

THERESA GOLD MARCH 24, 2011

Zelda: So Theresa, there's going to be 3 parts to the interview. I want to start before the war for context, just to get a sense of your life because I think it is important, and then I'm gonna skip the war years, and then I'm gonna look into where you were right after the war and your decision to come to Canada, and then the majority of the interview is from the time you come to Canada the first 5 years let's say. So let's go back between 1935 and 1939. I understand you were in Warsaw.

Theresa: Yeah, I was born in Warsaw.

Zelda: **And, how old were you, let's say in '35?**

Theresa: I was born in 1922

Zelda: **So you were 13.**

Theresa: Yeah

Zelda: **And, so you were**

Theresa: I was finishing – I went to high school after, but between '35 to the outbreak of war, I was already in the early grades of high school

Zelda: **And what were your dreams, what did you want to do?**

Theresa: At that time, what did I want to do? Come from very urban family, and education was always an aim in my family, so I suppose at that age, I don't think we planned what I wanted to do. Being a grown up, not yet.

Zelda: **But it was important to your family that you finish high school?**

Theresa: Oh yes. And then probably, with this we didn't know, we didn't even plan but at least it was an earlier high school, just to study

Zelda: **And what did your father do?**

Theresa: My mother and my father, we had a store, a store of women's lingerie; stockings, socks. My father was the 2nd husband of my mother. My mother had that store before she married him. It's his family that's from Warsaw, but I had, you know, relatives. My mother had children already when he remarried her. I had a sister that was just 18 months younger than I was and we were always like twins. So that's about it.

Zelda: **And did you have older siblings?**

Theresa: Yeah, we have 2 sisters older that were from the 1st marriage, but I don't even realize at that time that the aunts that were released were not supposed to be my aunts because we were like one family so I had lots of cousins

Zelda: And everyone went to school? Was anyone in university?

Theresa: I had older cousins that went to university, and I had one cousin, remember, that was wearing special hats [0:03:33]. I remember my cousin wearing that hat so she was at the university, the first year, but you know that university, I don't know if you know about, was a university in Poland. At that time in Warsaw was a new law, which was only a few years old, that Jews have to go at the back of the hall. It's called the [0:04:05] clause, but the Jews didn't want to go so they were standing. They don't want to sit there so the Jews at the university were standing

Zelda: At the back of the class

Theresa: At the back of the class instead of sitting. But they were standing, not in the middle of course. Instead of sitting, they were boycotting this kind of way or protesting. That was at the university. But that was a new law in Poland. It became much more [anti-Semitic? 0:04:38] with the rise of Hitler.

Zelda: You were fairly young, what were you interested in? Were you interested in the Arts, the Sciences, reading?

Theresa: No, not really. Jews and Poles, we were very politicized. There were papers in the house. We talked about politics. I was young. I was dreaming, but we're talking about war, I was almost looking forward that something's going to change. And my mother that remembered – she remembered some of the first war, and she was very mad at me that I was talking such stupidity, but we were dreaming. We felt, I suppose in retrospect, we must've felt enclosed into something that we wanted to get out of. We knew there was America, and we knew that there was another world out there.

Zelda: But what did you like to do? Did you like to read novels, sciences?

Theresa: Oh yes. No science. I used to read. My mother used to say that I got [0:06:07]. I was the only [0:06:09] in the family because of my reading at night [laughs]. Yeah, I used to read, I used to dream, go to school.

Third Female Voice: You would sing, no?

Theresa: I loved to sing. Me and my sister, we had a balcony. We had a very nice apartment in Warsaw, but in the Jewish district. If you come out to Warsaw, you will see it's still –just across from our house is the big [0:06:41]. If I come with my family, I tell them, here where I live couldn't be here, because it's just hereabout where I live because everything was destroyed, and rebuilt not exactly the same.

Zelda: Would you say your family was high culture?

Theresa: No. My family is middle class family, cultured, very politicized. We had 2 papers. We had a Yiddish paper. Then we had, what I remember was a paper Zionist, a Buddhist Yiddish. But in my house, was I think a Zionist paper, Yiddish, and we had once a week, the Polish paper, Jewish Polish. [0:07:35] It's called a review, it's like what they call here, the magazine, but it's a paper. It wasn't everyday, but we had it once a week. It was bigger, and I remember if anything was happening [trails off]. Oh, one of my sisters went to [Israel? 0:08:00] as a child from [0:08:00]. She went to [Israel?]. She lived there, and she lived there in some kind of [0:08:09]. And I remember every morning, we used to get up. I used to get up-my father sitting looking at the papers, my mother discussing –we were a very politicized family as well as all Jews most probably in Poland because politics affected their life to an extreme degree. I've given the example of the university class of something where Jews are not allowed to sit [0:08:40] that came back to Poland just a few years before the war

Zelda: Did you speak Yiddish?

Theresa: That's a funny thing about Yiddish. I thought I didn't [laughs]. I used to speak Polish to my parents and they answered me in Polish or in Yiddish. I understood everything. But when they ask me to speak, I never know words, and they wouldn't say a word in Yiddish. I thought I don't speak Yiddish. Not only that I didn't speak Yiddish before the war, but during the war, when it would have been so much easier for me to speak Yiddish with people, I thought I don't know Yiddish, but when I married Nathan, suddenly she speaks Yiddish, they all speak Yiddish, and I start to speak Yiddish. And I speak the Yiddish from where they come from, not from Warsaw, and I speak Yiddish perfectly.

Zelda: So your life though was totally in Polish right?

Theresa: Because I went to Polish public school. Mostly Jewish kids because of the district, but there were Polish teachers, and I went to high school, which was Polish.

Zelda: Were your parents religious?

Theresa: My parents were religious, but not orthodox. My father wore a nice elegant hat, what they wear now, like your father [points presumably to third person-laughs]. My mother was more religious than my father. My mother comes from Eastern Poland, and my mother used to love cantorial singing. She used to go to [0:10:39] the famous [0:10:43] that was destroyed the first day when the Nazis came. She used to go Saturday and sometimes hold me by hand or my 2 sisters. We used to play there, gorgeous gardens there. For women, there was balconies. It was like an opera house. It was gorgeous there, [0:11:07] one of the most beautiful apparently in the world at that time. She was religious, more religious. But [0:11:15] were observed, [0:11:18] was yes. I never had pork, we had Seders, every holy day was observed. It was a religious home. Saturday nights, my father sitting with the fish –he head was one of the most delicate –with the fish head [laughs]. I still love it.

Zelda: **Saturday was observed?**

Theresa: Oh very much. The store was closed.

Zelda: **But were you able to travel, or ride or?**

Theresa: Yeah, I was able. I wasn't. Travel, we didn't take buses [0:12:01], but when I went to high school, I did take a bus. It was more how your neighbors look at you [laughs], than you yourself, but my parents were religious, they were observant, but not like the Hasidim in Poland or the more religious Jews like some of our families that I went to during the war. Cause my father didn't have a beard, anything in his hair [laughs]

Zelda: **Did your mother wear a scarf or anything?**

Theresa: My mother didn't wear a [0:12:42]. No no.

