Interview with Frances Zatz
April 9, 1992
North Woodmere, New York

Q: Today is April 9, 1992, I am Anthony Di Iorio and I am at the home of Mrs. Frances Zatz of North Woodmere, New York. I am here on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to interview Mrs. Zatz about her experiences during the Holocaust. Good morning.

A: Good morning.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Warsaw.

Q: In Warsaw, Poland?

A: Warsaw, Poland, right.

Q: In what year?

A: In 1932, May 4th.

Q: Were you an only child?

A: I was not, I had a younger sister, four years younger than myself. Her name is Eileen. She lives not too far from me here and we see each other very frequently.

Q: What was your name when you were a Polish girl in Poland?

A: Frania. Everybody called me Frania and I'm being called by my friends that know me from Europe still Frania.

Q: And your family name?

A: Prawer. That was pronounced Praver. Praver in Polish.

Q: What kind of home did you live in Warsaw?

A: Well, our first home that I recollect, which was a very tiny apartment, on Nilefke (?). We lived over there for awhile until my mother gave birth to my sister and I guess the apartment became too small and we moved to Moronovska 2 (?), and

we lived there even while the ghetto started to be built. The Wall, which happened to have been on the corner.

Q: What kind of apartment was it?

A: Very small rooms, but they were like two small bedrooms, a living room and another little room where my parents worked. They used to do ladies lingerie, like piecework. They used to bring it home every morning and work until late at night, and if they finished making the lingerie they would fold it up, put it in boxes and deliver them to a certain place where I suppose they paid them rather well. Because from what I can recall now, that couldn't have been a very cheap apartment. It was a brand new building when we moved in, it was a corner building, we were on the fourth floor and everyone had a window, so I remember it being a lovely apartment.

Q: Was your father in business for himself or was he producing for retail outlets?

A: It was together with my mother. They worked together in the house. They had machines and I remember them working until late hours at night. You know putting out their certain quotas that they used to bring in.

Q: So they would make lingerie which would then be brought to stores, which would then be sold.

A: I don't think that they brought it to the stores themselves, they brought it back to the people who gave them the pre-cut pieces. They just put them together, folded them up and put them in the boxes and delivered them back to the places. I suppose a factory or a warehouse and they, on the other hand, would sell it to the stores who sold it to clients.

Q: How would you describe the religious life of your family?

A: We were not religious. I remember Polish and Yiddish being spoken in the house. I don't even remember, too well, observing any of the holidays too well. I do not recollect any specifics except for some minute little things, I guess it must have been maybe like Chanukah I would receive some gifts and I was told it was a Jewish holiday, and I was told also there was a holiday, of course now I realize it was Passover, where we couldn't eat bread. But, I didn't remember it too well. I remember eating something else beside bread. So this is all I have a recollection of actual holidays.

Q: Both of your parents were Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: So you would describe them as secular?

A: Yes.

Q: Jewish but secular.

A: Right.

Q: Were both of your parents born in Warsaw?

A: No. My father was born in Warsaw, my mother was born in Kovrin (?), in a small town.

Q: What were their names, your parents' names?

A: My mother was always called Toby. I guess in every language it's still Toby. My father was called, my mother had a name for him Srulik (?), she used to call him. His Jewish name was Israel. I remember this mostly as Srulik I remember my mother calling his names. That's why this name was more outstanding than whatever else other people called him. And his sisters in Israel also when they talked about him it's always Srulik. That's how he was known. I guess it's an abbreviation of Israel.

Q: What kinds of schools did you attend in Warsaw?

A: I did not go to any school. I never had a chance to go to school because the war broke out, but my father gave me some education. We used to sit, he used to teach me how to read and write and I used to have to spend a certain amount of time everyday looking, if it was an old book, or if it was just a page from something, whatever was readable material he made sure that I know how to read and write.

Q: In Polish?

A: In Polish only. Yes.

Q: So you could read and write Polish and you could understand Yiddish?

A: Well, Yiddish I learned actually in the United States.

Q: You didn't understand Yiddish.

A: I did not know a word of Yiddish until I came to this country and my mother made me learn Yiddish because it was the only way she could correspond with me here. She did not allow me to speak Polish in this country. She did not know too well English, which I caught on within one year. I spoke English when I came here, and for her it was more difficult and she used to speak Yiddish most of the

time to all her friends and I guess in no time I learned the language and she would talk to me in Yiddish and I would answer back in English or half Polish until after awhile I learned the language well.

Q: Did you know your grandparents?

A: My mother's father, he came once, I remember seeing him once. He was a tall man with a beard. It must have been a special occasion and I think I wasn't more maybe than three or four years old. It must have been my mother's sister's wedding when I saw him, was the only time I saw him. My grandmother died after she gave birth to my mother's youngest brother, and my father's side, I don't remember a grandfather at all, but I do remember a grandmother, my father's mother living around the corner from us when we lived on Moronovska (?). It was walking distance, but the woman was paralyzed. She lived there with my father's oldest brother. His name was Shlamik (?), and she was in the last bedroom and I remember my father said every week we have to go and see grandma. So that's , I remember just seeing her being ill in bed. She probably must have had polio, I imagine.

Q: Did you have any hobbies or pets when you were growing up?

A: No.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up?

A: Alive.

Q: You wanted to be alive?

A: Just to be alive. I was grateful. Nothing else and just to make sure there's always enough food. Never to go hungry again.

Q: Before the war was up, did you have any ---?

A: I don't remember too much from before the war. I was just a child playing. I had some toys. Since one of my mother's sisters had a booth in a market, I guess it was like a flea market at that time. Like an indoor flea market and she had a booth. She would sell toys so she used to bring me certain things I would play with and she told me not to break them because they would be resold tomorrow. Naturally I could never keep anything, but I played with a lot of things and then she would carefully put them back in boxes and sold them.

Q: Did you have any non-Jewish friends before the war?

A: No. I remember also as I'm talking to you, my biggest love, I remember, I was five or maybe six or even younger, my father taking me to the movies to see

Shirley Temple. I fell in love with her and at that time I used to go to see every Shirley Temple movie.

Q: So you liked to see movies?

A: I loved to see movies, especially with Shirley Temple. They were the only movies I ever saw was only when Shirley Temple appeared. Which, I guess, must have been once a year or whenever

Q: Were these dubbed?

A: Yes, they were dubbed.

Q: Were there any other films that you liked?

A: I never saw any other films. Those were the only ones. I must have seen maybe two or three Shirley Temple movies and they used to sell outside, when you walked out of the movie theater, they used to sell little rings with her photograph that used sort of flash like she would smile on those little pictures on the ring. That was my biggest treasure.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism in the thirties when you were growing up?

A: No. No, ,none whatsoever. I didn't know the meaning of it even.

Q: Would you say you had a rather protected or rather sheltered life?

A: Yes. Very sheltered. I was very secure. I was a very happy child and having a little sister, you know, made my life complete, I guess. Somebody to play with.

Q: You didn't particularly dream of having a baby brother?

A: No.

Q: Would you say your parents were easy going or strict?

A: Very easy going.

