

*LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-1]*

Key: LF - Lilly Friedman, interviewee  
DK - Denise Kreckstein, interviewer  
MIR - Miriam, daughter of interviewee  
American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust  
Survivors (Philadelphia, PA)

*Tape one, side one:*

DK: Hello Lilly.

LF: Hello.

DK: Tell me something about your life. Where--I know you're from Zar-, Zarica?

LF: Zarica.

DK: Zarica, Czechoslovakia. What was your life like there?

LF: I was born in Zarica, in a very small town. My mother died when I was nine years old. My father was a teacher, a scholar. We lived like in a town with, there were about 400 families, but Jewish families were only about 35.

DK: So you had non-Jewish neighbors.

LF: We had very nice Jewish neighbors. We lived very close with them. I just, most of my friends were non-Jewish. We shared our lunch. I shared with them because I wa-, my parents were very--we were very religious. I couldn't eat in their house, but we shared always my lunch. And, I shared with them only fruits, things like that. We went to school together. The Lake Miraver [phonetic] where we swam together, we had wonderful times together, until, until the, the Hungarian peop-, the Hungarians occupied us. And our life changed in a short time, very bad. My friends were not any more my friends. My friends avoided me. My friends didn't come to my house. They didn't even pass near my house. I used to come home, I used to cry, and I used to say to my father, "Why are they avoiding me? What's wrong with me?" But by the time my father finished with me, I felt so good; I felt, "I'm the one who's good, not they are good." And things still didn't went--wasn't very bad.

DK: Do you know when about that was? Around what years?

LF: That was in 1939.

DK: It was in '39.

LF: In 1940 my father still kept his job. He was teaching, he was teaching Hebrew and he was teaching his--he was--he still kept his job. He used to go by--He couldn't go any more by trains, so he bought himself a bicycle, which it was very unusual for a religious man to travel at that time with a bicycle, but he did. In our life we still were together. My oldest sister left for America. Somebody, my father wrote, we have cousins in Ameri-, the United States. My father wrote them a letter that things are very bad. And they said, "We gonna take one of your daughters out. And maybe you gonna follow." When she came out, she was fifteen years old. She came to the United States, so she started to work right away on us that we should follow. My father had the papers. My father had the ticket. My father had everything, but the United States wouldn't let him in. It was a quota. He needed a number. And he was waiting for that number until 1944 they took him to Auschwitz with my two brothers. So, till 19-, in 1939, from 1939 our life was together. We had very difficult times, very

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

difficult times. '40, '41, with the Hungari-, with the Hungarian, with the occupance; Jews weren't allowed to travel, Jews, weren't allowed to buy, Jews--was very difficult times.

DK: Your father had his job in 19-...

LF: My father had the job till 1943.

DK: How come he, how did he get, oh, because he was working for the Jewish community.

LF: Jewish community. So he really had the job.

DK: I see.

LF: And till the last minute. But then he, even then he was going like in every house. Secretly he was teaching the children, going like four weeks was in our, one house the school, four weeks in another house was the school. So he still kept, we kept going. Times were very difficult, very hard for us. And then this, we heard that they gonna take the Jews toge-, first of all, in 1941, they took twenty-two people from our family, from my mother's cousins. And they sent them to Poland. And we heard from.

DK: And you knew this?