Zelda: **So where were you during the war?**

Theresa: Accidentally I found myself not in Warsaw but on a summer* [0:12:53] camp, and I couldn't go back to Warsaw. The train –it was even before September the first, we knew that could be war, anyhow it's a long story because what this meant [0:13:13]. What was happen that the train could not go to Warsaw because the bombardments started and we were gone East from South and until we got to a part –if you know about Polish [corrects self] Russian-German, you know the pact; Germany was going one side. The train was bombarded already. They were the first days of war. And the Russian would go the other way. So I found myself in a city of the Lvov.

Zelda: **Lvov?**

Theresa: Yeah, that was taken first by German. The Germans went away and the Russians came in, and then all the Eastern part was already Russian. I didn't know what to do, where to go.

Zelda: You were alone or with friends?

Theresa: I was with friends. Friends from camp. I had one very close friend that would know what to do and where to move. But I knew that my mother, coming from Eastern Poland had a sister and cousins, very close cousins in Bialystok. Bialystok, which was a Polish town before the war, and became Russian. Russian took over Bialystok. Now Bialystok is in Poland on the very border between Russian and Poland, but it is in Poland. For me, Bialystok was almost like Russia because even the Polish that they spoke was almost with a Russian accent. In Bialystok, my mother had a sister, a younger sister to which I was [means visit?] twice before the war as a child for summer for a week or two. My parents used to send us to stay – rather stay with the cousins for reasons you know, my cousins were richer. My aunt married what nobody wanted, and she was much [0:15:46] and beloved. Anyhow, I stayed with my cousins before, but this time I went to the cousins, and I stayed there at my mother's cousins. They were very well off, but after a while I felt very uncomfortable there, even I shouldn't be, because I remember that they had bakeries, automatic bakeries at that time, my mother's cousins. And they had a little apartment on top of the bakery so I asked them if I can sleep in this apartment, and they said, yeah, with pleasure. It was one room with 2 beds. And I used to – my friend was with me, but she had nowhere to go so at night I used to bring her upstairs to sleep and she had to leave very early that nobody knows that she's there. But after a while, I felt very uncomfortable because the cousins were very sick. I can't remember every detail. I found myself with my aunt, my mother's sister, and I stayed there with her. She had 2 kids. One boy, same age as me.

Zelda: So you were there throughout the war?

Theresa: No [strong emphasis]. Documents, I didn't have any. In Russia, the first thing you have to have, documents; where are you from, who you are, who is legal, who is not. So, I wasn't the only one in Bialystok that was at – the [0:17:42] is the one that escapes, not really refugees, but like refugees. There were thousands, thousands of people from small towns around, far east Warsaw walking East because people were scared of the Germans. And here is Russia, the one that you should love and accept you like this wasn't so. Lucky me, I didn't have to smuggle into Russia. I found myself accidentally Russian [in Russia?], but usually people had to smuggle into there. There was a border now and you had to go through the border. Thousands of different stories of how people passed through. And there was a little also that passed

through that river*. Some of them had poles that helped them. Some of them – and most of them with money, you pay them. But it was not that very hard to get, but some of them had it very hard. But Bialystok and the area was swarmed with refugees that were escaping Hitler. And that was a time when Russia and Germany had a pact. So I was there, but they were starting to pretend they don't know what to do with so many people, there were swarms of people. They started to give documents so people that aren't from that area got documents as residents or had documents as residents. We got documents as refugees. So one day – it was in 1940 – not one day, one time, they started, with the police, they started to arrest all the people that are not residents. And there were thousands of people. They were thousands of long trains – the famous trains that they put them. So what they did – I was in school, I went to school there. I learnt Russian perfectly well while I was in school. It was not a long time. At that time, my parents sent somebody to bring me back home, because I was with – I didn't have shoes. I had nothing. I had summer stuff, so my parents were very much, you know, what can I do. And it was a horrible winter in 1940, terribly cold winter. And I was supposed to go back – there were lots of people, for money mostly, Poles*. So, why I didn't go back? Because I had nothing to wear. So my aunt said, wait, spring will come, and you'll go back later. That's what saved my life. That's why I'm sitting here. Because the Russians took all the so-called refugees. They were going from house to house, they were looking for people. I was in school, and they took our whole class. And they always say – their motto was first you take and then you see what you do with them. You take the whole group and then you have time, you will see. So many of them were Poles living there. They separated children from parents. When there were couples, you know families, they took them – you know that Russia had something like Siberia; there were people live there for years and generations

Zelda: **War camps?**

Theresa: No, not war camps. They were little villages. When the tsar used to send the people to Siberia, they didn't send them to war camps. There was no camps at that time. They were taken to live there. Either they gave them houses or not and they left them there. That's where they took these people.

Zelda: **You too?**

Theresa: No no no. That they took families. Single people – there were not many of them, I was one of them. Some of the singles went there too

Zelda: **So you were about what, 17?**

Theresa: Remember I told you I was born in 1922, you count [laughs].

Zelda: **You were 18.**

Theresa: Yeah. 1940

Zelda: **Yeah**

Theresa: That's right. They took us to prison – single people, only single ones in prison. It wasn't so because there were so many people that had families but they didn't know. And some people, they were scared to say that they're not because they thought if they have a family somewhere else in Bialystok, if they will say that they family, they will arrest the family so they said that they were single. Anyhow I was four months in Bialystok in prison, and my family that lived in Bialystok and they had no idea where I am. And I did get, one time, there was a one doctor that I asked him to give some notes to the family. I don't know if they got it or not. I know only one thing, that they got one letter, no it was later, a letter from camp. Anyhow, if you know, that about a year later it was a war, but in Russia, the Soviet Union [0:23:48]. From Bialystok, they sent us to another city, to Brest. And from the prison in Brest, which is on the border between Germany and Russia, you could see the Germans. So when the war started, they only had to cross the river [0:24:12 name of river?] and they are already in Russia. Everybody that was left – Bialystok had the biggest massacres. Not a single person of my family, which was very big, nobody. I found a distant cousin in Israel that I saw just when I was there the first time. She survived.

Zelda: **So where did you spend the war years?**

Theresa: I spent the war years, first in the prison, and if you want to read Dr. Zhivargo, his journey from Moscow to Siberia, that's exactly where I was. But in Russia, when you go there, it's in a train. The trains are a special den for prisoners, built for prison. But if you had to go from place to place, or there's something, you have to regroup people, you stop, you don't sleep on the train, you sleep in a prison. So I know many of the prisons on the way, and many things different and strange happened on this way. From prison, it went about 10, 12 or 14 days, I can't remember, until we got to the city, which is called Novosibirsk. It's in Russia. And from there, they were distributing us to camps. And myself, and another few girls that I got from prison, from Bialystok, from Warsaw got friendly. We got into a camp, which was lucky one of the best camps, and if you know anything about the Soviet Union, and the Soviet trials before, many of the women that weren't [or were? 0:26:24] political prisoners that were wives, they were for no any reason but they were wives. Most of them were wives of

the famous political prisoners that were killed in Russia, that's what got them to this camp. Considering to their age, we were children. We were much younger than they were and that was the camp that I was. The camp was one of the best organized institutions in the Soviet Union was that camp that was surrounded by prisoners; it was like a prison but not walls, but wires – thousands of people. This camp was doing uniforms for the Red Army so that factory is for sewing factories and material. For my age, at that time I was too young according to the law to work in the factory. I spoke Russian very well already. Lots of Polish speaking people were coming. They never had Polish speaking people but most of the refugees were from Poland. For the censury [census?] bureau, they needed interpreters because the camp was allowed, once a month, a letter you can write, and once a month a day when you can receive. But whatever it was, we did not receive until the day, they kept it. And that was the famous letter day. So they needed interpreters for the letters, rather translators. So I was one of them, working for a while. Then I was become suddenly old and they sent me to the factory camp. It depends on how much you work, and how well you work, you were rewarded. If you were better, and you had a better job too, you got better food – not any money, but food. There were 3 kinds of tables; for the lowest, middle, and for the ones that eat better because they work better or they're very executive. They camp was run very well. The camp having in prison so many artists, actors, singers at the theatre – [0:29:19] best performances I've seen in the camp. Except on this part was political barracks. There is another side where it is criminals. There was interaction, but very little. So it's amazing

