>> Bill Benson: They didn't denounce you.

>> Dora Klayman: Nobody denounced us. And nobody denounced anybody -- the only one that was denounced eventually was Giza.

>> Bill Benson: We'll come to that.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: So here's your uncle, an upstanding member of the community, not a Jew. He gets arrested and is sent to Jasenovac.

>> Dora Klayman: Right. Since we last talked about it, I had done some reading and found

out to what extent non-Jews who were considered political prisoners, in a sense politically not favorable to the regime, were arrested. Many times they were actually given sentences. So while Jews were just Jews -- and in the case of Yugoslavia it was Serbs and Roma who were just arrested en masse --

>> Bill Benson: And simply deported to camps.

>> Dora Klayman: Deported to camps. Some of the others, some of the Croatian Catholics who found themselves in camps, were actually sometimes given sentences.

>> Bill Benson: So like tried and then --

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. And why? Because either they were considered communists or sympathizers of the Partisans who were the warriors who basically was a gathering of local people.

>> Bill Benson: Like Tito.

>> Dora Klayman: Was the leader of it. But very soon after the war began people who opposed the regime went into the mountains and created an Army essentially eventually, which was very prominent, actually, in my area.

And the people from the town of Ludbreg, many of them had members who had left and joined the Guerrillas who were called Partisans. So the town generally was not sympathetic to the regime and that, of course, saved me because people didn't give me up.

>> Bill Benson: And now, here, of course you're with your uncle -- of course your uncle was sent to the camp. In his case, it's you, your brother and Aunt Giza.

>> Dora Klayman: Just the three of us.

>> Bill Benson: Do you know anything about what that was like for you?

>> Dora Klayman: That was a period that was sort of dangerous. I remember having the sense that things were not good. Of course, we missed my uncle. But also I knew that sometimes I had to be hidden someplace or we had to leave town for a bit. I remember very clearly being told one day we've got to get on the train. And then we went to the neighboring town and stayed there for a few days and then returned. Because somebody had told us that there would be a raid.

In that town, because of the Partisans sounding the town, they were very often -- there were very often battles at night and during the day. There were times that we were actually liberated.

>> Bill Benson: In that town.

>> Dora Klayman: In that town. But that lasted very short periods of time.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember correctly, through the course of the war there, the town changed hands like seven times.

>> Dora Klayman: Several times. Twice I think for fairly long periods of time.

>> Bill Benson: The Partisans controlling it for a while, then the Germans taking it back.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. So the most difficult, most dangerous times were when -- there was a time, but not until later that they had --

>> Bill Benson: Hopefully we'll have a chance to talk about that.

Your parents and Uncle Ljudevit and of course virtually all of the Jews had been sent to Jasenovac. You told me that Jasenovac was an especially violent place. Can you say

just a little bit about that?

>> Dora Klayman: Jasenovac, there were a number of camps and Jasenovac was built supposedly to be a work camp. Actually it was pretty much an extermination camp. But not in an organized sense like Auschwitz. People were worked to death. Often people were just shot, murdered, tortured in the cruelest of ways; sometimes in really primitive ways, like, you know, being hit on the head.

Well, I'm told that especially older people or children, older people -- someone told me that they know that my grandfather, who at that time was quite elderly and had been paralyzed on one side -- by the time they reached the fences of the camp, the barbed wire fences, that he was just hit on the head with a shovel and killed right there. Never even got into the camp.

So that was -- I had read recently quite a bit about the camp. And now, of course, it's a memorial site. It's been documented to a great degree. It was just a really brutal, brutal camp.

>> Bill Benson: Early 1943 your Aunt Giza is denounced and she is taken away. What happened to your knowledge and then what happened to you and your brother?

>> Dora Klayman: At that time my uncle tried to go after her because he had just come back.

>> Bill Benson: So he served his sentence and they released him?

>> Dora Klayman: He was released after a year. The reason how he survived that very brutal camp -- he was in Jasenovac. He survived for two reasons. He had always talked about that. Because he had run a bank and they needed somebody to run their business, they had put

him in an office. So because -- he was quite frail.