LF: And we knew that they sent them to Poland cause we heard, we knew that, we heard that rumors that they killed them. But we didn't know noth-, excuse me, just rumors. We didn't know definitely what it was. And that's how we heard rumors. Rumors. That's all we heard. Until 1944, when the Germans came in. They sent out an order to round up all the Jews. It was on a Saturday. It was after Pesach. And they rounded, they started to round us up. And it, for my father, it was very difficult to go. For all of us, but my father understood the problems where we're going, for what's gonna be. And he, they locked up the doors. They put us on wagons. And my friends stood outside and they smiled when they took us away. And we left for Auschwitz, my brothers, my sisters, and my father, my mother died when I was seven. And three days we traveled by trains. Everybody knows that those roads to Auschwitz were unbelievable. We used to look out from the window and we said, "The world is so beautiful and we have no place in it..." It was spring, green, everything beautiful. Everything was in bloom. And us, the trains took us to Auschwitz. We arrived to Auschwitz. In the train were my, me and my father, my two sisters, my two brothers, an aunt with five children which nobody survived from her, my aunt, my mother's sister. And cousins. And we arrived there and some of the little children were screaming. They were crying. And they took the children and they threw them to the, to the baggages. They started to select us. One of my younger sisters, she was that time fourteen, fifteen years old. She took the little baby, my cousin, and she wanted to go. Because they said, the Germans told us that they send them home. So she took the baby. She says, "I'm going with the baby home." And a Jewish man came that he was working there. He grabbed the baby. He says, "You can't go! Go with your sisters." But by the time she, by the time he told her to go, we left already, so she was already alone. And they took the baby, and they threw away the baby from her. And I constantly hear those cries from those babies. They threw them not even to the mothers, just to the luggage. We came to Auschwitz, to the baths. They started to tell us we should undress. And we said, I said there to the Jewish, there were Jewish men working, "How can we undress?" He says, "Look, you're not the first one here. You're not the last one here. Please, don't get, get yourself into problems they should hate you." So we said, "Where are our parents? What's happening to them?" He says, "Very bad things happened to your parents, very bad things," he says. "Don't expect that they ever will come out alive." But it was so impossible to believe that a thing like that should happen. How could we believe that a thing that they should take our parents and our children and just throw them in the ovens? It was impossible to believe, and we didn't believe it. We didn't even believe the man. We just thought that he is cruel. He's unsensitive. We start to, we took off our

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-3]

clothes. And they stood, the S.S. start to hit us we should go, we should rush. And we went and they start to shave us, our head. They shaved a lot of hair. And it was such a pathetic thing. One of, to each other, we didn't recognize each other. We didn't, were in a such terrible, terrible situation that, they chased us out and they left the showers on us. And the same guy came in. He says, "You see?" he says, "You're the lucky ones. On you water goes. And your parents gas goes." And, it was impossible to believe. We shivered. We were cold. We were hungry. We were, we were just unbelievable, the way we were treated. They sent us to barracks, from the showers. They gave us like one dress. If you were small or big, one size. And, it was terrible. We came to the barracks and they ga-, put us ten, twelve in a, in a bunk. We were so horrified that we were just huddled together in that bunk together. And we just looked, where we, are we missing somebody? Who's missing? Who is here? One of my cousins was with us, but my sister still wasn't with us. So we went to look for her, in another bunk. And we got hit from the *Blockältesters* we shouldn't go because they're gonna, the Germans are gonna kill us. Then finally we found my young sister. And we took her with us. And the night went through horribly. When the morning came they gave us something for soup. And we looked in the soup, and they said, "That's how you have to have. Everybody has a sip." We said, "We don't want your soup." And we threw the soup, and, but, we didn't realize that outside people were waiting already for the soup. They knew that newcomers come, they wouldn't eat the first soup. So they were waiting for our soups already. We were three days in Auschwitz. The third day, they took us back to the baths. They put us fifty again in those cattle wagons, in the trains, and they shipped us to Plaszow, Krakow.

DK: Plow-...

LF: Plaszow.

DK: P-L-A-S-H-O-V.

LF: Krakow. And then, and there, when we came there, the people from that ghetto, it was a ghetto before, it became a camp. And the people there were the people from Krakow. When they realized we're coming, we told them we're coming from Auschwitz, they said, "Did you see our children?" We couldn't, we couldn't be so cruel to tell them. We said, "No, we didn't see children, but there are some children there." They said, "Yesterday they took all our children away. They make place for us, and put the, the children away." There were still some fifty children left in the camp.

DK: This was in the ghetto?

LF: In that.

DK: In Krakow?

LF: In Krakow. And they took those, they started to round up the mothers with the children, and they started to take a little way the, take the children away from the parents, and the mothers. And the S.S. told us, you ma-, you told them that they go to Auschwitz. And it was, it was impossible. That horror, to see those mothers part with the children. It was an impossible thing.

DK: Why do you think you were not, why do you think you were taken out of Auschwitz and, to Krakow?

