UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON DORA KLAYMAN
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Lynn Williams: It looks like we're all here. Good morning. Good morning. And welcome to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. My name is Lynn Williams. I'm an educator here at the museum. I have the honor of being the host of today's *First Person* program. I really want to thank you for joining us. We're in our 16th year of the *First Person* program. And our *First Person* today is Dora Klayman whom you shall meet shortly.

The 2015 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're really grateful for their sponsorship and to have Louis Smith with us here today.

Can you raise your hand? There you go.

[Applause]

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand account. Each of our *First Person* guests serves as a volunteer also here at the museum. Our program will continue 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 in your program. It looks like this. That one. Or you can speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater after the program today. In doing so, you are going to receive an electronic copy of Dora's biography so you can remember and share her testimony after you leave 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 we have time at the end of the program, we will have an opportunity for you to ask Dora a few questions. And we've prepared a brief slide presentation to help with her introduction.

This is Dora, born Teodora Basch in 1938 in Zagreb, what was then Yugoslavia.

Here we see Dora on a park bench with her younger brother, Zdravko.

On this map of Yugoslavia, in 1933, the arrow points to Zagreb and where she lived.

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 grandfather, Rabbi Josef Leopold Deutsch. When she was visiting in this small town of Ludbreg, Germany invaded Yugoslavia. Ludbreg became part of a public state run by the fashionists.

In 1941 in June, Dora's parents and her brother were arrested. Their housekeeper 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 you see Giza and on the right is Ljudevit. The photo of Ljudevit was taken many years after this one from Giza.

Later in the war Aunt Giza was denounced and sent to Auschwitz where she perished. Dora remained in Yugoslavia in 1957 when she emigrated to the United States.

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

In 1957, long after the war, as Dora was on her way to Switzerland, she met Daniel Klayman 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. 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 medicinal chemistry, the Walter Reed Army Institute of research. His work was in the developments against malaria. Dora resumed her education, getting degrees in French and English as a second language. She taught in 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 issues of transportation. And Elliott is a freelance videographer and owns a video and film production company. He's married to when Iona and they have three children, 19, 17, and 10.

Dora retired from full-time teaching in 1999, became active as a volunteer with this museum. So she's been with us a really long time. Her work here consists primarily of translating materials from the Holocaust written in Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian. Her ongoing project is connected to the Jasenovac archives, a concentration camp in Croatia. As we will hear later, it was a major camp that had to do a great deal with her life. Other projects for Dora included translation of a booklet that accompanied a 1942 anti-Semitic exhibit in Croatia and then translation of the captions on a large archive of photographs that have been gathered during the Postwar two trials in Yugoslavia.

Dora enjoys traveling. She's been to Israel several times and is about to go there again. Are you going again? You just came back. Some of her travels are connected to learning more about the events and the aftermath of the Holocaust. She has attended several conferences in the International Organization of Child Survivors, been to Poland, visited Auschwitz. She traveled to her former home in Croatia. And during that trip she accompanied the Director of the Jasenovac archive to the site of the concentration camp to view the current exhibit. To add to her language skills, Dora continues to learn Hebrew.

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

[Applause]

>> Lynn Williams: Thank you so much, Dora for joining. You were born in 1938.

>> Dora Klayman: Yes.

>> Lynn Williams: So you were 3 years old when World War II came into Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941. It was attacked then by Germany. So before we turn to the horrors of the war and the Holocaust, why don't you tell us a little about your parents, what you remember about your life before. Who were they?

>> Dora Klayman: Well, as in the photograph, my mother and father were living in Zagreb at the time I was born. That's where I was born. It's only my father that lived actually before their marriage in Zagreb. It was a fairly religious family. There were six siblings, three brothers and three sisters. Everybody was at that point working at one thing or another before the war.

The family -- I never really got to know that family very well before the war. I don't have a great memory of them. And some of them, of course, perished in the war. We'll talk about that.

My mother's family I got to know eventually better because I ended up in Ludbreg eventually. They had lived in that town for a long time. My grandfather was a rabbi of this small town in the north of Croatia. The family came originally from Slovakia. When my grandfather came, the family already had two children. They were teenagers. And then they had two more children, including my mother.

My grandfather was the only rabbi of that town. It was a small Jewish population.
>> Lynn Williams: And back in Zagreb, your father, what did he do?
>> Dora Klayman: My father had started a small factory. It was a workshop. It grew fairly well. He owned and operated this workshop, small factory of brushes. They manufactured brushes. It was an organization that apparently was doing reasonably well. I have photographs. Some of them I think are online. There are many more photographs than we just saw online at the Holocaust Museum. There were about a dozen workmen. The family was doing well.