>> Bill Benson: Born in 1885.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. He was older and he was very frail, always. He would have never made it. My father made it to the very end, actually. My father made it to the very end and escaped, tried to escape at the very end. There are people who say that he was with a group of people who escaped and then they were found out by a German patrol and shot. But my Uncle Ludva survived only because he was not sent like my father -- whom he saw, by the way. He was carrying bricks and doing things of that nature. He survived because he was young. Ludva would not have survived except for that.

And also, they had organized in Jasenovac -- which I know people think it's fairly strange, but they actually wanted to be entertained so they organized an orchestra. And he played the violin. He had been a leader of a -- at home, before the war.

>> Bill Benson: So an orchestra made up of the inmates.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. There weren't many people who could play, but he could. He could also conduct a choir. So he made a choir. So that also saved many because they would have a few hours of respite. So between the two he survived. He returned just to see his wife being denounced and taken away. And he tried to follow her. He followed her to try get her released but was unsuccessful.

So you asked while they were both gone where was I. I was with neighbors. I had some very good neighbors.

>> Bill Benson: This is the family Runjaks?

>> Dora Klayman: The family Runjaks. They lived in the house next to ours. We shared the same courtyard. And they were our -- they lived in an apartment that we owned. They were renters. Mrs. Runjaks was a nurse and she spent much time curing Trachoma which was a disease quite rampant in that area. He was a painter. Ordinary people. They had three children of whom the oldest was already a teenager. And during that time that I was with them and my brother. My brother and I actually called her mother because they were everywhere at that time. They were bivouacked in our backyard.

>> Bill Benson: So this was a time when the Partisans had been pushed out.

>> Dora Klayman: Oh, yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Now you're back.

>> Dora Klayman: Which was most of the time anyway. I know that I called Mrs. Runjaks mother whenever there was anybody around. My brother, who loved her, called her Mother to the end of his time. So he was young enough not to know the switch back and forth, but I was able to do that. I remembered.

>> Bill Benson: And I assume for the Runjaks taking you in, you and your brother, was risky.

>> Dora Klayman: It was risky on their part. Also, many times when Aunt Giza and I -- Giza thought -- didn't run away but thought it was dangerous. She parked us with other neighbors. At times, if I remember -- I remember being with a family for like a day or two until danger of some sort would pass. So it was a very -- shockingly difficult time that fortunately I was young enough not to maybe feel the full --

>> Bill Benson: The full impact.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: Do you think -- did people know where your Aunt Giza had been taken? She was not sent to Jasenovac.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. She was taken to Auschwitz. Knew that because he followed the trail and tried to get her out. So there was a sense that she went to Auschwitz.

In fact, since this museum received the archive from Germany, which was fairly recent --

>> Bill Benson: In the last several years.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. I put in the information, and in fact, received the card on which it says that she died. I assume they wrote of that, of some intestinal problems in 1943. So actually I think they have Christmas Day. So it's pretty sure that that's where she went.

>> Bill Benson: And you've only really verified that recently.

>> Dora Klayman: Only recently, right.

>> Bill Benson: So you are in the care of the Runjaks. Ljudevit is released. He's unsuccessful in trying to use his influence to get your aunt back, and she's gone. So now it's Ljudevit's come back. What's life like now?

>> Dora Klayman: Well, life after that was just, you know, trying to go to school. I was actually going to school.

>> Bill Benson: With the war still going around you?

>> Dora Klayman: With the war still going on. And with trying to -- by 1944 -- I think it was actually during the time that Ljudevit was gone that I was told by the remaining member of the

Runjaks family that the local priest came to Mrs. Runjaks and said to her, "What are we going to do with these children?" Basically, you tried to do something or else they'll be gone too. So I was baptized at that time.

>> Bill Benson: And your brother, too, right?

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. I think in 1944, but I'm not sure.

I went to school early. I went to school -- that doesn't sound early by American standards, but actually earlier than by Croatian standards at the time. But because they had some influence, I started to going to school.

So I started going to school and trying to do everything the rest of the children were doing: going to church on Sundays, you know, played games a lot. I remember that we would separate into Partisans and Ustasa and try to play with cornstalks. Of course, Ludbreg is a small town in the middle of a rural area. And at that point we had very little, but we always had food. I was never hungry during the war that I remember.