LF: To work.

DK: To work?

LF: They had some factories there, and they sent us there to work. So we worked the factories there, and they were like bakeries and for a.

DK: What did you do?

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

*LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-4]*

LF: I worked outside. We used to, the first three weeks we were terrible. They showed us how in a concenter-, how in a concentration camp is. So they took us from one place we should carry lumber. And they gave like big, big lumber to two girls, sometimes three girls. My sister was too small, so we always used to take her in the middle. And the S.S. used to run after us we should carry faster, with dogs. Some of them, my friends, the dogs were bitten. They couldn't run fast enough. The dogs were, used to bite them. We never got any first aid. Some of them they took and were, in the hospitals and we never saw them again. So we.

DK: Where did you live during this time? I mean, how did you live, the same way you lived in Auschwitz?

LF: It was barracks. Barracks, and we also got four, there was, we was working already, so they gave us like four plopped in a bunk, in a bed. And we were always the three sisters and we had a cousin. So we tried very hard to keep together. Because we knew that's our only, my father told us, this was the last thing, "To survive you must be together always." And we stayed there for three months. Things were very bad. But little by little we start to get used to the rough life.

DK: And you got your one meal a day and...

LF: And we got, we got our, the food was there terrible. It was a few men that they just took from the grass and boiled, and gave us the food. And, it was impossible to eat. But it was also there the people from Krakow that, that they knew Krakow, and they used to go out to work. For some reason they always used to bring in something, hide something, and bring in some food. But not everybody got it. If one got it, let's say, out of fifty...

DK: Right.

LF: It was very, very difficult. Then in September, September they took us back again. They got us back together and back to Auschwitz. That time we were sure that this is it. To Krakow we came three hours. To Auschwitz we went around. They bombed the rails so they couldn't, took us four days to go back. They put 150 together in one, in one wagon. We arrived maybe sixty. The rest of them they just passed out and died. There was no air. There was no food. It was unbelievable. And when we came out from the, in Auschwitz there was like ditches and the people ran to those ditches for water. And the S.S. stayed and shoot them down just like--so we came back to that, to Auschwitz. And finally they took us. Now we were sure we're going to the, they told us to undress, we should. And we were near the baths, so we knew if, we thought, we're not undressed near the baths then they take us to the crematoriums. We were sitting all night, and, outside, was September. Later, they took our clothes away. We were together, trying to stick together, to warm. And every time somebody else was on the outside and we were, and they couldn't, they couldn't do nothing because they had two, a few transports arrived from Lodz. And there was not even a selection. They took them straight to the crematoriums. So they...

DK: When was this about? What...

LF: That was in September, September, in '44. So they arrived, they didn't even select them. They took them straight, women and children, straight to the crematoriums. So us they left for another night. And came in the morning, so they took us to the barracks. They gave us baths. They took us again to the barracks. So we were safe again. And when we came in the barracks, there was a woman, and she had a mother who went, who went in 1941 away. She was in Auschwitz. And somebody found out that she is working outside. And she came and it was a, the reunion that night with the mother and daughter. They didn't see each other for three years, to '41. And she told us, "You are really safe this, tonight. I'm staying here, but you're going all away.

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-5]

You're gonna be selected to a transport to, you're going to work. So you are very lucky." We stayed there three weeks in Auschwitz. And after three weeks, she told us the right thing. There was a selection. They selected 400 girls, the healthiest girls, and they send us to a, in a transport to Neustadt. [pause]

DK: N-E-[unclear]-A-D-T, S-T-A-D-T...

LF: N...

DK: N-E-U-S-T-A-D-T.

LF: Then in Neustadt there was a factory when we arrived...

DK: Was that a camp or was that a ghetto?

LF: It wasn't a camp, it wasn't a, it was in town.

DK: Yeah.

LF: But they put the barber [barbed] wire. It was, before we came there were soldiers there. P-W...

DK: POW [Prisoners of War]?

LF: POWs. And when we came, they took out the POWs. I don't know where, but they made room for us to, we should go to work. They put barber [barbed] wire around the place, and we started to work there.

DK: What did you do?