Q: If it had been possible, you would have loved growing up in your house in Warsaw?

A: Yes, oh yes. It was very comfortable. I remember my relatives living very close by and we used to gather rather frequently. Visit each other. I don't remember what days or what evenings, but we were always not so much with friends; I don't remember my mother's friends or my father's friends, but I remember the relatives always. Cousins, aunts, uncles.

Q: Do you remember any grownups talking about politics during those years?

A: No. I remember that in 1939, they were talking about a war that looks like it was going to be a war. I remember everybody being worried. I remember the look on their faces, they were very worried that there was going to be a war. Then of course all of a sudden we were covered with bombs. They started bombing Warsaw.

Q: So you remember the outbreak of the war?

A: I remember the outbreak of the war. I remember us running downstairs in a shelter in the basement of the building and hiding until the sirens blew and then you could go upstairs again. And this happened quite a few times a day sometimes. It was very bad and we had very few close calls, but our building was never hit. Not in 1939.

Q: Do you remember the battle for Warsaw in September 1939?

A: When you say a battle ---

Q: A battle, the bombardment and the siege of Warsaw?

A: I remember the wall being built and I remember people being squished into quarters. There were so many people in the streets at that time, they had to move from other areas to move to another area where we were all like closed in. It's like if you have people scattered all over they took a certain section and they made you move there. You had to find a room where to stay. People usually stayed with relatives. This did not last very long because the starvation came in very soon after the water, gas and electricity was shut off, food was shut off. No newspapers, no radios and starvation came in very fast. I remember every morning I looked out my window I saw dead people downstairs. They used to come around with wagons and pick them up.

Q: Can we back track just a little bit. Do you remember when the Germans first marched into the city of Warsaw? When you first saw Germans in the streets?

A: I saw them, it seems like, after the bombing. They were like animals running on the motorcycles. I would see trucks. They made such noises that it frightened me tremendously. And everybody used to hide and run away, escape. They would hit people as would drive by or run over people. And I remember them as my instinct told me this very cruel people, they are. And it's best to hide and not show your face. I understood that immediately. Even though I saw my parents talking quietly to each other, I suppose they were thinking what to do, where to get the next bite of food, but I saw them worried and I realized what it was.

Q: This was the year you were supposed to start school?

A: Yes.

Q: You probably had made plans?

A: I made plans. I remember my mother buying me a beautiful outfit. I think the sailor suit I was wearing in the picture. This must have been the picture. The outfit I was going to wear.

Q: What school would you have gone to?

A: There was a public school I would say about ten blocks away from us. We used to walk there. There was a park not too far from us. I remember my father used to take me for walks. We went to the movies, we used to go for ice cream, go walking in the park and play and he passed by once pointing out to a building saying, see, someday you'll go to this school right over here. So I remember it was not far because we walked there.

Q: So your father liked to take you for walks?

A: Yes, my father would be the one to take me for walks and explain to me, and tell me stories and things, sort of educating me.

Q: Would you know what kind of schooling your father had?

A: Yes. My father finished Gymnasia and I remember all the children of his family, brothers and sisters were all educated.

Q: How many languages could he speak?

A: I don't remember, but I did not understand certain languages that he spoke, but as you can see he wrote German on the photographs. I suppose he must have known more than two or three languages that I probably did not understand. I only spoke Polish. That was the only language I knew and everything else sounded like clatter to me.

Q: Which it was. Do you recall any other changes that occur after the Germans take over Warsaw? You couldn't go to school?

A: Everything was cut off.

Q: What about your father's business?

A: The business had ceased. Stopped right away. There was no need for it. It seemed like there was no money. There was nothing.

Q: So what did your mother and father do during these months?

A: Trying to survive. We were very busy hiding in the shelters, getting food together, trying to sell off things and to buy maybe flour, maybe an apple. Whatever was available. Of course a lot of Poles were coming in to work in the ghetto. There were factories, there were businesses and they would still be coming in. They would smuggle in things, a lot of Jews would buy things off them and give away a lot of precious things. They would give away art, they would give away jewelry. They would give away whatever was precious for the slightest piece of food.

Q: Do you remember when the ghetto was first set up?

A: Yes. I lived in the building and on the corner of that particular building the wall had started, so I was watching the bricks going up. Men were working over there, which I didn't understand at first why they're closing off. In other words our building was on the inside of the ghetto which was the last building by the wall. I remember that and I remember them putting, the wall was so high, it seemed so high to me, they were putting broken glass, I remember the smashing of bottles and glass putting on the top of the wall.

Q: Do you remember how long it took for them to build the wall?

A: It did not take long at all. It seemed it grew by a foot or two or whatever.

Q: Do you remember who was doing the construction work?

A: I didn't know who. I saw men working. I don't know if they were Poles or Jews. I don't know, but I saw men working and the Germans watching.

Q: Not soldiers?

A: They were German soldiers watching, standing with guns and civilians were working, and I don't know who they were.

Q: Do you remember when this wall was built?

A: The date? I cannot give you a date.

Q: The time of the year?

A: I guess it was all the same time, the very beginning, during the bombing and that's when the wall started. They must have decided right then and there. The bombs will stop, you know, start building the wall.

Q: So you continued to live in your old apartment?

A: Yes, we stayed in our apartment.

Q: Did anyone move into your apartment?

A: No.

Q: Do you remember any other changes following the building of this wall? For example, when you went out in public were there any changes in the way you went out?

A: Well, you did not go out in public. You were afraid to go out. You never knew when the Germans would come through the gate and attack and capture people. And a lot of people were captured. I remember seeing children dying and begging for food. I also remember my father taking me to a woman who myself and four other little girls we used to be taught how to read and write. So he used to take us, maybe once or twice a week, in the evening, walk over and take another little girl, I don't know who she was, maybe she was a neighbor, and take us to this woman who used to teach us how to read and write for about, this went on for six months. I would say I was being taught to read and write for the first six months maybe. And even that stopped because I was beaten up once in the street. I was wearing a little jacket and somebody wanted my jacket so they ripped my jacket off and they hit me and I came home bleeding and this was the end of my education, I guess.

Q: Or the beginning of a new education?

A: Yes. You don't go out anymore. Because at that time even there were hours, there were times you knew when you were safe to go out in the street. And she was only like maybe about a block away, I remember it was only about a five minute walk. So that's the reason why my father would take me or pick me up or I would walk back. And that was the end of that.

Q: This was inside the ghetto after the wall had been built?

A: Yes, inside the ghetto.

Q: Do you know who attacked you?

A: I don't remember the face. I know I remember somebody hitting me and ripping off my jacket and I had something in my hand, maybe it was a little briefcase or something was grabbed. Maybe somebody who was starving, maybe he thought I had food. Maybe his child was cold and he needed a jacket or something so he took it off me.

Q: So he got it?

A: So he got it, yes.

Q: He was Jewish?

A: Yes, it was in the ghetto. You saw a lot of these things happening. You were afraid to carry something. If you had something to carry, you usually carried it inside your coat so nobody would detect it, or else you were attacked by other people if they suspect you have food on you, they'd do anything. I guess when your stomach is growling and you're starving you know no honor, you know no shame, you know nothing, you just know one thing, you have to eat.