>> Bill Benson: Because it was farm country.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. We didn't have fancy foods, but we always had food. Because it was a farm area. And people would, you know, have their own chickens and there were cows. So contrary to some places, we were not hungry. In fact, after the war a lot of people from Zagreb used to come and just try to get some farm products. We were ok most times.

>> Bill Benson: You described to me that that time after Ljudevit came back and it's the three of you, until the end of the war in May 1945, that that was a period of just constant fighting between Ustasa and the Partisans.

>> Dora Klayman: Right.

>> Bill Benson: And there you are in the middle of it. And you remember that.

>> Dora Klayman: I remember that. Actually, I think one of the striking memories was a battle that occurred even before Giza was taken away. I remember it so well because it was -- our house was surrounded by -- in our backyard at that point was one force. And across the street on the second floor was another force. I can't even remember whether the Ustasa or the Partisans were in one house or the other. And they were shooting at one another. We were just there. All the bullets were flying through our windows. It was very scary, of course. I was crying.

At one point Ljudevit got up to come and see me because I was crying in the corner. And a bullet -- the battle started before we could run away. I'll tell in a bit where we used to go, but that time we didn't get out in time. So the bullets were flying. There was a bullet that ended on his pillow. And if I hadn't been crying -- I saved his life in a way. He had come.

Most of the time we would have enough time to run into the basement. And at one point when the battles would continue, we stayed in the basement. Now, the basement was not an American-style basement. It was a cellar. You would have to get out of the house in order to go to open the door through the cellar.

>> Bill Benson: So expose yourself going outside.

>> Dora Klayman: Expose yourself. So at that time when this particular thing happened, we couldn't do that. Sometimes we were able to do that. Sometimes we knew that there would be

another battle. We would just stay go to sleep there. We had some kind of cots. Being a kid, I loved to be sleeping in the basement because there were frogs.

>> Bill Benson: Worms.

>> Dora Klayman: Jumping around. We had a vineyard. So there were big barrels with wine, shelves on which there were apples. We stored apples. The apples had to be stored in a row so that they wouldn't touch one another and that way they could be preserved for the winter. There was a pile of sand with carrots and turnips inside. So it was kind of a playground for me I thought.

>> Bill Benson: The perspective of a 7-year-old.

>> Dora Klayman: Not even 7. I was probably 5, 6 at that time.

But, of course, after the battles, in the morning, would look out and you didn't know who was in charge. If it was Ustasa, times were tough. And if it was Partisans, then we were free.

But sometimes the battles were just awful. There was one battle in particular that really raged through our street and ended up at the end of the street in a house. The Ustasa were winning and the Partisans were retreating. And finally they were surrounded. They went into one of the houses and exploded a bomb in their midst and killed themselves. So my street, until recent changes, was called the Street of the 17th Brigade. That was -- 17th brigade was basically destroyed by the Ustasa at that time.

And, of course, the other thing is when you woke up in the morning, you would take a look at your furniture. Our furniture, even after the war, had holes in it. We had this big,

beautiful armoire. It had holes in them. You would take out the table cloth and would put the table cloth up. It was like when children play with napkins and you tear it. This was how it was.

>> Bill Benson: Bullet holes and shrapnel.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: Now, that all came to an end with the end of the war in May 1945. Do you remember the war's end? And now here's Ljudevit all alone. Very few family members have survived. He's lost his wife. You've lost your parents. What did he do to try to rebuild a life?

>> Dora Klayman: Well, the community kind of pulled together. It was a very -- it was new order. Partisans had won. Communist government was in power. We certainly upset about it. It sounds like strange to say, but it was a government that fought for us and for liberation. Not until later did we start thinking about what this meant in terms of Communist government. But it was a government that freed us or the group that freed us.

I do remember at the end of the war Ustasa being marched through the town looking totally bedraggled and being led to whenever. There are many stories about what happened after the war in terms of how the government dealt with them.

We were, of course, free. And as far as my house is concerned, we basically ended up having housekeepers. There were maids. There were several housekeepers that I grew up with later on, some of whom remained friends for a very long time.