LF: We were Weberei we were weaving. We were making linen. We were making, and it was very, very, the bad; this was not a very bad time for us because we, they gave us more food. We worked with, more between civilian people. But that was for September through January. January the 20th, the front came nearer, and they again took us on the road. They rounded us up and back, back on the road. And between those 400 girls, two managed to come without hands. There was a selection. They selected us naked. We were naked. We were, they looked eyes and hands. How, we never knew how they survi-, how they were s-, how they escaped, the two. One was missing three fingers and one was missing a whole, the whole wrist. So they came and they right away told, the survivor was very, very important. So they told us that those two girls must go back to Auschwitz. But one of them were three sisters. So she came to me. She says, "You're in charge here in the 400 girls. You must go ask the German that my sister should be saved." I didn't know how to do it. I wasn't the type I should do it. I couldn't go, but my, but to see my friend pleads with me so, I said, "I am nothing. I must try." When I came, the first thing he did, he beat me up. I told him, "She could do, clean the barracks. She could clean the toilets. Please, let, if she's not gonna be good, then, then I'll help her." He says, "If she's not gonna be good then you go to Auschwitz." And she stayed, and she, thank God, survived. And she is a wonderful mother of three children and she lives in Pittsburgh.

DK: When you said that you were in charge of the women, what did, what does that mean?

LF: I was in charge that when the girls got up in the morning, I was in charge that before we went to work, they should get ready, they should get themselves cleaned up and get ready to go to work. And by the way, after we were liberated, this is, I want to say that specially because I think it's important. Because the *Blockältesters* didn't have good names. Those people didn't have very good names, and--because it was very difficult to satisfy so many people. But, after we were liberated, we came to Bergen-Belsen, and the girls wanted I should continue to be in charge with them, after the liberation. So, so I tried very hard that they should, I knew that, that we are all victims there. So we, they took us from Oberschlesien, in Neustadt, and we went through Breslau. We were bombed. In Weimar we were bombed on the station. And it was the most horr-, we always used to say, [pause; mumbling] we always used to say, "They should do something. They should bomb the camps. They should bomb." We didn't care. But with that, that experience made us see that how the,

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

the bombing, what it did to people.

DK: Were you all by tra-, how did you get from Auschwitz?

LF: That time we were on the trains. From Auschwitz to Neustadt we went by train.

DK: O.K.

LF: But from Neustadt, we went by foot.

DK: Foot.

LF: Till another camp, Mauthausen. And there they took, put us back on the train, and they, to Bergen-Belsen.

DK: And this, and you had worked in the camps as, y-, when you were in Mauthausen, did you work?

LF: No.

DK: No.

LF: We didn't work already, because we were already so sick and so weak that nobody could work anymore and...

DK: But they didn't extermi-, they just kept moving you...

LF: They kept moving us.

DK: This now is the end of the war, is that right?

LF: That was the end.

DK: This was now...

LF: This was already, in January, this was already February. We marched already to Bergen-Belsen.

DK: O.K.

LF: But in Weimar they bombed us, and a lot of the girls, the trains just turned over like matchboxes. Girls were without hands, without feet. The bombs, and, and the Germans, when they came back, we pleaded with them, "Give, give us some kind of help here." This is a few friends that were do that. So girls took the skirts and then we tried to, to help each other. But most of them didn't even make it the first day, because there was no first aid for them and they just didn't make it. And we went back. I got that time very sick. I had pneumonia.

DK: Tell that story that you told me about the, the two trains.

LF: Yeah. We were in Weimar two trains, a train with men, and a train with women. But we didn't know of the men; the men didn't know of us. Then after the bombing, so many were killed, but even more from the men than from the women. Then they made one train. They lunged [she seems to mean "linked"] together the two, from the two trains they made one train. And in that one train, for some reason, we didn't know how, we don't know how it happened, but we heard that there is a man, a doctor there, and he's helping around for the sick people there. And they, and between was a nurse. And the nurse tried also to help. And they got together, and they were separated three years, man and wife, and in that train they got back together. Just by, I don't know how, how can, a few things happened that we don't know how, how things, you know, things happen. So they got back together for that night. I don't know. We were separated again. I don't know if they ever, if they survived, and I don't know if they, if they were brought back together after the war. But at that night, they got back together. And until Bergen-Belsen, they traveled together. And we came to Bergen-Belsen, three sisters, and my cousin. And my cousin got very sick. And I, and I ask her, "What's gonna be now?" She was always a very good student, a bright girl. She says to me, "From here definitely we're not going no place. Either we get liberated, or we get killed. We don't go no place." And I lost quite a few close friends on the way to Bergen-