Zelda: **So the war ended**

Theresa: Nooooo

Zelda: **There's more**

Theresa: No, the war hadn't ended. You don't know what happened to them. How did they find so many people in Russia? The war didn't end yet. The war started. I wasn't long in camp because right away there was an agreement between Russia and Poland –former Poland – that all the prisoners, all the refugees who were there because of Poland had to be freed. They were unjustly taken to prison all to those little settlements in the north – the most famous that [0:30:35] – those settlements of white Russians, all these are going to be freed because that was for nothing and we were freed. Commissions came and gave us documents. We had to tell them where we want to go. Where the hell do we want to go? We could go back to Poland, but the Germans [laughs]. That was in 1942, just a little bit after the war started when the Germans [0:31:12] Moscow [pause]. Now, where am I?

Zelda: **'42. You were free from the...**

Theresa: Oh, free from the camp. I tell you such strange things that I have seen there. Some of them you cannot forget. While we were in the camp, I see a single girl and we speak Russian. She's a very deep Russian accent. Who are you? Her name is Faniiii [pauses]. I forgot her name. Anyhow, German name. I said, where are you? She said, I'm from Germany. When I was a child, I came to Russia. Ohh Norman, who is Norman; Her father was the leader of the communist part of Germany. As you know that Russia arrested everybody. If they didn't come to Russia, they sent people to arrest people and Norman and her brother, he was there for a while as a – newspaper, for a German paper in the Soviet Union. But they [0:32:24] German and Russian friendships suddenly. They arrested Norman, executed right away him – So finally [0:32:33] had nothing to do with the Polish liberty that they get. All the Polish citizens were liberated. If you think that the policy was chaotic, it was. It was completely – can you imagine to take from a camp of thousands of people take all the Polish refugees from thousands of camps. Camps throughout Siberia – everything

Zelda: **So where did you go?**

Theresa: Oohhh where did I go – It was a journey unforgettable. I just want to tell you that Fani Norman was freed. She shouldn't have been, but knowing who she was and where she comes from, it was something extraordinary that everyone was talking about it, and I cannot forget it. I want to tell you this also. I don't know if – It's not to do with what you're writing, but the people in camp that I was with were wives of the very high political government of Russia – the highest people. Their names won't do very much to you – too young, but these names are like Bukharin [? 0:34:01] – anyhow, but these were the active makers, creators of the Soviet Union. That were the wives and their crime was wife

Zelda: **That was the crime?**

Theresa: Yeah. Because every morning you get up in a camp. You had to stand up, and you have to tell the name; first name, second name, and under what statute you are in prison, and the statute is wife of a prisoner. Yeah, Yeah. So, where am I? In Russia. In Russia, I spent – I went to Russia with my friend. My friend found a sister. We went north, and the sister was also ready so she went south. We couldn't find each other. We went on the train. We found ourselves on the train going from northern Siberia through Ural down to the – almost Tashkent. And they were sending us to all those little coops; you know what's a coop – community settlements

Zelda: **Yeah, small villages.**

Theresa: There that was my most starving part. I was never alone. I was always with one or two or three people that we formed groups. Anyhow, they didn't let us stay in the Tashkent because the cities are too big – we were [0:36:08], you can't imagine terrible. They gave us very little food. We went as far as the Persian border; we stayed for a few days. Then they told us we could not stay because that's too close to the border so they took us back. Anyhow, I was spent the rest of the war in a city called Turkestan which is not in Turkestan, but Kazakhstan, which is very close to Tashkent. And there – okay the war finished. And I went back to – not that simple – but I went back to Freiburg, back to Warsaw. And Warsaw was completely destroyed, and I couldn't find even the street I lived in. I was also with some friends – we got separated – with one friend, I went to Łódź, where the remnants of Jews were still staying. In Łódź, I was called, like anybody else, to the Jewish community that was organized, looking for people – if there was anybody left, and there was nobody left. And I accidentally met my friend and a neighbor that was a girlfriend to a Russian General – when the Russians were passing – you have to know the war – when the Russians were going, passing from east to west

Zelda: **This was in '45 right?**

Theresa: Yes, '45. Oh, now I'm talking about '45, '46. '45 yeah. '45 yeah.

Zelda: **And you were 23?**

Theresa: Yeah. '45 I went with my friend to Łódź and she got a villa from the Russian General – gorgeous villa built during the war with a gorgeous orchard. There, through my friend I met other friends. Nathan came to buy fruits.

Zelda: **Nathan, husband?**

Theresa: My Nathan, yeah. I had an orchard and so many trees – that was '45, that's right – and to buy fruits, that's how I got to know him. And how they come to Canada

Zelda: **One second**

Theresa: Oh no not yet

Zelda: **Not yet. We're not in Canada yet. We're still in the orchard. But you met Nathan there**

Theresa: Oh I met him and I saw him, and he lived in a small little town near Łódź. His former house that he found wasn't destroyed

Zelda: **Now he spoke Yiddish mostly**

Theresa: He spoke Polish too

Zelda: **So when did you get married?**

Theresa: Oh married, married I got when I was already pregnant with [0:39:17 – name was somewhat inaudible].

Zelda: **Okay, so when did you get together?**

Theresa: That come gradually [unsure if she said “gradually” or “February” 0:39:23] ‘1947, I suppose.

Zelda: **You and Nathan?**

Theresa: Yeah.

Zelda: **Began living together**

Theresa: We never – yeah, living together. I took him to my villa at the beginning. Then we had to exchange the villa for an apartment because Poles gave them much more higher than I was. And then Mike came. Mischa is Nathan’s brother. Nathan’s brother came from Russia much later than I because I came – when I heard that the was finishing, I took me and my friends, we just went ourselves without tickets from Tashkent to Moscow and from Moscow to Kiev. So when the victory parade, I was already in Moscow. But so, about 4 months later, Mischa – Mark – Nathan’s brother came from Russia with a big [0: 40:32] of people, big trains of people came back from Russia, and he came and then Nathan Feiffer was in the Russian army and he found himself going through Poland being in the army, but then passing Poland

Zelda: **Now Nathan Feiffer was related to you or to Nathan?**

Theresa: Nathan. He was his 1st cousin. He came much later. Because he was in Germany with the army and when the army was completely dissolved he went back to – so we lived together in an apartment

Zelda: **What did Nathan do?**

Theresa: Nathan was here and there – buying and selling things, and we were also worrying about – because at that time if you had something left from whatever you had before the war, you could have get it. So Mike was getting back the properties, was busy with this. Nathan was buying and selling

Zelda: **Just goods?**

Theresa: Whatever it was he bought. As I told you so, the fruits or whatever there was. He mad enough money to live very well. I was working for the government, and trying to go to school

Zelda: **Finish high school?**

Theresa: Finish high school, and do some kind of profession. At that time, you could have become a lawyer and a judge very quickly. I did not, but I was just trying to go to school.