My mother was not teaching at the point of which I was born. She had taught for several years while. Left, my brother was born. She had taught for several years in Ludbreg.
>> Lynn Williams: Let's bring us to the war period. Zagreb is attacked. Yugoslavia is attacked. Where were you?
>> Dora Klayman: Just before April 6, 1941, which was the day that Yugoslavia was attacked, there were neighbors of my grandparents visiting in Zagreb. I was sent with them to my grandparents. I'm still not clear to this day -- and, of course, I will never know -- whether my parents had me because they had a sense that the war was coming or the fact that my brother at that time was 9 months old and it was an opportunity to send me. So at the age of 3, with neighbors, my grandparents' neighbors, I was sent to Ludbreg and that was the last time I saw my parents.
>> Lynn Williams: Do you remember or know if they made an attempt to get out of Zagreb?
>> Dora Klayman: They made no attempt to get out of Zagreb, actually, that I know of. The war came so suddenly. I think there was a sense, I think in Yugoslavia before the war. I, of course, was too young to understand. But I know that there was a sense that the war was coming but there was really no place much to go.

Actually, some of the family, at one point but not my parents, ended up going to the Italian zone. Germany had occupied the northern part -- Germany had occupied really much of Yugoslavia but Croatia, as I think you mentioned, was really run by Ustasa, the Nazi puppet government, a government that ran everything in accord with the Germans. In other words, they accepted all the laws run by Germany that had to do with persecution of Jews, Roma, etc., but they also had their own agenda of persecuting Serbs. They ran the northern part of Croatia, the larger part of Croatia. But the coast was occupied by Italy. The Italian zone was much safer and so many people had tried to escape into that part. Some part of my family from Ludbreg, my mother's sister and her family, did try. They actually went and then they returned because they were promised safety. But my parents were arrested so fast after the beginning of the war that there was no question of any point of escaping.
>> Lynn Williams: Even though it went down to the southern part, right, which is really beautiful down there also. I've been in that area. It's beautiful. They were convinced to come back home.
>> Dora Klayman: Well, yes. I think there was a complete disbelief into what was really going to happen. And, of course, there was a proclamation that they would be safe if they returned. But very few people did that. In fact, people from the town of Ludbreg that were friends of the family fortunately did not return. They stayed in the Italian zone. And as the war developed, they had to do other things. They were rescued by the partisans into the mountains. Some of them were transferred to Italy as Italy capitulated.

Basically -- so this one family returned. And they're still good friends of mine.
>> Lynn Williams: That's good.

Getting back to you. Now you're out of Zagreb. You're in Ludbreg. How did your aunt and uncle know that your parents had been taken? Did they know?
>> Dora Klayman: Yes. We heard -- I don't know by what means. There were telephones, of course not in great use but still. So they were told that this had happened. I have some memories of everybody crying, being told that things were bad but not exactly what had happened.
>> Lynn Williams: Your little brother also --
>> Dora Klayman: My 9-month-old brother was taken into custody, was deported by the Ustasa into an infamous holding place in Zagreb. The housekeeper of ours telephoned. My Aunt Giza, my mother's sister, and her husband were able to go and get him from her. She was able to -- they handed my

brother to the housekeeper. And then she handed the baby to my aunt and uncle. I have a memory of his arriving, mostly because all of a sudden we were in my grandparents' house and there was all of a sudden this crying baby. I was a 3-year-old like, what is this? [Laughter] So I have sort of that memory in my head.
>> Lynn Williams: Of your brother crying.
So in `42, then your uncle was arrested. Right?
>> Dora Klayman: No. In `42 everybody was arrested but not this uncle.
>> Lynn Williams: Not that uncle?
>> Dora Klayman: No. In `42, things were really getting bad. By `42, the entire Jewish population of Ludbreg was arrested. So I need to explain about my Aunt Giza and Uncle Ljudevit who were in the picture. Giza was 15 years older than my mother. So basically the relationship was almost like, you know, almost brought her up sort of. She was sort of the oldest daughter. She had been in love for a very long time with Ljudevit, whom picture we also saw. But they came from very different families. He was a member of a very old, Catholic Ludbreg family. They were minor aristocrats. He was a bank director. She worked in the bank. So this is how they met. Not that it was difficult to meet in a very small town. But they had a close relationship.

They were in love for very many years. Ludbreg was a place in which there was a great deal of integration. Not into marriage, just social integration. My grandfather, for example, served as a teacher of religion, as a translator and so on, even in the public school and in courts. The Jewish population was fairly minor. It was prosperous. There were no problems of any kind of riots or anything like that which kind of remember was happening in many places in Eastern Europe but not here. Jews were fairly late in coming to this part of the world. And generally there was not much animosity. So in this atmosphere, still intermarriage was not the thing.

