Interview with Nesse Godin
December 14, 1995

Answer: Someone will pick up the tape and really not realize what I was liberated from. So I really think that this tape should start, me telling you that I'm a Holocaust survivor. I lived through the Holocaust from the age of 13 to 17, the ghetto, Shoriley (ph) Toovania (ph), concentration camp Shtoodruff (ph), several labor camps and went on a death march. At the end of the death march in the middle of February of 1945, we were put in a barn. We were at that point out of the thousand women, about six or seven hundred left. As soon as the Nazis, the SS and Gestapo that were guarding us brought us to the barn, they pushed us in there, I remember it was very, very crowded. There was nothing but straw on the ground. They ordered about 50 women out, ordered them to dig two giant long holes. We really thought that they were going to line us up and shoot us. At that point, we felt the death was welcome to us. We were tired of all this business but they had different plans for us. On one hole they put sticks on, they served, it served as a bathroom. The other hole, we found out soon enough, that that would be a grave. The SS and the Gestapo knew that we are going to die in that barn. No food was allocated to us already from the government, from the German government. Whatever the people from the village gave, some day a potato, some day a crust of bread, somedays we didn't get any. We started to die in that barn. Epidemic of typhoid, dysentery, hunger. Every morning the guards ordered the little bit healthier women to take out the dead and dress them naked cause the clothes you can recycle and dump the

body in the hole. My dear friend, what my eyes saw, in those three weeks that I was in the barn, it's very hard to tell, to share, to describe. Many times I feel I don't want to talk about it anymore but we are sitting, this tape is for history, to learn the truth. Every day that I walked from the barn to the so-called bathroom, it wasn't anymore a hole, it was a mountain of skeletons covered with skin. Now through the Holocaust I was a little girl but I pray to God, I prayed please God let me live through a day. I prayed to God, please God let me live through a night. Maybe I'll be free. But in that barn I started to pray to be dead, to be on top of this mountain. I was tired of living. All through the Holocaust we used to say, "Let's resist the Nazis, let's live a extra day, they want us dead." But in that point, I was really tired of resisting. But God's will was different. Marched in, we were liberated by the Russian Army. Now you ask me about liberation. My dear friend, I have a problem with the word liberation. Did any army come to liberate us? Did any country send soldiers, said, don't worry about anything, just free those people? They fought the war, they found us there. We were found. Yes we were freed but we were found. Now I want to tell you of that day of liberation. That morning, when the women that were supposed to take out the dead, took out the dead, undressed them, threw them on them pile of dead bodies, they came back into the barn and they told us that they don't see the guards. They said, "The guards are not here." Some women started to say, "Let's

run to the village." The village was, was within sight. We could see maybe one mile away. We women start say, "How can we run? We cannot even walk." Somebody else said, "The guards may be hiding behind the barn. They just wait for us to start running and they'll have an excuse to shoot us." So all day long we sat in that barn, not knowing that the guards had run away. They escaped. You see we did not know whether the war was ending, where the positions of the armies were. We didn't even know that there were Allied forces. We didn't know a thing. In the evening, it was dark already, I remember it well, we heard footsteps of boots. Now up to this day when I hear boots marching, even on the beautiful parade, I get nervous because footsteps of boots reminded us of SS and Gestapo and selections so there we heard these footsteps and we said, "Oh, the henchmen are back." But we heard Russian language. Russian language, Russian soldiers, dear ladies, we didn't know you were here, we were, we are fighting the war, we found already a few other camps. We cannot stay with you. We leave two, three people. Tomorrow there medics will come and help you. So all through the night we still stayed in that barn, naturally we were free. Now what happened in that barn the night of liberation? Some people applauded with their hands. They could hardly move them. Some people jumped up for joy. Some people started to talk where they will go, what will they do. I personally cried. I cried so hard and it is now 50

