UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
FIRST PERSON SERIES
FIRST PERSON RAE GOLDFARB
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Remote CART Captioning

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>> Bill Benson: Good morning, 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. Our *First Person* today is Mrs. Rae Goldfarb whom we shall meet shortly.

This 2016 season of *First Person* is made possible by the generosity of the Louis Franklin Smith Foundation with additional funding from the Arlene and Daniel Fisher Foundation. We are grateful for their sponsorship. I'm pleased to let you know that Mr. Louis Smith is here with us today.
>> [Applause]
>> Bill Benson: *First Person* is a series of 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 until mid-August. The museum's website, listed on the back of your program, 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 or speak with a museum representative at the back of the theater. In doing so, you will receive an electronic copy of Rae Goldfarb's biography so that you can remember and share her testimony after you leave here today.

Rae will share her "First Person" account of her experience during the Holocaust and as a survivor for about 45 minutes. If time allows we will have an opportunity for you to ask Rae questions.

The life stories of Holocaust survivors transcend the decades. What you are about to hear from Rae is one individual's account of the Holocaust. We have prepared a brief slide presentation to help with her introduction.

Rachel Mutterperl was born to Beryl and Dina Mutterperl on December 2, 1930, in Dokszyce, Poland, which is now Belarus. This photo is of Rachel, who is on the left, her mother, Dina, in the middle, and her brother, Shlomo, on the right.

On this map of Poland the arrow indicates the location of Dokszyce. As part of an agreement with Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union occupied Dokszyce in September 1939. Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. When German SS and police began mass killings of the Jews in Dokszyce in 1942, Rachel and her family went into hiding. A short time later, Rachel's brother was discovered by the Germans and killed. Rachel and her mother sought shelter in the ghetto in Glebokie, a town north of Dokszyce. The second arrow points to Glebokie.

Here we see a synagogue in the Glebokie ghetto. Rachel's mother joined a group of partisans in the forest outside of Glebokie and became their cook with Rachel as her assistant. In the late

summer of 1944, Dina and Rachel marched with partisans to the Soviet lines where they were liberated.

After liberation, Rachel and Dina left Poland for Italy where they stayed in the Santa Cesarea Displaced Persons Camp. The arrow points to the Santa Cesarea Displaced Persons Camp in southern Italy.

Here we see Rachel and her mother at the Santa Cesarea Displaced Persons Camp.

In 1947, Rachel and her mother emigrated to the United States with sponsorship and support from an aunt who had settled there previously. These pictures show Rachel's official Red Cross identification documents.

After arriving in the U.S. in November 1947, Rae and her mother came to Washington, DC, but later moved to Brooklyn where Rae finished high school. Rae went to work for the Washington, DC court system after graduating from high school and attended George Washington University and Baltimore Hebrew College at night.

Rae married Harvey Goldfarb, a Holocaust survivor and a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean War, right after he left the Army. They have been married 64 years. She went back to the court after her daughter Lynn was born. When her son Barry was born Rae became a stay-at-home Mom. She then went to work in the Hebrew afternoon school system.

Rae started a career in real estate in 1978 and retired 33 years later in 2011. Rae and Harvey's two children, Lynn and Barry, are both architects and live in the Washington, DC area. Rae and Harvey have two grandchildren, twins who will be 14 in August.

Both Rae and Harvey have led active lives. Rae played tennis weekly until recently. Harvey who is 91 ran six miles daily until he was 80. Rae says she is now "fully engaged with the museum." You will find Rae here on Wednesdays volunteering with Visitor Services. She took a break from a portion of those responsibilities today in order to be with us for First Person. Rae recently spoke to cadets at the U.S. Naval Academy. Among the audience was a young woman cadet who is a relative of Rae's. She has also spoken at such places are retirement homes and local schools.

Rae is joined today by her son Barry and daughter Lynn and her grandchildren Charles and Zachary. They are all here in the front row with us. We are thrilled to have them with us today.

With that, I would like you to join me in welcoming our First Person, Rae Goldfarb.

>> [Applause]

>> Bill Benson: Rae, thank you so much for joining us today and for being willing to be our *First Person*. We have such a short period, an hour, and you have so much to share with us so we'll start right away if that's ok.

>> Rae Goldfarb: Ok.

>> Bill Benson: Ok. Before you tell us what happened to you and your family during the war and the Holocaust let's start first with you telling us about your community, your family, your life in the years before the war actually began.

