**בס"ד**

One Generation after

an

Oral history Interview:

Personal testimony A

of

**Suzanne Claire Holzer-Wester**

(1921-2013)

**INTRODUCTION/FORWARD:**

In the late 70's and early 80's, children of Holocaust survivors had grown into young adults. Organizations of the second generation sprouted worldwide. One Generation After. There was such a group in Boston, headed by Ruth Bork. We met at the Zionist House on Commonwealth Avenue, had a small library of books, and met there once a month on Sunday evenings for an educational/social program. The activities of OGA included a monthly newsletter, a series of Awareness Groups for the second generation, and creating a questionnaire for interviewing Holocaust survivors. The goal was to provide a chance for their story to be told and documented. (Sent to Yad Vashem ?).

I had graduated from Boston University School of Occupational Therapy and decided to remain in the Boston area. In the years preceding this interview, I joined OGA, became its secretary for a while, helped produce the newsletter and the interview questionnaire, and was a member of Awareness Group. A group of women, daughters of survivors, shared the experiences of survivor parents and our perceptions as the second generation. I traveled with my Mother to the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Washington, DC in 1980's.

In the cold winter of 1981, I traveled home to McKee City, New Jersey, and interviewed our Mother. We sat around the tape recorder in our warm kitchen. (There were no video cameras yet!). I faithfully followed the written interview form, and she faithfully allowed herself to share whatever she could. Our Father Simon Holzer, refused to be interviewed, assumingly a process to painful for him to undertake. Our Uncle and Aunt, Herman and Eda Holzer agreed to be interviewed, but only about their post-war life. The little black tapes followed me around for many years, including my Aliya to start my new life in Israel. At one point, my computer expert Meitar put the tapes on the computer for safe keeping.

In memory of our Mother's passing this past year on the 20th of January, I have taken upon myself to transcribe this interview and present a copy of the oral interview and a transcribed written copy to her children and their spouses, all her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It was her request to pass on this legacy.

All events are historical and actually occurred. This attempted exact transcription is not edited. This is her personal account and testimony of what specifically happened to her and to her family that we need to know and remember. Much of it is very frighteningly difficult to read. It is very painful to know that this happened to our Mother in specific, but to the Jewish People and Humanity in general. Along with the tremendous pain that goes along with reading, we must always remember that she survived, started a new life in America, began a new family and lived a full Jewish life of meaning and faith. This was passed on to all of us. She lived a proud Jewish life until the age of almost 92, and died in safety, respect and comfort, surrounded by her Jewish family that she was so proud of.

Please save and care for this treasure, share it with friends and family.

It is Bubby's/Savta's personal story, but it belongs to all Jews and Mankind everywhere and forever.

It is for all of us to learn, to remember, to respect, to protect ourselves and to be careful.

Marilyn Cohen-Holzer

Jerusalem

**Tape#1, side 1))**

*Today is February 19th, 1981. My name is Marilyn Lee Holzer. I am interviewing my Mother,*

*Mrs. Suzanne Claire Holzer, at her home in Pleasantville, New Jersey.*

**Pre- war conditions**

*Describe those who comprised your household before the war.*

It was my parents, my oldest brother, myself, and I had two younger sisters;

We had a business and we all worked

*You all worked in the same business?*

The 2 oldest children, my brother and myself helped my Father in the business.

*What kind of business was that?*

We had a shoe factory, and we employed people.

*How many people worked, was it a large?*

Maybe about 25-30 people worked there.

*What was your family's social status?*

Quite comfortable, considered a higher income bracket.

*What was the level of religious observation in your family?*

We weren't terribly orthodox; we were keeping a Jewish nationalistic home;

*What do you mean by nationalistic? Zionist nationalistic, Or just feelings of Judaism and not Israel, Palestine?*

Nationalistic, we kept, everyone kept a Jewish Kosher home at those times; there wasn't such a thing not to keep a Kosher home.

*Did that mean you kept Shabbos and everyone went to the synagogue?*

Absolutely, absolutely.

*What was your level of cultural observation-in terms of the Polish culture or even Jewish culture?*

We all attended Polish schools. And of course we had a lot of Hebrew training, Hebrew schools and Jewish schools/education. There weren't any colleges in our town.

*Can you give the name of your town and what it was near?*

Szydlowiec, near Radom.

*What was your educational background?*

I would have had like, here, it's like finishing high school, on the American level.

*What was the relationship of Jews to the non-Jews in your community?*

Not very good one.

*Can you describe what kind of relationship it was, did they communicate? Did you do business together?*

They would come into the town, it was primarily a very Jewish town, all the non-Jews lived surrounding the town, outside. They would come in for business, to buy and sell, whatever. and do some work for the Jewish people. But they were very anti-Semitic.

*Like how? What kind of things did they do that you're calling anti-Semitic?*

They openly come out and talk about it, and beat up Jews.

*In the Jews own town? On daily business days?*

That's right. Provocate non-Jews not to buy by Jews, stand by stores and told "don't buy by the Jews", in Polish. It was going on a lot of anti-Jewish propaganda. A lot.

And of course, in schools, when we went with the mixed, we were non-Jewish girls and Jewish girls in the classes; you could also tell.

*Girls were separated from the boys?*

Boys and girls didn't attend school together. Jews and non-Jews were together.

The atmosphere was very unpleasant. You could always feel you were a Jew.

*Did you have any close girlfriends that weren't Jewish?*

No, not at all.

*Did any of the little Jewish girls have any close friends who weren't Jewish?*

Not at all. Such a thing never happened, not in our town.

*Did you ever go to the non-Jew's sections of town, to anybody's house?*

Never.

*Was there any assimilation in your town? Of some Jews that assimilated into the non-Jewish?*

Very few.

*In what way?*

They didn't keep the religious holidays so orthodox, strict like some others would. Maybe they didn't keep kosher, stuff like that, and was already a big step in that time in a town like that.

*What was means of support for the family? Just that business?*

We had a shoe factory.

*Did your Mother work?*

No, my Mother was just a housewife and Mother.

*Did you grow up, was that an urban or rural setting, your town, was it more city-like, or rural-like?*

It was a very small town, it wasn't like a big city, the whole town, had about 15,000 inhabitants, most of the Jewish all inside, and non-Jews were surrounding the outside of the town.

*They lived in more individual houses, like on the farm?*

The non-Jews.

*They didn't live in clusters, they live more separately.*

*Did you encounter any anti-Semitic experiences before the war? Maybe you can describe more of the ones you were talking about, like in your school or during business?*

We had a lot of non-Jewish people working in our business, for the factory, and they came in every day to the city, 2-3 times a day, from the villages where they lived, to us, to pick up work and drop off products. Closer towards the war. Of course when I was little, I wouldn't remember. In the pre-war years when I grew up, when I was a young teenager, you could already see and feel in the air, that the anti-Semitism was growing very badly.   
*In what way though? What do you mean by that? What got worse?*

They beat up people in the street, like I told you before, and they prevented non-Jews from buying from Jews, hollering in Polish 'dirty Jew'. Lots of things, how can I describe. Lots of things took place. The un-justice between, if someone had a fallout with a non-Jewish person, police, it was always one sided.

*No one would ever go to the police to complain.*

I didn't have any encounters, I was young, can't recall like.

*How old were you right before the war? This time that you're talking about.*

The last couple of years, I was 17 years old, going on 18.

*As it became more evident that war was going to happen, was options were open for your family?*

There were not too many options, being that my parents had lived in France before I was born. Where I was born in France. My parents talked a lot about going back to France.

Before the war. My brother had to join the army before he reached 21. So he had an option to go do military duty in France, to become a French citizen. They talked a lot about moving to France, but there weren't really weren't too many alternatives, one would have where to go, where to escape.

*What was involved in deciding not to go to France?*

It was a big decision, they had 4 children my parents, it was kind of hard to pick up and destroy everything and go to France.

*You had a grandmother, too. Right?*

The grandmother was dead already, one grandmother from my Buba Ruchal Leah. Yes, she was dead already. On her account my parents returned from France back to Poland. But she was dead already. I had just one other living grandmother.

My Mother had 3 sisters, and a brother. In Poland. In the same town. My Father had a sister, it was hard to pick up the pieces and return with a family to France, to Paris. Then it closed in on the last two years before the war. My brother had to go and join, they decided he should do his military duty in Poland, so he went. He was a soldier for two years. Then he came back, and they started to talk war. Then they recalled him to the reserves.

*So before the war started, he did his* *duty and he came back*.

He came back. The war broke out in September.

*Of what year?*

Of 1939. And then they recalled him in the beginning of that year, in the military reserves, because war was in the air.

*In the beginning of 1939*.

They recalled him as a reserve soldier. He never came home after that. The war broke out, we tried to get him out, without any success.

*You mean you wanted him to leave the army?*

We wanted him; we tried to get him out. Because we were afraid there was going to be a war, no way we could get him released from the army. They started to mobilize.

*He needed to fight in the war. How was it for Jews in Polish army?*

I can't really tell you about that too much. Because when my Brother came back he was already… we brought him in bad shape, wounded.

*He was in the actual fighting*.

They let him come home, he was very wounded. We bought him home from the hospital, he was very sick, he had 9 operations, he was a very sick man, he was only 26 at the time.

*How long did he stay with you*?

For about a year then came what they made…don't know how to tell you in English, they cleaned out the town, made it "Yudenfrei".‎

*What year was that?*

That was in 1942.

*So you lived like this for 2 years?*

Right. For over two years.

*During the war. And your Father's business kept on going during this time?*

No, they confiscated all our shoes, leather, merchandise, furs, gold, silver.

*Who is they?*

The Germans. They confiscated everything. All the furs, we had to give up.

*How did your family survive, with what did they support themselves during that time?*

Whatever we had hidden away, we would always change and sell something and live on that.

*To who did you sell it to?*

To whoever we could, to whoever still had money to spend and buy things.

*Was that usually non-Jewish people?*

No, just to Jewish people.

Of course, my brother very sick, we brought him home; he was on crutches, it was a sad thing to see a young boy return from the war. He didn't last too long. After when it came, they made "Yudenfrei", and they killed him by the train; he couldn't jump into the train, into the wagon. That was the end of him.

*What train was this?*

The train that came to haul the people away, they pushed everyone into the train to go to the chambers.

*Even though Germans had already come into your town and this was after 1939 and the war had already started, did the Jewish people still have time to spend time together and socialize?* *Observe holidays?*

Yes, to a certain extent. Families were still together, the parents and the children. We still had a synagogue, temples, and people could still observe their holidays. They tried to make people believe they aren't as bad as we thought that they are.

*You think they did that on purpose not to make you…*

Probably. People still attended synagogue, but not to many functions, get togethers, organizations, meetings cancelled that out. Evening were curfews. You could only walk until 6:00. After 6 you didn't dare go out on the street anymore.