So they had been in love for a very long time. He was 10 years older than she. They waited and waited. And then by --
>> Lynn Williams: A long time?
>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. For many years. By the time war was about to start, they married. You could not marry in Yugoslavia at that time in a civil ceremony. And neither of them was converting. So they actually had to go to Hungary which had civil ceremony and they were married in Hungary.

So by the time this whole war had started and my brother was already there, 1942 came, and everybody was getting arrested and deported in Ludbreg. People who were not getting deported was this aunt of mine who was married to the Catholic uncle. Because at that point intermarriages -- people who were intermarried were not subject to the deportation.

So I have very vivid memory of that night when everybody was being deported. Because all of a sudden there was my brother, who was now older, and I, it was 1942, everybody was crying and carrying suitcases, pillows, saying goodbye. I did not have a sense of why. Why was everybody saying goodbye? They were deported. And they were deported to Jasenovac, the infamous concentration camp. And the question often comes why not me.
>> Lynn Williams: Yes.
>> Dora Klayman: To this day I don't exactly know. My thought is that we were not -- because we were from Zagreb not from Ludbreg we were not officially on the list of Jews from that town. And the people who came and did the arresting and did the deporting were not people from that town. Everybody in that town knew who we were. It was sort of like a county seat. Imagine that the one rabbi and the rabbi's grandchildren. Of course everybody knew who we were. Whoever came to do the deporting, they would go through the list. Everybody had to register long before. People had to wear the yellow stars.
>> Lynn Williams: And you didn't wear them.
>> Dora Klayman: I didn't remember having one. I owned one. I actually donated it to the museum. But I don't remember how that played out.

We had to declare our property. I do have copies of this paperwork where everybody was declaring what they owned so that they knew who everybody was when they came to gather the entire Jewish population and everybody was gone.

So we were left now with this Catholic uncle and his wife, my Aunt Giza.

>> Lynn Williams: Did things stay pretty safe in Ludbreg? What was life like then for you as they came for both your uncles and Giza? How long did things remain?

>> Dora Klayman: For a while things were stable but -- actually, in terms of being deported. But what was happening around Ludbreg is it's an area which is close to the beginning of the hill, hilly area, mountains. At the point we are, early 1940's, there has been a sizeable gathering of partisans. Partisans were basically people who did not want -- young people who didn't want to serve in the Army, did not want to go along with the regime. They escaped in the mountains and they slowly formed units, fighting units. The partisans were led by the Communist Party which, of course, later on formed the Yugoslav government. So I think many people are familiar with the name of Tito, who was the head of the movement. But on the local level we didn't have that sense. We had only the sense that these were people who were fighting and fighting the local -- the Ustasa, the Nazi puppet government.

At one point my uncle got arrested. I'm sorry. I have to go back a little bit to explain why he was arrested. He was arrested at one point because he was accused of collaborating with the partisans. Which I'm sure he did but that's not exactly -- but, you know.

One of the things that happened is they took a number of people who were sort of heading the government of the town or were a prominent citizen in some way. They arrested my uncle, who was the director of the bank, and the person who ran the hotel, bookstore, or whatever. Because they were political prisoners, differently from Jews or Serbs or Roma who were just sent to camps and annihilated; basically, these people were actually given sentences. So he was given a sentence and sent to Jasenovac.

>> Lynn Williams: He was sent to Jasenovac. Did he see anybody there?

>> Dora Klayman: He eventually returned. He did see my father. My mother must have already perished.

Jasenovac was an incredibly brutal camp. I think most people haven't heard of it. We are focusing on -- in learning about the Holocaust we focus on the large camps in Poland, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, etc. Jasenovac was smaller but it was one of the most brutal camps there was. It was run in a less organized fashion than the ones in Germany and Poland so that people were killed every which way sometimes.

I was told by witnesses that my grandfather, who was fairly elderly already at that point, was killed. He couldn't even get into the camp. He was still on the outside and they just killed him with a shovel. So it was a place where people were killed with farm implements and knives and so on and thrown into the river. There was a river nearby.

Interestingly enough -- recently there was a movie out called "The Woman in Gold." I'm sure people saw it. There's a book that preceded the movie. I just read it. Even though it focuses on Austria, one part of the family went to Yugoslavia and there is a description of Jasenovac in a few pages. It's the first time I've seen any books published in America that are actually -- yeah, talk about that.

>> Lynn Williams: But still, a little girl and her brother. Now your uncle's gone. And through all of this it's not really safe in Ludbreg. There is this fighting going on. We're in the middle of a war. So how did that effect your life? Life couldn't have been normal.

>> Dora Klayman: No, definitely not. It was mainly -- the problem was the fact that there was this fighting going on. We often spent time in the basement but the basement was not an American-type basement. It was a wine cellar. We had a vineyard, a small vineyard. There were barrels of wine down there. It was dirt floor. The house was built in 1800s by my uncle's parents. It was thick walls but the dirt floor, frogs jumping around. But we spent time sleeping on cots in the cellar for quite a bit of time because the fighting was going on around us and you never know what would happen.

