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USHMM
FIRST PERSON - RAE GOLDFARB
MAY 16, 2019

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First Person Series
Rae Goldfarb
May 16, 2019

>> Ladies and gentlemen, please silence all electronic devices. The program will begin in a moment.

Bill: Good morning. 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. This is our twentieth year of the "First Person" program. Our First Person today is Mrs. Rae Goldfarb, whom you shall meet shortly.
This 2019 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.
"First Person" is a series of twice-weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust who share with us their firsthand accounts of their experience during the Holocaust. Each of our First Person guests serves as a volunteer here at this museum. Our program will continue through August 8th. The museum's website, at www.ushmm.org, provides information about each of our upcoming "First Person" guests.
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 a few questions. If we do not get to your question today, please join us in our on-line conversation: Never Stop Asking Why. The conversation aims to inspire

individuals to ask the important questions that Holocaust history raises. You can ask your question and tag the Museum on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram using @holocaustmuseum and the hashtag #AskWhy.
Today's program will be livestreamed on the Museum's website meaning people will be joining the program online and watching with us today from across the country and around the world. We invite everyone to watch our First Person programs live on the Museum's website each Wednesday and Thursdays at 11:00 AM EST through June 6th. A recording of this program will be made available on the Museum's YouTube page. Please visit the First Person website, listed on the back of your program, for more details.
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.
My screen is not working. You'll catch me looking over my shoulder to make sure I have the right image up.
Rachel Mutterperl was born to Beryl and Dina Mutterperl on December 2, 1930, in Dokszyce, Poland (which is now in Belarus). This photo is of Rachel, who is on the left, her mother Dina in the middle, and her brother Shlomo on the right.
The red arrow on this map of Poland 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, Rae's brother was discovered by the Germans and killed. Rae and her mother sought shelter in the ghetto in Glebokie, a town North of Dokszyce. The blue arrow points to Glebokie.
Here we see a synagogue in the Glebokie ghetto. Rae's Mother joined a group of partisans in the forest outside of Glebokie and became their cook with Rae as her assistant. In the late summer of 1944, Dina and Rae marched with partisans to the Soviet lines where they were liberated.
After liberation, Rae and Dina left Poland for Italy where they stayed in the Santa Cesarea displaced persons' camp. The arrow points to the Santa Ceseara displaced persons camp in southern Italy.
Here we see Rae and her mother at the Santa Cesarea displaced persons' camp.
In 1947, Rae and her mother immigrated to the United States with sponsorship and support from an aunt who had settled there previously. Here we see Rae's official Red Cross identification documents.
After arriving in the U.S. in November 1947 Rae and her mother came to Washington, D.C., but later moved to Brooklyn where Rae finished high school. Rae went to work for the Washington, D.C. 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 67 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, 16-year old twins, Zachary and Charles. Rae's son Barry is here today with her, as are her cousins John, Berry and Judy Bleiweis.I'm glad to have you all here in the front row.
Both Rae and Harvey have led active lives. Rae played tennis weekly until recently. Harvey who is 93 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. Rae speaks to groups here at the Museum and in schools and other settings. When she recently spoke to cadets at the U.S. Naval Academy her audience included a young woman cadet who is a relative of Rae's. with that, I would like to ask you to please join me in welcoming our First Person, Rae Goldfarb.
(Applause)
Bill: Rae, thank you for joining us.
And for your willingness to be our "First Person." We have just a short time. We are going to start immediately.
Before you talk about what happened to you and your family during the war and the Holocaust, let's start with you telling us about your family, your community and your life before the war began?
Rae: I come from a town that was four kilometers from the Russian border. My mom was a businesswoman. She had a retail store and did wholesale. She raveled to businesses in Poland where they manufactured fabrics and delivered bolts of fabric. She sold to stores, to smaller stores and also to a store that was in front of our house. We had much help in the house. My father was also in business. He did some exports, of all places, to Germany. He exported slacks which is used to make rope. Flax is used to extract oil. He also provided meat to the Army of Garrison that was a nearby town. Since it was close to the border, there was also a military presence in the area. And that enables him to provide meat to the Jewish community, because Poland had a restriction on how much slaughter could be done for kosher, which is the requirement of the Jewish diet. The Orthodox Jewish diet. And so he was able to, by a little bribery, slaughter in the kosher way and able to provide meat to the Jewish community and also to the military. My father did travel with his produce, the products that he delivered to Germany. But he never entered Germany. He only went as far as the border. He happened to have gotten an infection that was uncurable at the time. Because that was prepenicillin. He died in 1937. My mother took over for him. There were no banks as you know now for farmers. Farmer banks. So nay could borrow money and so they could sew the next season. My father was one of the people who provided them with a loan so they could start the products and then when they -- when the product was grown, they would repay him by -- with the products. So we were pretty comfortably off. We had help in the house, needless to say, my parents weren't in a position to raise us altogether. And they had a very good relationship with the community around.
Bill: Including the non-Jewish community; right?
Rae: Of course. The non-Jewish community is where my mother dealt with mostly, and so did my father.
Bill: Right. Right.
Rae: I visited some of the client's houses. They become friends. They weren't just clients. But things changed.