*Give me some other examples, how was life different after 1939 than it was before?*

Families could still worship, relatives- parents and children were still together, then after a while, they started to go around and pick up the men to take them out for work, for a day's work, to do all kinds...

*Did your Father and brother ever have to…?*

My brother wasn't home, my brother was in Hospital.

*What about your Father?*

Sometimes they would catch him, too. Everybody had to go. It wasn't that they took you right away to a concentration camp; that was the first two years, everyone still at home; but then the starvation started to come in. People didn't have money to live on, to buy food. And everything was sort of on black market. Who didn't have enough money could not go out and buy and shop like other people.

*Were there still stores open?*

There were still stores. There didn't come in merchandise like it used to come in before the war.

*Were you working?*

No we couldn't work. But some days they would go and pick up some people to work, to sweep street to make you feel ashamed.

*Did you ever have to do that?*

A couple of times, to shovel away snow in town where they occupied. The young men mostly, they would go and pick up on the street and ask them to go do that. And of course they would shoot people for different incidents, in the town.

*How were things socially? You had friends?*

I had lots of friends; we all had friends, but then everything sort of stopped. You couldn't get together, with too many people, from other parts of town. Couldn't come out so far, cause you couldn't go back after 5-6 o'clock, it was a big risk, you risked your life going that late in the night. There were lots of incidents were people were shot for walking a minute after 6 o'clock in the street, you had to wear a "Yuden band", a white band with a blue star on arm.

*You always had to wear that? Since when?*

Soon after they came in, maybe a half a year after they came in, early 1940's.

*That was in the beginning of 1940.*

They asked everyone to wear the "Yuden band", a white band with a blue star, on the left arm.

**War Conditions-Liquidation of Szydlowiec**

*So you were about 18 when the war started. How did you first know that the war started?*

They started to bomb.

*In your area?*

The airplanes came and they started bombing,

*That was the first you knew about it?*

That's right, people started to run away and hide in cellars, wherever they could.

*Was that as big shock? Did you expect that at all?*

We knew the last days before the war broke out, everyone would sit glued to the radio, not too many people had radios, we did have a radio. It was summer time. All summer was very bad, the news; everybody sat all day by the radio to listen the latest news, what's going on, what this one said, what this one said. The last few days was very bad. Very sad. Then we knew they were marching on Poland. We knew, everyone knew.

*How did your family respond to all this? Were there any options available to do anything else? Was there anywhere to go?*

No place to go. Lots of people, young men ran away to Russia; my Father couldn't go, he didn't want to leave his family. He was relatively very young.

*He never had to go to the army or anything?*

My Father? I don’t remember anything about that, because he was in Paris. Maybe he was before, I don't remember.

*Was your Father a French citizen living in Poland?*

No he was Polish living in France a certain number of years.

*So he never had to go to the Polish army when all this war stuff was starting.*

*What are your first memories of the war, how do you remember it? How did things change then?*

It changed in every aspect.

*Tell me some…*

Everyone had to have a lower standard of living. Things weren't that plentiful. And of course very frightened and sad, that we never knew what happened to my oldest brother. We never knew what's going to happen, if we'd see him again, when the war came first, we didn't have him at home, we didn't know how it would be

*He didn't die till later on, what year was that when he died?*

In 1942. We never knew if we'll ever see him again. And then of course, we never knew how it's going to work out, when they'll march in. It took about 2 days when they came to our town. 2-3 days. Everyone was hidden in cellars, in bunkers. And finally people started to go out and show up on the street, people started to get back to normal; life wasn't normal by all means, but we thought maybe it won’t be that bad. But later on things didn't turn out so good like we thought it might. And everything started to go worse and worse, every year, till they made the town "Yudenfrei" in 1942. Everybody had to leave.

W*hen you said "Yudenfrei", what did that mean?*

The whole townfree of Jews.

*Where did everyone go?*

Lots were killed, and they gathered in center of town, in a market place.

*You and your family and everyone were there?*

No, I was hidden with my husband, I was married a couple of years before.

*When were you married?*

In 1940.

*You were still able to have a little ceremony?*

Very little, just the chuppah in our house, with just the next few relatives.

*Your husband never had to go to any kind of an army?*

No.

*Was that because he was Jewish or to young?*

Then he was too young, he didn't do his military duty before, too young. My brother did before so called up in the reserves. He was too young to be called up. So we were hidden that same night. My mother and two sisters were also hidden, and my Father-they made him put on… he used to be in "Yiddisher Gemeinde"?????… they asked him to put on, not a uniform, a special hat, so when they would take the people to the camps, to the next camp, there was a camp next to us, Skarzysko, the Hasag, "arbeit lager", that he would go to the camp, that he won't be going with all these people. So my Mother was hidden, and my brother was taken out to the market place with all the people, and I was hidden with my husband. My Father was taken to that Skarzysko camp, to another "arbeits lager". And then after two months, there were still some Jews left hidden in bunkers in that town. But then they made them all come out and they were all sent away.

*How did they make them come out?*

They had a system to go around, and throw in bombs, with loud speakers and came out and destroyed the homes.

*That's when you had to come out?*

I came out about 2 days later with my husband. We went to another town where they had…

*How did you get to another town? Did you walk?*

We walked part of the way, and part of the way we gave away a man whatever we had on ourselves, all the money, all we could carry in a little bag with us, they took that away, and they gave us a ride into the next town.

*What town was that?*

Yezhnik; Starokovitza that was.

We stayed for about three days, and from there we disguised ourselves like non-Jews. We took off bands. We risked our lives, and we got on the train and went to Krakow, In Krakow we were in the ghetto. We went into the ghetto.

*I want to talk to you more about the ghetto, but I want to go back when your family left their home and they went to that market place, your Mother and your sisters…*

and that was the end of it.

*You never saw them again?*

No, they were taken away, there was the 'Treblinka" were they took the people to…

*From your village, the people went to Treblinka?*

Yes, from my town, not a little village,

*From Szydlowiec, and you never heard from them again.*

And my Father died in that Skarzyshko camp.

*People told you this later?*

Yes, Haskele Dreinudle lives in Israel, he told me Father died, he got very swollen from hunger, and he died.

*Your Mother and sisters?*

Bothwent.

*Two sisters and your Mother. You know for sure they went to Treblinka? How do you know that?*

How do I know? No one came back from there. There was no other place. If they would have lived through we would have found each other.

*You knew that that train was going to…there was a train there in that market place?*

Our train station was outside the city, outside the town, and they had to march 4 km,

*About 8 miles*

Right. To those trains there. That was the end of it. There wasn't a single Jew left in the town.

*And then they bombed the whole city?*

No, then came the non-Jews, the Pollaks, and took apart buildings, homes were the Jews lived; they were trying to find jewelry, gold and money, or whatever.

*Did you ever run across non-Jews from your school or that did business with your Father? Did they ever try to help?*

Non-Jews? I came back when I came back after the war, I was liberated and I came back to Poland, I went back to Szydlowiec for a few days, and I went to a non-Jewish family; we had given them things to store away for us, to put away things and we said maybe someone will live through the war you can help us out; we gave furniture, you name it, she took everything, and when I came to her, they had a style then, if a Jew came back and asked for anything they gave him to put away, they cut his throat, and she said to me "No, I can't give you nothing today, you come tomorrow". There were a few other Jewish people who lived through the war and came back to the town, and they said to me "No, we won't let you go there tomorrow, because you won't come back alive". And I didn't go back no more.

*Before you left with husband did you ever go to any of the non-Jews to ask them for help, the ones that you knew? Before you went to Krakow with your husband. Did any of them try to help?*

No, we didn't go to no one, we went away to the Krakow Ghetto.

We were hidden. One night came also around up

*In Krakow?*

A few days before my husband took me out and left me by a Rumanian Jewish family. Rumanian and Hungarian Jews could live free outside the ghetto limits. So he left me, he had friends Rumanian Jews; he left me there for a few days. In the meantime came that roundup in the Krakower ghetto, and he was taken away. They took him also to the chambers then, Mania's daughter was taken then, Gershon Frydman's sister.

*Where did they go?*

To the chamber.

*Did you know for sure they were going to the chambers?*

We don't know where they'll go, but later on…

*Later on you found out.*

Sure,

*Never heard from him again.*

Never, never.

*You were staying with those friends, and where was he?*

He was in the Krakower ghetto.

*Doing what?*

Nobody did nothing there, we just tried to sit and wait maybe something will happen. But then they came and rounded up, and took thousands and thousands of people and the next few days later I...

**Tape #1, side 2))**

**Krakow Ghetto**

*How long were you in the Krakow ghetto?*

A few days after all this happened, I couldn't stay outside the ghetto anymore.

Romanian Jews were afraid to keep me there. So I went into the ghetto, too. There we stayed until the following year, early March.

*So you were able to stay in the ghetto about a year*?

Quite a few months, almost a year. It was very bad there, very bad with food and rations and everything. Then took us to Plaszow, that camp.

*That was in 1943?*

Yes, 1943.

*When you were in the Krakow ghetto, who ran the Krakow ghetto?*

Jewish Kapos, under Goeth, the commandeer of the ghetto, Plaszow camp, Goeth was his name, an SS man.

*He was German.*

German, lots of SS men and women, would always take us to work and then back from work to the barracks.

*This was in the ghetto?*

This was in Plaszow,

*I am asking you about the Krakow ghetto, you were there for a few months.*

I wouldn't really know who was the commandeer of the Krakow ghetto.

*Did you work while you were in the Krakow Ghetto?*

Yes, in the evening I would go and work in a "Schneider gemeinschaft", and fix uniforms for soldiers.

*That's this were you learned how to sew?*

I knew how to sew already, we had a machine at home and I could always use a machine, but this is where I learned a lot, too.

*And who did you love with? In the Krakow Ghetto?*

In the Krakow Ghetto I lived with Rushka Boimans, Koenig's sister, Kshivatch… I showed you the picture yesterday, with her and her husband, and Manya was staying with us for a while, and another few people which I didn't know, were not from our town. Because in one room had to live a few people.

*When you got to the Krakow Ghetto you found them and lived with them.*

Yeh*.*

*Did you have Medical needs? Were there doctors to go to?*

There was a small hospital, like a clinic. People if they needed medical help, they wen, it wasn't like there were specialists or doctors

*Did kids go to schools there?* *Where there schools there?*

No,

*Were there little kids in the area?*

Sure, Yes, Lots of kids

*What did they do?*

Nothing. What could they do, the kids, they were starving.

*Were people still able to follow any religious practices?*

They did, they did very secretly, in fact by us-I meant to tell you- it got to be so bad, you couldn't go to services. And they bombed our synagogue, burnt it up, in our town. Rounding up of all the Jews when I told you it happened, was the day after Yom Kippur.

*In 1942*.

In 1942. People went very secretly to services in private homes, private rooms, the next night they rounded everybody up.

*Was there any political activity going on in the Krakow ghetto? Did people try to do any…?*

I really wouldn't know. I didn't know too many people.