Then at the end of fighting, we would peer out. Sometimes the partisans, in fact, won. There were two times that we were actually liberated for a few -- for a short period of time. But the rest of the time the Ustasa were there.

The fighting was often very severe.

>> Lynn Williams: Were you running from bombs, bullets?

>> Dora Klayman: No bombs.

>> Lynn Williams: No bombs.

>> Dora Klayman: Nothing from the air. Just the kind that you throw. I was just thinking --

>> Lynn Williams: That's good.

>> Dora Klayman: Grenades. That kind of thing mostly. In fact, at one point -- my uncle was still there. I have a memory of not having had the time to run into the cellar. We were stuck in our house in the living room, crouching in a corner. And the reason I remember my uncle was there is because I called him because I was crying. He had come from another room. A bullet pierced through the window and straight into where he had been. But he had come to see me. We were sort of like in cross-fire. At one point Ustasa were in our backyard; the house across had been occupied by the partisans. So they were just shooting at one another while we were in the cross-fire. And the bullets were coming in through the windows. Afterwards -- we had this armoire -- no built-in closets but armoire made of very beautiful wood which was pierced by bullets. You could take a table cloth out and it had sort of like when children take a napkin and you make --

>> Lynn Williams: Make designs.

>> Dora Klayman: That's what the table cloth and sheets looked like. It was, of course, very frightening. It's amazing how children compensate. It's frightening and you don't know why it's happening. And then you just go on. Look how the frogs are jumping.

>> [Laughter]

>> Dora Klayman: It's interesting, of course, you know, what do children play afterwards? We played war a lot with corn stalks. Anyway, that was sort of life in Ludbreg.

>> Lynn Williams: I know you said your uncle, for being a partisan, suspected of being a partisan, got arrested.

>> Dora Klayman: Yeah. He got arrested.

>> Lynn Williams: Left you with your aunt.

>> Dora Klayman: Left me with my aunt. At that time it was very tricky because now it was going to be -- she's going to be on her own, no protection.

>> Lynn Williams: Right.

>> Dora Klayman: So often he would have to leave town. We left town -- we were very fortunate that we were in a town where people would sometimes warn us that something would happen. I remember leaving by train and going to a nearby town and then returning and not exactly knowing -- in retrospect I know but I didn't know at that time it was dangerous. We'll come right back. Not to worry. Always not to worry.

>> Lynn Williams: So you're fighting bullets and dodging selections.

>> Dora Klayman: Exactly.

>> Lynn Williams: At one point is Giza taken?

>> Dora Klayman: At one point, unfortunately, before he returned, someone who was not from that town but who -- was from like one of the surrounding villages -- we found out later on who it was, pointed out to the Ustasa who were returning the place at the time that there was this Jewish woman in this house. They came and got her. She tried to run and hide. But it was impossible. They caught her.

What about us? Well, as I just described the house that we lived in, there was a building right next to it. That building had been started by my two aunts, my aunt Giza, about whom we are speaking, and the other one who at one point tried to go to Italy but was later deported. Those two families started building. There was a store on the ground floor and an apartment in the back. And this apartment in the back was rented to a family by the name of Runjak. They had three teenage children.

>> Lynn Williams: A Catholic family?
>> Dora Klayman: A Catholic family. Everybody there is Catholic. Basically a Catholic world. My aunt, I'm told by the Runjak family -- one of the daughters is still alive. She said that my aunt said, you know, please take care of these children. And she just left the children with this family. She was then deported. She was deported to Auschwitz. We know that. At that point they were starting to deport people from Auschwitz from Croatia which didn't happen earlier. And we know that because I actually -- in the museum we have documentation that she was in Auschwitz and she died there.
>> Lynn Williams: And you didn't find that out until much later. Right?
>> Dora Klayman: We always suspected that she went to Auschwitz but we never really knew until just recently, after the documentation came here.

In the meantime, my uncle had come back from Jasenovac telling us about the horrific conditions there but not until what he did first, tried to find his wife. So he followed the trail, tried to find where she had gone. We were still staying with the Runjak family.

Ustasa were big in our backyard so it was dangerous. We had learned to say "Mother" to Mrs. Runjak and my brother who was younger always called her mother for the rest of the time. I knew to call her mother when Ustasa were around and when they were not around I would revert to calling her Mrs. Runjak.
>> Lynn Williams: That's hard.
>> Dora Klayman: So my uncle, unfortunately, was not successful. He returned. At that time, also, there was a possibility that someone else would point us out. So apparently the local priest had spoken with Mrs. Runjak and said to her, and I'm quoting her daughter, said to her, "What are we going to do about these children?" Like, you know, they are going to be next. So they thought if we get baptized that might save us. So we were baptized.