>> Rae Goldfarb: I come from a town of inhabitants were between 5,000 and 6,000. About half, almost 50%, were Jewish. It was a border town. There was a large military presence. There was a military outpost. My parents were both in business. My mother had a fabric store and my father was supplying the military there with beef and also did exports through Germany of grain and animals. Some pigs, mostly. We were a well-to-do family. I had a pretty comfortable childhood, as long as it lasted.

My father was on a trip to Germany. Never into Germany. Always delivered his goods to the border with Germany. He found -- it was early 1937 and he found out that there was a segment of German Jews that was housed in a warehouse and went in to see what was happening. He found out, of course, that they were made to leave Germany. They were deported back to Poland because they were originally from Poland.

He got sick, some sort of an infection, that couldn't find out what it was and, of course, it was the pre-antibiotic age, and he died in the end of 1937. My mother took over both businesses. She was very busy but she had plenty of help at home. My father's mother, my grandmother on my father's side, lived with us. She had help for my brother and me and for the household.

The Russians came in, in 1939 --
>> Bill Benson: Before we turn to that, Rae, a couple of other questions. You lost your father very young.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Yes.
>> Bill Benson: Do you remember much about him?
>> Rae Goldfarb: The only thing I remember is that he was tall. He used to put me on his shoulders and I could almost reach a chandelier that was recently installed in the house. And it was cold light. It wasn't hot light. There were no candles in there.

I remember a picture hanging, a portrait hanging, on the wall of him. That's about all I remember. Oh, he took me once to one of the villages at the border and I remember we overlooked the Russian -- their collective settlement. And I remember they were playing the Russian music and dancing to it. But that's about all that I remember about him.
>> Bill Benson: You started school at a really early age. Right?
>> Rae Goldfarb: Yes. I was put in school at the age of 3. My father was involved in modern Jewish education. They opened a school across from our house and they needed to fill it with a certain number of students. I was volunteered to be a student there. I was reading by then. I had a governess who taught me to read Hebrew. It was a Hebrew school. So I was a natural to go in there. I was a little bit advanced over the kids and enjoyed being the teacher and, of course, with much pride.
>> Bill Benson: Rae, officially you were born in 1930 but, in fact, you were born in 1932. What accounts for the difference?
>> Rae Goldfarb: My mother was -- [Laughter] My mother was always thinking ahead. When the Germans came in, real young children were separated from their parents and taken away first. Being a resourceful woman she decided if I was made older then I would have a better chance. I would be accepted more. And I was a pretty developed child, I guess. [Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: With that early education for a start, too.
>> Rae Goldfarb: That's right, the education to start. So I was able to pass for a little older. Of course, I don't care. Age is only relative. The only way I could substantiate it, my aunt had a picture of me and there was a date on it in the back. When I entered school here in the United States, they accepted the fact that I was younger and I could enroll into school.
>> Bill Benson: Rae, of course, Nazi Germany attacked Poland September 1, 1939, starting the Second World War. On September 17, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east as part of their agreement with the Nazis. Your town was occupied by the Russians. You were just 7 years old. What can you tell us about that period of time when you were under the Russian occupation?
>> Rae Goldfarb: The Russians did not look very favorably on people who had means. There was a Russian expression that the population -- the Jewish population used. It won't mean anything to you. [Speaking Non-English Language] It means yours is mine and mine is mine.

My parents -- my mother, had to liquidate her business. She distributed the fabric to a lot of farmers, clients of hers, with the understanding that they would supply us with some food items. And if she needed something for clothing. There were no department stores, you must understand. People bought fabrics and made their own clothing. So that was a very important commodity to them. Some of them were friends because of it and some of them, of course, were the opposite.
>> Bill Benson: And under the Russians you were not permitted to practice religion anymore. Is that right?
>> Rae Goldfarb: No, not quite. They looked down on religion. They not approve of any religion. Communism is anti-religion. But we could still practice some of it.

Of course, the Hebrew school was closed. I went to a public school. I was able to enroll in a public school and did rather well. Some of the people were deported. Another family was moved into our house to vacate their home for some of the Russian hierarchy. And life was not as good. We had no more help in the house. My mother had to learn to cook some. But that wasn't that much of a hardship.