*Was there any resistance that you knew of*?

No. None at all, no one did anything.

*Was there any smuggling?*

Yes, some people held jobs outside of the ghetto. So the Germans would escort out a number of people to work, out-side the ghetto, they would buy and sell things. and smuggle in some things. But some days they would look through, check them out…

*On their clothing?*

Intheir clothingand bodies, the Germans would shoot people and take away what they smuggled in.

*Can you describe what a typical day was like in the ghetto, when you woke up in the morning?* Always a hassle to go and get your ration of bread,

*That's how they gave out food in rations?*

And then the soup. In the beginning, I didn't have a food card cause I wasn't from Krakow. It took a while to be able to get some food. And people would go and try and help themselves, a lot of things were going on. I didn't know.

*Like what?*

People tried to organize food.

*Who tried to organize?*

People that lived in the ghetto, I didn't really know that many people there, I wasn't from Krakow myself, and there were mostly Krakower people. It was a hard time for everybody, to go stand in line 2-3 times a day for soup, for the piece of bread. People that still had some money could still buy,

*There were there stores there?*

No, what people smuggled in, it wasn't an easy life.

*How long did that last?*

Till they liquidated the Krakow ghetto. Till one day in early March 1943, they liquidated the Krakower ghetto.

*March, 1943?*

Yes, they took all the kids and they threw them into big dump trucks, little kids. Including my own.

*How old was your baby?*

My baby was a little over 3 months.

*That baby was born in the Krakow ghetto?*

Yes, December 6th.and then they took even older children, took them away, killed them and burned them. Little kids they threw in, in "kinderheim" they had a special kinderheim for little kids so parents could go to work. like I could go to work in the evening, but my baby wasn't in the "kinderheim", at the beginning, because Hela, Rusha's sister still stayed there with us, but later on everyone had to go. But then, they took the kids and threw them on the dump trucks.

Took us to Plaszow to the concentration camp and said they would follow up with the children, but and children never came.

*This was in 1943?*

Early1943.

**Concentration Camp-Plaszow**

*So you went from this Krakow Ghetto to this other place, Plaszow. What was that?*

Plaszow was a railroad station outside Krakow, and they built there not too far from this railroad station, built those camps. In fact when I came, it was not quite a camp yet. We helped build all those barracks.

*So Plaszow wasn't anything when you first got there.*

They had already some people there, but then when they liquidated the Krakow Ghetto, we all helped build those barracks.

*Where did you live and where did you sleep?*

In barracks. Very, heavily populated, with a lot of people. and then they built up more barracks, more barracks, we helped them build, and they brought in other transports of people. A lot of transports of people from other ghettos and other towns.

*What do you mean by a transport? That was a train, car?*

They bought in lots of other people by train, but the train didn't come into Plaszow, the train station outside Plaszow, then people had to march on foot.

*Like you had to do*

We marched from the Krakower ghetto…

*all those people you were together with them,*

That's right. We marched into the Plaszow Concentration Camp, from the Krakow Ghetto, it was right outside Krakow.

*And this was in early March 1943*. *Can you tell me any incidents that happened during the march or during the transport?*

*R*eally can't recall much, which about 2-3 hours was going there. But then the first few weeks were really bad there.

*What was it like?*

You had to, they took us out every morning to the "apel platz", had to be counted, they used to shoot people and kill, and I worked in the "Schneider "gemeinshaft", like fixing uniforms,

In Plaszow. And we got our daily ration of soup. Every block got their ration of food. it was distributed among all the people that lived in our block, all the women.

It was very hectic, we worked 12 hours /day work. We had no light; we used to leave in the morning when it was dark and came home in the dark. Get up 5:00 to go the "apel

platz".

*You did this 7 days a week?*

7 days a week.

*When you first got to this place Plaszow, the very first day, did they tell you where to go?*

They showed you were you had to go to your barrack and that was it.

*Was there any selections?*

They started to select right away the weak people they took away and we never heard from them. Very old ones and very young ones. People tried to hide their children, but eventually they had to come out. And they selected the weak people, the old and the very young and took them away, we never heard from them again.

*All* *the people you arrived together with them, stayed with them the whole time you were there?*

Most of the time, and then they used to send away different transports to different camps, for different labors, different works.

*You all got separated eventually?*

Eventually we all got separated.

*What were some of your initial thoughts and feelings when you first got there during all this?*

What could you think? You just lived from day to day.

*What did you feel? What were some of your feelings?*

First of all everything was so fresh, I just had….lost my parents, my brother, my sisters, and my Husband and the baby and everything. You just couldn't function, and had thoughts; just were so occupied with the day, from day to day, you couldn't make no plans, and You didn't know what the next hour would bring; you never thought for tomorrow, you never knew what the next hour would be, here you were one minute, and an hour later you were dead. They would come in and shoot people and pull out people for no reason in the street and gun them down.

*All pretty shocking all the time*

All the time.

*Can you talk a little more what you had to do to help set up the camp Plaszow?*

I didn't help set it up, they just made us work, carry stones, and break stones, I didn't help set it up, I would burn it down,

*I mean in terms of that, what did they make you do?*

They made us carry stones, we used to carry big stones like this, bricks, and then some days they would make us sit down with big hammers and break the stones.

*For the whole day*? *Now this camp was located outside of Krakow, how big was it?*

It was very big. And then they had neighboring that they had another smaller camp for men. Yulag. But that was very big, a lot of barracks, a lot of people, and the conditions we lived in there were just awful.

*What kind of guard system did they have?*

They had the SS, of course they had a lot of…

*Was there only women in your camp?*

our camp, no it was separate, it was a lot of men and women, but the men stayed in one part of the camp and the women stayed in another,

*How about the guards? Where the guards all men?*

No, there were SS women and SS men. Of course they organized Jewish police men, they took young men and made a Jewish Kommandant and Jewish policemen, and some were so brutal and used to beat up some people to death.

*The Jewish policemen?*

Some of them were very bad.

*Were any of the Jewish people women that were doing…?*

No, mostly men.

*Were conditions for them a little different?*

A little better, but eventually they all had the same end. Goeth finished them in a worse way. We were sent away to Auschwitz and other labor camps. Those people were finished and shot in a very ugly way, there in Plaszow. Mina, my friend from Sweden, she was one of the last ones to leave Plaszow, as a prisoner, and she saw a lot of what had happened to some of those terrible policemen. And some of them, believe me, they deserved what they got, what they did to some people. It's a shame to talk about it, that Jews could do that to Jews, but they thought they could save their own skin. But they had a worse end.

*Were you angry at them?*

Of course we didn't like them,

*The Jewish people.*

We were terribly afraid of them like the SS, they sided with the SS and they thought they would be privileged in many ways, but when the end came, many of us had been sent us away, there was just a remnant of people left to be transported, which Mina was one of them left, a day before they were transported Goeth gave an order to shoot all those policemen. They were all laid out like herrings beside the barracks, the rest of the people had to go march by and view those corpses,

*Did you meet Mina there?*

I met Mina two days after we came from the Krakow Ghetto, in Plaszow.

She saw me walk on the street, and I was crying, and she asked me where I am from and from which barrack, I said I am from –barrack, and she said "so am I", and she asked "where are your things?" I didn't have anything with me, just what I had on, because I had fled so many times already, so she took me on her bed, and I stayed with her, because she still had a little pollster, she had a blanket and a little pillow. So I stayed with her. That's how we got so attached, so friendly, and after the war, I met her again. She was in Theresienstadt. I ran around to ask, call names, to see if someone survived, people who were sick laying down, she looked down the window and recognized me. Mina was sick, she had typhus.

*In Plaszow camp, what kind of food did you get there?*

Soup and a ration of black bread, and some soup. One time a day, a piece of potato in it, a couple pieces of barley.

*And there you also worked in the sewing shop fixing uniforms?*

Yes.

*Did the inmates get along with each other?*

In conditions like this people get along worse. You know why? Because everybody was in bad shape, everyone had lost someone, everybody was broken hearted, and people for a piece of bread sometimes would fight, for a spoon of soup,

*But Mina took you into stay with her*, *sometimes people were…*

but in different ways, because everybody was in the same boat. Sometimes people looked out one for another, but they used to fight and argue over the least little thing, it wasn't a least, it was a matter of survival actually. If someone stole a piece of bread from somebody, she was hungry. They would steal from one another sometimes, or different incidents took place. But I would say on the whole, people got along real good because everyone was on the same boat. In the same situation, everybody had lost everybody, and we all lived the same way, looking forward to the next day to see what would happen. And everybody tried to be close to someone, cause everyone had lost everybody. So you just tried to hang on to somebody. That's how I got so friendly with Mina.

*And what about the people you were in the Krakow Ghetto with, Rusha's sister?*

Rusha's sister and her husband were in another barrack,

*Husbands and wives were able to stay together?*

No, he was with the men and she was with other women, they worked in different places.

*What do you mean by barrack? Is that a building where you slept?*

A barrack where you sleep.

*And you worked in the same building where you slept in??*

No, you had to work, to go to march to work. But Manya, worked in a different place, and Hela worked in a place where they made shoes.

*Did you get to see Manya once in a while?*

Very seldom, once in a while.

*How did you know she was in the same…*

Because some times when we had a break, I would run over to the work shop where she was working, I would run over and see what was she was doing and where she is. And then when we would come home from work, we would run over to each other's barracks, to see where we are, what we're doing.

*What kind of clothing were you wearing at that time?*

I just had a coat, did I have a coat? I don't even remember, and a dress. Just what I had on, that's it. We didn't have a wardrobe, where to hang up things. It was bunk beds, only that little place to lay, that's all. You didn't have clothes to change, or shoes to change or underwear to change.

*Did you ever get to wash?*

Yes, we would go down in the middle of the night, 4 o'clock, everybody had to get up, We would get up at 4, 4:30 and run down to the latrines, where we would go to the bathroom, and they had long pipes with water, and we were lucky to get to get to a pipe with water and wash yourself the best you could.

*You slept in your clothes?*

No, we took off coat and the dress, in the winter-time we probably slept with our clothes on, too. It was cold.

*It was real cold there in the winter like it is in Boston or NJ?*

That's right, even colder. snows and what not.

*So you only had your shoes to wear?*

That's right*.*

*Most of the people there were Jewish?*

Yes.

*Where there any non-Jews there?*

There was a non-Jews camp-for Poles that were caught to work, for political reasons. They were in a different camp.

*Were their conditions the same?*

I couldn't tell you, I was never there.

*Did you ever have opportunities to have contact with men that were there, or get to know them?*

We worked with men in the workshops, together; by the machines or tables, but we lived separately, we lived in the women's barracks, and they lived in the men's barracks. Separate camps. But there were couples, men could come after work for an hour or so before the curfew to see his wife.

*They were allowed that freedom to go and see each other?*

Not too often, but sometimes after work, after the "apel" they counted coming back,

*What do you mean you were counted?*

Twice a day we had to go to the "apel platz" to be counted, some people had violations, they hung some people and we had stand and watch it.