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-7]

Belsen. We came there, and there, every day we had to stay with, Ten and seven, sixty to seventy girls in a room. So there was no place just to sit on the, you just were, was just sitting on the floor. Mornings they took us out, and at night they gave, took us back.

DK: What did you...

LF: And nothing, all day, nothing. We just heard the bombs and we were just, we were like, felt that we are in the middle of, of everything. And it was...

DK: [not sure this is DK:] We have to realize that it was also winter. It was still winter in Europe.

LF: Right.

DK: And it was very cold.

LF: It was very, very cold.

DK: And they were undernourished, and underfed and no coats.

LF: No coats.

DK: [unclear] and no [unclear].

LF: And we were sitting in there in the rooms. And every time they took out, they took us out, they counted us, the dead, and always, they counted that they should be able to bring in more, more people. The dead they didn't even carry out. It was called a death camp, Bergen-Belsen, where we were. They didn't even carry them out, just to one, one side they pushed them away. There was always new stories. We gonna be liberated. We're gonna be exchanged. We gonna be this. All these new stories. But at the time, we were already, or, bringing always new girls we were always less, less in the room. And my cousin was already such in bad shape that she didn't even breathe any, hardly breathed any more. And then somebody came, they wanted to take her out. I says, "Until she breathes, nobody takes her out." And we were hoping every day something will happen, but, and the first time in my life I resigned that, that we're dying, that we're never gonna be liberated. And one day they came and they took me out to work, they started to scream we should go out to work. But they knew that we cannot work any more. So they took me, they took me in a place, to bring clothes, to take clothes from one room to another room. I came in that room, and when I took clothes, between the clothes were dead babies. [weeping] And that shook me up more than anything. I took my head, my head against the wall. I says, "Dear God, are we the Chosen People from that?" That never left me. And that was time--[weeping] that was the time, maybe about a week, or two before the Liberation. When I came back, and I was so horrified from that experience. I came to my sisters. They said, "What happened to you?" I didn't want to tell them what happened, because I was afraid that, they are so sick themselves, they are so weak, they are, we all had typhus, we were infested with lice, we were, we were just unbelievable. And about a week later, we couldn't even walk any more, nobody in the room. We were, remained maybe eight from the girls. But we walked in and they always had new in the room. And between the eight we were still the three sisters and a cousin. And definitely we would have never been if we wouldn't be together. One struggled for the other. If one was sick, the other ones watched over. If one, we were kept together always. Then, April the 15th we got up in the morning. It was a beautiful day, I'm always telling my daughter, my children. It was a beautiful day. And we got up in the morning. And it was so quiet. We didn't hear the bullets. We didn't hear nothing. We heard, like once in a while a big bang, but it stopped. But we heard in the men's camp, was a little further, and we heard the men's camp, they're screaming, they're yelling, they--that camp was already liberated during the night. But we didn't know why they're screaming. We didn't know if they kill, we didn't know what happens to them. But nine o'clock in the morning a tank rode in, in the camp. They said, they announced, the English Second Army, "Ladies and

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

*LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-1-8]*

Gentlemen, you are liberated." When he said, "Ladies and Gentlemen," who talks to us like that? We definitely couldn't go meet our liberators. We were too sick. But they came to see us. [weeping] They didn't see a very pretty scene.

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*



*Tape one, side two:*

LF: Right.

DK: What did that mean? You were so sick, you were so very sick...

LF: Now we got a, very sick. We were liberated.

DK: You had, you still had your cousin and your sisters?