>> Bill Benson: As you were explaining to us, the Russians looked on your family as bourgeois. And at one point you thought you might be sent to Siberia, and weren't, of course, but there was some sense that you wished you had been, in the family. Can you say a little bit about that?
>> Rae Goldfarb: Well, the people -- we were packed. You could only take what you carried so I remember the bundles ready. They would come in the middle of the night. So we would be ready in case we were deported. A few families were deported. And, of course, they were the lucky ones. Even though life was harsh but some of them managed to survive.
>> Bill Benson: Rae, you lived under the Russian occupation for the better part of almost two years. In June 1941, Germany turned on the Soviets and attacked the Soviet Union. The German Army entered your town in the late summer of 1941. By the end of 1941, the Germans forces you had and the other Jews of Dokszyce into a ghetto. What do you recall of how life changed once the Germans occupied your town? And then what was it like for you to go into the ghetto?
>> Rae Goldfarb: Before even the ghetto, the Jews were instructed to mark their clothing by sewing on a Star of David in the color of yellow. The Star of David was a Jewish symbol of pride. The yellow, of course, was the tarnished color. I felt degraded. Because walking on the sidewalk was forbidden when a non-Jew was approaching. Of course, if the military were approaching, of course, we had to step down.

You must realize it was still 1941. There was very little automation. Most of the travel was done by horse and buggy. And I needn't tell you what happens to a street when horses pass by and it rains. It was rather foul. And we had to step down. I remember the shoes getting soiled. And, of course, the smell of it coming home.

That felt very degrading. But it wasn't as bad as when we were put into a restricted space that was called a ghetto. The ghetto was an area that was fence off. One border of the ghetto was a main road. So most of the houses had gates, so those gates were closed off. One side of the ghetto was a river and that was a natural barrier, too. The rest of it was fenced off. Our house that was originally occupied by five and then four people, we had between 30 and 40 that were crowded into the house. Food was scarce because we could only barter food one day a week, market day.

People were taken out on assignments to work. It was a requirement to provide workers to take care of the military that was stationed in the barracks that were originally occupied by the Polish Army. Those people were taken out by guard and brought back by guard. There was also a gathering. Everybody had to come out to an open area and be counted. The Nazis kept close count as to how many people were in the ghetto. A few tried to escape from their work assignments. Two or three of them managed to escape. The rest of them came back. When the Nazis counted them, they expected retribution. They demanded retribution for those that escaped. Their way of saying was they were teaching the Jews a lesson.

The Germans organized the ghetto where they appointed a person to be in charge and then a committee to work with him. The Germans demanded sort of a restitution -- call it whatever you will -- to give up valuables at first, then any kind of silver, utensils, and eventually -- they called it all for the war effort -- they asked for copper and iron to be turned over to them. Basically they robbed the ghetto of any relate that was in there.

For the people that escaped, they requested that 10 for one be given to them to show the ghetto a lesson so nobody else would try to escape. Those in charge offered themselves as hostages. However, they required that they give 10 young people of the same age as hostages. They took the hostages and shot them in front of the whole ghetto. That meant that anybody who would try to escape would be responsible for 10 lives of equal age.
>> Bill Benson: You told me that before long the Germans began actively diminishing the ghetto.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Under the disguise of resettlement they collected a number of people and it became known that they took them to a pit and just gunned them down. The next time they asked for a count, some of the people hid. And, of course, whoever they managed to catch was disposed of the same way.

We had a hiding place. The house was built in such a way that there was a warehouse attached to the house but there was a blank space between the walls under the same roof. And that was our hiding place. Knowing what was coming up, there was provisions stored there and when a call came out to come for a count, we would hide there. At that point, not too many people came out. Whoever had hiding places hid in their hiding places. So they started to go from door-to-door and pull out people that they could catch. They had many collaborators. People who were anxious to kill the Jews.

You must also understand that right now in the United States we have the big debate should people own guns. Guns were something that was not very much available in Europe. Some people had some ancient rifles from the First World War. There weren't too many guns around. The ability to escape was not there simply because some of the public were belligerent also.

I'm going ahead here, but we hid -- the last closing of the ghetto, the last massacre that occurred, we hid in the space between the walls. Not too many people managed to get in. My mother, my brother and I, my grandmother, and some other kids that were living in the house managed to get into the hiding place.

>> Bill Benson: If I remember right, Rae, to get into it, you had to climb on top of your stove and over an opening?

>> Rae Goldfarb: The baker's oven. The house had a baker's oven. We had to climb up and then get up to the attic through an attic opening and climb down --

>> Bill Benson: Into the space.

>> Rae Goldfarb: There was some sort of ladder to get down into the space but it wasn't easy to get up there. And we stayed in that place for eight days and we heard everything that was going on.