*Did anyone try to leave from there, to escape?*

A few people tried to escape, but were caught and brought back and were shot. A few people tried to escape.

*Did anyone try to plan to escape or resist of a lot of people together?*

Didn't know if tried to resist. Nothing.

You didn't know about it?

*Was there any kind of resistance, did people still try and have their prayer, or follow holidays?*

Nothing.

*Describe some of the punishment that the police used to do to the people*.

Punishments if didn't work right or if you didn't show up to work, there wasn't such a thing that you didn't show up, for every little thing they pulled you out and beat you until half dead.

*Did you ever get beat?*

No.

*How did they beat, with their hands or with sticks?*

No with rubber, like a policeman walks around with that rubber thing.

*Was there any cultural activity going on there? Or political activity?*

I didn't know., no gatherings. No, how could you? You were watched day and night. You couldn't just move around and gather…

*How long did you stay in this Plaszow ghetto?*

We stayed until April, 1944.I have it written down on a paper.

S*o that was over a year you stayed there?*

At least a year.

*And then what happened?*

**Concentration Camp-Auschwitz**

And then we were sent on a big transport to Auschwitz. We were taken on trains.

*How did you know that you were going?*

I didn't know, just came and took us, and that was it, and they marched us out to the trains. Manya, Hela, we tried to stay together, and we were sent to Auschwitz there we lived in the same barrack in Auschwitz.

*How long did it take to get to Auschwitz?*

I think about 5 days,

*On a train?* an open or closed train?

A cattle train.

*Was there a lot of people on the train?*

An awful lot of people, in every car. All you had was standing room. people a lot of them died before we reached Auschwitz.

*You could only stand up for 5 days?*

That's right, and sometimes we would try and hold on one to another. One would stand and one would try and sit down, and then we changed till we reached Auschwitz.

*Did you know you were going to Auschwitz?*

We assumed, we didn't know where we were going, but we assumed that we were going to Auschwitz

*Had you heard that word before?*

Oh, sure.

*How did you hear about it?*

We heard about it; who ever went there never came back. Because they had sent away lots of people, then they sent ashes back. Before we were even taken to the camps. They would round up some people and send them away. Take them away to Auschwitz, and they would send back ashes to the relatives. So we knew there was an Auschwitz were they burned people, when people were still in their homes, back home,

*What do you mean back home, Szydlowiec?*

When people were still home. Some people were sent to Auschwitz even then. and sent the ashes, the Germans, some ashes of the people.

*Why would they bother doing that?*

Who knows? It was their mentality, their fine mentality to send the remains of some of the people.

*You were on this train for 5 days*?

They gave us a ration of bread to last for 5 days to hold us through until we got there to

Auschwitz.

*Did yours last for the 5 days?*

It had to last.

*Were you able to go to the bathroom on the train?*

Don't ask what was on that train. It's just beyond imagination, really, what happens on a train like this, just for fear, people got sick, threw up, got diarrhea, It was awful. It was awful.

*It was closed the whole time*,

That's right … by the time we reached Auschwitz lots of people were dead, and then there they took us…

*What was it like when you first got off the train there?*

The guards, German SS walked around, they had very big flies, biting, green flies, so they wore nets over their heads, and we all the women were transported into rooms where we had to get completely undressed, and they said "leave your things neatly, your clothes and shoes and whatever you have, so when you'll come out you should be able to find it". So when we got all undressed they kept us for hours, they had us wait for hours on the street.

**Tape #2, side 1))**

*So when you got there and you had to take all your clothes off, what happened?*

And they had us wait for hours and hours on the street naked, and those SS men walked around among us, and then they took us in and they separated us.

*Who separated* ?

The SS. They said:

Left, right, left, right" you didn't know what left is or right is, so they had one group of people"

go in this door, and another group to another door; you didn't know if you were going to come out or not; so were we went in, they let water came down, and we got showered, but before we went to get showered, they had men, men shave us here, and here and here.

*Jewish men?*

I don't know if they were Jewish, probably, they were all inmates, also, they made men shave us, and then they got us in to shower and we got water and we came out, but we came out through a different door altogether, we didn't come back to the place where we got undressed, and they gave like a big woman –I was a big girl, they gave me a short little dress with a boy's coat, and they gave me those wooden shoes. And the other group of people, went in, and instead of water, they got down gas, because you could hear the screams, and the yells, and the hollering and then it quieted down.

*You heard that?*

Everyone heard.

*You knew people that went into the other side?*

I knew so many people, all the transports from the places that I got acquainted with, you get to know people and then you didn't see them anymore, and then you assume that this is where they went.

*I just want to ask one question, remember when last year they had the movie, Fanny Fenelow, and the music, was there music when you arrived there?*

That's right, when we arrived…

*Do you remember her?*

We couldn't see the people, but on days when they burnt a lot, when the ovens were going, they had a lot of orchestras, music playing. One woman a Hungarian woman she was dressed like a gypsy, in the camp playing, a Jewish woman; and after the war, I went with another girl to Lions Korn House in Marble Arch, which was a very famous place in London. And I thought I'll die, this woman was standing there and playing, the Hungarian woman, she played the czardas. She was a very beautiful looking woman, and she played so beautiful the violin and she played the charda,

*The same song?*

Different songs, but when she played, I had a feeling I had heard that before, and I look up and there's she's standing with her pitch black hair, wearing also a gypsy outfit, playing. I thought I'll die. I felt like fainting. Can you imagine after the war…

*Did you speak to her at all?*

No, I couldn't get myself to go over to her. But they had people standing playing specially to make music, while they were burning and people were getting gassed and screaming.Did you watch that movie*?*

*The song, one of the songs that they were playing, I remembered that you used to sing, do you remember any of the songs?*

Maybe if someone started it I would get to me, I couldn't watch it; I didn't want to watch it, they said to boycott it.

*OK, after the shower that you had, what happened the? That was the first day?*

Yeh, that was on the next day.

*Where did you sleep on the first day?*

By the time they got us off the train, Marilyn, it didn't go so fast, by the time they organized us in one place and got us to undress, and then they hauled us all into one big barrack, and everyone got shaved off the hair, shaved off like Dad standing and shaving; my head wa… and then they took us into shower, and then we came out and then it was already late in the night, by the time they got us into a barrack and they showed you were your bunk bed is going to be, so Manya and I climbed up to one, and Hela Shgivatch, and the next morning when we got out 5 o'clock in the morning we got out, "appel platz" to be counted, by every barrack they got their people out to be counted. We got so hysterical when we looked at each other the first time without hair, you know. When they got us back, it was in the middle of the night, it was dark, nobody could see nobody, there was never light in the barracks, you couldn't undress or dress by light, whatever we had to dress or undress, so you couldn't see what you looked, but when it started to get in the morning a little light, daylight would set in.

And we looked at each other, there were, people got so hysterical, crying, and laughing and, screaming. I just cannot describe to you the feeling what is was then, We all looked like you know what, like our father's, you know when a girl's head is shaved off, she looks just like her father, in Manya I saw her Father, Manya saw in me my Father. It was an awful thing. An awful feeling, can you imagine you're not a woman anymore; and then they started, they put something in your food, which you don't menstruate.

*How did you know that, did they tell you?*

No we didn't know, but the day I arrived in Auschwitz, till we left all those months, we never menstruated, and about two –three weeks after we left, we started to menstruate.

*So then you knew*.

Yeh. We knew, they put in something in the food, the soups, in the bread, so people shouldn't menstruate,

*So you got there in April of 1944.*

I have some papers were I have the dates,

*What did you do there after the first couple days?*

That was the worst part, we didn't do nothing. They made you sit from

5 in the morning till 6 in the night outside the barrack, rain or shine or cold or whatever, and it was cold, we didn't have no clothes, we huddled one next to the other standing in the groups.

*You were still wearing that little dress?*

Yeh, short little dress, like a mini, must have been the mini times for me then. and we didn't do nothing, but to have a job there, was a great privilege, if you had a job, they gave you those pashaks with the stripes,

*Striped uniforms?*

uniforms, the striped dress, but who could be so privileged, but a couple of times, they picked out about 20-30 people, I don't remember , to go to another camp, like you saw it on TV. that camp Birkenau, this is the one I was in, but there were a lot of other camps., there was another camp where the trains arrived, which was called Epkael, and they marched us down to that Epkael train, that we should unload some cars, some trains, and we marched by and we saw those people sitting, leaning towards the trains, they were like corpses already.

*These were people that were coming on the train?*

No, when we went there, they took us to unload like some wood, coal or corpses, whatever they transported in, and were sitting people at the train, at the trains that we passed by on the way, and they were already dead those people, they couldn't walk, couldn't talk, kept on saying we should say "Kaddish" after them , we should remember them. Those people died within hours, those people, were so thin, mussel men, so thin, living skeletons, like sometimes did you see in Biafra, the children with the big head, thin little hands and thin little legs, big fat stomachs, like you know, like a skeleton that you could take out from a grave… that's what these people looked…Tired of sitting.

*We'll stop and finish tomorrow*.

*When you said, you sometimes went to work to take things off the train.*

Not too many times, a few times they took us,

*What did you have to take off the train*?

corpses, or wood, and boxes, unload or load on, that was just a few times that they took us.

*How long did you stay at Auschwitz?*

We stayed a nice few months we stayed there, and then they took us they transported us, *about 4-5 months,*

at least.

*How did you survive, they had such a bad reputation, just from day to day?*

Just from day to day, from hour to hour, believe me, you never knew, and then they, one day, and then, almost every week, 2-3 times a week they made "selectzia".

*What do you mean by that?*

"Seleczia" means a selection of people, they had us all undress and Mengele, you heard about Mengele, the one that is being filmed now, would you believe that he clapped me like this on my back, that bastard. One day, they assembled us all, naked, and Hela, Rusha's sister, had two other girls at the Plaszow camp, we kept together, Manya and I , and we always tried to keep Manya between Hela and me, Rusha's sister and me, because Manya had scars, from operations, and if he saw a scar, or a pimple on somebody, and you didn't look good anymore, you went here; you didn't know where you were going, but we assumed. So we tried to keep Manya between us, but he said "March, march", so when I came by he said to me "die vet noch gut arbeit leissen" that I will produce a lot of work yet, so we all went by and we were lucky, we could go and get dressed again. but then, this, was this in April 1944?

*When you first got there…,*

In April 44 I first got to Auschwitz? Then I must have come to Auschwitz in the end of 43, because in April we arrived in Willishtal, I have a paper. I should have gotten that out, I could the exact dates.ץ

*You went away from Auschwitz? They took you away?*

They, they got us again assembled,

*Did they tell you why?*

No, and they,

*Before you go on further, is this when things started to change, cause we could stop now.*

*Do you want to stop now?*

It changed that they transported out us out from Auschwitz to Willistahl

*Did they tell you where you were going?*

No. That was a "arbeits" camp, a work camp.