Bill: Before we turn to that, let me ask you a couple of other questions. Your father, as you said, died when you were young. Do you remember much about him?
Rae: Not very much. Not very much. I remember -- I remember a very tall man. I remember him putting me on his shoulders to touch when electricity was wired into our house and the chandelier become electric to touch it that we had cold lights. I remember that particular thing. I remember a portrait hanging in the living room of him. I have a picture of that time too. My aunt, who immigrated to the United States, had given me. It was sent to her.
Bill: You started school very young, didn't you?
Rae: I was able to read by the age of 3. I was also tri-lingual. The Yiddish language, which was spoken in the house, Hebrew, because my father had started a school or -- basically he financed some of a private school that taught Hebrew and Polish, and of course, the language was Polish and Delaugue. Which are similar. I still mix them up. Because I had a nanny or governor, I don't know how to call it. I had a woman that took care of me. She introduced me to reading. I guess I picked it up early. When the school was formed, and they needed students to fill the seats, my father enrolled me. I started school at the age of three.
Bill: At the age of 3. Nazi Germany attacked Poland September 1, 1899.
>> That wasn't Nazi Germany.
Bill: In September, they invaded Poland. Your town was occupied by the Russians. You were just 7. What can you tell us what life is like?
Rae: It is confusing why I'm 7 and 9 at the same time. This would come later.
Bill: You were born in 1930.
Rae: Birth was 1932.
Bill: We should take a moment. Why was that?
Rae: My mother was very resourceful. The Nazis had a certain age when they thought that children were working age. And the age was different. But that will come in later.
Bill: Now you are under Russian occupation. What was that time like for you and your family?
Rae: My mother had to basically close the store. She distributed most of the fabrics to some of the clients and farmers. The Russians lewded. Aside from that, they needed housing. They evicted some families from large homes that they wanted. We started to share our house with another family that was evicted from their home. We kind of were a little bit more crowded than we used to be. The families, unlike here, had their children living with them, and also their aging parents and sometimes aunts and uncle. I don't know how many people it was, but I can tell you that half of our house was occupied by someone else.
Bill: You shared with me, Rae, at one point your family thought the Russians might ship you off to Siberia. But later when you weren't, the family sort of wished they had been sent off. Will you say more about that?
Rae: Of course. The Russians had labeled some people who were well off as bourgeois. They put them into hard labor. I remember bundled sitting in the house ready to go. Because they did not give much notice. They would give a half an hour notice to collect belongings and took people away in the middle of the night. There were conditions that prevailed for the eviction. I guess we were on the list, but we didn't make