Much of it that I'm telling you is my mother's retelling because I remember things only as frames, like to look at pictures. From my mother's retelling, we were in there for eight days. Sanitation was poor. Food wasn't very plentiful. It was water, especially became an issue and a few of the people that were in there got out after eight days. And, of course, they were caught and we heard them being caught. So it was a question of how long could we stay there. We heard about arguments among those who were looting. Like my mother said she heard neighbors that she considered friends arguing over a pot or over a spoon.

We stayed there for two more days and then climbed out. My mother sent my brother and I first. She came out behind us and my grandmother behind her. Well, two kids came out before my grandmother. We thought that it was quiet because all the noise stopped. It was nighttime. And lo and behold somebody was until the house, even though it was dark. My mother took us into another hiding place, in a pantry, and we climbed into a cellar. My mother, my brother two children, two other children, and my mother was the last one.

My grandmother, being slower, was behind us. She heard the voices coming closer. She quickly put the cover over the cellar and she acted crazy so when she was caught, she said she doesn't know where she is, what's going on, and they took her away.

We stayed in that cellar until the next night, climbed out. It was quiet. It was nighttime. And my mother figured the best way to get out of the ghetto was going toward the river. We crossed the river only to be stopped by two guards with rifles. Mother knew them. She begged them to let her go. She said she had valuables. If they would put their rifles on their shoulders, put out their hands, she would fill it with whatever they had.

One of the things she had was a gold watch that my grandmother would wear on a heavy chain around her neck. Actually, my aunt had a picture of my grandmother with that particular chain and watch. She wound it around his hands to make sure he doesn't drop it. Into the hands of the other man, she says, hold on to them, make sure you don't drop them. Of course they were afraid that if somebody knew about it, they would have to give it up. We had enough time to escape.

The two children that were with us ran in one direction. She said "Run!" We went towards the home of a family in a village that we were very friendly with. My father's best friend. He agreed to hide my brother and directed my mother to take me to his sister's house, she would be more than willing to

hide me. However, we were at the sister's house and she was feeding us and listening to my mother Her nephew came and said that my brother, Shlomo, was taken away by the Nazis and his father was beat up badly because he wouldn't say that he was hiding a child. It was his own mother-in-law that told on him, who lived with him and depended on him for sustenance. But she was willing to give up a Jew for 10 kilos of sugar.

The house we were in, the woman gave us some food and told us where to hide. She said the best place to hide would be a bathhouse. Because there were no baths and showers in people's houses in villages, they would go on Saturday to get a bath to be clean for Sunday church. So we hid during the day. At night again we started to run. We went through fields. It took us a couple of days to reach the house of the woman who took care of my brother. Of course she was sad that -- she was single. She was older. She had no children. She was sad to hear about my brother and offered to go into town and find out what his fate was and if he's still alive maybe they would give him to her so she would have a son because she loved him. She came back and told us that he was shot. So we know the date that he was shot. He was shot the 8th of June in 1942.

The ghetto didn't last long. They were still progressing very quickly toward the Russian front. The prisoners -- the Russian Army did not fight very much. They laid down their arms and thought they would be better off as prisoners of war. They were hungry. They didn't have much will to fight. However, the Nazis did not treat them very well. They did not feed them. They took away everything they had. And they marched them toward Germany. They became disillusioned and started to escape en masse. Some of them were shot. Those in the front managed to escape.

The area I come from has very thick pine forests. If any of you have gone to cut off Christmas trees, you know how low the branches grow and how thick the area is with trees. They managed to hide from the Nazis and managed to organize themselves. They became what was known as the partisans. Partisan in Russian means somebody devoted to his country. So they became the Russian underground that organized in the back of the German armies. Those Jews that managed to escape tried to join them. Some of them were not very friendly but nonetheless they needed people who lived in the area and knew the area and so they were willing to accept them.

We, however, could not find a place to hide amongst the non-Jewish friends, the gentile friends, in the area. My mother was well-known and everybody knew who her friends were. We got to the house of a woman who was widowed and my father basically helped her keep her farm. She originally came from France, married a Polish soldier, and settled into Poland. However, she was afraid to hide us because she depended very much on the villagers to help her keep her farm.

She kept us overnight. The next day was market day. She dressed me in her daughter's clothes. She had a daughter and a son. Dressed my mother in her clothing. Her son loaded the wagon and she hid for the day and we went to market, to the larger city where we knew there was still a ghetto called Glebokie. With the people that went out to work, we managed to go into the ghetto. Of course, she went back home.