*This was late in, this was in April 44*,

Yeh, and there we stayed till.. I have to go and get that paper. I can't recall this…

*Do you want to stop now? We can continue tomorrow?*

If we'll have time tomorrow. Let me think back…

We were liberated in Czechoslovakia, in May, 1945,

Well was this place in Czechoslovakia?

No that was in Germany, Willishtal was in Leipzig, in Germany.

*From there they took you to... to Theresienstadt.*

*In Czechoslovakia?*

Yeh. In Czechoslovakia we weren't too long, only a few weeks, before the liberation. Because they were going to gas us in Czechoslovakia. That was the last stop because all the Allies closed in on them, American and Russia, England, they all closed in on them and that was the last stop they could drop us off; all the railroads were bombed. They couldn't continue with the trains. So they finally got us in in there, we were to be gassed there, but they didn't have any time, they had to run away themselves. They were closed in…

*I always thought Theresienstadt was a camp, the camp that they kept pretty with artists and music that people would get the impression it was nice.*

At the beginning, but not towards the end. The kept "mishlings" kept there, you know what "mishlings" are? Mishlings are, were German people, intermarried people, Jews , Jewish people who married to non-Jews, they were to the camp, but the children are mishlings, from an intermarried marriage, non-Jewish and Jewish children are called mishlings, so those mishlings were interned in that Theresienstadt camp at beginning. but later whoever they couldn't take anyplace else anymore, everything was being bombed. They took us away from our place, starting to get bombed, too. So they took us out from there, and we were along time on the trains, oh that train long train ride I'll never forget.

*This is from where?*

This is from Willishtal to Theresienstadt, (stop)

The next day, we waited who'll be next. There is not much more I can tell you like, you got up in the morning, in the early hours of the morning and you had to stand until you were counted, and then they gave you your piece of bread, and then you waited for the noontime soup, and we sat around

and waited for who would be called next,

*Called for what?*

For a selection, or something, you never knew if you'll be the next day there.

(discussions returns to Auschwitz)

*Where did you get your number on your arm?*

When we arrived in Auschwitz. They gave you this instead a name, was the number on the arm.

*How did they do that?*

They tattoo it in. It looks like a pen. With ink. They put it in it was very painful, like needles,

*Do you know what your number is?*

I have it here, 821037, and Manya has the same with 38 (821038 Manya).

*In Auschwitz, was there any attempts of resistance of people trying to leave…*

Nah, There was no way we could leave or get out of there.

It was a camp within camp. Where could you go? Where could you run? And even if you ran outside the camp, the Poles would catch you right away and turn you in.

*The Polish people.*

There was no way of escaping from Auschwitz.

*Was anyone allowed to leave the camp to do work outside the camp?*

They had commandos taken out people to work, people who came before us had jobs to go out, they burned people, and cleaned up the ashes, and selected the clothes and the jewelry, shoes, pulled out the gold of the peoples mouth, the teeth, they accumulated all that.

*What happened to all that stuff?*

They took it away, the Germans.

*Did you know when there were holidays going on?*

There were no holidays going on but we sort of tried to keep our memories alive, with keeping track of when it's Rosh Hashana, when it's Yom Kippur, when it's Sukkas; we didn't celebrate, we had no way of celebrating, but everyone tried at least to keep it in mind,

*How did they do that?*

Just by counting the days and months, and we knew that right around then should be, but for years we didn't know about no holidays.

*How was it when new people came in?*

It was the same procedure. They were kept under quarantine, different wirings until they got also shaved, taken away everything from them, and situated in barracks. In fact once they came and said they brought in a transport from France, I could get near those wires, the barbed wires, and I was going around and calling. Lots of people did that, lots of people had relatives in France. I called the family "Laks, Laks". So one woman came and she said, she asked me if I had family there and I said yes, and I told, and she knew the family Laks, and she told me their address where they lived, and I could see that she knew them. And she told me that that were also deported, but she doesn't know where they are. But I thought maybe I'll find Clara was in Bergen Belsen, in a different camp.

*Were you in Bergen Belsen?*

After the war, but she was in the war at the same time when I was in Auschwitz she was in Bergen Belsen,

*So when you left Auschwitz, you said you were there from August, 1944 until October 1944*

The end of October.

*Then how did they tell you were leaving?*

They didn't tell you are leaving, they just assembled us in a big field. And they called out, they took still young looking women, and we were standing all 5 of us, Manya, myself, Rusha's sister Hela, and 2 other girls we knew from Krakow, friends of theirs. And we always kept our 5. When you had to go to an "appel", you had to stand in 5s. And we stood together, and I was the last one, Manya in front of me and Hela in front of her, so they read our numbers, and an SS woman marked down. And when it came to Manya it was the last number read, "she's the last one, we don't need no more". And I was here in the left back bunch of people, and Manya was to go with the transport with them all. So after a couple of minutes, I sneaked out, I ran up and I pulled Manya by the arm, and I pulled her out to come with me back to her the end of my line.

*You pulled her out of the line,*

Yes, and then Manya got to be very angry with me and she kept on saying "they'll shoot us yet. What you did".

*What happened to the other ladies?*

The other ladies still stood in line there, Manya and I ran to the end of the line, and I said to her, "OK Hela and the other two girls will go together and you'll come with me."

the other people , this first transport was taken out of Auschwitz and they were put on a ship. For three weeks, we didn't know this until the end of the war, we found out, and they were for three weeks on a ship on the Baltic Sea, and eventually they were put up in some kind of a camp, I don't know exactly where that was.

*In which country?*

In Poland, and later on when it came the end of the war, they put them back on the ship, and they traveled with them around for G-d knows how long on the boat, and they had no place where to land, and eventually when the end came near they let the whole ship go under, and they drowned all those people, 1500 people. Manya and I …

*Rushele's sister?*

Yeh, this was Hela got lost, and Manya and I stayed on in Auschwitz another little while, and then they put on transport to Willishtal.

*Now where is that? In Poland?*

Willishtal? In Germany. And from there, we stayed,

*What did you do there?*

We worked in ammunition factory.

*How did you get there?*

By train.

*In an open train, a closed train?*

For days and days, in a closed train, cattle train, 300 women.

*In one car?*

Yes, I don't know if it was one car, but 300 women arrived at that camp. We worked in an ammunition factory.

*What was it like when you first got there?*

Nazi women "ober off seren" and Ukrainian men, in the black uniforms. They were hollering, and beating and screaming. And then put us in barracks. There were two big barracks for us. and took us to the ammunition factory, which was within walking distance. And I, worked at a big machine where I used to file the hand guns, and Manya worked by something else, and we stayed there until April 1944.

Where the conditions, how where they different?

It was a little bit cleaner conditions, there wasn't so many people, you understand, it was only 300 people. One woman, I'll never forget, tried to escape from there; she was a German lady,

*Jewish?*

Jewish, and she tried to escape, she got out one day, she ran out from work and made believe because she could speak perfect German and she wound up in the woods, and when was missing in the "appel" counting us. They sent out some Gestapo and dogs they caught up with her, and they bought her back. Did she get a beating, like you've never seen in your life. They put her in where the water was running where we'd get washed in that long sink, and they let the water run on her and beat her. And after the war, she was so black and blue, and after the war we used to talk about it. She survived, and after the war was a very wealthy lady, she used to come to Manya's house in NY.

*What's her name?*

Henya Jollinger, she got married after the war, again in Berlin, and she lived in the Bronx. We used to see her very often.

And there in that Willishtal, we stayed until April 1944.

*What was the food like there?*

Also a ration of bread every morning, and soup during the day. And also she used to beat us, and for every little thing, if you had an inch of

*Who?*

The "ober versehren", if you had already an inch of hair growing, for every little thing, she would shave it off again for you. It was such a setback, to be bareheaded again. And we tried to make the best of it.

*Was there men there?*

No just 300 women. One young girl got very sick, and she died just as we were being transported to Theresienstadt, and she never saw the freedom. We knew she would die, she was such a gorgeous young girl, maybe 19 years old.

*So the 300 women stayed together the whole time?*

299 women, we were transported into Theresienstadt.

*How were you transported?*

In the cattle cars.

*What kind of clothes were you wearing? This was winter time.*

Yeh, don't ask, torn shoes, whatever she could up from other people that were gassed and killed, what they sorted clothes they sent in to distribute among us.

*So what did you have to keep warm?*

Nothing, I had a little coat, and a short little dress, I came in what they gave me in Auschwitz, in that. There in that Willishtal in the middle of the big barrack, there was an iron little stove with a big pipe. We could once in a while go in and wash in water our dress or water we wore, and stand, it was like a big tall black pipe hold it on the pipe and dry it. That was the only way of washing or cleaning it. But there we could wash ourselves. We had water to get washed every day. There, relatively for cleaning purposes and to keep yourself clean and washed, this was the best place yet, that Willishtal, cause there weren't so many people. Only 300 people.

*Why do you think they took you from Auschwitz to this place?*

To work there.

*They needed people to work?*

Yeh, because people died out, but there nearby was another camp from Russian prisoners of war and French prisoners of war. They also used to be brought in to another section of that factory.

*This was mostly men*

Yeh, young soldiers, and my master, the master, means my boss, was an older gray looking man, *German?*

German, late to middle 50s, he said to me: he wasn't allowed to talk to me, Hanz was his name, and he kept on teaching me how to use those machines, so they sneaked in a few words, they wanted to know what was going on , and he said to me Where my family is? Why did I leave my family and go away? He asked me things that I couldn't really give him no answer, he said where my family leave, and why did I leave my home and family and go away to work and what happened to them? But we weren't allowed to talk to him.

*Do you think they didn't know? The German people?*

They knew a lot what was going on. Because of all the wealth they kept shipping into their country, where did they get all that? It was all from dead people already, what they robbed all the people, all the countries, and they shipped it all into their own homes. And from there…

*April 1944*.

**Tape #2, side 2) )**

S*o in October of 1944 you left Willishtal, how did you leave there?*

I told you, they transported by train, did they give you a reason why? No, first they came and took us all in a 6 km march to the train, and they gave everybody a ration of bread to take along. When came there, when we arrived at the railroad, the railroads were bombed, and they couldn't put us on the train. So we marched back to a nearby camp which was about 2-3 km from us, and we stayed there one night. It was awful. People fought because they put in 300 extra people for the night, which made it very bad. People were fighting, hollering.

*Were you still with Manya?*

Yes, I have to tell you such a funny incident: when they gave us the ration of bread to take along on the journey, and we had our ration of bread from the day before. So we start to get hungry, so I said to Manya, let us eat up the staler bread from yesterday, Manya said "No Hellishi, we'll eat up the fresh bread". She loves fresh bread. "For once in my life, let me eat up, and enough, who knows, maybe they're going to take us to the chambers, so somebody else has to eat my bread? Let me go at least not hungry, to be burned" And we ate up the bread. And on the way back we ate up all of it. I said, "let's keep a piece". And she said "No, let us eat up everything, you don't know what she's going to do with us, where they're going to take us", because they kept on coming from all the places, bombing, the Americans, the Russians, and the French.