LF: Still, still, yeah. We still were together. And they started to come to tell us, and we still were losing people. This, they took us, they took a, they start to come and to tell us that the front is still on, and there's nothing they can do for us but bring us some food the best they can. I was just telling, they brought, used to bring us a, like a, how do you call a, a, something, it's a yellow, like, it's a, like a, oh, I, I don't know. It's a big yellow thing, you know, like a potato, but it's yellow, big. It's not a sweet potato.

DK: Squash?

LF: It's not even a squash. Something like a squash.

DK: Like--yeah.

LF: Yeah.

DK: Yeah.

LF: But, we couldn't open it. We didn't know what it is. We couldn't eat it, so the girls were sitting on it.

DK: [laughs]

LF: Because was, the floor was very cold.

DK: It was frozen, yeah.

LF: So, we really did the best we could. They brought us some broccoli, they brought us some food. Then, then there was even more problems. Whatever we ate, didn't agree with us, and we got sick all. And they start to take us out on, to the Ber-, to the men's camp from Bergen-Belsen. In that camp where the men are, and they made hospitals, and they start, they start to taking us out little by little from there. Because they saw that they were losing, they lost about 10,000 girls after the Liberation in a short time. So, we, they took us out there. And there little by little they start in the hospitals to feed us. With, there came doctors from Sweden, from all over, and they start little by little to nourish us back to, to health. But that was a long, a long way, a long road.

DK: How long did it take, approximately?

LF: Oh, about two, three months until we could walk a little bit.

DK: Right.

LF: Until our hair started a little bit to grow. We had no hair. Our hair came out from the typhus. So our hair started to grow a little bit and we started to, to walk around a little bit. So a little bit, our skin, our thing was peeling. It was really, it was unbelievable. We were, well, they gave us vitamins...

MR: They also, you told about the bread that they gave you bef-, right before you were liberated.

LF: Right. Then they found out. I mean, that's, when they found out that two days before we were liberated that they started to give us poisoned bread. Not to kill us. They couldn't kill us otherwise or before it, it got, we shouldn't get liberated. So they gave us, they put poison in the, they were feeding us with the, they give us a piece of bread once a day and it was poi-, they found poison in the bread. And that's, I mean, that's what they found out. And it was, it took us a quite a while until, it took us, it took me three years to come out of Germany. Because no country really wanted us, until in 1948 America, thank God, accepted us, and we came.

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

And we had three children, my husband and I, wonderful children.

DK: Is your husband, was...

LF: Also a survivor.

DK: Oh, a survivor?

LF: Also a survivor.

DK: Where did you meet him?

LF: We met there in the...

DK: In Germany?

LF: After the Liberation, yeah.

DK: Where did you live, after you...

LF: In Bergen-Belsen. He was in Bergen-Belsen and I was. So we met there.

DK: Oh my God.

LF: And we got liberated. After the Liberation, and we have wonderful children, thank God, and they are my pride and joys of my future.

DK: Now...

LF: Mary was born there.

DK: Miriam is your daughter who is joining you today on this, doing this with the tape recording.

LF: Right.

DK: And you were born in Germany?

MIR: Right.

DK: Ah, and in 19-...

MIR: '47.

LF: '47.

DK: And what, year c-, and when did you come to the United States?

LF: In March '48 we came.

DK: So you don't remember anything of Germany.

MIR: No, I do not.

DK: Did, and you, did your mother speak, and your father, speak often of their experiences in the camps or, when was your first knowledge that they were survivors, and their experiences?

MIR: I don't remember ever not knowing this. I knew about it, but it was a very cursory kind of knowledge, and, as a child, I was never allowed to read about anything that had to do with the Holocaust.

DK: Miriam, was that to prote-, I mean, Miriam. Lilly, was that to protect Miriam, or was that because you could not talk about it yet?

LF: Both, I, first of all, maybe to protect her. Also, I didn't want she should hate as much. She shouldn't hate what happened to us, and maybe when she gonna be older, she will be able to understand certain things, and to protect her from the evil what I went through. But also maybe, I thought that maybe the next generation will be in a different position than we, the survivors. So.

DK: You seem very verbal now. Did you, when.