it. Now in hindsight, we wish we were deported. Maybe more of us would have remained alive.
Bill: Right. You live under the Soviets until June 1941 when the Soviets turned and attacked the Union Army. By the end of 1941, the Germans forced you and the other Jews of your town of Dokszyce. What do you remember?
Rae: Once the Germans came in, from the beginning, we didn't know much. My grandfather, who lived through the First World War remembers the Germans as being very humane and very considerate. He had German officers in his house. Actually one of them he recognized. From the First World War. However when my grandfather approached him -- I want to tell it a lot of it is from my mother's remembering. When my grandfather approached him, he said not now, later. He came to visit my grandfather at night. He brought an orange, which was a big gift at that time, because Europe didn't see oranges or bananas. They were all imported. He told my grandfather it is not the same German Army. To please be tolerant and hopefully will would be tolerance towards you. We were aware already that something was in the offing. However there was not much one could do. The German Armies occupied our town. Within about a month, we were ordered to put on a mark on us, a yellow star, a yellow star of David, inner garments, out of garments, left side, on the right backside, and if anybody was on the sidewalk, we had to give way to them. Some of the kids that I knew, that I played with, started to bully me. I didn't want to go out to the house. Aside from that, they would push us into the street. All we could transport was by horse and buggy mostly. The horses weren't exactly sanitary, and the streets were not very clean and being pushed into the street wasn't anything pleasant.
Bill: In fact, you were required to walk in the streets; right?
Rae: We were required if anyone was on the sidewalk to walk in the street, basically the butter.
Bill: Your home happened to be in the area where the Nazis created the ghetto in Dokszyce. What changed for you and your family once the ghetto was established?
Rae: Actually the ghetto was established in November. The Nazis came in in September. In November they had forced all of the population, the Jewish population, into an area that was completely enclosed. Our house happened to be in the ghetto, because the street, which was a main street, the houses all had gates. I guess that was the style. I have no idea. That was a barrier on the main street. Then the rest of it was either bordered off or barb wired. The synagogue area was included. Which had an open closet sort of area. Everybody was given just a half an hour to pack and then they were forced into the ghetto. I remember that our house was full. I remember that at night you couldn't walk by, because everybody would make room for themselves on the floor to sleep in whatever bedding there was available. I remember sleeping and having to give up my room and sleeping on my mother's bed -- it must have been a double bed. We all slept across the bed. I remember it was more people than just my mother, brother, and I. Food -- the Nazis needed workers and also the population took advantage of it. If any of the Jewish women become workers, they also had to do the laundry for the Nazis, for the soldiers, I don't know if all of them were Nazis they were just forced into the army. They were -- they needed laundry, they needed cooking, they also needed manpower, and they needed to have their horses groomed, their boots shined, and they needed the roads worked on. Because the roads were primitive roads.

They were not paved roads. And the Nazis did have trucks and tanks and in order to move towards the front lines, they had to have the right passage.
Bill: When you say the Nazis took people to -- as workers, that was slave labor?
Rae: It was slave labor. I've recently discovered information from an encyclopedia of what happened. My memory from my child of 7-9 years old, I don't know how. Many of you remember things other than fleeting memories. The conditions in the ghetto were not really good. The Nazis allowed the people that went out to work to do some bartering. Those that were enslaved in outside families were given a little bit more of food. The rest was a question of what you could barter on market day when Jews were allowed to come to the -- some openings, opening gates in the ghetto, and barter for food. We were fortunate to a degree, because some of the people that my parents knew would bring food to the gate. My mother had an arraignment that they could use whatever they were given to hide for her as payment for whatever they did for us. The general public, depending on how they could manage, some of them were able to get sufficient food, and some of them did not have sufficient food. Also the Nazis required ransom -- I don't know what else to call it. At first they required money. The way they collected, the way they put out their request for the ransom was supposedly the ghetto was going to be ruled by itself. They had appointed five elders as a committee with a head of the committee. One of the prominent citizens. They could put their request to the committee, to the council, and the council had to collect it from the citizens in the ghetto. At first it was money, then it was any kind of gold objects, and then they said that was all for the purpose of waging the war to support the -- their war. Their war. How much of it went into their pockets and how much of it was given to the German government is always a question.
Bill: Rae, you told me that it wasn't long after the ghetto was established that was Nazis began -- your word was diminishing the ghetto -- what did you mean by that?
Rae: They were shrinking the ghetto. They claimed they were resettling the Jews to bigger cities. The first resettlement was -- unknown to what would happen. But very quickly we found out they took some -- several hundred people, to a pit and just gunned them down. Shot them dead. People started to worry about it. And hiding places were established, since we lived in our own house. We had a nice hiding place, compared to some of the others, because the house and warehouse were built L-shaped. But there was a space between the wall of the house and the warehouse, but all of it was under one roof. I don't know -- I don't know who built the house. Whether it was my grandfather -- I think it must have been my grandfather before my father. That was also used as a safe to keep some things that people here would put in the safe for a safe place. And that space and what I recall was big enough for two people to walk by. Because we spent some time in there. Every time there was some sort of rumor that something was going to happen, we had to climb into that space. We had to climb over actually there was a big stone oven. We had to climb up on that and then up to the attic, and then down.
Bill: Then to the space?
Rae: Then town to the space. The space was stacked with some supplies. The second time when the Germans had what they called a resettlement, they took quite a number of people. People were hiding as soon as word got out, as soon as a rumor came out or whatever. People started to hide. So they went from house to house. Whoever they