*Did you know that?*

They kept on bombing our place, she used to close us in our barracks, we would scream and cry and holler, and she wouldn't let us out; bombs were falling all around us. And it didn't hurt our building,

*Did other people get killed in Willishtal while the bombs were falling?*

No, not from us. But some people got a little bit crazy, a few women got out of their mind from fear. So Manya said let us eat up you don't know where she's going to put us, she's got no place to go with us, so at least let us go not hungry. So we eat up all the bread, everything and the next day she's marching us back to our camp. So when we arrive in Willishtal in our camp, she makes us all stand and wait out-side, and she announces that everybody who got bread should bring the bread forward and give the bread back so the women started to hide under the arms, in the pants. Wherever they could, to hide the piece of bread for later on. So when they came for her, they tried to feel you and to check you out, and if they found the bread she took it away. she smacked you, they hit you really bad and shaved off the little bit of hair again that you had. So when it Manya and me to come there, we didn't have any. So we walked just by, and Manya said to me: "see, just for once you listened to me". We were the benefactors today, it's really funny the way I listened and we ate up all the bread. For once we were really not hungry, we ate up all we had and the others tried to save, they figured maybe she won't find it on me, and when she found it, don't ask what she did to them. So we really always talk about it, Manya and I, about that incident with the bread on that march.

We stayed for several another couple of weeks, and it was getting very bad again, and the railroad was fixed, so this is when we marched again to the railroad, she put us on, we went to Theresienstadt.

*How long did that ride take?*

It took also a long time, at least 4-5 days, and we had no water, nothing. So one day, I'll never forget that, we stopped by water, like a river, some kind of a body of water. So not too many people could get out of the car. So I went out, the younger women. Manya couldn't go out, so I went out and few other women and we ran down and we took off what we could take off and wet it. We wet it and we drank what we could drink, and we brought back soaking wet towels, and kept it in the mouth to refresh yourselves and gave the other people who couldn't get out. To suck on the wet towels, to have a little bit of moisture. You know when you're thirsty it's worse than when you're hungry, when you don't have water, you suffer more than from hunger. Than if you don't have bread.

So when eventually when we arrived in Theresienstadt.

*What did it look like there?*

Ah, there it looked very good, my G-d it looked much better than all the other places we had been. There were military barracks that used to be for soldiers, years and years ago, and they kept there the people. We lived in one room, there were about 10 people we were, also on beds, bunk beds.

*So you got there in October, 1944.*

No, in April, to Theresienstadt

In April, 1944.

No April 45, To Willishtal we came in the end of 1944. And we stayed there until early 1945, and in 45, like I told you, she tried to transport us and it didn't work out, and eventually when we arrived there, it wasn't too long because…

*What did you do there?*

Nothing…that was the final place where they were going to gas us.

*They had gas chambers there?*

Yes, they were gassing people there.

*Even from your 300 women?*

No, not from us. But they were gassing people already before there, but this was their sole purpose in dropping us off there, so we should get gassed there. But then it was getting too late for them, and the Russians arrived, and they were on the run.

I'll never forget the day when we were liberated

*What do you mean when the Russians arrived? How did they arrive?*

On tanks, on foot. The Russians came and liberated us. And the Germans ran with the people who started to live around there and even the Czech people that were for the Russians started to run.

The Russians were coming in and the Germans were running away…

and then we all broke out of the barracks and went out to see what's going on .and we saw some dead Germans laying on the highway, people took revenge and killed them. and some Germans lay dead, around the highways. People started to run crazy and the Russians started to give out food, a lot of people started to eat very fast, they were hungry, lots of people got diarrhea, dysentery and died right after the liberation.

*Could you speak to the Russians?*

Manya could speak in Russian. We used to go and take food to a friend of my father's son, was also liberated in Czechoslovakia, he was such a tall lovely boy, he was swollen and very ill, and we took over food, because Gershon Frydman was in a children's camp there.

*How did you know he was there?*

I found him one day when I ran out of the camp to go around and call up to windows and to people and to see, if somebody…to call out names.

*In the village?*

In Theresienstadt.

**Post-war Conditions**

*You still stayed in the camp?*

Oh sure, we couldn't go no place, so another couple of girls and myself went out we went to different camps, different barracks, and call up and say is there so and so, and so and so by the name, we tried to call and see if there's some people who survived. Relatives friends, a sister, we never knew how bad it was so many people did not survive. Mina from Sweden, she came to the window, she sick with the typhus. I found on the street walking Gershon Frydman, he was so skinny, thin hands and thin legs, so skinny.

*He's about your age?*

3 years younger, he was later on with young boys, 15-16, he looked about 15-16 years old when he was 22 and he was in that "kinderheim". They got a little better food, so he used to bring and go over to me and Manya some good food and we would take it to my friend's Father's son, was so sick, and to Mina, she as so sick with typhus, and one day we came, the Russians wouldn't let you in so we shouldn't contact sicknesses, so Manya talked to them in Russian and finally they let us in, a couple of times to that Rachmielchik Tannenbaum, was his name, and we came in one day, and was already covered up, he already died in the night. And we used to take food often to Mina Weinberg, and then after 2-3 weeks. We got on a transport that went back to Poland.

*What do you mean by a transport?*

They tried to arrange for people who want to go back to Germany, to Poland, where ever people came from, so Manya and I and a lot of other people…

*What about Gershon?*

Gershon went with the "kinderheim" from Czechoslovakia to England. They sent a "kinderheim" transport to England.

*How did you ever know you'd have contact with him again?*

Because he went to England and I gave him my aunt's and relative's names. You see I remembered the names, and he stayed in Bloomsbury House which was a very rich organization, a Jewish organization Bloomsbury House in London, and they took care on those refugee children. And he told them he was looking for relatives, because his Mother was a cousin to my aunt. So they gave them the numbers, and they put him contact with my relatives, and he told them that I am alive, that's how I got in contact with them. They had a son, he was a major in British army and he was he stationed somewhere in Europe, I am not sure where, either was in Italy or Germany, and he got in touch with me. And he sent a girl from the UNWRA that she should give me clothes, but that was already when I was in Bergen Belsen.

Manya and Mom went on transport to Poland, to Krakow, and there when we arrived, we just met Nathan, was a young little boy, 15-16,

*Just walking the streets?*

No, we, Manya went back to where she lived once and they were living there in one of the rooms. And Yoshu went to Theresienstadt he heard some people were in Theresienstadt liberated, and someone told him he thinks Manya Neuwirth was there. So he went to Theresienstadt when we arrived in Krakow. A few days later he came, and we all lived there together.

*So you stayed in Krakow?*

For not to long*.*

*Was it bombed there?*

No, Krakow wasn't bombed, we stayed there not too long, maybe 2-3 weeks. And then I went to back home to my town

*To Szydlowiec*

To Szydlowiec and I told you when I went to this Gentile lady, the one we gave all this stuff. My parents gave her all this stuff, and she said maybe some of my children will survive and come back, you give them some, so when I came and opened her door to the other room, there was our bedroom, beddings, and sofa and everything, and our beautiful bed spreads, so I said to her, can you give me something, and she said "no, not today", can you give me some bread and potatoes. "No", she said "you come back tomorrow". So there were some friends of ours that had also survived the war and they lived in Szydlowiec for the first few weeks, and they said, "we'll chain you to bed, you're not going there tomorrow, because if you go back, they’ll cut your throat. That's what they did the Poles, If you came back after the war and you asked for something you had given them to put away, they killed you, they cut the throats of the people. So I didn't stay there too long.

*Was there an organization that you could go to and leave your name?*

No, yes. In Krakow they made a Jewish "kuldes gemeindeh", means like a Jewish center, where you could go and put your name on a Board there. And if someone came, you always looked up on the board, and I always thought maybe my husband would live through, somebody, my brother I knew won't, but maybe my sisters, if they'll see my name, but nobody came.

On that board, you could only put your name, you couldn't put where you were going. No, you could only put your name. But at least if the people knew you lived, there was a chance to find yourself. If you were alive, but if the name wasn't there, you had no chance of finding no one. From there we went, from Szydlowiec, I ran away, and I went to Lodz.

*Alone?*

With some friends,

*Not with Manya*.

Manya stayed in Krakow, and I went to Lodz, stayed by Rusha and Hershele, and her cousin was a boy, Natan Starck, he lives in California, and I talked to him when I was to visit you. He worked with Russians after the war, he was in some kind of organization with the Russians. He had a nice apartment there. So You remember Harry Langer in California? He gave me the salt and pepper, , his wife and her two sisters, they also survived the war. Their father and my father were partners in the shoe business before the war. We were very friendly, We all stayed in Natan Starck's apartment, and Rusha and Hershele, I stayed with them till I went away to Bergen Belsen.

*Why did you decide ,*

Because Bergen Belsen was the British zone.

*Was Bergen Belsen in Poland?*

No, in Germany, the British had settled there. So I went there with the mind to find out about my relatives, and in fact I did.

*In Bergen Belsen?*

Yes. Because my cousin Pat…

*How did you find out?*

Cause Gershon got them in touch with me.

*Oh, you mean your relatives in England.*

Gershon Frydman, and my cousin Pat Patashnik found me. He sent some people to me and then they sent me papers and I went to England, that's why I didn’t want to go to Israel or America, or Australia, but I wanted to go to England where I have my Father's sister, and I also got in touch with the French cousins through them the English relatives, they wrote the French cousins and they started to write to me, they also wrote to me they wanted me to come to Paris, but they were also in bad shape, they also had come back from the war, from the camps, so I figured I better go to my aunt in England. This is where I went. And her son sent me papers, that rich cousin Bob. So that's that.

*Were you suffering from any illnesses?*

A Well, I was, in one of the camps, in Willishtal, the woman pulled all my teeth out, because I had toothache for a few weeks, and I was afraid to go in. and one time I was very ill with bronchitis and laryngitis, but you were afraid to go and tell. And once in Plaszow, I was once very ill and I was in the "krankenstub", sort of a semi-hospital, for about two weeks. I had no major illnesses like typhus or something like that.

*Any emotional* *illnesses or anything?*

Of course, who didn't, emotional everyone had. Crying, especially when you saw this one found a husband, this one found a brother, a sister or a father, and I didn't find no body. I was just left alone. It was a very hard time for me.

*Afterwards were you ever in a DP camp, displaced person?*

That was Bergen Belsen

*Was that open you could come and go when you wanted at that time?*

No, not really open, because first of all you had no access of traveling or going, you had to have someone take you; you had to have written papers to go outside the camp. but I had no place to go.

*So you just stayed there*.

I just stayed there.

*How long were you there?*

I came there in early 1946, because in August, 1946, I went away to England.

In middle of August, 1946, I left.