One of our housekeepers came because she had lost everything and she was highly educated. She was my first piano teacher and my first German teacher. I was very

friendly with her granddaughter.

There were basically -- my uncle never remarried. So it was he and I growing up. My brother, who of course survived with me. In 1946 he contracted Scarlet Fever along with two other boys in town. The other two boys survived but my brother didn't. He passed away in Mrs. Runjaks' arms. And my uncle just -- we were all he had.

>> Bill Benson: Right.

>> Dora Klayman: So the loss of his brother, my brother, was also very hard on him. But before he passed away, he had adopted us formally. So at the very beginning when my name showed up, it's Basch, it was his name. So I was formally adopted, which was fine for me, but it was a bit of a problem for some other people.

>> Bill Benson: Some that had survived in your own family. Right?

>> Dora Klayman: Exactly. One uncle survived. One person survived in my mother's family. He survived -- both he and one of my father's brothers, both survived as German prisoners of war. They were both in the Army when the Germans invaded. So the Yugoslav Army was just whoever was there was taken to prisoner of war camps. And fortunately they were not treated nearly as badly as the Russian prisoners of war. That's another story, another awful story. They were imprisoned but they were ok. They survived.

>> Bill Benson: So came back after the war.

>> Dora Klayman: Came back after the war. Both of them decided to -- both my mother's and my father's brother decided that they would be going to Israel because they were allowed to do that. At that point Israel was not yet in existence, but they were all going to Palestine. I should

say they were going to Palestine. And they wanted me to go with them. And they came to see me. And, of course, especially my father's brother very much wanted me to go with him. Ludva said, “Well, whatever she wants.” And I was 7 years old. I looked at this man who just appeared in my life and I said, “I'm not going.”

[Laughter]

>> Dora Klayman: Been through all of this --

>> Bill Benson: Been through all of this upheaval.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. I really loved Ludva. He was a wonderful, wonderful, kind, generous, incredible person. I certainly wasn't going anywhere. I remained.

>> Bill Benson: In the little bit of time that we have left there's a couple of things I want to talk about before you close and one of them relates to Ljudevit, of course. That would be a few years later, I think 1957, you've excelled in school tremendously. Tell us about your opportunity to go to school.

>> Dora Klayman: Well, you know, I had every opportunity known to mankind really. In a small world, you know, he was a big fish. So I had the opportunity to go to a good high school, out of town.

>> Bill Benson: This is all under Tito's leadership, if you will.

>> Dora Klayman: Right. He got back to being director of the bank. We lived fairly well for that kind of existence. I mean, you had to --

>> Bill Benson: Communist society. Yes.

>> Dora Klayman: You had to wait for a year to get a pair of shoes, but.

>> Bill Benson: But relative to that.

>> Dora Klayman: Relative to that, yes. And the other thing is that we had -- because he had been sort of from a family of a -- we had some things that we could still sell. So at one point we also discovered that one other uncle of mine survived and another, father's brother. He had gone from Croatia. He escaped into Hungary. And from Hungary, he was on that very infamous or famous transport. He and his wife survived and then were taken to Switzerland. And he eventually wrote and found me and then invited me to come to visit them. And because I was deemed a victim of fascism --

>> Bill Benson: The Communist saw you as a victim of fascism.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. That was my title, victim of fascism. So I was allowed to go abroad.

>> Bill Benson: For a visit.

>> Dora Klayman: For a visit, which was unknown. I mean, when I came back, I was giving talks in every class in my high school to tell them what life was like out west.

So I went for a month to Switzerland. We had to, of course, sell whatever else we had to get the money just for the train. And I was allowed $5 to take out. It was a different world.

Anyway. But for the first time I met my family in Switzerland, any of my family. Strangely enough, they were Orthodox Jews and I didn't have any idea what that meant. I always knew I was Jewish and that I was forcibly converted. But I didn't follow anything after the war ended. But I lived in that world. I didn't know practically any other Jews. But now I found myself in this orthodox world. But they were very, very lovely people. I really enjoyed

them. We got along very well. They said, well, go back, but why don't you come to study once you are at the university. So that's what happened in 1957. And in 1957 I was given permission to go study.