years after liberation. And for 50 years, I'm trying to analyze, why did I cry? Did I cry for my family that was dead? At that point, I didn't know if anyone was alive because in that barn I was alone. No one of my family. Did I cry for, because I didn't know what was happening? Did I cry for joy? But I came to a conclusion that I cried because I felt sorry for myself. I thought where am I going? There's no telephone to pick up and tell I'm coming home. There's no home, no family and sincerely, many kind people say, "Nesse, you talk about the Holocaust and we don't see tears from you." I really cried that time the last time. So once in a while, I have a little tear in my eye. I learned to laugh and to love. But I never cry. So that was this night, the _____ day of liberation. The following day, when the Russians came, they explained to us that the village does not have a hospital. They have a little hotel. They are going to convert this little, it's a inn, not even a hotel. They are going to convert it into a hospital. They are going to try to take the little healthier women and bring them to the village, put 'em in the little homes. Some homes were already empty. The Germans had run away being afraid for the Russians. Some, in some homes there were still some Germans that stayed. I know they spoke German, it was a German area. Pomerania, mostly, Polish German, border but this little village was mostly German. They, so the Russians the next day came with little carts, whatever they could take from the villagers, a horse and buggy. I

personally was carried by a Russian soldier, on his arms, and he carried me to the village. I was nothing but skin and bones. And he brought me to the village, he put me in the kitchen of that little room, on a straw sack and he said that eventually somebody will come and help me and give me food. A little bit later, they brought another woman that they put next to me on the straw sack. This woman, I'm really sorry that I cannot remember her name. She was a teacher in one of the religious Yovna (ph) schools and I knew her from before the war because I had friends that went to that school. And when I saw her I was so glad that she was there next to me on that straw sack. At least I felt I had someone from home. And the Russian soldiers every day came for a few days, they delivered a little bit food for us. Also, some Jewish women that were a little bit stronger started to cook a little bit, get from the villagers some food or just take it from them and started to cook a little bit. After I was there one day or two days, I really don't remember, one day, one of the women that were a little stronger walked in and just said to me, "What are you doing here with a dead person?" I didn't realize that the woman next to me was dead. They carried her out and I wanted to really go out and go out like, see where they're burying her or whatever. But I couldn't. So I thought let me look out and see how the free world looks. Cause I hadn't seen the free world. Could hardly get up. And there was a windowpane, it was already towards evening. And I looked through

that windowpane to see how is freedom? What's outside? And what I saw was a monster. A reflection of a monster in that windowpane. A person, eyes sunken in, really a skeleton covered with skin. That's what I saw. Like you see children for Halloween how they have these masks and I turned around to see who was behind me and there was no one there. And this is when I realized how I looked. How I looked. I did not really imagine that I looked that way. Okay. After a few days being in that house, one, a truck or a car, a truck, I believe it was a truck that came and picked us up and took us to that makeshift hospital. What I remember of that coming to the hospital, I remember them shaving my head, shaving my private parts wherever hair is, washing me with some kind of a disinfectant because I remember a burn of a, where they shaved. And then I didn't remember anything else. Not a thing. Next thing I remember, opening my eyes and seeing a man with a white coat on and talking to me in Russian, explaining to me that he is a doctor, that I shouldn't worry, I'm in a hospital and he would love to know my name. Because they did not have time to register me when I became unconscious. According to what they told me I was three days unconscious with high fever of typhus and typhoid, those two different diseases. And him telling me that the most thing that he's worried about is that my toes were frozen and he just hopes that they wouldn't have to be amputated. And as I started to tell him my age, people from down the row, it was

like a big ward with many beds, somebody else tells _____ "Oh, Nesa _____ that's you! We didn't know who this was. Everybody asked do you know this person?" And there were a few people from my hometown that I knew and I really felt already more comfortable about it. So I was gettin' a little better. People started to leave from the hospital and then I was transferred to another smaller room. The main thing, the treatment was on my legs. And I don't even remember if I ever said that, if I gave this testimony or not but I really feel I should tell it now. I decided that I don't want to live. After all this that I went through, the stupidity of me, not wanting to live was, now when I think back of it, it was crazy. I heard and saw some people were united with the, right there in that hospital there was a mother and a daughter and here I was all by myself. I thought what do you need to live for? So I decided to do a hunger strike and every time they brought a little food, I just threw it out or gave it to the lady next to me. And she was, I thought of that, I'm terrible but now I think of her as wonderful, she told on me. So they wouldn't walk out from the room until I finished the food. And I really recovered pretty good. My, what was at that point, I still had, you see at the very end on the death march I was beaten up severely. And I still had my face swollen. My toes had kind of, the, the, a big layer that was frozen of the skin just peeled off, like, like you see a snake change his skin? That's how this came off. And my temperature

went down and I gained a little bit weight so, they kept me there because I was alone for a while. And then one day they told me I have to go down to the office. The office was like a little room. And when I came down there, they said to me, "We are going to close this hospital and you can go now. We feel you're in good shape. You can go." And I said to them, "Where should I go?" They said, "Well, you want to go up, where are you from?" I said, "I'm from Lithuania but I don't have a home. I don't have a family, I don't have anybody. I don't know where I should go. I'm 17 years old. I don't know what to do." So they asked the lady that was next to me where she was from and she happened to be from Lithuania and because I was just 17, I was a minor. I was assigned to her. I became her ward. We had one document that stated her name and my name, my last name and saying that she's in charge because I'm a minor. And that's how we left Freenuv (ph).