*What did you do there for so many months?*

Nothing, you couldn't do, there was no work.

Some people had jobs in kitchens, but you had to have the privilege to be working, go 2-3 times a day to the kitchen to get our bread and soup.

*Who were you with then?*

There was Edzia, and her father.

*How did you find Edzia?*

She was liberated in Bergen Belsen.

*So when you got there, you found her there?*

I found her and her father, was liberated was liberated in Stenchehov with Yoshue together and he came to Lodz and to Krakow. We all went to Bergen Belsen. and we stayed lots of people, Rusha was there. I stayed with Rusha and Hershele till I went away to England.

*How did you find out about your Mother and everyone that you didn't find anyone?*

From my Father I knew that he died, Haskele was living there, too.

I found Haskele in Bergen Belsen, in the same block, he told me told me that my Father died.

*He saw it happen? How did your Father die?*

He died from hunger, he was swollen.

*And where was he at?*

in Skarzyko that big "arbeit" camp near Szydlowiec.

*And your Mother and sisters?*

They went with the transportation. If they didn't come back after a year, you could find nothing out, so it was obvious that they didn't live through.

*Were there any organizations that you went to for help in finding people?*

You went in every town wherever you were you went to look up on the boards.

*Was there an organization with a name?*

They formed Jewish centers, where people congregated. Lodz was one big one, everyone in Poland who lived through knew to come to Krakow or to Lodz the big cities and there you could find out if someone lived through, if you had somebody or some relatives living. That's how you found out.

*So from there in Bergen Belsen in 1946 how, those people in England gave you…*

My cousins sent me papers, and they gave me, the Joint sent me to England. Joint Distribution was a Jewish organization,

I stayed with my aunt in Luton Bradford, till the end of the year.

*Till the end of 1946*

This is where I built my courage up. The whole thing was, Gershon Boiman from Columbus, Ohio, he got married, and you didn't know Carol's mother, Helenka, gave me a letter to take to England to send off to some relatives. She didn't know if they were relatives but they were the same name as her maiden name, she was from Warsaw. and she found out that those people were also from Warsaw, maybe they are my relatives, so she gave me a letter for those people. it was the same name, her name was Volgroff, and she gave me a letter addressed to these people, and I sent this letter off to these people to London, and I lived outside London, so these people called up to my aunt's house and they came out to visit me, one day, one Sunday. Then they invited me in to London should come and visit them. So one day, on a Sunday I went and bought myself a railroad ticket and I went into London and they met the station, cause I could speak very little English.

I started to learn English. I started to learn English already in Bergen Belsen,

*There were classes to learn English?*

Yes, they gave classes in Hebrew and English, and I went and I took all those.

When I came there I stayed with them for a couple of days, and they asked me if I like it, if I am happy by my aunt. I started to cry. So they said OK, tell us what's going on and they had a Warsaw man, a butcher, who bought them to England just before the war came, when they had to leave Germany. And he came up and he said would you like to go to work? What can you do, so I said I know how to sew. And they needed a lot of people for sewing. They couldn't find enough people for work. So he said I have a couple of friends, customers in the butcher shop who have sewing factories, I 'm going to see what I can do. There was a Russian family Shetock, and he called on those people and they said they would take me but I was an alien, and you're not allowed to go to work, and here my relatives bought me that would be their responsibility, so I won't be a burden to the British government. It's the same like here, when you sponsor somebody, to bring over to this country, you are their sponsor. So this Mr. Shetock was in partnership with another man, Mr. Gross, an American man. Not American, English I said. He Went to the Home Office in London and made out for me papers so that I can stay permanently in England and that I should have the right to work, and that they will employ me. That they are willing to employ me, give me a job. And that's how I started.

*Were your relatives angry?*

When I came to England, people had ration cards. You had to buy bread, sugar, potatoes, meat, an egg, cooking fat, everything on rations. So when I came, naturally I got a ration card because my cousins bought me over, and they got an extra card for me. and I gave my card to my aunt so when she went to the grocery store, she could pick up my rations for very little money, so she had my ration card, and when I was ready, when I went in a few times and met these people and they took care of all the papers for me, and they got me the job and took care in the Home Office, that I should be allowed to work and everything was right. So I came back and I said to my aunt, Aunt Idel, I found a job in London and I think I want to go to work and make a living. She got very angry at me. I'll never forget the words she said to me: "we struggled to bring you over and now you're going to work for other people". That was the answer. Because I saw no future sitting there and scrubbing floors and washing dishes, and go from her house to her daughter's house, and from her daughter's being sent here and taking care on the laundry and fixing clothes, and babysit. I said once "I would like to go and learn English" she said "what do you need to learn English for, I've lived here for 40 years and I don't speak English". I said-that's very nice but I was 24 and I wanted to learn English and I knew I was going to live in an English speaking country, so I can't go on like this, so I tried to read the newspapers, but how much can you make sense when you're reading and you don't know too well. So she got very angry. She got a little nasty. I packed up my couple of shmattas that I had, and I asked her for my ration card. I figured I am going to live in London with these people, they'll house me, I'll pay them a rent, and I'll go to work. So I asked her for my ration card, and I didn't understand, didn't know what it's all about. so I took the ration card and I gave it to these people. They look in when I come back and they said to me, "HHHella, I'm sorry to tell you, that your rations for the whole month ahead have been collected, taken". I couldn't absorb it at first, what she means, so she explained to me, I was so upset, so sad over it, and I felt so ashamed that she was so cheap that she could do that, but these people said to me, never-the-less, don't worry, you're not going to go hungry. You're not going to starve.

So later on I also got registered with this butcher for the rations and downtown,

where I worked in a grocery store. Mr. Gross's wife, a non- Jewish lady, an English girl, very nice, she was very kind to me and she started to teach me English. And you'll be surprised how well I did, and they were so happy and pleased with my sewing, with my work. And they were very good to me. I could say that. Then I used to buy for myself food even on the black market, without the rations. I could afford to go buy a piece of salami, and a piece of meat. And a piece of butter extra. I didn't have to just live....

*Where you still living in that room*?

Later on I moved to Mrs. Ziering, they were friends of these people. And they had a big house and I took a furnished room by the Ziering's, this is when I moved. I worked already, I had a very good position, a good job downtown in London, in Oxford Street in a sample house in a high class section, where I met Mrs. Brown and her husband, and she brought us, I was very friendly with them, and she invited me very often for supper. And then in one place I worked with June's mother, with Grace, I was very friendly with them and they used to invite me often.

**Tape 3, side 1, #5))**

In 1951, then I started to write with Manya, we wrote all the time, I wrote to Manya. In 1951, Manya got Giza and Adolph to send me papers. And they asked me to,,,

*When did Manya come to America?*

1949. And I came in 1951 to America. I was just about to go and fill out papers to become a British citizen. And I figured, nah, I'm going away. Manya insisted very much to my coming, she wanted very much I should come. so I figured I've got no one there to keep me, and I figured I have more here in America, relative-wise than there.

*Your cousins?*

They never bothered to find out what do I do or where I went, or whatever. But I used to write with Klara from Paris. And then I came to America. And I lived there with Manya for four weeks they didn't let me go to work. They were very good to me. Then I went and got a very good job. Through friends of Manya's in a tailoring factory. I took a furnished room, in same house upstairs. But I only went up to sleep, I used to eat and cook with them, with Manya, Yoshue and Nathan. We did our household together. Then I stayed all day down, I only went up to wash, bathe, shower and to sleep upstairs. That's how it all came about.

*How did the war influence your values?*

In what respect?

*I guess about religion. Money.*

Religion-wise, it made my beliefs so much stronger.

*They did?*

Absolutely. Not to be fanatical religious, but for what you stand and what you are. It made my beliefs so much stronger. Because you lose so much and suffer so much for what you are. And that's exactly what we did. We were persecuted for what we were, you lost everybody for that matter, so you don't feel you want to abandon and change like some people changed their religion. Did you see on television a few weeks ago that a French man became the bishop of Paris?

What do mean about my morals?

*Your values of life.*

Well in that respect, Marilyn, a person's morals and religious feelings becomes much stronger for what you went through. Don't you see? For what the price you paid for, for what you lost, and what you believe, and what you were.

*But since you lost so much don't you feel bitter?*

I feel bitter, I never gave that up I never recovered from that. But there is nothing that can be done about it.

*What kept you going?*

It's a very hard question to answer, what kept me going. When you live through all those horrors and now not to keep on going, so what’s the purpose? And after all what you go through, and finally settle down and want to start a new life, and a new home, that was everybody's aim, and everybody's ambition, including my own. So you started out fresh after all that. I went and I found work, and I started to work, try and settle down and accomplish something in life, be somebody, that was the only way to do it. You don't go back. You keep on going forward. No matter what.

*Did you talk about your experiences with anybody?*

Mostly only with people when we get together, that we have in common a lot. You don't talk too much… I never talked to much with British people or even American people; you only talk your experiences… because they are all on the same level with people who went through the similar situations, we have a lot in common and we can understand each other.

*So you met Dad in New York and got married in America* Yes*.*

*What was your motivation in wanting to have more children?*

I wanted to have a new family.

*What kind of values did you still try to transmit?*

Having a close relationship with your parents and your children, this is the number thing in a family that should exist. To be close, and love and respect for one another; when a situation arises comes on and some difficulties in life, sickness or no matter what, we all stand together, shoulder to shoulder. That's what the most important thing and I think I accomplished that.

*You think so?*

I definitely think so.100% nobody has. Could say I did. That's all right. Lots of things to cry for

*Did you join any survivor's organizations?*

At first there weren't any. But there was one, I used to get literature, it was sort of a Polish, I have some literature from New York.

*Jewish?*

Absolutely. It's called the Polish "Jewish Combatants" something like that.

*That's the magazine I sent you.*

I used to belong with them years ago. After the war everybody sort of registered with them…Out here there isn't too much to be active with.

*Why did you want to join?*

You always keep abreast with all the news. Among people not just myself. What's taking place. Here in NJ not much, to get news

*Did you apply for reparations?*

Yes I did.

*Why get reparations?*

You mean to get compensation money? Because they asked you to register, then they sent letters to people like myself that we should fill out,

*Who is they?*

The West German government after the war, and they wanted to know where we were and what you did and they sent you a certain amount of money for the work you did.

*For the work you did* *for them.*

It was like next to nothing.

People had the privilege to go to a Dr. and be examined and they gave a diagnosis, what is wrong with a lot of the people; of course I had some damage that they pulled my teeth out when I was so young, and they gave me some compensation money, a few hundred dollars,700 $ for pulling my teeth.

*But you still get money from Germany now?*

Yes, that's a pension, it's called a pension for Life.

*For what reason?*

For the work I did and health damages because they took away the years that I could have gone maybe to school and learned something or do something for myself, they took away best years that a person achieves in their early adulthood. Lots of people like myself never had a chance to do anything with ourselves. So they are paying a certain amount of compensation money.