could gather, they took people away. And again to the pit and shot them. There was no way of escape. There was retribution if anybody escaped. The only way to escape was when people were taken out to work. And somehow escaped from their detail, work detail. And the punishment for that was 10 for 1. They would collect ten Jews for each one that they missed from a detail and gun them down in front of the population. They also counted the people. Everybody had to be accounted for. If anybody was missing, they counted the dead, they counted the living.
Bill: If people were missing, there were reprisals for that as well?
Rae: Unless they had a corpse, there was a reprisal.
Bill: You weren't in the ghetto very long before your mother started making plans to escape. Tell us what happened and how you were able to get out of the ghetto with you, your mother, and your brother.
Rae: Originally what happened was the committee had appointed what they called Jewish police with the excuse they would police the ghetto. However the Jewish police, quote unquote, police were very watchful as to what the Nazi plans were and spread the word very quickly throughout the ghetto. Word spread they were going to have another resettlement. We went into hiding. However the last resettlement which happened at the end of May 1942, which was less than a year after the Nazi or German Armies occupied our town, was a complete annihilation of the ghetto. They opened the ghetto to lewding, and anybody they found they took into the warehouse, collected them, took them to the pit, and shot them. We stayed in the hiding place. Some people that managed to get in couldn't stand the claustrophobia and went out at night. When it become impossible to stay there because of lack of food and worst of all, sanitation. When we heard it was quiet on the eighth day after, we climbed out. My mother, brother, grandmother, and I don't know who else was behind us. We all of the sudden had heard voices. We had another hiding place in the pantry that was out attached to the kitchen. There was a food cellar there. That was another hiding place. We very quickly went into the hiding place. My grandmother, being slower behind us, was caught. But before she was caught when she heard them approaching closer, she covered us up. She acted crazy. She said she didn't know where she was. She was hiding and she's all by herself. She's hungry and basically acted out of sorts. They took her away. We stayed the night in the hiding place. We ventured out when it got quiet again. We got as far as the edge of the ghetto. My mother knew the area very well. She knew where to go. We were met by two guards. They were Polish townspeople. They had rifles and they were standing on guard, because I guess there count wasn't complete. They guessed Jews were still around. Mother had some trinkets. She asked them. She said you know me. You know I was always good to you. I'll give you whatever I have. Just let us go. They put the rifle on their shoulders. They put out their hands. Mother gave them the trinkets. Before they had a chance to put them away, we ran. We ran to a village nearby. Some very good friends of ours. I remember having gone at Christmas time. We decorated the Christmas tree. I remember we took an egg, made a hole in one end, and the other, we painted a face, put on a hat with a string, and hung it on the tree. I don't remember anything else, but I remember that. We were very close to those people. The man said he would take his son and my brother, who were the same age, and hide them. My mother took me to my home. Within a short period, within a short time, we were in the house and they gave us some food to eat. We were