MIR: That was, that happened over the years. I think when things, publications started coming out denying the Holocaust existence, I think my mother and her sisters realized, that, unless they who actually experienced it, were willing to be able to tell this story, and, of course, as my brothers and I went to school and

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-2-11]

learned more about it, we prompted them to, to speak more about it, and make themselves more open to talking about it, because otherwise we could not tell anybody what happened during the Holocaust. We were not there. As they're getting older, there are less and less eye witnesses to the atrocities that occurred. And up until that time, I think the earlier books that were written about the Holocaust that I had seen, never really depicted quite the severity of the actual living conditions that the people had to exist with.

DK: Lilly, in your, when your family, when you were in Czechoslovakia, and you were talking about that you were religious, or, you know, and your way of life, are you as religious as your parents were? Less religious now? Are you, do you keep kosher?

LF: I keep a kosher home. I am religious. I am *Shomer Shabbas*. That means that I observe Shabbas. My daughter is even more. Thank God for that. She's better than I am.

MIR: [chuckling] [unclear].

LF: She's better than I am. But I'm *Shomer Shabbas*. My boys, my children went to *yeshivah*. I wanted they should learn everything. And, my sons are not observant. They are wonderful people. They are educated people. If they want to be religious, they know how. I'm not telling them what to do. I would, they would make me very proud they should be religious. I would love them, but they're not less. They're not boys. They're not religious.

DK: If you, there was something that, on this tape that you would like to tell your great grandchildren, is there anything, through your experiences, that you would like to leave them with, that you would like them to learn from your knowledge?

LF: I would like my great grandchildren should know what a great past they have. Even it's not present, they don't have it, there is nothing left from my past. When I was liberated, that's when my life started. But I would like that they should know their glorious past. From the Jewish people. This is what I would like my great grandchildren should have...

MIR: We, none of us have any tangible roots that we can, we don't have photographs of our grandparents. Our heritage, our tangible heritage starts, started from when our parents were liberated. Anything else is, is only from what our parents tell us. That's why it's so important for us to keep on talking to our parents, to find out, you know, our roots are, are only what we know from our parents, what our parents tell us. We don't have any, anything tangible. We never grew up with grandparents. We never grew up with great grandparents. We have a difficult time dealing with and accepting deaths, I think, because we don't know what it is to be around old people. My parents are in their early sixties. They're the oldest people I know! Nobody survived that was older. We never lived with the normal life cycle of great grandparents that might have died when we were younger. The thought, when I go to a funeral now, is panic, panic, not because of the people who died at the funeral, but just because I can't deal with the fact that people close to me are getting older. So many things. All the stories about the starvation, not only when they were in concentration camp, but during their occupation. I mean you could go I think into any second generation Holocaust survivor's house and find, I know in my house, you could feed 100 people with what I have in my house on any given day! I don't ever want to starve, like my mother starved, and my father did.

DK: How do you, let me ask Lilly first, and then I'd be interested...

MIR: Yeah.

DK: How do you feel about non-Jews? How do you feel tow-, or, do you have a fear because your children live in a world of non-Jews? Do you trust non-, I mean, is there a...

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

*LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-2-12]*

LF: I, I feel very good in the United States, let's say, with the people that we know. But in back of my mind, I always have that fear that, and I always tell that my children, that this is very hard for me to accept, to be friendly with non-Jewish people. And I have wonderful people that I am in business with, and that I'm friends with. But, for some reason in my back mind, I always say, I had such a wonderful friends before when I was young. And they deserted me. And they, it was an unbelievable thing.

DK: Nobody offered to help?

LF: Never.

DK: Never that you knew.

LF: No, never, not to help. But we were afraid, because they threaten us that we, they gonna gave us, give us over to the, to the Gestapo. And I, and this, this I al-, I will, I would like to hope that this will never happen again. But when I was liberated and when I saw what the people of Denmark did, and what other people did, that there were the righteous people who they risked their lives, and I met those people, then I said, "It cannot be that, I have to get rid of that, of that [unclear] to me and to, to trust people again." But, we have to learn how to trust. We have to learn how to laugh. We have to learn how to start to live a life with normal people. How could one go from a concentration camp to live a normal life? It was an effort, the courage to bring children to this world, an obligation, because we lost a million children. And if I am not gonna have a child, the Jewish people are, are finished. It was, they put on me an obligation. I have to have children. And it was that, that, that conscious, that, to live, that to live, that I, that I survived. And there must be a reason for why I, why I survived. And I have to learn to live and to laugh, and that was not an easy thing for a survivor to do. It was very hard.