Q: The few times that you did go out with your father, for that matter, did you wear any kind of armband or star or anything?

A: No. I did not have to wear anything. After that incident I was never allowed anymore to go outside anymore.

Q: Do you remember whether your parents wore Jewish armbands?

A: Yes, when my father went out he put on the armband and the minute he entered the building, he would take it off. Just in case somebody spots him, he had to wear it.

Q: How about your mother?

A: I don't remember my mother. I guess she must have worn it also. I don't remember her putting it on or taking it off. Maybe she did it outside when she left the apartment. It was something you did not wear with pride, so like you didn't want even your own children to see this so no questions would be asked. But I saw people wearing them. I didn't ask because I think I knew what the answer was going to be so I didn't ask too many questions. I was very silent.

Q: I saw a photograph of your mother during these years. She looked like a very glamorous as well as a very lovely woman.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Did she go out a lot in the ghetto?

A: Well the only time it was when they closed the ghetto and as I said the factory still continued and she got a job there. A very prestigious job. But this took a while until she went out on the Polish side and she was in contact with the other Poles about papers. She got alien papers that she was not Polish, she was

Ukrainian. Those were the papers she was given and her name was Ana Gregorief (?). I will never forget that because she spoke Russian. She did not come from Warsaw so her Polish had a very bad accent. And, therefore, to make sure she is not questioned about being Jewish, she became Ukrainian. Then it's OK to have an accent. So she became Ana Gregorief and paid a fortune for these papers and as Ana Gregorief she got the job in the ghetto so she could go in and go out and she would bring in food.

Q: So she worked in the ghetto, but she was living outside of the ghetto.

A: She had to go in and she had to go out. She could go in and go out, she had a special passport. The factory was like going around the clock. This was not a nine to five job. They were in a rush to make these uniforms or whatever they were doing over there.

Q: So she was making uniforms?

A: Yes, the factory where they were making uniforms, maybe they were making other things. She never discussed what they were doing there.

Q: You don't remember the name of the factory?

A: No, but I remember her once, she came in, but this was a long time, much later, 1943 already when she brought in a suitcase into the apartment and there were uniforms on the top and when she picked up the uniforms I remember seeing guns. Long shotguns and boxes I guess must have been bullets. She was bringing it into the ghetto from the Polish side because they were talking about an uprising.

Q: So your mother smuggled guns into the ghetto?

A: Yes, she smuggled in several times, and of course she carried the suitcase as if it weighed only twenty pounds and it could have weighed over a hundred pounds. That's how she got all dressed up so people would never dare, or the Germans never dared to question her. She would just show them the flashed Ana Gregorian, her name, her special pass that she could go in and go out and that's how she got away.

Q: Does the name Tobins mean anything to you?

A: I don't remember any names.

Q: I know there was a factory making uniforms it was known as the Tobins Factory.

A: I never saw the factory. The only time I ever saw was the time she brought the suitcase when she brought once. I said what are these uniforms and she said these belong to the factory. That's all I remember her saying. I don't know if this was

the factory or another factory. I don't even know where she worked. There was no conversation, there was nothing was talked about so my sister and I could hear. My father and mother when they talked nobody else could hear a word they were saying. She didn't want us to know anything.

Q: She slept though in the apartment?

A: Yes. She would go in, she would go out she would like to go back and forth. She had the permission to go back and forth.

Q: She would also bring food?

A: She also brought food. So we had food and nobody bothered her. Because nobody after awhile knew who she was. As people were dying out and, of course the crowds in the very beginning were all gone already and there were very few people now in the streets and those that survived already at that point were hidden in their apartments or in basements trying to scrounge food, together mainly. The ghetto was getting smaller at that point, we had moved several times already.

Q: So you were forced to move out of the apartment?

A: Oh, yes, we were forced out of the apartment and they said we have to move. My mother at that time would say, we're going to move to a much nicer place. She still tried to protect us that we should not know what's going on. We were like in the blind in a way because she never wanted to reveal to us what was going on at that time. But I remember moving and then again moving and then again moving. We were constantly on the go.

Q: Were these nicer places?

A: No, they were not. They were just temporary quarters. We would walk into a building and we would be the only ones in an entire building. We could take any apartment, so we would run to a building that was not bombed and there were empty apartments. Every floor we looked in all over, we looked for food. There was nothing there and we just slept anywhere.

Q: What kind of food would your mother bring you?

A: She would bring maybe a potato, she would bring flour, some kind of a vegetable, a lot of fruit, a piece of bread, a piece of salami once she brought in. It was scrounged together, I guess, like leftovers they looked like more. It was not like you went to a store and you bought it. She would ask the workers maybe they had leftovers from lunch, whatever it was, those were the leftovers she would buy it from them.

Q: Before the time of the ghetto, were you considered a picky eater?

A: I was a picky eater, yes I was a very picky eater.

Q: These are not the things she would have ordinarily given you?

A: No.

Q: How about your father, did he get any jobs during this period? Was he working at any factories?

A: No. He was watching my sister and me while my mother was the one looking very Polish. Because as you can see on the photograph she did not resemble a Jew. That's the reason why she got away. So she would get dressed up, she bought herself a coat, a hat to make sure she looked as elegant as possible. Because if you look ragged you know, you would have been stopped right away. Like this if you walked with your head up high and very positive nobody bothered you. I guess your attitude was very important. That's why she survived.

Q: Your father stayed home and watched the kids?

A: Well, he was watching us and he also kept an eye on his mother, his relatives, we were still in contact in the beginning, we're still in contact with them.

Q: They also lived in the ghetto?

A: In the original ghetto. When the ghetto got smaller, my grandmother must have died because I never heard about her again or maybe she was shot, I don't know, and neither were her uncles. Like nobody had remained. It was just my father, my mother and the two of us. We were kept on the move. And then after awhile we found out that one of his brothers was nearby when my mother said would try to find her. She'll go into the building and would try to find her. We found her, we found only my father's sister-in-law, my aunt. She had given birth to a baby at that time. She was there with an infant. The infant was crying and we heard like an echo, the ghetto was so empty. We heard the echo and we heard German voices. We heard shotguns and we saw my aunt was thrown out of the window. She was on the sidewalk and the baby was ripped in half was also on the sidewalk.

Q: So you saw your aunt?

A: I did not see, my father saw and my mother saw. We were hidden, at that time we were hidden in a basement so I did not see anything what was going on the outside.

Q: So your aunt was thrown out of the window?

A: Yes. This I remember my father and my mother, my father crying terribly.

Q: Your cousin was torn?

A; Yes, torn, it was a newborn infant.

Q: So all you heard was the echo and the crying?

A: Crying and then a silence. And if somebody marched blocks away you could hear the footsteps. Especially German footsteps. You could hear German cars, trucks or motorcycles. It was a dead silence. Nobody even breathed so you are not discovered. At that time you are already hidden in ghetto and the building that we were there were quite a few people with us. I would say about twenty people were together and this is when the conversation started with the uprising. And then other people came and we were all like together in this one particular area and they started talking. You know, there were very few of us left, that something should be done and this is where my mother started bringing in the guns. Whatever should be done and this is when my mother began bringing in the guns. Whatever we need to do, she said, first we need to shoot our way out.