Mother was able to contact through them a friend of my father's who managed to get a gun and brought it in a basket of eggs to marketplace where it was arranged for mother to meet him. They would allow the Jews to barter for food on market days because that kept the farmers happy. They were able to sell some of their goods. Mother had a plan to try to escape the ghetto. She was very resourceful. She always managed to think ahead. And, of course, she was a brave woman. I think my mother was very brave and managed to live to the age of 99 1/2 eventually.

She tried to organize in the ghetto some people. She knew she needed man power. She knew she needed somebody that would be a value to the partisans. There was a doctor in town who was willing to escape. She knew what his fate would be and so organized to try to escape. A tunnel was dug under the fence. However, a few people who got wind of it, tried to beat us to it and they were caught on the other side of the tunnel.

Again, she thought ahead. Resourceful. We had the clothing that we came into the ghetto that were the natural peasant garb. So she made me older, first of all. So I was taken out to work. I had a

way of going out of the ghetto. I worked. And that I remember, in a spinning mill, trying to catch the threads that broke and tie them together.

On that market day, mother had the basket with the straw and the gun. She managed to barter for a few eggs, put them on top. We came out trying to mingle with the peasant that were returning back to their villages and tried to find the partisans.

>> Bill Benson: Didn't your mother find a way to get some identification for you?

>> Rae Goldfarb: In the ghetto, in order to not to be taken with a, in order to be taken to work, she had to get identification for both of us. She knew somebody -- well, she knew a lot of people in that ghetto because of business connections. In addition to selling fabrics in her store, she also sold wholesale. She would go to the large cities, to Lodz, to Warsaw, and buy bulk of goods, bring them back, sell them to some of the smaller stores in the area. So she had much connections. Somebody's daughter was taken away. Her documentation was left. That was my first set of documents that I was made four years older so I could go out to work. Mother got documents for herself from somebody, too. So we were able to go out to work.

There was one time when the Nazis sort of, under the guise of resettlement, took a lot of the Jews out of the ghetto. We were at work. We came back. We found out that the ghetto was going to be closed down for the day. We hid. We managed not to be taken. After that it became imperative that we get out. So on market day, we got dressed properly, went out with the population to barter, went to the edge of the ghetto, and slipped in with the farmers. And as they were going back home, we went with them.

>> Bill Benson: And your mother has the gun with her.

>> Rae Goldfarb: Mother has the gun in the basket under the straw with a few eggs on top of it. We were stopped by a truck that was carrying Germans. Mother was a beautiful woman. She was asked if she would like a ride where her village is. She says, “Where are you going? I'll know if you're going the right way.” They named a village. She named a village further up. So they gave us a partial ride in the back of their truck.

>> Bill Benson: With the German soldiers?

>> Rae Goldfarb: With the German soldiers. They let us off where they were going, and on foot we managed to go further into the area, into the forest.

>> Bill Benson: And found the partisans?

>> Rae Goldfarb: We found what they called themselves a special group, a forward group. It was a small group that lived at the edge of the forest, of the reconnaissance for the partisans who were deeper in the forest. We didn't know at the time but the head of the group was actually Jewish. The men in the group were not very keen on keeping a woman and a child.

>> Bill Benson: And a child.

>> Rae Goldfarb: He said that they needed a cook. And it was natural, the group could then mingle better with the population if they had a woman as a cook. They wouldn't have to ask the population to do the work for them. They accepted us. Mother was the cook for 20-some people. She didn't know how to cook much.

>> [Laughter]

>> Rae Goldfarb: But there weren't many supplies. There was plenty of potatoes and onions. She knew if you sautéed onions, they'd give you a better flavor. They were very happy. The villagers had learned something new. Potatoes with onions and garlic. Jews are forbidden pork. Mother told them that it's best that we don't tax the population and take away their pork. She was going to make a wonderful meal without it. And they liked it. They liked it. The population liked it because they weren't imposed on.

>> Bill Benson: And you served as her assistant.

>> Rae Goldfarb: Yes. I learned how to peel potatoes and carrots very well. I could do it to this day.

>> [Laughter]

>> Rae Goldfarb: And my children will attest to that. I make wonderful potato pancakes.

>> Bill Benson: You're in very primitive conditions there.