Zelda: This was in Łódź?

Theresa: That was in Łódź. Life was coming slowly. It was a gradual process. Mike and Nathan – not Nathan Feiffer – opened a store of ice creams, not ice cream, what am I talking about – a bakery, they bought a bakery. They found a Pole. They told him he is a terrific baker but he has no money. So they bought this bakery with him. Then they bought a store to sell the – what am I talking about – because we had a nice [trails off] – a bakery! So I was working in the bakery too. But I was working for the government, a secretary for a while. But I wasn't a good secretary. Then I was taking courses – I wanted to have a profession. I was getting called, and I had no profession. That's a great mistake was my friend that had nobody, didn't have Nathan, didn't have Mike. They went to school and became doctors and lawyers, and I didn't. Anyhow, what happens that Mike comes one day – we used to go every time to the Jewish committees to see what's going on. People came from the Soviet Union months later. That was in 1947. In 1947, Mike comes with greetings. He found a Jewish committee that the family Feiffers were looking for any relatives – people from the United States, people from Canada were looking for relatives that they left in Poland to let them know we're here and we want to know what happened to you.

Zelda: **So this was family Feiffer in Canada?**

Theresa: Yeah. Feiffer family in Canada. Terribly paupers* [?: 44:57]. Mike, being in the Soviet Union got a little bit – they come from very small town

Zelda: **Okay. So Nathan and Mike were brothers**

Theresa: Nathan Feiffer was a 1st cousin.

Zelda: **A 1st cousin. Was Nathan and Mike's father a Feiffer or were they?**

Theresa: No, mother yeah.

Zelda: **The mother was Feiffer?**

Theresa: I think so, yeah. Anyhow, Mike came and said that a Feiffer family was looking for a [0:45:40] for a

Zelda: **Feiffers?**

Theresa: Feiffers. They both know there's not anybody left – thousands of [0:45:49] from United States, from Canada, from part of Europe. So of course Mike got in touch and they write letters to each other. And they said if we want to come, we will gladly sponsor your

Zelda: Now where did they live – the Feiffer family in Canada

Theresa: Montreal. And that's what happened. They found – we needed a visa

Zelda: And you wanted to go?

Theresa: Who wants to live on a grave of [trails off] – that was the dream, especially for Polish Jews especially the first time, it was a great tragedy because we always thought that this terrible war would teach you one thing – what nationalism does just the opposite. And you can see the world politics that nationalism became that thing like the African countries and everything. And the same happens everywhere; it's not a lesson. It wasn't a good lesson. So where am I now?

Zelda: So that was the dream to come to Canada

Theresa: Oh that was a dream to leave Poland and Poland told us so. Now Poland is apologizing for everything because it's very a la mode; it's elegant. Not in the beginning; they were denying any criminality. And a population that doesn't cry whatever happen to your brothers and sisters, neighbours really, and there was very little in common after a while, after that separation. Anyhow, everyone was dreaming to go away except me [laughs]. I just didn't want to move.

Zelda: Oh so you didn't want to go?

Theresa: I, myself, didn't want to go. I wanted to go to Sweden because lots of people – Jews were running away, so I had friends that decided to go to Sweden

Zelda: My mother was in Sweden

Theresa: Oh okay, see. And we had already decided – that my girlfriend, she had a boyfriend already that she found in the camps. And we decided – they wanted [0:48:16] go with them to Sweden, and I was supposed to go but I was already with Nathan. And I felt very bad, just to tell them we made the plan that he wouldn't know. I just couldn't make it. I couldn't deal with it. Everybody told me what a great opportunity we had. Nobody ever [trails off] – if we said send us whatever we want to send. Anyhow, tickets they didn't send us because, first of all, I don't think he could. But, we got visas. That's the most important

Zelda: For all of you? For Mike, for Nathan, Nathan Feiffer and you?

Theresa: For everybody. There were specifications on how you can come – you just can't get a visa, unless you're a son or something – but they got the visas for them as workers on a farm here in Montreal for a Jewish farmer [0:49:24]. And they gave them visas on this condition. For me, don't ask [laughs].

Zelda: I won't ask

Theresa: It was legal so

Zelda: It doesn't matter, what are they going to do to you now? What did you get a visa for?

Theresa: They made me their niece. Mike family [trails off] – but it's not legal, you cannot [trails] – they made me [0:49:51] the name of Feiffer. Mike get me the little village that I was supposed to be born, a paper that I am Feiffer. Theresa Feiffer. And I came as their niece. The reason I could come I was two years young so

Zelda: So how did you get the money to

Theresa: Ohh money we had enough at that time. Why, first of all, Mike sold some of the– you know I told you if you had property, so he sold some kind of property that they had. He had money. Same with Nathan Feiffer. Nathan Feiffer's parents were rich. They weren't millionaires like here, but they were rich. Because my Nathan was very poor but they had some kind of property. So they had money. Anyhow, not only that they had money, because we knew that money is nothing, if we wanted to exchange it for dollars, we had zero. So we bought things; we bought silver, we bought antiques. We bought whatever was possible. Now we had to buy tickets. We couldn't get 5 tickets together. We got 2 tickets first class and then 2 tickets 2 months later. I came with my Nathan 3 months before Mischa and Nathan Feiffer came.

Zelda: So how did you come, by boat?

Theresa: By famous Batory; if you don't know who Batory was, the very famous luxurious boat – First Class

Zelda: How do you spell it?

Theresa: Batory. B-A-T-O-R-Y

Zelda: Batory. B-A-T-O-R-Y

Theresa: Why it is so famous, because

Zelda: One second, this was '47?

Theresa: That was '48.

Zelda: '48.

Theresa: '48. I came August '48. Because of the way it used to go, not to Montreal [inaudible 0:52:47] – it used to come to Halifax but [trails off]. It was leaving at Gdansk New York [? 0:52:26] because on the way back it used to take Bertolt Brecht, all the famous Germans – the famous Communists and non-Communists that wanted to go back to East Germany or to Germany on the way back. It was famous for this, that they went with this ship. Bertolt Brecht, what's his name, the famous—I don't know, some composers, I don't remember, I forgot everything

Zelda: **Yeah, that was Bertolt Brecht**

Theresa: Bertolt Brecht for sure, but the other ones that I don't remember that came – [0:53:07 –name] lots of people – oh Thomas Mann, you know these people came back with Batory. But that was the way because from there to the Communist part already of Poland

Zelda: **Okay. So you went from Gdansk**

Theresa: To New York

Zelda: **To New York. And then at New York you got off at Ellis Island**

Theresa: Noooooo. Why Ellis Island?

Zelda: **I don't know.**

Theresa: That wasn't a ship of refugees. That was a ship that from Poland where some great diplomats – it had first class my darling! [laughs]. Probably the first time in my life I had a grapefruit [unsure if this is exactly what she said; inaudible because of laughter 0:53:47]. Had first class! So it left Poland with very few passengers. It stopped in Denmark, and stopped in Copenhagen. And you should see what happened – how many people [trails off]. It went Gdansk, Gdynia, Copenhagen, and the ship was filled up in Copenhagen and New York. The first coca-cola I saw when I went to Copenhagen. People were coming, they were Americans, most of them.