My uncle told us a lot of awful stories about Jasenovac. One of the things that we did that was very unusual in a sense, we were allowed to send packages, even while he was still there. We were allowed to send packages. We made mixtures of fat and flour and made like brick cakes out of it. That's what we would send because they were basically getting nothing but water as soup. So they would take this and they would, you know, put it inside to make some calories.

He told us -- he told stories, many of these stories I didn't hear until later. And the reason he was able to survive rather than my father who eventually -- my mother who died I think very early, is that -- he was a violinist by avocation. He had been very active in the community running a choir, putting on performances, having a little orchestra. And in the camp the Ustasa wanted to have entertainment and so he organized shows, a choir which allowed him to take some people from the prison community and have them have an hour where instead of working hard, carrying bricks, making chains, whatever they were doing, they were able to sing. The other way he survived was they knew he was a banker and they needed to have somebody working in their office. They put him there. Otherwise he might not have survived either. Because he was already older. He had never been in good health. So that might have really been very difficult for him.
>> Lynn Williams: So he came back though. He's lost his wife. He's got the two of you. And now you're really raised in a Catholic environment, a Catholic home.
>> Dora Klayman: We were raised in a Catholic environment. What is happening at that point -- we are still in the situation in which we sort of have to pretend as to who we are. We have to watch where we go. One of the things that was particularly difficult sometimes is both my brother and I had flaming red hair, which is not there anymore. [Laughter] It's fairly unusual, quite unusual, in Croatia. People are not redheads. So going outside when there was anybody that didn't know who we are might stop us to see just who we are.

There was a time that the head of the Ustasa came to visit. He was the big to do in town. I very much wanted to go with all the other children. But I was not allowed to go. I remember that I was told if I want to peer out the fence, I was to wear a hat on my head so that I would not be noticeable even in the middle of the summer. Because I would be an unusual-looking child. So things were sort of tense. We lived through all of these battles. After the battles would go outside.

I remember -- because my uncle could not take care of us on a daily basis, we had maids who would do the cooking. There were farm women who came to take care of things. I remember one of them taking me once to take a look -- I think we were to go to a movie or something. On the main square -- it was after a battle and the Ustasa had won. And on the main square there were trees on every square. And from every tree there was a partisan hanging.
>> Lynn Williams: She took you to see this?
>> Dora Klayman: I think she tried not to have me see it. Because I remember very much that she was holding her hands on my eyes and I very much wanted to see it. So I do have that image in my head. She did not shield me successfully. I think she probably wanted to see it.
>> Lynn Williams: It's amazing to me this small town, Ludbreg, with all of these people, now the Jews have been mainly deported.
>> Dora Klayman: All of them.
>> Lynn Williams: But they all sheltered the two of you.
>> Dora Klayman: Yes.
>> Lynn Williams: And the town is not very big.
>> Dora Klayman: No. The town is very small, actually.
>> Lynn Williams: Very small.
>> Dora Klayman: A couple of thousand people. And then a lot of small villages all around. It's all farmland. Which in a way, the fact that it was all farmland saved us to some extent during the war in that we did not starve at any point. Because people -- everybody, you know, could grow at least their fruits and vegetables. So we always had -- in wintertime we still have things like potatoes and cabbage so that the food may not have been excellent but it was food. At no point did we suffer like some areas in the more mountainous area where people didn't grow their own food.
>> Lynn Williams: So May 1945. It's the end of the war. It's you, your brother, and your uncle. Tell me what was war's end like? What do you remember about the ending of the war in Ludbreg?
>> Dora Klayman: Just relief that it was all happy and good. We were safe. No more battles. But now I have a memory of a column of Ustasa being driven through Ludbreg looking bedraggled, exhausted, not fed, having little water; people just standing and looking. And here and there somebody would give them something and they were told not to.

Of course, at that time I didn't quite understand it but I know now that it was the last of the Ustasa that were -- that had been caught by the partisans and now they were prisoners of war. They were marched, whatever happened to them after the war. There were also trials. I remember those.
>> Lynn Williams: And they were running. Where were they running to? As they escaped, where was Ustasa going?
>> Dora Klayman: They were trying to run -- the last columns were trying to go to Austria. They tried to go to the British zone.
>> Lynn Williams: Why? Why the British zone?
>> Dora Klayman: To escape the partisans. Because they were afraid of reprisals. It was already known at the time, of course, because the partisans had been already -- at that point they were a force to be reckoned. And there were major, major battles with the Germans and the Ustasa. Not in Ludbreg -- there were battles but the major battles were fought all over what used to be Yugoslavia and what was to become Yugoslavia after the war.
>> Lynn Williams: So the end of war wasn't always the end of horrific things happening for you.
>> Dora Klayman: No. But for us, personally, it was ok. My uncle was to sort of continue a reasonable life in terms of work. But for us it was, again -- we waited to see if anybody was going to return. We waited to see if my parents would return. We had no idea what happened to them. My uncle did see my father but he didn't know what happened to him.