DK: Did you share all these things with your, you were lucky that you had to share them with your husband, that the two of you shared experiences. I don't mean the same experiences...

LF: I think that I am better in those things than my husband. My husband cannot watch a movie from the war, especially recently about surgery. He cannot look at pictures. He lost his parents and his sist-, five sisters and brothers. And for him it's very difficult. He cannot come to this Gathering to tell, it's a very difficult time for him. So, I'm even better than he is.

DK: But your sisters?

LF: My sisters, I, I, we have problems, but my sister what she was here in the United States she...

MIR: She has a lot of problems.

LF: In a way I feel, in a way I feel that she is guilty that she wasn't with us...

DK: Well wait, where...

LF: That she left us.

DK: Where is your sister now?

LF: She's here.

DK: Oh, she's here.

LF: She's here, she's here.

DK: I mean that's your older one, the one that got out before the war.

LF: That's my older one, right.

DK: What about your other sisters?

LF: They're here too.

MIR: They're here.

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

LF: They're all four here. Yeah, they're all four here.

MIR: I have four, I'm very lucky. We have four, I have four mommies!

DK: Oh, that's wonderful.

LF: And I want you to know that we went away this Pesach.

MIR: We're going every year.

LF: [unclear] Four sisters and their children and their grandchildren. And this is our biggest joy, when we see...

MIR: Sixty people that go away together for a whole week, and we have a wonderful time!

LF: So we were very...

DK: You were very lucky. You really are.

LF: We are very lucky people. And we hope that...

DK: Your sisters are married and they have children also? And...

LF: Thank God. They all have children. And I want...

DK: Did their children have children?

LF: And we raised them, and I want you to know that they are all college graduates, doctors, dentists. They are really, really unbelievable *ken ayn horah* psychologists.

MIR: [chuckling]

LF: They are really...

DK: So how did you remain so normal?

LF: I'm not always normal!

MIR: [laughing]

DK: None of us are.

LF: Thank you. Thank you.

DK: But you're warm, and you're loving. And this is something that's very, very obvious. And you've got a loving daughter and a very committed daughter to her Judaism.

MIR: I think a lot of the credit, from what my mother tells me, for that, goes to my grandfather, who raised a family in a very difficult time, in a very difficult place, as a widower, a young widower who was left with seven children. And very little foo-, very little with which to give them material things. But he gave them a wonderful love of life and of people, and of their religion, and it, a very deep belief and commitment to one another. And I think that that belief and commitment is transferred, hopefully, from our parents to us, and I hope that we can give that same depth of feeling to our children. The important things in life to my grandfather were not the money that he could earn, but the fact that he knew he had to be home with his children every day. He used to hold them in his lap and tell them stories. And he raised them as a father and a mother, because my mother was one of the oldest, and she was only about nine or eleven when her mother died. And I think a lot of the normalcy comes from him. Of course, I think they're, all the sisters have some things that are, physically they were all damaged by the war. Emotionally...

LF: Not really.

MIR: Also, they're very emotional people. A lot of times they can't cope with it. Their nerves are shot. But they love us, and we love them back.

DK: It's hard, when your daughter can say that, it's hard to follow, it's a hard act to follow.

MIR: [chuckles]

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*

*LILLY FRIEDMAN [1-2-14]*

LF: I think they owe their grandfather very much. One of my nieces, that wrote her thesis, she came home and she said to her mother, "Mommie, do you want to see to whom I...

MIR: Dedicated?

LF: Dedicated the thesis?" She thought to a professor, to her, maybe to, she says, "No, to my grandfather. Because I think, we always heard about my grandfather. And, and I drew this, the strength, from you, from my grandfather, and that's why I dedicated my thesis to him." My sister cried. She says, "You never could give me something better in my life than that." So we are a very devoted family, and we would love to see a better world for our children.

DK: *Halevai*. Lilly, thank you.

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.*