Q: Do you have her name? Do you remember her name?

A: I don't, I remember her first name, Hannah, but I don't think I ever knew her last name. I don't think I ever knew it. She was very kind. She was very nice. She was more like a sister to me than a stranger. So we left, with the idea to go to Lithuania. She had left a child for safe, safekeeping with a Lithuanian family. She was from Kaunas and she really thought that maybe her child is alive. She wants to go back. Now I wanted to go to Lithuania because the last thing that we said to each other

when we came to the concentration camp, that is my brother and my mom before we were separated, if we survive this hell, we have to make a meeting point, back home in Lithuania. So okay. So this I had back in my mind. And I thought after all, we had a home, we had a business, we left belongings with non-Jewish people for safekeeping. Maybe I'll find it. So that was my plan. So there we go. You couldn't go to the railroad station, say I want to buy a ticket to go to Lithuania. Didn't work that way. See you are very young, I don't know if you understand that. That first it, it wasn't even, the war hadn't even ended yet, so a military trucks were going east and they were going west and they were going south. Trains were going back and forth. The Russians were looting Germany and taking machinery back to Russia. So you hitchhiked. You hitchhiked on a train, on a freight train. You stood there, you told them you want to go little bit east, they took you. They said, "You want to go up to this and this little town, we'll take you." Then you have to wait for a next train and it took weeks until you got at least somewhere. And this is the way we arrived in the city of Lodz, Poland. When we arrived in Lodz, Poland, like through the grapevine while we were traveling people were telling us that in Lodz, Poland, there is already shelters. Christian relief, Red Cross, Jewish relief, Hiyas (ph), the Join (ph), some kind of Jewish agencies helping out refugees. All of a sudden we were called refugees. So, we were very glad to arrive in Lodz. When we came

there, there was a big shelter on _____ 66. I remember that address and we, when we came in there was a very big room, we signed in, we were assigned where to go to sleep and in that room on the walls, there were big billboards. Posters like, and it was divided by country and divided each country more or less by city. And you, if let's say if you were from Kaunas, Kaunas and surrounding _____ and surround Siauliai, that's in Lithuania was called and surrounding. So I saw quite a few names there and I wrote down my name. That was in case somebody of your family comes. That's how you got connected. You see when I tell it to people, they cannot understand why would you want to write your name on a posterboard but this was the way you found each other. Your name and where you are staying, whether you are continuing, whether you are in Lodz, wherever. And that particular, that shelter was, there was a big courtyard with many houses on, see in Europe, some people don't understand that especially in the large cities, they used to have a whole courtyard maybe six, seven buildings. And you had to go in through a gate and it was closed for the night. And so we were assigned in that same courtyard, a place. Now all that night I thought to myself, why didn't I write down my name within eyesight. I wrote it down kind of low in the poster, nobody's going to bend down and look for my name. I was 17, I wasn't too bright. And I could hardly wait for the next day to go back and put my name with eye level on that thing. I said, "I'll put it

on again, that's alright, nobody's going to say why do you have it twice." And, as I was writing my name, Nesa Galperin, that was my name _____ N,E,S,A G,A,L,P,E,R,I,N. Galperin. And a woman said to me, "What Galperin, are you from Siauliai?" She was standing right next to me. And why did she ask that way? Just if you come of European background, you can understand, they usually said, "I am Galperin, the, the doctor Galperin, the lawyer Galperin, the shoemaker." My parents had a dairy business, I said, "I am Galperin from the dairy business from the _____, from the dairy business." And the woman looked at me and she said, "No, Nesa, that's you, you look so terrible, I would never recognize you." And, and she said that. I thought to myself, isn't she crazy? Everybody looks terrible. And when I looked at her, I recognized the lady. She was a very nice lady. But before the war, everybody called her the, the _____, the person that is not all there. She had some mental problems. And next thing out of that woman's mouth was, "Oh, I was with your mother in the camp. She's in this and this shelter in this and this village." And I said, "You were with my mother. My mother was taken to Galepf (ph) in Shtoodruff (ph)." She said, "Yes but then there was another selection and they took the people in the sixties away to the left," and asked, she was maybe in her thirties and my mother was in the forty, she said, "They took us again and send us to labor." Now as young as I was, I thought can I believe a crazy woman?