Zelda: **In Denmark?**

Theresa: In Denmark. Either going back to the U.S. or coming to see their relatives, nothing to do with the war, nothing to do with communism, nothing. So that's how we went. In New York, a cousin that was – nobody had heard of of all the refugees that I

know – my cousin Harry Feiffer and his wife Janet were waiting for us at the docks in New York

Zelda: **To take you back to Montreal.**

Theresa: Oh, right away yes. To Montreal. So we went to New York and then we found some kind of family, old family of Nathan's

Zelda: **Nathan Gold**

Theresa: Yeah. Believe me, if I could kill myself at that time – I wanted so much to go back to Poland. What did I do? What did I do? Where I find myself? First of all, I never had to do anything. People – it's not a class – way of thinking is so different, it totally [0:55:36 - 0:55:40] talking Arabic. So different, so loud, I never met people like this. I found myself in a completely [trails off]—I knew I had to spend my life with them. Anyhow, what happened in New York. We stayed a few days, and we went by car

Zelda: **By car**

Theresa: To Harry and Janet's house. They came by car

Zelda: **So that was Harry and Janet Feiffer?**

Theresa: Harry and Janet Feiffer; one of the Feiffer brothers. And they came and they took us to the country place. They had country place in Hyde Park near the Canadian border, but on the American side

Zelda: **Vermont or New York state?**

Theresa: No, Vermont. I think Vermont

Zelda: **Okay, it doesn't matter.**

Theresa: Hyde Park. I think it's Vermont. Hyde Park, we stayed 2 days only, and we crossed the border.

Zelda: **Did you have a passport?**

Theresa: We had a visa, and we were supposed to have birth certificates; some kind of documentation. Anyhow, the [0:56:57-0:57:00] in the Canadian consulate, which about ten times [0:57:03]. And we crossed the border there. They took us and they gave us special thing, and when we crossed the border, we went right away to Sainte-Agathe, not in Montreal because the family – it was at [0:57:23], and the family rented houses there. And we had about a week before Labour Day. A week before Labour Day, I spent in Sainte-Agathe with the family. They received us very warm, but the only way they could. These are people that came to Canada years – not that many years

Zelda: **1929?**

Theresa: No, much later. They spoke very strange English, which I thought I should understand, but I didn't

Zelda: **One second. You spoke Yiddish. You spoke Polish. You spoke Russian. And you spoke some English?**

Theresa: I was learning English

Zelda: **In Poland**

Theresa: In Poland before coming to Canada. But I thought I know but I didn't understand a single word

Zelda: **Did you speak French at all?**

Theresa: No, not a word. I learnt here. And what happened is that really there was cousin Dorothy that lived – and there was the old [0:58:37] that lived in Sherbrooke and there was cousin Rosie and they were cooking inviting her for special dinner. My first sweet corn, I had leg of lamb. It's true, they wanted to receive us as well as possible. But there wasn't nothing I could talk to them about. One cousin was a bit younger than I was. I remember I brought from Poland a 2-piece bathing suit. They looked at me like crazy, who's wearing a 2-piece bathing suit? They wear skirts almost to the beach – you know the bathing suit with some kind of skirt on it. You have to know, myself, I come from a very urban – I was born in a very big city. The part in Russia that I was is almost like a dream. I wasn't home. It's always – it's a passing stage. Then I came back to Warsaw to [0:59:55]. And here I find people, Jews, that as a child, I never met.

Zelda: **In Warsaw**

Theresa: In Warsaw. I never met this kind of Jews. They're from small cities

Zelda: **Schetel**

Theresa: Schetels. There was no sophistication. There was nothing about art or anything that, I don't know. It was for me such a terribly alien atmosphere. I thought, if I had to spend my life like this, I rather kill myself. Assimilation – it's a very gradual process. In the beginning, you hate it

Zelda: **This was here in Canada**

Theresa: I'm talking about Canada. The beginning, you hate it. Then you accept it. And then you start to like it. It's a very gradual process; very hard.

Zelda: **So after Sainte-Agathe, you came to Montreal?**

Theresa: We came to Montreal on the hottest day. It must have been 40 degrees. And the humidity; this I've never seen. That was a greater shock than the culture shock. And it was for me, a culture shock. It was for me a culture shock to see everything.

[interruption]

Zelda: **So we're ready.**

Theresa: Yeah. We're ready for what, where did I stop?

Male Voice: **We were just coming to Montreal**

Zelda: **So it was 40 degrees, it was hot. Where did you go?**

Theresa: I suffered, I suffered.

Zelda: **So where did you stay?**

Theresa: Okay. Firstly, remember I came along with my Nathan, and 3 months later – 2 months later – came Nathan Mischa. Nathan Mischa came. Janet Feiffer, by train, went to New York

Zelda: **Again?**

Theresa: When they came, she didn't go by car, she went by train.

Zelda: **Oh, okay**

Theresa: She went by train alone without Harry. She went to New York and she brought him. At first, we went to [1:02:47] the older Feiffers; the mother and father of the whole family. She lived in Siant-Urbain, and we stayed in a house for maybe 2 weeks and then Nathan got a job in the factory

Zelda: **How did he get a job, just went in or**

Theresa: They had a factory; a shoe factory. Feiffer money was made from shoe – they had a shoe factory; quiet large by Montreal standards. That's how they become rich. When we came, they already rich, with the houses they lived. But we stayed in the – with their house, it's a old house on Saint-Urbain on the 1st floor, very dark, but big – so many rooms, big kitchen. We don't have those huge houses, the rooms, so many rooms, so many bedrooms, but dark, low. And we stayed there for a just short time. And Nathan started right away to work in the factory. I didn't do nothing in the beginning. I was waiting for Mischa and Nathan to come. In the meantime, the Feiffer family – being rich – started to buy properties. So they bought a house, a building, on Edward Charles [1:04:22]. It's a very nice street. And they bought it, first on the fourth floor without an elevator, 2 bedrooms. And that's the house where Mischa and Nathan Feiffer came. So we had 2

bedrooms, and a small kitchen. And that's where we lived. I still did nothing. Oh, I became pregnant. I became pregnant.

Zelda: So this was fall 1948? Fall/winter '48 right?

Theresa: Mmm hmm. Yeah. No, Mark was born in '50 so I didn't become pregnant yet. Anyhow, the Feiffer family at that time, especially Harry Feiffer was very much intrigued by us. He used to come to us. I started to take courses in English. We had to learn to speak.

Zelda: Who offered the courses?

Theresa: First of all, the courses were offered first by the Board of – you know for public school, mostly high school

Zelda: So Parks and Board?

Theresa: Parks and Board, yeah. Parks and Board offered school so I went there for a short time from, I can't remember because it falls on [1:06:03]. And then we went to the Jewish public [trails off] – that's very important – the Jewish Public Library that offered courses for newcomers. The Jewish Public Library at that time was run by [1:06:18]. There was a Jewish poet that came too. He was born in Poland, and he lived in Australia and he went to Canada and he got the director of the Jewish Public Library – his son, if his still alive I have no idea, was a very famous artist in Israel, very famous. I know him personally that's why. Anyhow, the courses were offered. Who was teaching me? Who was the teacher of my courses in the Jewish Public Library? Ervin Clayton. That's where I met Ervin Clayton. And I went to these courses. And then my Nathan went to these courses and all of us went to these courses.