eating. Word game, you know, villages, grapevines, were very good and word came that my brother was caught and was taken away. Because the man who was hiding him would not say where he was, they started to beat him. His son, who was my brother's age, a mere 4 going on 5, couldn't stand his father being beaten so badly, and told them where my brother was. The woman told my mother a safe place for her to hide right now would be in a bath house. The farmers did not have bathrooms like you have or the farmers nowadays have. They had a bath house that they used to bathe on Saturday to clean up for church. Since it was Thursday, we could hide there. On Friday, somebody would start preparing the bath house for the influx of people. We stayed there overnight. The woman came and bought us more food and told us we better leave. So we started the trek, walking at night and hiding in the day in the cornfield. Corn was pretty high. We could go in and hide in the rows of the cornfields. We managed to get to another village. The woman that took care of my brother was a single woman. When she found out my brother was taken, she offered to go to the town and find out what happened to him. If she could find him, she would take him for her own. Maybe the Germans would allow her to take the child, because she was childless. She came back and told my mother that my brother was shot. We even know the day. It was June 8, 1942. She was afraid to keep us, because they would make the connection. She said it was safer for us to just go on. Again on foot, hiding during the day, walking at night, we got to the home of a woman who really owed my father a big debt, because she lost her husband and my father financed her until she could get herself on her feet. She had two sons and a daughter. She hid us for a couple of days. She was afraid to keep us again. Because the population was belligerent. The Nazis offered sugar for exposing a Jew. Sugar was a desired commodity. They would get their sugar. She was afraid to hide us. On market day, both of the farmers took their produce to a bigger city to sell. That was their way of disposing of the foods and getting money to satisfy their other needs and seed for the next cycle. She dressed my mother in her clothes, and me with her daughter's clothes. Her son drove the wagon. She and her daughter hid for the day.
Bill: This was in Glebokie?
Rae: We left the marketplace. With the population that went back from the ghetto and after the second workday, we managed to get into the ghetto. Of course the son went back. They basically resumed their lives. We were in the ghetto without papers.
Bill: Here you are without papers in the ghetto of Glebokie. Your mom is intent on getting out of this ghetto and going to find the partisans in the forest. How did she manage that?
Rae: First of all, she got us documents from the people in the ghetto. That's when she got me documented. I was two years older. Instead of being 10, I was 12. I was old enough to two outside of the ghetto for work. I was sent to work in the spinning mill where threads that were broken had to be tied. That was my job. But it gave me a way out of the ghetto. My mother got a position -- as a laundress, so she could also go out of the ghetto to do the work and come back at night. So we had a way of going out. Mother -- during market day and with the help of this woman, contacted my father's friend who smuggled a gun to my mother. A Lugar, a German Lugar. I don't know how he got it. He smuggled it in in a basket of eggs. Straw on the bottom, the gun, straw on top, and eggs on top of that. The Nazis would not put their hand into eggs, because if one was broken, they would get messed up. They made sure there were a couple of

eggs broken. One day, once mother found out exactly where the partisans were, on the way out, on the way back from work, actually, we disappeared. And with the farmers that were going back to their villages, they started to walk towards the area where the partisans were. We were met on the way by a German truck. Two soldiers offering us a ride. Mother was a beautiful woman. I guess she attracted attention quickly.
Bill: And you had false identification papers.
Rae: We had Jewish identification papers. We didn't have any identification papers at all. Mother told them we were going to a distance. First of all, she asked them when they were going to. When they said where they were going to, she quickly figured out where she could get off of the truck. She told them that she -- we lived in a distance village. They offered part of the way. They didn't have time to take us. When we got to a certain cross road, mother knocked on the back of the window and told them this is where we should get off. We got off and we got away. We managed to get as far as where the partisans were.
Bill: For our audience purposes, just in case, partisans were the resistance groups operating in the forest.
Rae: They were Russian prisoners of war badly mistreated by the German Armies. They escaped in mass. First of all, they were shoeless. They took their shoes and took their outer clothing. So the weather was pretty cold. It wasn't -- we're not -- we don't come from a warm climate.
Bill: So, Rae, here's this group of partisans who obviously are fighting for their lives. Who shows up but you and your mother, your mother with a little girl. Who was the reception like?
Rae: Actually, they were organized by then. They organized themselves quickly. The Nazis took over in December. By October they had done pretty far in. By November which was already the winter season, they were in Russia. Each prisoner of war was being taken out from that area. So without shoes and without outer clothing, they were pretty uncomfortable. And when they realized how badly they were mistreated, they started to run en masse and escape to the forest. When they got to the forest, they had to organize themselves into groups. And their aim, at that point, they realized what was happening. They wanted to slow the progress of the front line. So they become a resistance group. By the time we got there, the next summer, they were pretty well organized and actually some of them had managed to get across the front lines to the Russian side and had brought back -- they were playing soldiers. They brought back with them some officers to organize them. We were -- okay, Bill, I'll interrupt you now. We were with what they called a forward group or recognizant group, as you would name it. So they were just about 20 of them. And they had to depend on the farmers to provide their food and laundry and so forth. So mother offered herself as the cook and she had a helper. And she also offered them a gun, which was a very big acquisition for them. Because they had very little ammunition. The only ammunition was from dislodging trains from going to the front lines and whatever they could glean quickly before the soldiers came out. Basically they had to flee. So we were with them for a bit of time. They accepted us. The only problem was I got typhus.
Bill: Before we run out of time, at one time you had an incident where you got shot at.
Rae: That was much later. At first we were taken. We were not with our group. I had already gotten better from typhus. However my head was shaved. We were caught by