Always people said the crazy so and so. So I didn't know but I thought, I said, "Well, maybe I should check it out." So I go up to the lady, to this Hannah, who is my, whose ward I am and I said to her, "We have to go back to the German border." She looked at me, she says, "Child you're crazy. Nobody goes back, everybody goes forward." I said, "But somebody told me that my mother is there, near the German border." She said, "I love you but how can I go with you to your mother? I want to go to my own child." I said, "But you have to go with me, you have the document." So she took the piece of paper, she tore it to pieces, she said to me, "Go over to the desk, tell them you're 18 years old. And you'll have your own document." So I went over to the desk. I told them I'm 18 years old. I need a, a document. They gave me the document. Now everybody's traveling one way, I'm traveling the other. Everybody's going east, I'm going west. Some Russian soldier felt sorry for me, gave me his coat. And it was May already. I remember being on one of the trains and hearing a lot of shooting and thinking that we are being bombed but that was the celebration of VE Day and I arrived at that village. Got to the village, found the shelter, walk in there and I see women from my hometown and I recognize them, some woman that had bakery, another one that had a dry goods store, another one that had, that sold buttons and thread and all kinds of things. And I look at with my eyes and they say, "Who are you?" And I say again,

"I'm Galperin from the dairy business." "Oh, Nesa, your mom heard that you were alive and she heard that you were in Lodz and she went there to look for you." So you can see, this isn't just my story, how we survivors went looking for families back and forth, back and forth, hearing rumors, trying to find each other. It took me about maybe another two weeks or three weeks to get back to Lodz.

Q: Nesse, tell me what you remember of your feelings when it was then confirmed that your mother was alive and you could trust these reports?

A: Oh, my, it was unbelievable. It was unbelievable. I just thought in my heart that maybe I was kind to, to some older person. When you are 17 and you think of somebody 46 or 47, it's old. I just thought maybe God helped to my prayers. Maybe God paid me back because I was kind to some older ladies in the camps. And it, you, it just undescribable, undescribable, that I felt so grateful, so grateful. And those remember asking me was their child with me. And unfortunately there wasn't. I was with some people not even from my town, just a few from my hometown were with me in my camp. And when I came to Lodz back, yeah, we human beings are really wonderful, a wonderful thing on the earth. When we came, when I came back to Lodz even out of the survivors there was a welcoming committee at the time. I came down in the three weeks that I wasn't there or four weeks, such a difference. I didn't have to ask where is the shelter. There were

women saying already, “Where you from? I’m going to help you, there’s a shelter.” And a woman with red hair, I don’t remember her name, came over, she said, “Nesa.” I said, “How do you know me?” She says, “Ooh, I know, you were here, you went back, I’ll take you to your mother.” And I just went with her. I figured even if she takes me to any mother, I’ll just go. And I don’t know how I walked up three or four floors because as I told you my feet were so raw, I could hardly walk. I shuffled my feet and there I came up and the only thing I remember of that reunion is this woman knocked on the door and said, “Frau Galperin, Mrs. Galperin, I brought you your daughter.” And she left. She didn’t even wait. And the door opened up and there wasn’t any electricity, it was a candle burning, and there was my mother. She looked like my mother and she didn’t run to grab me and hug me. She looked at me and I couldn’t understand, why this cold reception. And she said to me, “Okay, take off your junk.” I had, my face was wrapped because this was still swollen and a hole in there draining parts and no hair, I still had that little hair and that was wrapped with a rag. With that big . . . [end of side 1 of tape 1] My mother said to me, “Take off your, your junk, your wrappings, your _____ like was saying, just take them off.” So as I started to unwrap, there, there, the scarf and took off the coat. And you see when I was a little child I had a tracheotomy. I had measles and I had some infection and when my mother saw this little thing here on my neck, on

my actually, right here in the middle of my neck, she grabbed me. She said, "My child, I didn't recognize you." You see she looked the same because she was 46, you don't change that much. But me as a little girl growing up and looking different and, and all this, being so skinny and so ill. Now for weeks and weeks I didn't go down those steps cause I couldn't walk them down and I always wondered how did I ever go up those steps. Now we were very fortunate to find each other. There we were, a mother and a daughter, not too many survivors at that point had already someone of their family. Some did but not too many, especially a mother. Forty-six was considered old, not too many at that age survived the Holocaust. Now we stayed in Lodz not knowing what to do.