Q: Were you afraid?

A: Yes. I was very afraid. I didn't know what the next hour was going to bring. If we will be discovered. My biggest fear was if someone will put a gun against my head and shoot, because I've seen so may to others and it looks so terrifying, this was my biggest fear. It was bigger than starvation even.

Q: So you saw people who were shot.

A: Oh yes. I saw people shot, oh yes.

Q: People you knew?

A: People I knew? Even if people I knew I probably would not have recognized them. People looked very different during the war. They became extremely skinny, they ages, they were very ragged looking, very dirty. There was no water. If there would be no rain, we would never have nothing to drink. So even if somebody was shot, I did not know who they were. I didn't know anybody. I didn't recognize anyone. I just saw their brains being shot out.

Q: Right on the street?

A: On the street. Running. If you were running they would grab somebody and shoot them right in the head. If it was a child, or a woman, it made no difference, and leave them. And then there would be somebody to come with a little wagon picking up bodies. The bodies piling up and taking them someplace.

Q: How long did this go on?

A: This went on until the plans were made for the Jewish uprising. Which was, I would say, 1943. Since 1939. At that point when my mother knew there was going to be an uprising, she made arrangements for my sister and myself to be taken out of the ghetto and taken by the Poles, one family was called Doblinkov (?) and whom I was held in their home. I was taken out, smuggled out of there.

Q: By your mother?

A: No, not by my mother, the Poles with a truckload of merchandise went out and we were hidden on the truck and then we were supposed to be dropped off at a certain point, we jumped off the truck and they were waiting for us. Two people were waiting for us, one took my sister, one took me. I didn't know the whereabouts of my sister and this was the last time I saw my parents. And we stayed with the Doblinkov (?) family which was about, quite a ride with the trolley. At that time, on the Polish side, the trolleys were going. So we were changing trolleys and going like to the outskirts of Warsaw and I saw a very little, private little cottage, a little house. This is where I was brought in by this man. He had a daughter about a year or two older than myself and a son about a year or two younger than me. And he introduced me to the family that I am going to live with them and I and their mother's sister's daughter who died so they are to take care of me and I come from another town. I don't remember. Lodz or Krakow, or whatever. They picked a city and said this is where I come from and this is going to be my name and this is where I'm going to stay. My name was Yasha.

Q: Yasha?

A: Yes, I became Yasha Doblinkov. And they said this is where I am to stay and this is going to be my family. And I had to adjust to that instantly. The first thing, I was very happy, they gave me food. They gave me, I remember, a giant bowl of potatoes, mashed potatoes and I think I finished it. It was I think maybe five pounds and I finished it all. And they gave me a glass of milk, which is something I had not seen in years, since before the war. That was good. So I think they got through to me through my stomach.

Q: You had never seen these people?

A: I have never seen them, I have never known them.

Q: Would you say you were quite skinny when you arrived there?

A: Yes. I was very skinny and she said to me, I am going to fatten you up. Don't worry you're going to look very nice.

Q: Did she say anything else to you?

A: Yes. Of course when the uprising started, which did not last very long. After that all of ghetto was burning. It was aflame. One giant flame and she took me outdoors and she said to me, you know, this is where you come from and this is where your parents are. And I remember remarking the sky was so red, like blood, it looked like and it was towards evening. And she said to me, you will never see your parents again. They perished in the fire. So you are going to stay with us. I am going to take you to church. You're going to go through a Communion. You'll become a Christian and you'll become part of my family and we will treat you equally with my children. I started to cry. I wanted to see my mommy and I wanted to see my daddy and I didn't want to live with them. I didn't want to go to a church. But she said, if you are not going to obey we will have to take you back where you came from. So I just closed my mouth. I shut up and I didn't say another word. I just did whatever they told me to do.

Q: And you ate the food?

A: And I ate the food, yes, and they gave me a little bed in the corner to sleep.

Q: Is this around the time you started to wear the cross?

A: They put a cross on me, yes. They put the cross on me a very short time after that. They said to me you are going to church so you must wear a cross and I did not take that cross off until six months after the war. This was I felt like my, in a way I wasn't hungry anymore since I wore the cross. So I felt that this maybe protected me from starvation. And they said if you wear the cross you will never be hungry and you will always have a roof over your head and we are going to be your family because you have nobody else

Q: How long did you live with them?

A: Oh, for a few months, I would say, quite a few months. At that point already, I realized that my mother and my father are gone. I didn't realize, of course, that my father was captured. Right during the uprising he was captured taking _____, my mother, of course, head out. She was still in the ghetto for quite some time and the way she got out is a whole story by itself. It was very miraculous. At that time she did not look so elegant, she did not look so glamorous as she did just a couple of months before that. She was hungry, she was tired, she lost a husband in that time and she changed tremendously and the few people that did survive were in the sewers for quite some time and then when they got on the other side, that's the reason why it took such a time, until she finally one evening just knocked on the door and came to the Doblinkov family and when I saw her, to me it was like a new world had opened up. I never believed I'd ever see her again.

Q: You never believed the Doblinkov's _____.

A: They were going to be my parents, I had to mentally adjust myself that this is it. I am most probably stay with them. I never thought that my mother was going to march in through the door.

Q: She did?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you recognize her?

A: Oh, yes. Immediately I ran to her arms and I wouldn't let go. I held onto her dress. She took me by the hand, she took a few things and said that some of the people gave them something when we walked out. We had a car waiting outside. I don't know if it was some kind of taxi, or somebody doing my mother a favor or whatever. Whoever it was, I don't know. All I know I was so happy looking and staring at my mother's face, I couldn't believe that she was there and then we drove for about fifteen minutes to another building where I had to sit in the car and she brought my sister down all wrapped up in a blanket and it seemed like they were starving my sister because she looked terrible. She was all swollen with no clothes on, frozen and it was very cold and my mother wrapped her up in the blanket and came running down angrily what they had done to her child in those few months only.

Q: So you had not seen your sister since March of '43?

A: I saw her only one time when that family has written a letter to the Doblinkov family that they have the other sister and they probably want to know, maybe they can get rid of her and send her to me. So there was an address and I said to my _____, I used to call her my aunt, I said to my Aunt Doblinkov, I said can I please see my sister? I had five minutes. So, I remember going on a trolley and her daughter went with me and we went upstairs and I only had five minutes and I remember my sister laying over there in bed and Mrs. Doblinkov gave a piece of salami and a piece of bread to give it to my sister. So when I came in I gave this to her and she was very cold and the woman was standing there and watching. I gave her the food and she hid it under the blanket and I stood there helpless not knowing what to do. I saw that she was dying, that she was starving and there was nothing I could do about it. And the woman said, OK., your time is up you got to leave. I said I just want to sit with my sister a little more. No, she said, you have to go. Lady, I said, I want to be with her. She said no, leave and I had to leave. I left her the food and when I came back to Mrs. Doblinkov she asked about my sister. I said she is very, very hungry. I've known children that look like her they usually die right after that. She said there's nothing I can do about it, I cannot help her.