>> Rae Goldfarb: Very primitive conditions.
>> Bill Benson: What was it like living there in the woods?
>> Rae Goldfarb: We were fortunate if we could sleep under some sort of a roof. If the Germans came too close, we had to go into the forest and sleep under the pine trees. Many times the cover were pine branches and, of course, the bed pine needles. And fortunate for us if we had no cones under our bodies. Sometimes we had to dig to dig out the cones.

Conditions were primitive. And Typhus was very prevalent. I was unfortunate enough to get sick. I got Typhus. Mother was trying to get me someplace. I couldn't stay -- we couldn't stay where we were with that group because everybody was afraid of getting infected. She got us loaded into a wagon and she knew of what they called a field hospital. And the woman in charge was someone we knew. She also escaped from the same ghetto we escaped from. She was originally a mid-wife but she knew how to use a needle and a thread to sew up the wounds. She basically nursed me to health. I think I attribute part of my memory of those younger years being gone because of the Typhus fever.

We were not with our group when the front shifted and the Russian armies were pushing the Germans back. They had a front in the front and a front in the back. And that was late -- actually, it was early 1944. They were squeezed. And they decided to send out their soldiers to rid of the partisans.

Time up?
>> Bill Benson: Not quite.
>> [Laughter]
>> Bill Benson: We have a lot more to share. You got captured by the Germans. You were actually captured.
>> Rae Goldfarb: We were captured. We were captured by the Germans. And of all places, brought to a warehouse in our hometown. Mother was afraid of being discovered because they had people from the nearby villages also. We were in further away villages. Lo and behold, they started to separate the women from the men because the men were the threat. The women they were going to send home.

I was just passed my typhoid fever. I had no hair. My head was shaved. I was dressed in boys clothing. Needless to say, understanding German, [Speaking Non-English Language]. My mother and I were going to be separated. And they decided that I was a boy. Being a child, I said mechen, one German word, and then they decided that I might be Jewish. Mother jumped out and said, no, she is not. Mother acted very haughty to them. "What do you mean she's Jewish? She's my child. She had Typhus and that's why she has no hair, so the Germans will not get sick in the lice that's in the hair that spread the Typhus."

She spoke to them only in high class Polish and convinced them that she was not Jewish. They decided she was harboring a Jewish child. She told them she was a laundress for the Germans and, of course, had no place to leave me because she was a widow and had to take me with her. And being a child I picked up some words. And all of a sudden they started to test me. I guess I was smart enough not to act that I knew too much. They put us under gallows. Mother told them to hang her first because she does not want to see her child die. And that convinced them that she was my mother. They figured that anybody who would give up her life for a child must be the mother. So they let us go.
>> Bill Benson: And from there would find your way back to the partisans.
>> Rae Goldfarb: From there -- not really back from there we started to look for groups of partisans because they were dispersed. The groups dispersed themselves so they would not be able to kill everybody and also they could inflict some damage to the Nazis. We managed to join with some of the partisans. They were from a bigger group and we were eventually liberated.
>> Bill Benson: And that was in the summer of --
>> Rae Goldfarb: Summer of 1944.
>> Bill Benson: So once you're liberated, of course the war is still going on. This is the summer of 1944. This would go on for almost another year. Tell us what your mother then did next. I think it's remarkable.
>> Rae Goldfarb: My mother went back to her hometown. Everybody goes back to their place of residence. You're seeing things happening here. Everybody goes back to their home base to see who

survived. Mother went back to our hometown to see if anybody survived. A neighbor across the street gave her the picture that you saw me point to on the screen.
>> Bill Benson: Of you, your mother, and your brother. And it's the only one you have.
>> Rae Goldfarb: That's the only one I have. She told my mother that she loved her and she was sorry to see what happened. She kept the picture. She picked it out from the trash. She said she didn't loot. She invited my mother into her house to show that she doesn't have anything of ours, that was ours. But she kept the picture because she lamented fact that she lost a good friend. She gave my mother the picture and she told her that if she stays the night, both of us, both of them, she and my mother work not survive to the next day. She gave my mother provisions and she sent her back.

Mother left me with a family that provided us with transportation to the other ghetto. She came back there and decided that we better go to Glebokie, which was a larger place to see if any Jews survived. Actually, first she went by herself and found out Jews survived. She left me with the villagers. And she went back, found that there were Jews who survived and were living all in one house. We joined with them.

She enrolled me in school. However, the safety net was not to last because some people came, pulled out somebody from the house and basically hacked them to death. After that there was a watch day and night to make sure that we could survive.