Q: Nesse can I go back and . . .

A: Yes.

Q: Because it's so moving, I imagine that what had kept you going was your, your wish to survive, to be with your mother and brother? And I imagine it kept your mother going, the hope to be there for you. And I, I just wonder, did you hold each other? Would you, would you sleep soundly holding onto each other at night?

A: When, you see all through the Holocaust, it's true the hope helped. But to very sincere with you, there was no formula for surviving. Many times people will say to me, "Oh, Nesse, you're a strong lady, that's why you survived the Holocaust." I was

a little child. I wasn't, and somebody will say, "You must have been intelligent." Now how intelligent was it? I was just a kid. It, I survived maybe by the grace of God, maybe by sheer luck, maybe by the kindness of women that held my hand and did give me hope or gave them their own bite of bread. Or maybe women that took straw and wrapped my body so I would keep warm. I didn't understand that straw is a insulation. I really don't know what made me survive. I really don't know what made my mother survive. My mother always, when she died 27 years ago here in the United States, she alway, at that time people didn't take oral history. I wished they would have had her oral history. She was telling me how many times, even from the labor camp, she was selected to go back to the concentration camp to be killed. And by some miracle she was left or she was overlooked or they decided that she can still work. At one point she said to me, "They told another woman to take off the shoes and give it to her and the woman went there and she, she, she was still alive." So we don't know how but when we were reunited, we became really like one person. We, I didn't even want my mother to leave that room. She used to have to go down to bring up some food or get in that shelter some food or, or food stamps or whatever we, like little nut foods, there was a little ticket to go to get the food. I was always afraid that if she leaves me that I won't see her again. And from the day of liberation, no from the day of reunion with my

mother, 'til the day she died, we were not separated. She chose not, never to marry again, she lived with us, with my husband and I until the day she died. And I cherished her, everybody knows I respected her. I cherished her and the day she died, I thanked God for giving me a gift of so many years after the Holocaust to have a mother. Many people thought I was crazy at her funeral. You see now I have a tear when I think of my mom. But at her funeral, I stood there when the casket was being lowered and I said, people didn't want me to watch how they lower the casket. They said you're supposed to stay aside. I said, "No, I have to stay here because I was blessed as a survivor of the Holocaust to have a mother survive and die by a disease." I know where she was laid, I know I'll put the stone over her grave, I know I'll be able to come and visit her which I do very often. I go constantly for my father. I don't even know where his ashes are. So you ask me that question. We were inseparable and I was lucky that my husband Jack just adored my mother. He really was, he lost his whole family. He cannot even listen to me speak about the Holocaust. And he was very kind and glad to have her and we cherished her. Anyway, to continue what happened afterwards. So one day, my mother comes upstairs after going to look get some food or some clothing, I don't remember and she tells me that she ran into a gentleman that was with the Soviet Army by the name of Tabreeshock (ph). My father's younger sister, her

married name was Tabreeshock (ph). This gentleman told my mother that he stationed in Lodz and his cousin who was my uncle by marriage and my aunt, my father's sister succeeded to escape from Vilna, just as the, before the Germans marched in to the Soviet Union. That they have returned back to Vilna and they hope as Polish citizens to, they had, there was a certain law, that you were allowed to live _____, Vilner (ph), that's we Jewish people call _____, if you're a Polish citizen you were allowed to go back to Poland. And most people did not want to stay in the Soviet Union cause it was Communism and most Jewish people had the dream at that time to, to go to Israel or to come to America. So he told us that he knows that in a very short time, he doesn't know it'll take a week or two weeks or three weeks that his cousin and, and, he's, my aunt who's, he's cousin to by marriage are going to try to come to Lodz. We shouldn't go nowhere, we'll be reunited. So we were anticipating every day are they coming, are they coming? My mother went always to check if their name is on the board and finally they arrive. They arrive in Lodz, my uncle, my aunt. They had a boy that was twelve years old. My uncle's best friend, he's my, his best friend's brother and the brother's best friend, so there are three single men with my uncle and my aunt and that little boy. So we are already a family unit. Here we are surrounded with my aunt and my uncle and, and a few guys that are there and we are all looking, where should we