Q: So your mother snatched her?

A: Snatched her out in the nick of time, and she was dying. As a matter of fact, she did not grow for five years, not one inch, after that incident. After those few months of the starvation I guess this is what happens to children. The lack of everything. My mother was very frightened that she'll be a midget, she was so tiny. Not until we came to the United States she started growing.

Q: Where did your mother take you?

SIDE 2.

A: A very nice apartment.

Q: In Warsaw?

A: In Warsaw on the Dobra Street, which was right across from the Vislag (?) River.

Q: This was outside of the _____.

A: As Poles, yes. We lived as Poles. We all had our papers. I had my _____.

Q: My mother found an apartment on the Dobra Street, this is where we lived and she got a job. She was working in a factory again. I guess run by the Germans, so she had enough money to pay for the rent and it was also food was scarce in Poland, but you were not starving and we came to ourselves after awhile. In the meantime my mother did a lot of heroic things while she worked in the factories and manufactured the uniforms, she decided to custom make some uniforms for some big generals, big "machers," they called them in Jewish. And they sent her to several different concentration camps. She wound up going.

Q: Not as a prisoner?

A: Not as a prisoner, but asking them what sizes they are, what kind of uniforms they want. So she could make them up custom made for the upper echelon type of generals. This was one time when she saw my father very briefly, from a distance.

Q: She saw your father?

A: She saw my father from a distance, and she whispered to him, of course nobody could see, you got a chance, you can put on one of those uniforms and you can escape. He says I cannot run even, how can I escape? You go, save yourself and save the children, forget about me. And this was the last she saw him. But there was another man that did run away with her. Went along with her on the truck. This is the man that has written a book and he has written about this whole

episode in the book. His name is Cheslov (?). I don't know if this man is alive or not, and I have the book that he has written. There is a whole chapter about my mother. And after she took him out she brought him on Dobra Street. She brought him into the apartment and we held him there for awhile. Then the following week, she went to another camp and she brought in two sisters she took out, two women that she said she needed them as assistants. They let them out, she brought them and she brought them to the apartment also. And one night the Germans were knocking at the door. The two sisters were caught and they were taken out. This man went out the window and he was not captured.

Q: The man that she smuggled from the camp?

A: Yes, he was not captured. And they left with the two sisters, they left.

Q: They didn't punish your mother for this?

A: No. They, I don't remember what was the story, she just must have told them that maybe they knocked on the door and she let them in. They just came in, they just walked in, or something, some kind of an excuse. She made believe she doesn't know them. It's not like this was an old friendship or something. That she did it intentionally. Seems like these two women just walked in and they asked to sleep over maybe, or they asked for something, so they let us alone.

Q: Do you know when your mother saw your father for the last time?

A: The last time I would say a year before the war ended, maybe less. Maybe it was less than when the war ended. She said he looked terrible.

Q: You had been living in the Polish part of Warsaw for a year?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Which camp was this?

A: My father? In Miedniewice.

Q: Would you know which other camps your mother visited as a custom seamstress?

A: I don't know. I know she went to several camps. She never discussed anything with me or my sister. She never told us very much. She would say I have to go away and I'll be back in a few days. That's all we knew. We never questioned her. She would say you are not to leave the house and you are not to leave the apartment. Keep it locked at all times, and that's how it was.

Q: Nobody was there to take care of you?

A: No, no. We were there ourselves.

Q: Did she tell you that she saw your father?

A: She told us that a long time afterwards.

Q: Until that time you did not know?

A: No. We knew, I sensed that something was wrong when she came back. She did not sleep, she talked to herself, she was shouting, she was crying and I knew something was wrong, but she didn't want to tell us what it was. It was only years after when she told us. I saw him from a distance, I would have never recognized him in a million years if he stood a foot in front of me, but he recognized me. So he called out my name and I saw him.

Q: So he recognized her first?

A: He recognized my mother first. She did not know where the voice was coming from. She would not have known it was him. All she told him I can save you. If I'll throw you the uniform, put it on and walk out, march out like a German. And he was like behind a fence and she was on this side of the fence. There were a lot of fences. There were men standing there with those striped uniforms and she tried to save him, which I think would have been hopeless anyway, so he was afraid that he's going to jeopardize her life, so he says no, no. He did not want to go. In a way she could not forgive herself seeing him and yet maybe she could have helped him as a Ukrainian but he didn't want to jeopardize her life. He didn't want to go.

Q: Was he a slave laborer?

Q: I don't know he was just standing there with other men. She doesn't know, he must have been working, they must have been feeding him a little bit, because he survived. He did survive sometime there. I would say maybe like seven or eight months later when she saw him. This was the last person on earth she expected to see. She knew that he was taken to this concentration camp. This she knew. Because she realized that this particular truck they captured people, that's where they were going.

Q: So she knows when he was taken away during the uprising?

A: Yes. It was just the beginning of the uprising.

Q: The very beginning?

A: The very beginning of the uprising.

Q: Did you ever find out later what your mother was doing during the uprising?

A: What she did during the uprising? I guess she was fighting like the handful of people that were there. They were fighting until there were very few people left. She said it was a glorious fight. It was glorious. So they gave her a reason to live again. There was a thread of hope, of course. They knew they cannot do very much but just to give the Germans something back. A little revenge for all the aches and pains they caused everybody.

Q: Did she ever describe how she got out? how this Ukrainian factory woman who became a Jewish fighter how then she survived and got out of the ghetto and then found you?

A: Oh, this was through the sewers, this took time, this took time, until she finally got out of there. They could not escape, they put the gas in the sewers, they made sure that nobody can escape, there were dogs all over. They had to be at a hideout for quite some time until they could get out from wherever they were hiding until it became clearer that she could get out of there. But this took awhile, because they were on the lookout. They knew that whoever survived this uprising would want to escape because there was nothing else left there. It was a handful of heroic people and they're not ready to give up. So even the sewers you couldn't go, it was all gas there. They would have gotten poisoned. So they had to wait probably until it was o.k. to find a way to leave.

Q: Did your mother survive and escape by herself or was she with others?