>> Bill Benson: Again, because you were a victim of fascism. You could go study abroad.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes.

>> Bill Benson: The idea is you would come back though.

>> Dora Klayman: Exactly. I came back once. So that counted for me.

[Laughter]

So I went in 1957 to study French at the University of Lausanne. Of course, I didn't say what an emotional time it was for me to begin with. And I was looking forward to staying with them. And, of course, they had had an incredibly difficult time. And then trying to make a life in Switzerland. And they had two little boys, my very dear cousins whom I'm going to visit in two weeks in Israel. They both left for Israel eventually.

>> Bill Benson: We don't have the time to go into it, but as you're on your way, you're on the train and there's some young men chatting. You, who are a gifted linguist --

>> Dora Klayman: Well, I had been an English major. I was studying English in high school. I was an English major at the university the first year that I was at the University of Zagreb. And I was dying to hear English and see if I had learned anything. They were arguing in the train about Little Rock. It was the time that the governor stood and forbid the entry to black children. And the other two were saying -- one of the Yugoslavs was saying to one of the other guys who was there in a Yugoslav fur hat that would not be warn by anybody except an American --

[Laughter]

And he was saying to him -- it was like, a fur hat acquired from a Shepherd. He was saying: You Americans, you know, how can you treat people this way? He was saying: Well, you know, it's not all of us. And I certainly, you know, apologize. And this is not how it should be. And so on and so forth.

But then when this discussion ended, I kind of wanted to hear more. I passed a few times. This young man said something about my beautiful red hair. I was redheaded in those days. Naturally. And I smiled. He said, “Oh you speak English?” So we started chatting. We exchanged addresses. He went off in Venice, a few hours later. And I was off to Switzerland. But we corresponded and corresponded and decided to get married.

>> Bill Benson: And then to move to the United States.

>> Dora Klayman: And then he came back and, yeah, we were married two weeks later. In September. He turned out to be Jewish. So my orthodox family was thrilled.

[Laughter]

So in 1958 we were married and I came here.

>> Bill Benson: And, of course, you weren't able at that point to go see --

>> Dora Klayman: I was not able to go back. I would have had trouble getting out again. So at that time I couldn't go. But as soon as I got my American citizenship, which I got as soon as I could get it, then we went back. And at that point I already had two children. So it was a wonderful reunion. Yeah.

>> Bill Benson: I wish we had a lot more time. We don't, so we’re going to end. In a moment,

I'm going to turn back to Dora to close our program. But first I want to thank you for being with us today. We appreciate you being here.

I remind you that we will have *First Person* programs each Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. So very much hope that you can come back and that our museum's website has information about our programs that you can even view podcasts if you can't get here for them; so that would be great.

It's our tradition that our *First Person* has the last word. So I'm going to turn back to Dora to close the program. When Dora finishes, I'm going to ask you all, if you don't mind, to stand. And the reason for that is our photographer, Joel, is going to come up on stage and take a picture of Dora with you as the background, if you don't mind. It was a great effect. So we're going to ask you when Dora's done.

And because we didn't have a chance for questions and answers, you can stay behind for a little bit?

>> Dora Klayman: Sure.

>> Bill Benson: So Dora will step off the stage. If you want to ask her a question, just shake her hand, say hi, whatever you want to do, absolutely feel free to do that.

And so with that, Dora?

>> Dora Klayman: Well, this last summer I was back in Croatia. Every time -- I've been a few times. And, of course, my uncle had passed away. But every time I go, I'm reminded once again how great it is to be here. Not that I don't like that country. I do. And I have wonderful memories also and wonderful friends, but there is a sense of everywhere in Europe now that

there is some resurgence of anti-Semitism. While there, it's not nearly as bad as in some parts of the world. Jasenovac still stands now as a museum, but I'm told it's not visited very much. There is no -- not that kind of an effort for people to come and learn and talk about it as it is here. I am very gratified that I can be part of this group now, that I can be part of this museum, to keep alive the idea that we need to be tolerant, we need to learn what had happened in the past. We need to continue to work for the human spirit.

Thank you very much for being here.

[Applause]

[The First Person event ended at 12:04 p.m.]