the Nazis, because the front lines were progressing Russia got help from the United States and equipment and they were able to resist the Nazis. The German Armies were not equipped for the winters in Russia. And so the Russians got the upper hand. They were pushing them back. They had the resistance, the partisans, in the back of the German Army, and the Russian Army in front. And so the partisans had to disperse, because they were pushing back. So we were not with our unit. We got caught because the Nazis had taken the farmers out of their villages so they could hunt the Russians. Remember the front lines were just people all over the place. And so we wound up in our town. And the rule for the Germans was not to keep the women with the men. So they started to separate the women from the men. The women were sent back to the villages. The men they would take away to harsh labor. I was dressed like a boy. I had no hair on my head. I had girl features. They decided that I would go to the men line. Needless to say, I was a child. What do you expect from a 10, 11 year old? I knew when they started to argue whether I was a girl or a boy and the Yiddish is very similar to the German. I picked up some of the German language. I said they should send me to the woman side. They decided I must be Jewish. The penalty for being Jewish was to go to the gallows. They had scalpels with noose hanging down, and they put me under it. My mother got word of it, she ran out very quickly and started to argue with them that I'm not Jewish, and I'm not daughter, and to hang her first, because she did not want to see her child being hung. She offered herself to be hanged before me. And I guess some of them -- well, they were not DSS, they were plain soldiers. And they let me go. Both of us went back with the people to the villages. However we went from village to village. We had no home, we had no place to go really. We had no papers, nothing. We went from village to village. However somebody recognized my mother, and she confided in somebody else that she thinks she knew who my mother was, and she was Jewish. The other woman had recognized my mother before. She kept quiet. She told my mother to disappear. We very quickly left the village and went into the forest. The forest around our area were pine forest. So it was easy to hide under pine tree, especially if you have a couple of branches covering you. Well, we managed to get to the partisans. I'm looking at the time. We managed to get together with some of the group. I'll progress a little faster.

Bill: To liberation, yeah.

Rae: To liberation. We managed to find some of the partisan groups, joined with them, and we were liberated very shortly thereafter. Mother having been with the partisans was given an opportunity to enlist to fight the Nazis. So she become a worker on a train that went from station to station to fix the water towers, because the trains were running on steam. So had, in a way managed to get -- we lived in a boxcar. We had just a palace in the boxcar with other workers. When we got to Prussia, we were very close to the front lines and her aim was to get over to the Allied side. She found out were there were some Jews in southern Poland liberated from camps, and had our boxcars connected to one of those strings. We got to the City of Lublin. From there, there were guides that helped Jews going towards basically at that time the only place that Jews could go to was Palestine, which is now Israel. And a little bit by train, a little bit by foot, a little bit by truck, we got to Italy. We actually crossed the Alps on foot. I tried to make it short.