Mother had an opportunity to enlist in the Russian Army. They were looking for people who wanted to enlist to help with the war effort. Mother enlisted as a worker on a work train to fix water towers. The trains were run on steam at that time. So she enlisted. We lived in a boxcar. We had a corner of a boxcar. There were other people in there that were also workers. We traveled from railroad station to railroad station.
>> Bill Benson: Fixing water towers.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Fixing water towers. We got as far as Prussia where conditions were horrible. The Prussians basically mined everything and mined themselves so that they would inflict damage to the Russians.
>> Bill Benson: You described to me that the Prussians would actually put mines and bombs on corpses so that if the Russians want to the loot the corpse --
>> Rae Goldfarb: They would mine the corpses. Prussia was pretty progressive, like Germany. They mined any kind of fixtures that the Russians may want to loot. And if they reached for them -- some of them committed suicide but they mined themselves. They had the guns in their hands. And if the Russians tried to disarm them, they would blow up.

By the railroad station, we always went out to get water from a source and there was a warn path. They were warned to just walk with the path. A Russian soldier who was a little inebriated, happened to step off the path and got blown up.

At that point -- mother's idea of enlisting was to reach the American line so that we could cross over to the allied line. However, it was impossible to go any further because the frontlines were very dangerous to cross. The area where we were was dangerous. She found out that there were some Jews that gathered where we got the documents. Our boxcar attached to a train that was going in that direction. And we ended up in the city of Lubin which was sort of further, southern part of Poland. We stayed there for a number of time. That's where the Red Cross came in to help with food, some clothing, and, of course, the idea for us was to try to get into the American zone, for one thing, and to try to get closer to what was then called Palestine that is now Israel because that's the only place that would accept us.

Going to the United States was a difficult project. We eventually were able to contact my father's sister and her husband. Mother remembered the address from writing to them except for she did not remember DC. And the letters went to the state of Washington. And they never got them. However, my mother advertised in a Jewish paper and my uncle saw that we survived and got in touch with us. By then we had managed to get to Italy. We came to Italy and found out that the day before, the war there had ended. So we stayed in Italy for two and a half years before we managed to get to the United States.

>> Bill Benson: Tell us, while -- once you got to Italy, you still had hoped to get to Palestine. You were unsuccessful. I think you tried to --
>> Rae Goldfarb: We tried several times. One time a truck broke down that was taking us south. At that time we were in Modena, northern Italy. Eventually the Displaced Persons Camps were organized in Italy, which were in the south, which suited us very well because that was closer to the Mediterranean. It was right on the edge of the Mediterranean. However, my mother developed asthma. And of all the times, when we were about to be taken to a ship, she had an asthma attack and was taken to the hospital. That particular group ended up in Cyprus.
>> Bill Benson: They were interned in Cyprus by the British.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Right. So somehow we escaped that. At that point we had been contacted by my uncle and aunt and they started the process of getting us to the United States.
>> Bill Benson: You arrived here in 1947. Finally you were able to make it here. Tell us what it was like for you to come -- to go through one more major adjustment, upheaval. What was it like to get here?
>> Rae Goldfarb: It was a dual experience. I learned a few words of English, taught in an Italian school. I learned more Italian than English. And, of course, nobody could understand a word I was saying. However, I realized the similarities of some of the words.

When I first came in, it was a completely different world. Even though Italy was progressive and -- it was mechanization and so forth but we came in at night and the only thing I could see looking out towards land was lights going forth and back, white lights going one direction, red lights going the other direction. I asked one of the sailors who spoke some German and some Italian. We came over on a troop ship, basically slept in bunks and the ship almost went down one day out of New York. But fortunately the storm seized and abled to right itself. He told me that those are cars going across bridges. Never saw so many cars.

Of course, the next morning when it all cleared up, we saw the tall buildings of New York, the Statue of Liberty. I didn't know what it was, frankly. I saw a statue in the water and I was told it's the Statue of Liberty. However, I was very much impressed with all the tall buildings. It was only when I was in high school that some of the students and I went to Ellis Island and was able to climb up in the Statue of Liberty.
>> Bill Benson: Rae, you were 15, in fact, when you arrived but officially everybody thought you were 17.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Right.
>> Bill Benson: And they put you in elementary school.
>> Rae Goldfarb: I had no papers. And I couldn't go anywhere to be accepted unless I had papers. My uncle put me in a private Jewish school, Hebrew school. I spoke Hebrew. I learned it as a child. To this day I can still speak it better than I can Polish or Russian. Because somehow it stuck with me because it was a language that I've learned much, much younger and had no resentment against. Polish and Russian I had much resentment against. I understand some of it. And here in the museum when I meet some people that speak Russian or Polish, I can understand some of it, not all of it. I haven't spoken it in 70 years. But I've never developed this love for it. And also, it has no connection. Slavic languages have no connection with English.