A: No, I think they could not go in groups. Everybody went their own way, because in a group it is more dangerous. Singularly it always easier to escape when a single person runs. I don't know, maybe they started as a group and they wound up individually, I don't know. She never talked about that particular incident. It was a very painful incident in her life. Very painful. And even though she used to talk about a lot of things, she used to remind us when we were in the small ghetto, at one point, and she had to go to work and when she came back my sister and I were gone and my father was gone. It seems like the Germans came, they were coming and they said we're going to put the building on fire whoever's there doesn't run away or doesn't give themselves up they're going to get burned alive. So I don't know how it happened, how my sister and I somehow or other my father, where was my father, I'm trying to think, he was also gone in the morning. He did not go to work, but my mother went to work and he went someplace and my sister and I were left alone. And when the Germans came, we looked at each other, what are we going to do, we got to run away someplace. So, we went downstairs to the cellar and from the cellar we found there was a hole in the wall there to go to the next building and the next building, so we escaped through a few other buildings. They were also empty, so we didn't know what had happened to the building we were originally. I don't know if they put it on fire or they didn't put it. But the two of us crawled through and we wound up another

building and the first thing we started doing is running from apartment to apartment which was all abandoned and there was no food nowhere. We turned quietly every drawer and every closet, we looked all over and then we hear Germans marching downstairs and they're entering the building and here's my sister and I alone in this apartment and it's all empty. I remember I took her and I put her inside a cabinet, a kitchen cabinet. I pushed her inside the kitchen cabinet and I put a blanket on top of her and I closed the cabinet and I hid behind a chest that stood like on a corner, it was some kind of corner chest. I squished in the back of that chest and covered myself also with a blanket so if they even look in they'll think there are rags there. And I took a blanket and covered myself and the two of us stayed there. We heard the German footsteps and we heard them getting closer and closer and then they kicked open the door and they marched in this apartment. They must have been looking for Jews from apartment to apartment. This was their preoccupation and that's how I know this, and they walked in and they machine gunned with the machine guns. They were shooting in every apartment. All they did was go around with machine gun and shooting. I guess in a way they were afraid also maybe somebody was going to attack them or something. So they would come in with the machine guns, shoot, walk in, I heard them talking loud and clear I didn't understand what they were saying. Then I heard them walk out. And when they walked out and they left the door, my first words were, Chaja, Chaja, my sister's name, are you alive? She says Yes, are you alive? I said yes. So we got together again, she came out of the cabinet and we decided we're going to hide in the attic. From now on it was no good in the apartment because they are shooting and they may shoot us. So we'll go in the attic. We go all the way up in the attic and there's a lot of furniture and we hear voices. So we realize, because we were very quiet, we knew there were people hidden in the attic. We started moving the furniture away and the people outside didn't know what's going on. And I said, we were yelling in Polish, let us in, let us in, we got to hide with you. So my sister said, well, I'm going to cry so loud that the Germans are going to hear us and I'm going to tell them that you're hiding there, so let us in there. We came in over there, we sat with them, they had water, so we drank a little water with them.

Q: Did you know who these people were?

A: I had no idea. We just walked in. There were about three or four people there. It looked like older people, maybe at that time, maybe they were in their 40's, 50's, 60's. I don't know I couldn't even judge the age. We stayed with them for a few days and then we left them, and we were going from building to building, we got to find our parents, where are our parents, we had no idea. And from one of the buildings we saw there were schlep carts and we saw people gathering and the two of us would look out the window, you know hidden behind the curtain, to make sure we don't see our mother or our father. I didn't know what to look for. I didn't see them. So, I said, you see they did not get caught, they didn't get caught they must be someplace. Don't you think my mother came around. She

walked also from building to building yelling quietly, Frania, Chaja, just like an echo from the distance it sounded like. So she found us.

Q: She found you?

A: And my father must have gone to work also that day. My mother went to work, my father went also to do something. Maybe to look for food.

Q: So your father worked sometimes?

A: Like sometimes, depending. They were always very busy, they were always doing something.

Q: What would your father do whenever he found some work?

A: I guess whatever labor they gave you. They didn't ask you what your talents were. They needed somebody. I guess like today, you know, people want a job, whatever they'll tell them to do they'll do, so there was no question of asking what your talents are or what you specialize, I'll do anything.

Q: This episode that you just described, this flashback, this was before the ghetto uprising, long before?

A: Oh, yes. Not long before. This was in a small ghetto. This was when we had an apartment _____, when we were staying there for awhile.

Q: This wasn't the Morenovska (?)

A: No, the Morenovska, we were gone already. This was like the third or the fourth apartment already, that we were on the go. So we were like constantly like gypsies on the go running. The minute we were afraid maybe they heard footsteps, we would leave the building already. We were afraid to stay in the same place three or four nights that's it and you had to be on the move.

Q: And that's the way it was until they took you to the Doblenkov house?

A: Yes. This was up until, I would say, the last few weeks before we went to the Doblenkov's. Then we were like more settled with other people. All of a sudden I saw a lot of other people. I don't remember their faces, but I remember there were quite a few people there and they were talking constantly and making plans and they would tell us, there were a few children, go sit on the side, go away, not to bother anybody, and they were making their plans. So we were there for a while. Once they made up, I guess, a date when they're going to start this. This is when my mother made up her mind to get me and my sister, to get us on the Polish side so we're not going to get caught.

Q: Now, back to Warsaw after the uprising, when you were living in the -----

A: On Dobra Street?

Q: Yes. Were you living in Warsaw when the Polish uprising occurred?

A: Yes. It did not take very long, I heard shooting in the streets and my mother came running in like she was being chased for G-d knows how many blocks or miles and when she came in she says would you believe that the Russians were supposed to come and they're not coming, they're on the other side, on the Prague side, and they're not crossing the river and they told the Poles to start. This was the first time she talked to me, and she says and the Poles are starting an uprising now. So we're going to get caught now in the middle of their uprising.

Q: How long had you been there when the uprising begins?

A: Immediately. We had to leave right away. They made announcements. Everybody to leave the buildings. Everybody to go. They're going to shoot every Pole that's going to stay here and help the Russians to cross.

Q: So how long had it been since you left the Doblenkov's and then lived in Warsaw before the uprising?

A: On the Dobro Street? A few months.

Q; Just a few months?

A: Just ac few months, yes. Then we had the uprising again and we were on the go again. And I remember my mother burying a suitcase. She says one thing I don't want to carry with me is luggage. Let's bury it in the basement, we'll come back if we ever survive the war we're going to take out my little treasures, pictures, letters, addresses of relatives in Israel, relatives in the United States.

Q: She was not involved in this particular uprising?

A: No, no. She couldn't care less about it. It was a nuisance. It was a tremendous nuisance. They started burning buildings and chasing the Poles and running through the streets and the buildings were all burning and they were chasing. Also I remember running for about twenty blocks and the last few blocks the buildings were ablaze and we couldn't crossing. We couldn't go through anymore. There was a church and they made us all, quite a few hundred, pushed into this church.

Q: The Germans pushed?

A: Yes, all the Poles pushed into this church. My mother made sure ----

Q: And you were still passing as a Pole?

A: Oh yes. We had Polish papers and nobody knew otherwise. We were right at the door. At the door or there was a window, some kind of exit even if we were locked in we would be able to get out, because my mother said I have a feeling they're going to do something to us. They're going to, she thought they're going to put the poison gas and they're going to poison everybody there. We didn't know they were going to put it on fire. So we just broke through the glass and people started panicking. They were breaking all the like stained glass, whatever there was there. People started climbing from the windows and running and jumping into the flames and we ran. At that point we ran with the fire on both sides. My mother grabbed me and my sister. I don't remember how far, I was like in a daze, we just ran until finally it was a clearance and all the people that came out into a clearance, the Germans were there and there was a train and we all were pointed to get on the train and my mother saw a train and she was like petrified. She says oh, my G-d, we're going to a concentration camp. She already knew at that point that all trains were going only in one direction. But it did not go to a concentration camp, it went to another camp, some kind of camp, a detention camp where as Poles we were held over there, but there were not like guards, they gave us to eat, they gave us cots to sleep on and we had like a army blanket even to cover ourselves and I remember that my mother said, this is no good, I don't like this business here, you know, with the Poles they're going to do something with them also. It's mostly women and children here. The men, they were shooting them like dogs. And we escaped. We were not there very long, we escaped.