go? Where should we go. We get already messages that the men were liberated from Dachau. We hear already that the men that were taken to Shtoodruff (ph) that came with us from Siauliai were taken to Dachau and the _____ camps of Dachau. So we are waiting to hear maybe someone of the men survived. Eventually come a few gentlemen that were liberated from Dachau that are from my hometown. What they did, they decided to send out a few people to come to Poland, see if, and tell the women don't go back to the Soviet Union, don't go to Communism. Try to come to the American Zone. So and so they came with list telling who survived. On that list was my brother's name. And we knew this, one of this gentleman and he said you, to my mother, "Your son said if I find you, try every which way to come to the American Zone." Why was the aim to go to the American Zone? My mother had a sister that lived in Washington, D.C. And if we would be in the American Zone, we would be able to come to America. So here we are, all this group of people, not knowing what to do. So one day, my mother says to me, "You know, Nesa, we two women alone, we couldn't do all this traveling." We couldn't, you still had to go a little bit across the border, there was no really regulations about the border. But still you have to take a chance, you had to take a truck, you had to walk. She says, "We two women alone couldn't really manage all of this. One of us have to get married." And I looked at my mother and I thought she has me. Why

does she want to get married? But the next thing out of my mother's mouth was, "My child, I had a wonderful husband. He was killed in Auschwitz. But you, it's true you're very young. Maybe you should get married." So I looked at her, I said, "Where do I get a husband?" And she said, "Look at those guys, three guys, single guys. The friend of the uncle's, his brother and his friend." Well I looked at the three guys and I said, "Well this one is too old. This one is too short and maybe this one." So my mother said, "Okay." Now I don't know how Jack and I got married, I really don't know. We, we just talked that it would be a good idea and I never kissed him before or anything and we went and we did a document that I'm his wife. And so, we were already like a, a threesome, a family. But I really didn't, legally, I was his wife but for all practical services we were not husband and wife until later on we had the religious wedding. So here we are, trying to find out how can we get to the American Zone. So everybody says not a big deal. There is a, the Jewish agent, he's helping out people to go across the border. Once you get into Berlin, Berlin had four zones: The Russian Zone, the French Zone, the English Zone, the American Zone. So to go to the Russian Zone was no problem because we were in the same place. And we didn't have any luggage, we didn't have anything. So we took a walk and we were in the American Zone. And when we registered there in the camp and eventually through the Jewish Agency, people came and helped you

to go to wherever you had family. And my brother was already at that point in a displaced person camp called Feldafing. And in October of 1945, we arrived in the displaced person camp. At that point, we had separated from the rest of the people because we were privileged to go to Feldafing because my brother was there.

Q: Would you tell me the name of this brother and which one . . .

A: Yeah.

Q: It was [talkover].

A: That's my oldest brother, Yurhaskel (ph) and he was liberated in one of the _____ camps of Dachau and from those camps they were all put in the Feldafing Displaced Person Camp. When we arrived, they were already, I think they were liberated in May, maybe I don't know exactly whether May or June that displaced camp was formed, but when we arrived in October, it was pretty much organized. Now my aunt and my uncle, they were assigned to another displaced person camp 'cause Feldafing was pretty crowded at that point. But if you had family you were allowed to go and be reunited so this is why we came to Feldafing. And we, we registered in the, as soon as we came. You have to register every, within the little town, police. It's funny because I still have the, found the little document where I registered that I came there. And that's how we wound up in the displaced person camp.

Q: And tell me about the reunion with your brother.

A: The reunion with my brother was different than with my mother. Because, because of us knowing that he was alive and because of him knowing that we were alive. And because of him trying to make arrangements for us to get us permission to come. Although we didn't see each other, but by knowing that we were alive, it wasn't like when I walked in and there was my mother. Naturally it was very emotional but not like you got surprised, you see somebody, you didn't know they were alive.