What actually happened to him, toward the end of the war, is that he and a number of other people broke out of the camp. They knew that the war was at an end. The Ustasa were just going to kill everybody and get rid of the camp. Which they did. But some people escaped. And unfortunately

the group that my father was with stumbled on to a patrol, German patrol. Some of them -- some people were able to get away but my father was killed.
>> Lynn Williams: Lasted almost to the end of the war.
>> Dora Klayman: To the very end of the war. My mother not. But, of course, we at that time didn't know. So everybody waited.
>> Lynn Williams: Did any of your relatives survive?
>> Dora Klayman: Yes. On my mother's side of the family only one brother returned, one person returned. His wife and his daughter were killed. He eventually remarried. He wanted me to go with him but he in the meantime remarried. He had two daughters, his new wife had two daughters. They would come to Ludbreg to see us but there was no sense of my wanting to go with them at all.

And then on my father's side of the family, one uncle also came back. One uncle came back and he very much wanted me to go with him. There was a sort of -- not a very nice conversation between the uncle and where am I going to go. I was asked at the age of 7 what I wanted to do.

And, of course, what I hadn't mentioned is that immediately after the war, pretty much immediately, my uncle with whom I was growing up, with whom I was all this time, adopted my brother and me. So we were officially now adopted already. The minute my parents didn't come back he adopted us.

Now the uncles are arriving and they want me to go with them. And there was a little unpleasant discussion going on about where am I going to go. Finally they asked me. And I said no way, I'm not going anywhere. I wanted to stay with my uncle whom I loved; super, fantastic person. He had lost his wife. We were all he had.

In the meantime, unfortunately what also happened, in 1946, my brother died of scarlet fever. So at the time all of these decisions were being made, actually, I was just -- it was just me. I said, no, I'm not going.

So this uncle, my father's brother, and my mother's brother, both of these uncles survived because both of them were prisoners of war, German prisoners of war. And the reason they were prisoners of war because they had been in the Yugoslav Army at the time of the occupation had occurred. So Germans came and these two were deported as prisoners of war and they survived the prisoner of war camp.

Another aunt of mine survived with her children in the mountains but she did not return. She just went directly to Israel. These two went to Palestine. And one uncle also survived on my mother's -- on my father's side of the family. He survived in Bergen-Belsen with his wife,was part of a fairly well-known thing that happened. He was on a train with people that went to Bergen-Belsen and were later rescued into Switzerland. So there he was in Switzerland. So those were the ones who were rescued.
>> Lynn Williams: You go to Switzerland?
>> Dora Klayman: Eventually he connected with me. He wrote. He had married. They were in camps, of course in Switzerland as well, in a resettlement kind of camp for a while. Then they were allowed to stay, which not everybody was allowed to stay in Switzerland that ended up there but they were allowed to stay. When they finally settled that they were going to be there, he wrote to Ljudevit to find if anybody was alive and found me.

So in elementary school, during my elementary school, in the middle of school age, we exchanged some letters. They sent some little packages for us. After the war we had practically nothing. Not only was it after the war but it was also we are under Communist government.
>> Lynn Williams: How was that for your uncle, too?
>> Dora Klayman: My uncle was ok because even though he was from the aristocratic family, that wasn't the issue. He had been a very respected citizen of that town for a very long time. He was a mayor of the town. He was just very highly respected and loved by everyone. And his family -- I hadn't mentioned it before. His family -- he had a very large family at one point but they were all somehow ill with something or other, most with Tuberculosis, accidents, and so on so that actually he was all by himself at this point, which is why it was so important for him to have me. You know, on both sides, it

was a love on both sides. But politically he was fine because he had been on the right side. He had his job back. It didn't pay very much but nobody -- everybody was in the same boat. We didn't have very much but we didn't have very much together. So it was ok.

At any point, by the time I got to high school, my uncle from Switzerland wrote again and asked if I could come and visit. As many people know, you didn't just go visiting Switzerland from a Communist country. But I was allowed to go because I was what was at that time labeled a victim of fascism. So I was given a visa and a passport. The Swiss deliberated for a while but eventually they gave the visa.

So at the age of 16 I was now in high school. We had enough money, my uncle sort of had some family things we could sell, a gold chain or something, and I had enough none buy a ticket to go to Switzerland. It wasn't very expensive because you went by train, of course.

So I left. We could only take $5 with us. I had this $5. I arrived actually to the Italian border, to the border between Switzerland and Italy. And my uncle was waiting for me in the Swiss town, at the border. It was quite a reunion. That's the first time that I really, since I was 7, the first time I met anyone from my blood family from my actual family.