Bill: Once you made it to Santa Cesarea, your mother hoped you would go to Israel or Palestine. Why were you not able to go?
Rae: Because the ships were intercepted. The one that we were supposed to go on ended up in Cyprus. Mother got sick. She got asthma and had to be hospitalized. We missed that ship. However after that it become very difficult to go to Israel, because of the ships being intercepted. And mother started to write -- actually, she started to write before that, to my father's sister, my aunt in Washington, D.C.
But she forgot the D.C., and she sent them to Washington. They came back undelivered. She advertised in the Jewish newspaper. Trying to look. She knew my aunt was married, her married name, she was looking for William. She didn't know my aunt had changed her name to Shirley. My uncle read that particular Jewish publication, saw that we were looking for them, and wrote to us to please stay put. He made an application for us to immigrate to the United States. Mother on the other hand knew that the Russian quota was not full. Russia didn't have many immigrants to the United States. Actually when she was born in 1906, it was Russia. There was no Poland. Poland did not come into being until after the Second World War -- I'm sorry, the First World War. So she went to the consulate in Naples and convinced him she was really born under the Russians and we got a Russian VISA. We came here on a Russian VISA.
Bill: In the little time we have left, Rae, just a couple more questions. You arrived in the United States. You were 15, although your papers said you were 17. When was it like for you when you got here?
Rae: When was it like for me? It was heaven on earth!
Bill: Okay.
Rae: I mean you could go whatever you wanted. Italy was good to us. I can't say it wasn't. It is too long to go into details. But I befriended an Italian family that even took me to the opera. They took me to Sampson and Delilah story. Aside from that, it was very, very accommodating. When I came to the United States, my uncle had a grocery store. And -- it was right before Thanksgiving. And my cousins -- he had three daughters, one of them my age, and they would go down to help at the store. Needless to say, so did I. I learned -- my first English words were peas and carrots, bread, and milk, of course. Little by little, because I found a connection between English and German and Italian, I was able to figure out a lot of words. But aside from that, my uncle sent me to a private -- a Jewish school where I could communicate with some of the students. I learned English -- I picked up English enough that in February when the new semester started in middle school, I was able to be accepted to middle school. My birth certificate become a picture that my aunt had of me when I was six months old with a date in the back. That was my birth certificate. Because otherwise I would have been almost too old to go to school.
Bill: Two last questions for you. I believe your mother passed away in 2006. She was clearly an extraordinary woman. A very brave -- just an amazing woman. How was the rest of her life?
Rae: Unfortunately the rest of her life she -- the reason I know so much about my history is because my mother talked about it. After she passed away, I found a lot of lets that she wrote to the Red Cross and wherever she thought to inquire to see if anybody from the family was alive. She was one of six. All of them had families. All of her

sisters and brothers had families. Nobody survived. The whole city that had about 3,000 inhabitants, right now I'm the only survivor. But originally there were just about 20 some people that survived. Some of them in hiding, some of them in Russia.
Bill: That was going to be my other question. When did you finally learn the extent of the full loss of your family?
Rae: The full loss of the family actually we learned as soon as we came out -- as soon as we were liberated. My mother went to our hometown. First of all, where do you go to see if anybody else survived? You go to the place where everybody was. Needless to say, there was nobody there. A neighbor across the street, the picture that you saw of my mother, my brother, and I, is the only possession that I have from everything that we ever owned. This woman that was obviously a friend, she told my mother that she picked out the picture from the trash. So she would have a momento of my mother. She told my mother that if she offered her lodging for the night, that neither of them might survive to live to the next day. Because the town was so belligerent still.
Bill: I'm going to turn back to Rae in just a moment to close our program. It is evident to everybody in here that Rae was only able to touch on a little bit of what she could share. We could spend the entire afternoon and still could not do justice to all that Rae has been through in her life. We thank you so much for this, Rae. I want to thank all of you for being here and remind you that we'll have "First Person" programs Wednesday and Thursday through August 8th. Our programs through June 6th will be livestreamed. All of the programs will be available on the YouTube page as well. We didn't have time for you to ask questions of Rae. When Rae is finished, she will remain on the stage. We invite any of you to come up ask a question, shake her hand, have a photograph with her.
Rae: May I have the last word?
Bill: You are about to get it. It is our tradition that the "First Person" has the last word.
Rae: I see a lot of young people here. I have a special message. Value your families. I have none. I was fortunate enough to marry someone who had a big family in the United States. I had some cousins sitting here. I really felt like I joined with my husband and I joined with his family, and they all become my family. Value your family. You may be mad at your mother. You may be mad at your father. Believe me, they are the ones that are looking out for you. Remember one thing: don't collaborate on things that you think are wrong, just because it maybe popular. Don't bully anybody. Just think of how you would feel to be bullied. And above all, value this country, the United States. It is the best country in the world right now.
(Applause)
Bill: Thank you, Rae.
(Applause)