[interruption – phone rings]

Zelda: So you went to the English course?

Theresa: I went to English courses. And, I became pregnant. So, went to the English courses and then, what do you want to know?

Zelda: Okay, so let's go back. So Nathan kept working in the factory and

Theresa: We lived together; 4 of us.

Zelda: And Nathan Feiffer did what?

Theresa: All 3 of them started in the factory.

Zelda: In that factory

Theresa: In the shoe factory; all 3 of them.

Zelda: And, were you feeling a bit easier about being here or were you still just

Theresa: Look, I started to communicate with people. You wanna know one very good [1:08:08]; I needed nail-polish so I go to the 5 cent store and I can get a house polish. I know in Polish, it's lakier, so I said can I get a good lak, and she started to laugh [inaudible 1:08:29 -1:08:38], you know these kind of things, but I learn English, and not only this because when I was with Earvin Clayton, he even told me. Listen, you won't get anything from the courses that much anymore. Take one of the subjects. He says I'm teaching Greek History, you know Greek and Roman periods, take it, it'll do you more than – so I took it and there were people that were Canadian immigrants, but from before

Zelda: Yeah, the earlier immigrants who had been

Theresa: Yeah. My first impression of Montreal; I was so strange. I was like, unbelievable. First of all, the French-English. The French; atrocious. The second, the French always apologizing that they don't speak English. It's true. And then, the women were dressed horrible. In the cities normally, if you go out, you get specially something. Here, people were so dressed casually; shirts and this. For me, they were wearing schmattas – no dresses – schmattas. What else, what can I tell you

Zelda: How was the established Jewish community?

Theresa: That was very strange too. In my person situation, we had very little to do because we didn't need any help from them. Because having 3 people working, I had enough. I didn't need any help. Socially; zero. That means there was completely no integration. It is something like a – it doesn't matter, there is no integration between [trails off]. I mean, social integration. They did everything I think – the Jewish society – financially, they had so many committees; they had [1:11:14]. They had everything to help people in every aspect. Even cultural thing. But there was no whatsoever interaction between these 2 as people nothing. So strange, because when I'm thinking about it. I had a friend. She just died not long ago. She lived in the assistant living, in the Jewish assistant living. She tells me exactly the same thing. She says there is a group of 5 or 6 Polish or Russian Jews or whatever Jews and there is a group of 5 or 6 Canadian Jews and they don't mingle whatsoever

Zelda: Why do you think that was the case?

Theresa: Because we came with a big package and we couldn't stop talking about it. That means that whenever I used to go with my friends anywhere always ended up with what we did during the war. And there was certain materialism, certain planning that was

not possible with us that was –For instance like this, I go to my [trails off] – we had some other cousins here on my side, my mother’s half sister in the U.S. but a cousin on my mother’s side [trails off] and they were very very nice. She invited us to attend wedding anniversary, which happened to be in 1943. That must’ve been 1953. At 1953 still, I could not believe that people could have 10 wedding anniversaries in 1943. Life shocked me. Life was normal at that time. People could live, and that was without [1:13:27]. Not only me, but I’m telling you I went with a friend, which is more or less like me. We used to go to theatre, French theatre and then go out for coffee afterwards; happy after a comedy, you know, sit down, talk. And we always ended up on the Holocaust; on what happened. She was in camp. It cannot be any other way and couldn’t be in its [1:13:54] till now.

Zelda: And so the main Jewish community didn’t get it, didn’t understand it, didn’t want to know about it?

Theresa: At that time, no. At that time, yes, but they didn’t want to talk about it. It wasn’t elegant. It wasn’t nice. The whole world didn’t want to know. You know, I remember going to France; people talked about the war, people talked about the camps; people talked what they lived through. And in Canada and the United States, you didn’t talk about it. It became – there was a time, maybe 20 years later when we came a la mode, we came very elegant that is to talk about it. That still didn’t help the interaction of people; it never happened and doesn’t exist until now. It’s a separate class, which believe me, it’s not the first time I’m telling you this, because I remember when Nathan died, there was a woman correspondent. She came. She asked me who at that time – Nathan had a whole following of women, and strangely enough, they were all Canadian women and very surprising because he was so open, he was so curious; he wanted to know every detail. So I remember repeating it to her; the same thing. And she offered, I said it’s not possible. I say it’s possible. It still exists. And I’m telling you off the [trails off]

Zelda: Do you remember reading, like in newspapers, about how the established Jewish community viewed the immigrants, the survivors? Was there a lot of dialogue about that in the local newspapers?

Theresa: I don’t think so. There was just news; general news. I don’t remember anything. I remember only – not as a Jewish community – but after about 20 years because Montreal was changing from a quite closed French town to a very much more open and bigger and culturally changing; little cafes that Hungarians brought. And the immigrant Jewish population also changed, but I don’t remember anything specific about Jewish immigrants, as though anything special to Montreal

Zelda: **So why do you think there wasn't social integration from the established community?**

Theresa: You're talking about Jews?

Zelda: **Jews**

Theresa: I told you. Neither do they have any interest to know what happened to us. On the other side, we were full of it. That's it. We were full of it. They had no interest to listen. Oh, there were single people that did it

Zelda: **Yea, no no, I know**

Theresa: In general. Then, as you see, we can't get rid of our accent. And the longer you are here, the less accent, towards the second generation almost. And I don't know how it was with second generation. It was more, there's no question, more integration with the second generation. But the first generation, there was no integration. There was no language; completely nothing. And there is another thing; very important. The region.

Zelda: **How so?**

Theresa: Many of the immigrants through [long pause]. It's very hard for me to say because I come from very secular –not background, I don't come from –but during the war, even before the war my family was more religious. I become more and more secular, more and more left-wing. Here, I come to communist Poland – to Canada and I have to justify the modern left-wing. That was the hardest possible thing. Religion too. Observance. Not many immigrants came religious but not that many unless they came later from Hungary

Zelda: **So was the main community religious?**

Theresa: Jewish communities were religious; quite a bit much more than now, the secular Jewish community.

Zelda: **So my memory growing up**

Theresa: Tell me, I have to remember

Zelda: **Growing up, everyone – I lived on Durocher and Fairmont, and everyone, almost 90% of the street were survivors**

Theresa: And they were religious?

Zelda: **It varied; my father wasn't, my mother was**

Theresa: Oh, just like my family

Zelda: **So it varied. But it was like total ghetto; it was total segregation. And in my mother's language, it was [1:19:54].**

Theresa: Yea, oh yes. That's what my family. That's what my family. And [1:20:00] like my family

Zelda: **[1:20:02] is a green horns, like immigrants, and [1:20:06] are yellow so they're the established**

Theresa: Aged, they're aged. Now, I want to tell you that it's true. The same was in my family. My family came about 3 years before us or 4 years before us. Their English was horrible. They learned 5 or 6 words, but for my ears, in the beginning it was [clear? 1:20:31] English. Oh yea, it's exactly how it is, exactly how it was. How about Canadian Jews? Then came the Hungarian Jews that came very very religious, extremely – the group of Hungarian Jews that immigrated were very religious. And there was a revival of religion in every aspect because my – I sent

Male voice: When did the Hungarian Jews come?