So I was put in elementary school in a private school. The kids spoke Hebrew and English. I could communicate in Hebrew. And I picked up enough English.

Also, my uncle had a grocery store. As soon as I came back from school, I would go down to the store. And, of course, everybody spoke English. I learned the names of the canned goods before I learned anything else. I knew what peas and carrots and beets were. I knew what bread and milk were. And, of course, I knew all the names of the different soft drinks. And little by little I learned English by connecting some of the words from German and Italian to the English. And I was fortunate enough to have teachers in school who -- I was a willing student and they were willing teachers.
>> Bill Benson: It sounded from what you told me, remarkable teachers took you in.
>> Rae Goldfarb: Remarkable. My first teacher was someone who lost her son and husband in the Second World War. I was already in junior high at that time. It wasn't middle school. It was junior high. I

had enough knowledge to enter. I was given of a test and told that I qualify. She came in every morning for half-hour to 45 minutes earlier and taught me sentence structure.
>> Bill Benson: In the little time we have left, which is very little, I want to ask you a couple more questions.

You told us not only how brave your mother was, from everything you told us, she was clearly a remarkable human being, just as resourceful as anybody could ever possibly be. What was her life like when she came to the United States?
>> Rae Goldfarb: Mother had a very difficult time adjusting. She was used to being in charge, being a businesswoman, having her own business. We were needless to say penniless. She didn't know the language. It was hard for her to adjust. She did not want to live on charity, basically, from my aunts and uncle. There was more ability for her to get some sort of work in New York so she moved to New York. And needless to say, she got a job in a factory. The only thing she could do was run a sewing machine on a straight line. She didn't know any other way. She got a job that paid $20 a week. Our rent was $60 a month. There was very little to go with.

My father had some relatives in New York. They were helpful in some way. One of them had a butcher shop. Made sure my mother had some meats on the table.

When I finished junior high and was about to enroll into high school, I went to live in New York with her. I got a job, so I was helping with household expenses and I was fortunate again, in New York, to have a guidance counselor who escaped Germany in 1934, I think it was, who understood what I went through and really helped me along.

Also, there were two English teachers who were willing to help with language. One helped me with elocution and one speech. They put me in front of a mirror. I was rolling my R's. I couldn't pronounce the TH. I had to try my darnedest if it took three hours it took three hours. I remember it very well. I still slip once in a while. I think I'm ok now.
>> Bill Benson: In fact, in preparing our introductory material, Rae corrected me several times. She's mastered it.

We are going to close our program in a couple of moments. We're not going to have time for questions, as you can see, we could have spent many more hours today learning much more about what Rae experienced.

It's our tradition at *First Person* that our First Person gets the last word. I'm going to turn back to Rae in a couple of moments to close the program. When she finishes, two things are going to happen. One, when Rae's finished, our photographer, Joel, will come up on stage and take a photograph of Rae with you as the background. So I'm going to ask you to stand for that photograph. And then Rae will stay behind for a while up here. So any of you who want to come up and ask her a question, that's a great time to do it or shake her hand or get your photograph taken with her, whatever you would like to do. If you'll stay put for that.

So, I'd like to thank all of you for being with us. I remind you we will have a *First Person* e ach Wednesday and Thursday until the middle of August. Please come back. If you're not able to this year, check the museum's website for our program for 2017.

With that, I turn it over to Rae to close our program.
>> Rae Goldfarb: I like to tell about my experiences because that's the only memorial to an extended family. My mother was one of eight. My father was one of three. There is nothing left of them. There is nothing to remember them with other than the fact that I speak to you and tell you about it.

My own experience has taught me that prejudice is wrong, especially when aided and abetted by one's own town's people and neighbors out of jealousy and greed.

This is where we have an exhibit that you can see here, temporarily here, on this level called "Some Were Neighbors" about intimidation by the public. I urge you if you have the time to please visit that exhibit and, of course, the main exhibit about Nazi propaganda and artifacts that are by ticket access, bypass access, on the fourth level.

I thank you all for coming.
>> [Applause]