*And here you spoke mostly Yiddish at home.*

We raised you and Harry in Yiddish, you could hardly speak English when you first started school.

*How come you chose not to speak Polish here?*

Because I'm very angry at the Polish people. I don't see no purpose why their language should be used in my house, or their presence should be alive in my home. If I could erase all memories of ever living in Poland or being Polish, I would. So why should I have to speak it in my home. I'd rather speak English than Polish. Lots of people do that.

*What did you try to communicate to us your children about the Holocaust?*

When you were little not too much. What can you explain to little children, when you're2, 3, 4 even 5 years old. But when you started to get older and you started to ask me questions, little by little…

*What kind of questions did we ask?*

Once you came up and saw other kids have a grand mom, and you said "where is my grand mom"?

Because at first Uncle Herman and Tanta Eda used to say we'll be the grandmother and grandfather for you and Harry, but you called them aunt and uncle, which is right, they are; then one day you asked "how come I have a grandma and a grandpa". This is when I started to explain, little by little, you got a little older, you probably used to see things on television, or read, and this is how, and I used to show you pictures. And this is when I started to tell you little by little the story. You can't come out and tell children a story what happened in 5-6 years when they are little yet. It has to grow on you.

*Do you think it was important to tell about it* or do you think you should have not said anything?

Absolutely. I thought it was most essential that the children should know

*Why is that?*

Because they should know what has happened, why you don't have a grandma and a grandpa*,* and aunts and uncles, anddifferent relatives like other Americans people have, and also important for future, what can happen. You should know about it, and if my children and my children's children won't know about it, then the whole thing will be forgotten. And it shouldn't, never.

*How would that make you feel if you noticed it was forgotten?*

I would be very sad about it. If it should be erased. Because anything like this can happen anytime happen, anyplace. Again. It is very sad to think so, but unfortunately it is the truth. And the way things go you can tell what's happening.

*Do you think another Holocaust can happen? Do you think it's possible?*

Oh Yeh,

*Why is that?*

The way the Neo-Nazis rise, and with the Ku Klux Klan in this country, and altogether the way the situation is in America now, it is very easy to play on the people, the population. And they always have to have a scapegoat, if it will be the Jews, the Cubans; it will be the Black people they will always find someone to blame for the situation. Isn't that the truth?

Let us hope it won't happen. I just hope it won't. The way things are at the present, it isn't too good. The future is very sad looking right now. It was very good when I came in 1951, it was very good. But Anti-Semitic situations come up in all parts of the world, and America is no exception. Now it is very, very much on the rise. Lots of other people can feel it the same way in all parts of the country. Don't you feel it and see it?

*Now you have a question!*

Well I feel it and I read and listen to news the same like everybody else. Of course, it hurts very much. People like myself to see that something like this could occur again, it's very sad, it's very painful. But I tell you one thing; I wouldn't go through it another time, never. I would never go through it another time. I wouldn't give them a chance to do what they want to do. I know what to do myself.

*What kind of feelings do you have about this country that you live in now?*

I think America is a wonderful country. It's a beautiful country.

If somebody has the ability and the willingness and the opportunity to work. You can be anything in this country; you have the opportunities for all that here. More than anyplace in the world. Where but America can you come with no money, nothing, and make a home and a business and be counted for an American. Where else can you do that? It's really the greatest country in the whole world! Unfortunately not too many American people can see that. they down America.

*Does that bother you when they do that?*

It does, it does. They don't know the difference, they act like spoiled children.

They never knew what a war is, they never saw fighting, they've never been in no camps or places to suffer, to see, and they think it's coming to them; they think that's how it can be always, but unfortunately it isn't so. And they take everything for granted in this country. Many a times I told American people all to do to appreciate their own land, their own country is to go outside go out to other countries, to see the way people live, the way people work, what they have from their work, and they'll come running back and kiss the ground. Because in other countries average working people don't have all working people have here. I am not talking about wealthy business people, working class people own a beautiful home, TVs and cars, push button stoves and push button this and push button that. No place in the world has like here with so little. And they give you the opportunity to work, pay and enjoy things, the luxury of things. In other countries in a lifetime people cannot achieve this. What they can achieve here in the very first few years when they start to work and building a home. There you grow old and die before you achieve anything. In any of the European countries, you don't have to go far and look, I know how it was back home and I know how it is even now. With the progressive world people. People don't have that much. No one that we know. Although our home isn't that elaborate, but do any of our relatives in Europe live like we live here, or in Israel. And the people work just as hard, maybe even harder than we do.

*Is there anything else that you would like to add that hasn't been covered by these questions?*

Not really. The only thing I would add is that this a wonderful thing for One Generation After.

That they created an organizations like this, to keep young people aware what has been and what can be. And they should carry on the memory of their grandparents and relatives.

*How did you feel about me asking these questions, Mom?*

It's a hard thing answer. You have to compose yourself a lot. You have to… It's hard to go back to those things, although I never even one day in the year or in a week stop thinking about it, it's hard to dig back to all those little details, and then it comes to mind people that never made it. Like me even. And hope it never happens that my children, any for that matter, none of the people in the whole world never have to go through something like that situation. It's not a thing that can be erased from your memory or you heart. You have to live with this. The rest of your life. It's not an easy thing to go through your life when you had parents, sisters, brother, aunts and uncles, and you have no one. It's not an easy thing to go through life alone.

*In what way do you think the Holocaust has affected the course of your life?*

In what respect do you mean, in the course of my life?

*How would things have been different?*

Well, I would have lived in some town back home in Poland, I would have lived nearer to my parents. I would have had the privilege of having parents much longer. My parents were very young people. My parents never lived the day to be 50. And that's awful when I think about it. And I'm going to be already 60.

*Let me ask you one more question.* *You know the necklace you gave me, with the little diamonds. Where did you get it?*

I bought this for some ration, crackers in Bergen Belsen, by some people who came in to clean and do work and things. German people used to come in because they were poor, they didn't have what to eat; so they used to bring in I gave them rations, crackers and stuff like that.

*Is there anything else you want to add to this, Mom?*

No.

*Shall I turn it off? Thank-you.*

Was it a good interview?

*I think it went well*.

She met me in Plaszow, walking crying on the street, two months, 3-4 months before I had lost my husband and lost my baby, and I came there and I had nothing. She saw me walk on the street, cri, and she called me to her bunk bed. She and her husband so good to me. Used to give me a piece of bread, piece of some soup. Her husband used to go out with a commando and go outside Plaszow, in the city. And bring home a "bissel" soup or piece of extra bread; they would share that with me. They could have sold it for a diamond, for a gold ring, Marilyn, but they would give a little extra food.

*Why did they decide to go to Sweden?*

After the war,…I really don't know.

*Mom, Why was it so important for you to teach us Yiddish?*

Because I wanted it should be carried on.

*Did Dad feel the same way?*

Yes, in fact Dad and I would speak Yiddish among ourselves. Yes, I speak English but I feel

Yiddish should never die in a Jewish home. And you should not be ashamed of it. Look what we paid for it. For what we were born and raised to be. Why should we abandon it? Why shouldn't we live it as Jews? Don't have to be fanatically religious and orthodox and separate yourself from people, you understand? But you can be a Jew in so many different ways. And a good Jew.

*Did you feel that the people in this community in South Jersey, not the people you knew with your experiences in Europe, but the people from here, felt the same…*

In many ways, I would say that mostly the Polish Jews, the Polish survivors feel the same way would think so. All the people that we know.

Hebrew school and keep the Yiddishe atmosphere at home, all the people around here, You name one that is not. Right? The Gelmans, the Lifshins, the Zyndorfs, the Ehrlichs, although their children many of them went different ways, they chose different paths, they chose different ways to live their lives, but never the less their parents gave them the right approach to it. Don't you think so? You know, you know it, too.

(Marilyn, Mach es aus un lome machen essen)

*Mom, from where do you know that song?*

….."zingen in de heim" but after the war, very popular for "kaztettlers"*,* means concentration camp people, "kah ztet" we used to call it. KC- kah ztet in Polish. Among us, and I always try to get the lyrics for it and I could never find it.

"Vie ahien zoll ich gehen", (Steve…& Edie Gorme)

Tell me where can I go, there's no place I can see, where to go where to go

Every door is closed for me.

To the left, to the right.

It's the same in every land, there is nowhere to go, and it's me who should know

Won't you please understand?

Now I know where to go, where my folks proudly stand

Let me go, let me go

To that precious promised land

No more left, no more right

Lift your head and see the light

I am proud can't you see, for at last I am free

No more wandering for me.

Vie ahien zoll ich gehen, ver can enferen mir,

vie zu gehen ,vie zu gehen

az vermacht iz yeder tier,

siz der velt gross genuck, nur fur mir iz enk und klein,…

vie a gluck mus zturick

sis stushert mir der glick

vie ahien zoll ich gehen

Now I know where to go, where my folks proudly stand,

Let me go, let me go

To that precious promised land

No more left, no more right

Lift your head and see the light

I am proud can't you see, for at last I am free, no more wandering for me.

Chronological List of Events:

1921-born in Pontoise, France (Polish Jews living in Paris)

1925-approx. Family returns to Poland, Szydlowiec to say Kadish

1939-German invasion of Poland

1940-Marriage to Koenig

1942, Fall-Deportation of Szydlowiec Jews to Treblinka, going into the Krakow ghetto

1943, March-Liquidation of the Krakow ghetto and going to Plaszow Concentration Camp

1944, April-Transport to Auschwitz; end of 1944- to Willishtal

1945, April-Liberation from Theresienstadt

1946, August-Going to London

1951-Going to USA

1953-Marriage to Simon Holzer, starting a new life in New Jersey

1955-1957-Birth and raising 2 children

1988-2002-birth of grandchildren

2008-Moving to DC area

2013, January 20- passed away, DC.

List of People:

Mom- Chaya Sara Wester, Suzanne Claire Holzer, Hela, 1921-2013

Her Father-Hershel Wester, 1895-1942, Hasag Skazysko

Her Mother-Miriam Radolnik Wester, 1896-1942, Treblinka

Her older brother-Velvel Wester

Her little sisters:

Hanna Esther, 1926-1942, Treblinka

Rachel Leah, 1930-1942, Treblinka

Her first husband-Gershon Koenig, sister to Edzia

Her baby-Hannah Perel, 12, 1942-3, 1942

Gershon Frydman-cousin,

Gershon Boiman – wife-Helenka Volgroff; parents >Carol

Manya Neuwirth-cousin; Yoshue >parents to Natan

Mina Weinberger-Sweden>Daniel

Aunt in England-Idel Patashnik>son in British army

Aunt in Paris-Batcha Laks > mother to Klara> Jocelyne; & Michel> Brigitte

Aunt in Syzdlowiec- Miriam Eta married W.Dreinudle>Haskele Dreinudle, Kfar Saba

Marilyn Lee Holzer-her daughter

Harry Joseph Holzer- her son