Zelda: '57

Theresa: After the revolution

Male voice: After the Hungarian Revolution

Zelda: **Late 50s**

Theresa: Yeah

Zelda: **How did Nathan – so Nathan, and Nathan and Mike were working in the factory?**

Theresa: Not all the time.

Zelda: **How did they learn English? How did your Nathan learn English?**

Theresa: My Nathan didn't have time to go to courses. By speaking. He had to speak English. That's how the majority learned. Yes, to speak. Those that wanted to speak better went to courses. But the majority just were listening. I just want to tell you about French and English. There was no at all available French courses for refugees, for newcomers.

Zelda: **How come?**

Theresa: There was not in common. If you wanted to learn French, pay. Go to university. They had courses, but not for the community, not like now when they force immigrants to – there was nothing. So you had to go – that's why all the immigrants even the ones that came from Morroco, which came later, but in

the beginning, they had to learn English. I know people that came – they're now in Toronto – that came from France. They

Zelda: **had to learn English**

Theresa: Yeah they had to take – but there was nothing available from the French government. Forty-eight, '49, '50, '50-something: nothing. There was institutions; nothing that was catered to the – Federal government, there were some. Jewish community, there were quite a bit. One thing, Jewish community was the best I suppose of any community in question of aiding the immigrant. For instance, we wanted to bring people from Poland. So we went to the Jewish community to help us, and they did. Not only this, question of housing, courses as I said before, employment even, loans. The Jewish community did very well. The question of assimilating, the Jewish community did wrong [1:23:38]. That was different, that was very hard. This you couldn't do

Zelda: **With my parent's experience was, financially, no help. No loans. They tried. No loans, no money.**

Theresa: My cousin was the President of the loan society

Zelda: **Yeah. No loans, no money. My father wanted to start his own shop**

Theresa: They didn't let him

Zelda: **He got no money. He had to go to a friend, a fellow survivor, who gave him the money.**

Theresa: I'm talking my experience.

Zelda: **Oh no, it's interesting**

Theresa: I never needed. I know the organizations existed. I know that even now. My cousin was the president of the Free Loan Society, it's called.

Zelda: **It would be interesting to see how much they gave, right?**

Theresa: As a matter of fact, he was pushing us. I can tell you his name

Zelda: **What's his name?**

Theresa: Now, the one that's now is Morrie Cohen

Zelda: **Morrie?**

Theresa: Morrie. M-O-R-R-I-E. Cohen. C-O-H-E-N

Zelda: And he's still alive?

Theresa: Oh yeah. Morrie Cohen.

Zelda: **So when did it change? When did the Jewish community change? When did they want to hear about the holocaust?**

Theresa: It was worldwide, not the Jewish community. It's United States, it must be Israel, [1:25:14] I think must have started – I don't know, it's too much for me to be accurate about it. there was a time, which must've been started with Israel, I don't know. The United States, Canada in the Jewish community started to talk about holocaust. But I'm telling you, when I remember going to France, I said oh I'm home. We're talking about holocaust with everybody, in the street, in the paper. We're not in America. Listen, there were so many things happen. There was an increase of anti-Semitism after the war. [1:26:01] in the United States. The book, Miller's book, how they call it?

Male Voice: Arthur Miller?

Theresa: Focus! It's one of the first Arthur Miller books. Focus. And he writes about a man, a gentile. He's a gentile, but he can't see; he's myopic. So he buys himself a pair of glasses; it looks like a Jew. It's very interesting. But that was written after the war. And I wanna tell you. That's how the world is. They started, and now they talked and talked. How is it that so many books came out so late? The good writers write it right away; they couldn't keep it in themselves. Levi wrote it right away

Zelda: **Primo. Primo Levi.**

Theresa: Primo Levi. He wrote it, you know. They couldn't keep – there are other ones. Italians. Poles. Boretski, how they called? This religious gentleman, I forgot his name. They ravaged in France. Some committed suicide, but then suddenly 20,30 years later comes a heap of literature about holocaust

Zelda: **I think I was just saying, I think it began with Leon Uris and "Exodus". 1958, and then the movie "Exodus".**

Theresa: Maybe, I don't know. I cannot tell you.

Male voice: What was Arthur Miller's book?

Zelda: **Focus**

Male Voice: Focus

Theresa: I just happened to read it, very early when I came to Canada. After the war, anti-Semitism became bigger, more not less. And later, it became not – as I call it, a la mode.

Zelda: **So how do you think – this maybe just I’m grabbing at straws here – but how do you think that, do you think the established Jewish community felt threatened by the immigrants?**

Theresa: No, I don’t think so. In what way?

Zelda: **Shame**

Theresa: [shakes head]

Zelda: **You know, rising anti-Semitism. Things were good.**

Theresa: I don’t know. I’ll tell you, when I went to the Jewish museum in Washington, and I wanted very much to see the United States Press during the war, and I didn’t see very much there about what’s going on in the camps. Maybe because people didn’t know. Most probably, people didn’t know. I myself didn’t know till very late in the war

Zelda: **So Nathan was working in a factory?**

Theresa: In the beginning my Nathan was in the factory. After several years, he and some other friends decided to make their own

Zelda: **Okay, so let’s go back. So in that factory, were they all immigrants?**

Theresa: The three of them?

Zelda: **No, who worked in the factory in general?**

Theresa: Oh in general. Mostly French Canadians, Italian Canadians

Zelda: **So there weren’t many Jews?**

Theresa: Very few.

Zelda **Very few.**

Theresa: Very few. Jewish not [1:30:06 – 1:30:12 inaudible because of laughter]

Zelda: **So were you connected to the immigrant Jewish community?**

Theresa: Yeah. We had a group of friends

Zelda: **That you met here?**

Theresa: Yeah, most of them I met here. I met here. And we formed people usually with the same interest. People that were very much more secular. I was not religious whatsoever, but we

got together, we like to talk or read a book at the Jewish Public Library. Somehow, all the English courses, you talk to each other. You formed some people with long friendships, some people with short. I had a huge group of people that we met together, we spent holidays together, our kids know each other even until now if there's anybody left.

Zelda: **But never with the established community?**

Theresa: I didn't. Not that I didn't – most probably I didn't want – yeah I had friends. The only established community that I have, I had family. They were very nice to me. The problem is, socially I could not – not they could, neither could I. So I didn't have personally. Even I went to school here, I went to university, I go to courses now. It's hard, you know old age already, hard to form friendship at this age, so to say hello, sit and read, you do it everybody. But I formed some friendships, but they were not with Jews.

Zelda: **So you had kids?**

Theresa: I had kids

Zelda: **And the kids went to school?**

Theresa: Yeah. And I wanted very much my kids to know who my grandfather was and my grandmother. Being secular, I was very Jewish. And my past never went away with me. So I tried to send them to any – I hate to send them to religious school, so I sent them to Jewish pupil school. They went, Judy and Mark in 7th grade – that's how much it was. Howie [? 1:32:40] went to [1:32:41]. It was a high school also.