Q: Do you know the name of this camp?

A: No. I have no idea.

Q: So where did you go?

A: We started running. Most of the time we were hiding out during the day and we were on foot at night. And we went through towns and villages all on foot and we stopped at different, and I remember my mother saying, if we're going to walk in this direction another twenty kilometers there's a small town I know some people there. We'll go there and when we made it over there, we stayed with them, I think for about two nights, and we heard the Germans outside so we ran out to the back, the three of us escaped. And we were on the run continuously on the run until I don't know for how long on foot until we came to this primitive little village where only farms, like small little straw roof type of little huts. People lived like that and we were all very ragged, and my mother marched into these houses, claiming some kind of accident, something happened and we needed refuge for just a few days. And when they asked us where we come from. We said we come from Warsaw. She said, oh, she heard about Warsaw, can you tell

us stories about it. She says if you let me sleep here, I'll tell you all the stories you want to know. They heard about wagons going on electric. This was all primitive, and when I think back, my G-d like a few hundred years behind times.

Q: These were peasants?

A: Real peasants. Good natured, nice people, that were afraid of their own shadows. They knew there was a war, because the Germans came and took away most of their cattle, and took away whatever they had. They were constantly coming and took away their wheat and their corn, whatever they were growing.

Q: Do you remember the time of the year that you were with these people?

A: We were there in the winter. We were there until the Russians came into this village. That's how long we were there.

Q: Do you remember the day the Russians came to the village?

A: No, I don't. I remember the day they marched in I don't remember the date, because I think we were all in a state of shock.

Q: Was it the middle of winter though?

A: I remember it being cold. I don't know if it was the beginning, the end or the middle of winter, but I remember it being very cold. When the Russians came in my mother started talking Russian to them. She could not get over that they came in, and the first question she had for them, did you hear of a Bernard Friedman, my brother is in Russia, maybe he is in the army? Well after awhile we found a Jewish Russian soldier who was a Jew. He was very nice. As the Russians came in and the war is over, and they said they are chasing the Germans are just in front of them and they were passing with tanks which were so loud and we packed up our few little belongings and they did not mind taking us, jumping in the truck and taking us along, a part of a truck and part we sat on a tank. Just to get out of this village, and we wanted to go to any town and as we were going through on these vehicles we saw the Germans hanging from trees. Which was some sight to see.

Q: How were they hanging?

A: They were hanging some by the legs, some by the neck, some by the hands. Some by one foot. They just hung them live. They were hanging live there. As they turned around, they were practice shooting with them. They took guns, they were shooting at them and they were jumping on their ropes, and they were yelling in Russian, this is for my mother and this is for my father, what you did to my country to my Mother Russia. For the millions you've killed. You know. And this is what they were yelling at. Even I understood the few words in

Russian. I didn't know Russian, but I understood those few words, it was very similar to Polish.

Q: What was your reaction to this scene?

A: I was glad. I was very glad. I hated the Germans so much with such passion that I think if they cut them alive, it would not have bothered me. On the contrary, I think I would have found some kind of satisfaction.

Q: How about your mother, how was she?

A: My mother went into a shock. She actually went into a shock because after a short while after she got very sick. And they told her that she was in a shock. I don't think it was a stroke, it was some kind of a shock she went into. When we came into one of the cities, we passed by a city, I don't even know what big city we passed by, she went to a hospital. I was there sitting and they told her they have to treat her for a few days. And I didn't know what was wrong with her. But I remember my sister and I sitting and waiting for her to get well, because we couldn't go anyplace without her. This was it, you know. She got well after a few days and I remember she became very calm. She was not as wild as she was during the war. She would do crazy things. She would jump, and run, and lift and pick. But here after she got sick, we were released, I guess from the German agony, I guess you never thought the end was going to come. Every day was a year, you're talking about five long miserable years, miserable years.

Q: The period you were on the run, from when you escaped from the Polish detention camp until the time the Russians caught you.

A: That took also quite a few months.

Q: When you first escaped, what time of the year was it? Was it summer?

A: It was warm. I know it was warm because from the fire it was hot, or something, or the people in trains. But I was warm.

Q: How did you manage to survive the change in seasons? You probably were dressed lightly in the summer and then months later it was winter?

A: We were shivering. If we could steal something to wear or if we saw a body we would rip off something to wear. I wore maybe a hundred different kinds of shoes. Whatever I could find, I had no shoes at all. Most of the time my mother wanted me to be very quiet when I walked so she made me walk without shoes. And I shouldn't knock. But we used to always find something on ways. We found rags. Once we passed a small river, so my mother washed my face, she said my G-d, I forgot what you looked like. I was black from mud, from crawling, from hiding,

Q: You were still at Doblinkov until the Russians came? Were you still called Doblinkov?

A: No. Once my mother took me out from the Doblinkov family. I was not a Doblinkov anymore. I had those papers like this. The only thing was she claimed that she adopted a daughter, I was a relative's daughter and she adopted me. So that's the reason why she and I had two different names.

Q: So officially you were still Doblinkov. And this went on until the Russians came in.

A: No, once in the primitive village, we didn't need any papers or anything. Nobody questioned us, nobody knew from anything anymore. It was like I said, they didn't even know anything exists. You know, from a clock, they knew nothing.

Q: Did they know Jews?

A: They heard about people that were Jews and they heard, they're supposed to look out for them because they are very cruel and very mean and you can usually tell just by looking at them. That was a propaganda, of course. Oh, if you see a Jew you'll know right away, he'll look subhuman, first of all.

Q: Are they worse than Nazis, these Jews supposedly?

A: Not in that way, no. They were just vicious and they were ugly and they tried to steal from you whatever you had. They tried to connive you whatever you had.

Q: More than the Germans did?

A: Yes. It shows you this was in the schools. The children were taught like that. The children were taught, the Polish children were taught, they would make a picture of this, I don't know, a witch I guess they would pick, and they would say this is what a Jew looks like. And it is the biggest honor to find one, and if you want to kill them yourself, it's o.k., and if you want to give him to us, we'll kill him.

Q: But they wouldn't know one even if they were under their own roof?

A: No. They never saw one. They only know from what they heard. Don't forget, the war was on for quite a few years already at that point and they knew nothing of what was going on in the outside their village.

Q: So they had three of them right in their own house?

A: And they thought that we were very fancy people from Warsaw after we washed up. They realized that they called my mother. In Polish there's an expression, "Pania (?) Intelligencia" that means you are a lady pf intelligence.

Q: Of intellect.

A: Of intellect and, therefore, if we have any questions they would ask her when Christmas comes out, when the holidays. Of course, they have no calendar, no clock, nothing, no radio. Didn't know anything. If I thought _____, and they gave us this tiny little room that was supposed to have been an attached bathroom originally, just some boards. This is where we slept. So they knew nothing about Jews if they hit them over the head, probably. Luckily, they were very nice to us, They gave us food, we ate with them and my mother helped them with the farm, with the work and I did some work. I would sweep and clean and grow things. Whatever she told me to do, we would do it.