>> Lynn Williams: And he was a religious man. Wasn't he?

>> Dora Klayman: Yes. So this is the thing. All of a sudden I ended up -- he took me, of course, home. There was his children, wife. It was nice. But I found myself in a Jewish, Orthodox Jewish family.

>> Lynn Williams: Right.

>> Dora Klayman: I knew absolutely nothing about Jewish Orthodoxy or about Judaism. Of course, everybody was Catholic where I was. But also, after the war, of course, nobody practiced any religion. So religion was really totally of minor importance.

>> Lynn Williams: In Ludbreg.

>> Dora Klayman: Right. No religion because of the Communism. Religion was totally not -- if you were religious, you just wouldn't even get a job. So that was really not the thing.

So I found myself in this Orthodox family having to all of a sudden learn, as I was trying to help my aunt, having to learn, you know, how to separate meat dishes from milk dishes and all kinds of different things. They were lovely people. I enjoyed them very much. We had a good time together. They said, “Well, how would you like to come back once you are at the university?”

So when was I ready to finish high school -- I was going to be an English major at the university. I had studied English from the time I was 13. I really loved the language. So I was an English major. I thought, well, it would be nice to go to Switzerland and also study French. So I fast studied -- started to study French. I applied to go for a year to go to Switzerland for a year. What happened was that it took me almost a year again to get papers. Eventually, for the second year of university, I left to go to Switzerland.

>> Lynn Williams: You met your husband somewhere.

>> Dora Klayman: I was on the train to Switzerland. That's the Orient Express that goes through all the way from Istanbul to Paris. It was an unusual time. It was, well, for the United States it was a difficult time. It was 1957. It was a time -- all the problems of desegregating schools in the South. It was a time of the governor in front of the school, not allowing African American children to enter the school.

How did that affect me? Well, I was on this train and there were three young people, young men, outside of where I was sitting. They were discussing exactly that. There was a Yugoslav, an engineer, who was apparently a very devout Communist. He was somehow allowed to get out. Then there was a Britisher and this American. I didn't know who they were but I was, like, dying to hear what they were talking about because since I had been an English major and studied for so long, I never had an opportunity to actually --

>> Lynn Williams: Use it?

>> Dora Klayman: To use it or hear it even. I immediately -- I was like all ears and then telling other people what was going on. And this Communist guy was attacking this American. You know, how can

you be? What kind of a country are you? And he's saying, well, you know, not me, not all of us are like that; we are trying to solve it. The president had already sent the troops, etc., etc. And then finally it broke up. The conversation broke up. But I was dying to talk to some of them some more just to practice. So I took a little trip. And this young man, the American, said, “Oh, what pretty red hair.” At this time my hair was youthful.
>> Lynn Williams: [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: So I said, “Yes.” So we started talking. And we had a wonderful time talking to one another.
>> Lynn Williams: Evidently. You got married. Right? [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: And we exchanged addresses. He went off in Venice, off to Naples to take a ship back to the states. I went to Switzerland. Very soon I got a letter. Eventually I answered. Then I got another. And I answered. I must say that at one point finally we discovered that we were both Jewish. Because he asked me, you know, what was I -- what was I doing in Switzerland. And I told him a little bit of the history. He wrote back and said he was Jewish. Well, that was very interesting to my aunt and uncle who were probably inviting me not to study French but to find a husband.
>> Lynn Williams: Right. [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: So they kind of pushed the whole thing. But anyway. We corresponded for quite a while. Then he asked me in the letters to marry him. I said yes.
>> Lynn Williams: [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: So he came back to Switzerland and we were married in Switzerland.
>> Lynn Williams: Very nice.
>> Dora Klayman: We lived happily ever after until 1992 when unfortunately my husband passed away.
>> Lynn Williams: Dora, we really want to thank you. She gets the last word, so before we end, we would like to take a few minutes and see if there are any questions from the audience. We just have a few minutes.

Do we have a few minutes for this? I hope so.

So if you have a question for Dora, please stay in the auditorium. Don't leave. She's going to always have the last word.

I see an arm. Yes.
>> When you were 16, you went to Switzerland to visit but then went back to Yugoslavia? Was there no sense that there was no fear of going back to Yugoslavia? No sense that you would be able to get out again or were you thinking you would just stay?
>> Dora Klayman: I didn't have really any fear. I don't think -- in Yugoslavia, I know in retrospect that there were many persecutions but I was not totally aware of it. And also there were politically -- people who were politically motivated, criticizing the government and so on which I was not doing. Since I was allowed to go out, I wasn't really fearful. And it didn't occur to me not to come back because of my uncle. I would have never wanted to abandon him. It was my home. I was returning home.