Zelda: **And most of the parents, their parents were survivors or they were Jewish Canadians?**

Theresa: They were mostly Jewish Canadians

Zelda: **And was there any integration between you and the other parents?**

Theresa: Very superficial. I mean, Batoskis say hello and this; not on a social basis. No, not on a social basis. There was integration with the kids, but not with the parents

Zelda: **That's odd, cause you know I think now a lot of people, friends I met were also through my children's friends. So, it again speaks to the isolation and separation**

Theresa: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's true. Yeah, I didn't realize what a degree. I'm thinking of some Canadian friends I had; my best was Nicole. She was not Jewish; from France. Or Yvette, my

other— she became a very close friend; she is French-Canadian. Married a Jew sometimes, and very Catholic. These were my friends that [1:33:59] friendship. Any French-Canadian Jew [trails off]. Listen, I used to get — I lived on my boat [? 1:34:10]. I lived on third floor. On second floor, lived Heather Wexler — Jimmy and Heather Wexler. Kids were exactly my age, the 2 kids' age. My kids called them uncle Jimmy, aunty Heather. I was Aunty Theresa all the time. They're Canadian, and they had a big — born here — a big group of friends that they met. I had a huge big group of friends. So if there was a birthday, I used to come down to Haddy and we celebrated the birthday with her children. When my child, Jimmy used to come. Jimmy was a terrific cook, and she was a terrific buyer. We had kids the same age, so we went shopping together very often. But, there were social things. They never invited us to their social thing, and never did I invite Jimmy

Zelda: Okay, I'd be curious why they didn't invite you, but I can ask you why you didn't invite them

Theresa: First of all, like this. Many of my friends didn't speak English well. They spoke more or less, but some of them didn't speak English. Second, what would we talk about? I invited Jimmy when I make a reception for Mark's wedding, together with all my friends. They knew them. I'm not saying that they didn't know them. They knew them because they were coming and going. Over 20 years together. But I didn't invite her because I didn't think her and Jimmy would even know what to talk about. What they gonna talk about? Three quarter of them spoke lots of Polish. I didn't even think about it. But I knew that — I just have to stress that it wasn't one-sided; it was both-sided. It wasn't that they didn't want us. I'm sure it never came to them that they didn't want us. They just no interest, and we had no interest. Because you don't invite people with nothing to talk about. I used to come to her house on birthday, the kids were together. Who knows, she had a baby or something. She had her baby, her kids were with me. I had a baby, my kids were with her. That's how it were. She used to come to the country to me. I used to come to the country to her for the day. But where I had [1:37:12], neither she did invite me, and I didn't invite her. I don't know why.

Zelda: So why wouldn't they ask about the holocaust or the experience?

Theresa: They didn't

Zelda: Any idea why?

Theresa: I don't know

Zelda: Just curious, right?

Theresa: Yeah. It is. It is curious. They didn't ask. Some asked, but very few. They didn't ask. Must be – I don't know. I'm not going to go into psychological thing. People usually do what everybody else is doing. If it's become very popular or something, they started to know. I went to a doctor. She wasn't Jewish. What was it? A book, what is that famous film? Shindler's List. The film came, Shindler's. I read Shindler's List 2 years before. So she says, oh no did you see Shindler's List? I said, no, I read the book. She read the book! She read the book! Of course, can you imagine the Jewish community. But everything comes, you know, I'm not a psychologist. I have no idea, I've never thought of it. I just state the fact. And I'm thinking, am I going to accuse somebody? No, because there is nothing to accuse. I know. I talk about it with my friends. They didn't want to. [1:39:01-1:39:03], not at all. [long pause] You can know because you yourself come from a family

Zelda: **Well it's very odd, right? It's very very odd. Total not wanting to know or denial. Because it changed; it changed in the late 60s.**

Theresa: Oh, believe me, it changed of course. I wanna tell you –

Zelda: **So it's interesting for me, what changed? And why did it change? That's what I'm interested in.**

Theresa: Yeah. I wanna tell you there's so many things that I [killed? 1:39:41] myself that I don't know and I should have known. I remember very little of my mother. I know my mother was a very interesting person. I didn't have the curiosity to know more. I knew a little bit more about my father because he was from Warsaw

Zelda: **But you were 13 or 14**

Theresa: But still. To know about my mother. She wasn't old. My father was 50 years old when I last saw him. My mother maybe 2 years older.

Zelda: **But you were 14. How many 14s are – they're interested in their own drama**

Theresa: I was older. I was older. No, it's not a question of drama, but I wanted to know. She was such an interesting woman. When you think about it, nothing. And then you don't remember whatever it is. So that's it, until everything changes. As I say, it's slowly, slowly. The beginning, you think I can't be like them. Then you think, if I'm gonna be like them

Zelda: **So what changed for you? Do you remember?**

Theresa: Yeah. I remember what changed for me. First or all, I started to like the feeling that I'm not going to die for this country. That I don't feel that great nationalist feeling that Poland, Israel, I'm ready to die. And I had that freedom here not to be so much attached to a country. I wouldn't die for it. I love it. Fine, that's it. Like in Israel, you want to die for your country. In Poland, when I used to be, I also wanted to die for the country. So that national feeling, you belong, the love your country; it's not that strong. [1:41:49] used to like it very much. And then I slowly started to like what I hated in the beginning; the informality. I remember going to Israel. When I came back from Israel, I say for goodness sake, I like it here better than there.

Zelda: **Interesting, what you hate you become to**

Theresa: Yeah, you become – either you tolerate and you hate in the beginning. And then you start to mellow. That's how it is.

Zelda: **And the two Nathans and Mike, did they hate it from the beginning too?**

Theresa: Yeah, they're supposed to go through every immigrant course, to a lesser degree. They didn't like it in the beginning. Listen, we left Poland – our family especially – not bad financially, just apartment. We couldn't gotten good jobs. Suppose so, our education was proper. And you come here. You see the Jews here. Our family fought [? 1:43:03] kind of materialism. The cent is how much is worth. What does that mean?

Zelda: **So do you think the Jewish community here saw the immigrants as poor and uninteresting?**

Theresa: No, I don't think so. Because Jewish immigration before used to be this kind. Who used to immigrate before? The law was nothing to leave. Now, it's a different immigration. People are fleeing terrible war, after war. So different kind of people. Just the opposite. People with education. They were better educated that they're here. And here I come to Montreal. There is nothing here. What can I do? My one escape was cinema.

Zelda: **And you did that a lot?**

Theresa: I did that a lot. It still stays with me. Cinema. I remember Harry Feiffer taking me to a play very early. And I still remember the play the first time. And there was nothing here for English theatre, for English this. They used to go to Jewish – there was the Jewish public library. Montreal was a quite nice secular life. More than now. Poets and artists used to come in the theatre. There was in Yiddish more than in general English

Zelda: **So is that a place where the immigrant community and the established Jews came? Or was it mostly immigrants that came to the Yiddish theatre?**

Theresa: Mostly immigrants. There's some, maybe older. But the second generation hardly spoke Yiddish. The first generation [1:45:13 – inaudible because of laughter]

Zelda: **So there were real parallel lives**

Theresa: They were. When I went with Harry to [trails off]. You must be starving! Okay, I'll see what I have.

Zelda: **You could stop**

And there was a little also that passed through that river*: I am not sure if this is exactly what she said, as it was a bit muffled [0:18:33]

And I was supposed to go back – there were lots of people, for money mostly, Poles*: I am assuming she meant that there were lots of Poles who would smuggle people in and out of Russia for money. [0:20:29]