Q: When did you become Frania Prawer again?

A: Again?

Q: I mean openly.

Q: Openly? In Germany. Because after the war, after we left Warsaw and we saw we had nothing there, we registered.

Q: You returned to Warsaw eventually?

A: Right after the war we returned to Warsaw, my mother wanted to get that briefcase.

Q: And what did she find?

A: Nothing. Rubbles. All rubbles you couldn't even tell if a building was once standing. It was all burned down and we went to Berlin. We stayed in Berlin for about six months and we were in Berlin we tried to get to the American side because we were told it was best from the Russian side with the Russians, eventually, like with cars, trucks, trains until we got from Poland to Berlin we did a lot of traveling. So we wound up on the Russian side of Berlin and then we escaped to the French side and then finally got to the American side. Once we were on the American side, we re-registered and we found a lot of other Jews there and they told us that there are some camps in Germany, they're called DP camps where all the Jews after the war should gather, and from there we will see what to do further, where to go further. So this is where we wound up from Berlin we went to Eschfegan (?), Germany, a DP camp where we lived for almost four years.

Q: From when to when were you in this camp?

A: In that camp we got there in the beginning of ’46, I would say, until ’49, when we came to the United States.

Q: So you came to the U.S. in ’49, the three of you?

A: Yes.

Q: And lived happily ever after.

A: Well, much happier than during the war.

Q: And your sister finally grew up?

A: Yes, she did grow up. My mother took her to several doctors. She used to get some vitamins and very special things but she did grow up.

Q: Looking back, what was the worst part of this experience for you, the worst moment? Was it the time when you and your sister were hiding?

A: That was one of the moments. It felt like it was the end. We had no place to go. This was the finality because we didn’t think we were going to see our parents again. Also, when I was separated from my sister with the Doblenkov family, this was petrifying thought for me that I would be a Pole the rest of my life with a family I don’t even know. I have to live with them and I had to live their style. Whatever I remember from before the war or even during the war the love, the affection I got from my parents, it’s all gone. I don’t know this was one of the moments. There were so many moments.

Q: When did you remove the cross that you wore?

A: This was after the war when we were in Poland, when we were in Warsaw, just before we went to Berlin.

The first thing she found out that Jewish children, they want all the Jewish children in this summer camp, and it was a magnificent place. It seemed like there was a palace over there and everybody lived over there. It was like they took over something and we lived there. There were like a hundred children for a very short time, and we were supposed to be, I suppose they must have advised my mother to bring us there for a few months to retrain our thoughts to make us aware that the war was over, which I refused to believe. Although I saw signs of the war being over, but I still did not believe, I thought that the Germans would spring out from someplace, make a surprise. I didn’t trust anybody anymore. I did not believe anybody anymore. I didn’t want to get close to anybody. They tried, they worked on me very, very hard, until I took the cross off, it took awhile

and I think what influenced me the most was when I met from Israel in the camp, there were some young Israeli, all though there was no Israel at that time, it was Palestine, but they came in some kind of uniforms from the kibbutz, maybe, or whatever. They were dressed with the berets and I was so impressed when I looked at them and they said, you see they are just like you, they are also Jews. And these are young soldiers and this, I think, I fell in love with them the minute I saw them. It was almost like all of a sudden I discovered something, a goal, something different to leave my past and this is the future to go to Israel and to be just like them. And I wanted very much to be just like them and this is where I realized I'm not Polish I'm going to go to Israel and I'm going to find a new enemy called Arabs.

Q: If you had been old enough you probably would have married one of them.

A: I don't know.

Q: You were still a little girl. Never went to school.

A: No. In those few months they prepared us that we'll have to start going to school. When I was in Germany _____ we went to school six days a week and many hours a day. From morning until evening we were going to school, and they tried to put in those few years all the missing years of schooling that the majority of kids were. Everybody was missing five years of school, so you had children from all ages. There were also children that were born in concentration camps, there were children that were orphaned, they were taken away from Polish people. I met a lot of people in _____, also in that camp where we stayed right after the war when we came to Warsaw after the war when we stayed in this camp. I also met some people from all over and the majority were staying with other families. That's how they survived and it seems like the families, some kids escaped, some of them were older already. Some of them at that time were like 17 or 18 years old. They must have run away when the war was over and they came voluntarily to this place to find themselves to know who they are. Some, maybe the families, the Polish families, brought them, I don't know. But they were like dumped. Before you know it within a few weeks more than a hundred children there. So they brought all these psychologists, people talking to us and retraining us, trying to make us forget the war in a way and to think that there is another life now is going to start. There's a future.

Q: So when was it you realized the war was over and that a new life was about to begin?

A: When I was in that camp, that summer camp. I found it to be beautiful. Because I found people like myself. At first I thought I was the only survivor on this planet. This is a horrible thought that you think you are the only Jews that have remained alive and I bet there's nobody else, so let's keep it a secret nobody has to know what we are. I remember telling this to my mother, don't tell nobody.

Q: Yet you left the camp. You went another direction?

A: Yes. After that camp we went to Berlin.

Q: Your mother was the leader of the pact.

A: Oh, yes. She always was, she always thought with a clear head and she knew exactly and was an extremely brave woman. Such a brave woman that when I think back at things that she did I don't know where she got authority. I've never come across anybody else like that. With such impact, with such go in her, like nothing could stop her. Yes, in times of desperation you pick up strength you never knew you had and courage or you die from fear or else you turn the other way around and you become extremely courageous. Life is so important that you will do anything to survive.

Q: I would have loved to have met her.

A: She was something. She was very, very loved, she had so many friends here.

Q: And those who came to America and the three of you?

A: Well the originally I did not want to come to America. My goal was to go to Israel.

Q: With the other kids?

A: Well that wasn't with the other kids. I was in Germany at that time. This was already almost four years later and I remember they were always coming from Israel. They were coming to train us. To train us to become young soldiers. How to protect yourself, and I was going through all this training and I was ready to become a soldier.

Q: You were seventeen years old.

A: Didn't make no difference, I was ready to run away from my mother and to go there, and she said "you're not going nowhere". And I remember a few of my friends went on the ship Exodus and I was supposed to be on it and my mother caught me the last minute. She said you are not going. After going through a war like this you're not going to get shot by an Arab. We are going to America. At that time, of course, I was trained Hebrew, I was taught Hebrew in Germany, it was a language It was supposed to unite us all. I said, but I don't speak a word of English but I do speak Hebrew, so I'll be at home in Israel and all my friends here from the camp are going and I want to go there too. My mother forbid me, you are not to go by yourself, we are all going together. We have relatives in America and this is where we are going. And sure enough we came here.

Q: Any regrets?

A: No. I go to Israel every opportunity I have. I've been there many times, at least a thousand.

Q: Well, on behalf of the United States Holocaust Museum, I thank you for your time and for your story.

A: You're very welcome.