I had a sense that maybe I could go back out again. I was very fascinated by the West. And, of course, lots of people had not had that opportunity. So when I was in high school, I was going from class to class telling people what it was like out West. It's amazing what fascinated me. I remember, for example, telling everybody how when you go to where the supermarkets and how when you approach one, the doors opened by themselves.
>> [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: There was one in Switzerland. And that's what it was. On the other hand, later on, after I got married, I did not go back home because at that point it would have taken I don't know how long to again get the permission to come out. And that would have been tricky.

So we were married in Switzerland. Unfortunately I did not get to go see my uncle at that point and he couldn't come out for the wedding. So your question is well taken in a sense that, yes, that was happening but not at that time. It was a problem later on. In fact, I did not go back until I got my American citizenship and I requested a release from Yugoslav citizenship which I did get because I

was afraid at that point, you know, you had to go and do so-called volunteer work and maybe go in the Army or whatever. So I did not go back until I was an American citizen. So that was five years later. After I got here. And I already had children so all of us went back. And it was wonderful.
>> Lynn Williams: Yes? We have a question down here.
>> What happened to your uncle in Yugoslavia?
>> Dora Klayman: My uncle in Yugoslavia eventually passed away. Think about it. He was quite elderly. He was born in 1885. So that's why I'm saying -- I was saying that my aunt was 15 years older than my mother and he was 10 years older than she. So I was being basically brought up by someone who would be the age of a grandfather. Could have been. So, you know, we went back -- my husband and children and I went back twice. Then he died. It was very hard to have to leave him alone.
At that point, we always had -- well from the beginning we had -- after the war we had more like housekeepers, nannies, to take care of me. There was one that we had for a very long time. She was with him for 20 years and took care of him.
>> Lynn Williams: Somebody -- the gentleman here.
>> [Question Inaudible]
>> Lynn Williams: The question is -- in case everyone didn't hear. Do you know where your parents remains are?
>> Dora Klayman: Absolutely not. Jasenovac is now a memorial site. In fact, that's what brought me to the museum, to be a volunteer here. An archive out of Jasenovac came here. There was a need for someone who could read the language. So I signed up and stayed.

The archive -- well, you probably know, Yugoslav had fallen apart again and now is Croatia, Serbia, and all the constituent parts. And during that last war, the Jasenovac archive disappeared. One thing I didn't stress much but one of the problems in Yugoslavia that was different from elsewhere during the war, the Serbs were persecuted in the camps. So when the war started between Serbia and Croatia, the Serbs feared they might destroy the archival material. So the head of Jasenovac absconded this material. Then it came back. It became known where it was. And this museum was the agency chosen to help rescue it out and bring it here. It was all here. The staff and the volunteers here organized it all and cleaned it up and put it into proper shape. And now there is a memorial in a sort of museum on that site. So I know their bones are there but.
>> Lynn Williams: Don't know where.

Do we have time for one more? One more question. It's all the way in the back in the corner.
>> Dora Klayman: Anybody wants to ask questions later you can.
>> Lynn Williams: Yes. Yes. We'll give you that.
>> What has the significance of Judaism been for you since the war?
>> Dora Klayman: That's a good question. Well, since my husband was Jewish and I had then lived with my family for a year, I had really accepted that faith as mine. I feel very Jewish. I'm not particularly religious but I do belong to a synagogue and my children have been brought up -- they went through bar mitzvah and my grandchildren -- my son married a Jewish woman. So the children are brought up the same way. My daughter is not married. But anyway. It's been a rediscovery for me and discovery.

I'm very close to all of my family in Israel. The two children -- my cousins in Switzerland with whom I lived for a year, where I had my wedding, they were 5 and 12 at the time that I left. They are my very close cousins. I feel like they are my brothers. They lived in Israel. I visit them a lot. Half of my family in Israel, whoever survived -- whoever has survived is in Israel. Half of them are quite religious, not crazy religious but, Orthodox.
>> Lynn Williams: [Laughter]
>> Dora Klayman: And half of them is almost totally secular. So I visit them. I have a very good time with both sides of that divide. I do feel very Jewish. I appreciate the Catholic world has brought me up but I do feel Jewish.

>> Lynn Williams: We're going to give Dora her last word. Then I'm going to ask two things of you at the end: that you stand and allow our photographer to take a picture of Dora and seeing you in the audience; you'll get behind and take a picture and then I'll thank Dora appropriately.
>> Dora Klayman: Well, I thank you very much for being here. These days of constant mention of the rise of anti-Semitism in the world, I feel very privileged to be able to be here and to add some words for tolerance and understanding and lack of racism, anti-Semitism. I appreciate you being here. I'm sure adding to my feelings about the need for tolerance and recognition of human values.
Thank you for being here.
>> Lynn Williams: Thank you. And thank you for being here.
[Applause]