Q: Do you remember what you felt and how he looked? [talkover]

A: He, at that point, he looked a little, pretty good. He didn't look so bad because don't forget from May 'til October, we all, I looked already better, my hair had grown and, and we looked already entirely different. And he was married in the ghetto and his wife, who was with me in, in the labor camp, and we were separated after liberation, she was there already. She had come already there. So we found him already with his wife and it was just so wonderful. In that villa, it was called Villa Valbearta (ph), those villas were used actually for SS men, for their entertainment, it was like a country club. Feldafing had golf courses and, and all this beautiful things for the SS and the Gestapo to come and enjoy themselves and that thing was turned into the displaced person camp. For the plain (ph) soldiers, they had these

barracks and that's where originally the survivors were put in, in those barracks. But if the family started to come, they assigned those buildings, those villas they called it villas. So now that villa that we were in, maybe one family lived before or one SS man with his wife or a commandant or whatever. And here we were, downstairs in one room lived a woman with her, with her husband that she married right after the war two, another room, two, I'm trying to think, we were like five families, five different groups, units that lived in that one house. They called it a villa. It was a house like my house. And we were assigned the kitchen. Now don't forget, I wasn't really sleeping with Jack. He, to me he wasn't, he was a husband on paper but we hadn't had a _____ a religious wedding. There I slept with my mother in one bed and then there this other bed that poor Jack had to sleep. And then they started to plan our religious wedding. And after a few months, we were married. And . . .

Q: And it was at Feldafing.

A: In Feldafing and there wasn't a big to-do there, we went to the rabbi and it was my brother, _____ and my sister-in-law and my mom and Jack and I and my sister-in-law kept on saying to me, "You have to be very serious when you get married. Especially in our tradition, you have to go around the, the groom seven times." And she said to me, "Would be nice if you put on a pair of shoes with heels

so you look a little taller." I don't know who gave us those, those heels but I hadn't worn heels before. And when I was walking around Jack, I couldn't stop laughing. I was laughing and laughing, laughing, and everybody said, "That stupid kid. She's gettin' married, look at her, such a stupid girl." So that was in Feldafing. And we lived actually in that kitchen, we just switched beds. Jack hopped into my bed, my mother got his bed. We stayed there for a year, in that kitchen, until my oldest daughter was born. She was born in March of 1947 and when we, when she was born in '47, some of the people had already documents to immigrate somewhere. Some people went on illegal immigration to Israel. And so we, the, the camp had already little bit more space so we were assigned in another villa, was called Villa Gowlitz (ph) a room. But still we shared that room with my mom and Jack and I and my youngest daughter, my oldest daughter. And the life in the displaced person camp, it was organized living. Some people think well you were free and you were free. I remember there was a curfew when we first came to the camp. In later years, not. But when we first came to the displaced person camp, is was a curfew. You were not allowed to go in town whenever you wanted. Yes it was no gate, it was not fenced but you were told that after, I don't remember, ten o'clock or eleven or whatever, don't remember anymore, you were not allowed to walk around. Also, it was very difficult. Can you imagine us victims, I don't call us survivor, we were

victims that survived by miracle, walking among murderers? You see now if I would come to Germany, it's a new generation, new people. Young people that will not dare, it's a new life, a new government. But don't forget, right in 1945 and '46, the Nazis were there. You could see it on their faces, men that just put on, changed their coat, that's all. Their feelings they still had.

Q: Nesse were there individuals there, that you knew had been sort of perpetrators talkover?

A: Well not that I knew personally [talkover] yes, others would know. And, and then they started to talk about having trials for, they started to talk about later on what came about, the Nuremburg Trials, but in the, for the time being all those people were walking around free. Maybe the main, main 20 leaders, I don't know exactly how many were taken to the jail right away. Let's say a few hundred. But thousands and thousands that killed human beings were walking around free. They just said they obeyed orders.

Q: Right. I understand that was one of the hardest things in the camps for the [talkover] survivors [talkover]

A: Yes, it was difficult because you walked, you went in to register in the police office and there you thought that the German man that you thought maybe he was a guard in a camp somewhere. It was very difficult. It was, maybe it was a innocent

man that maybe stayed at _____ and minded his own business, was, closed his eyes to what was happening around there. Now is that innocent?

Q: Yeah. Even then you'd, that would be hard.

A: Exactly. But when you walk around each, there were cases of still there were anti-Semitic incidents and even if, if someone said something to you without meaning anything, you as a victim thought well, he wants to kill you again. It was very difficult to live so many years in, in, in that area.

Q: How long was it before the organization and the running of Feldafing was placed in the hands of the Jewish community?

A: Well I tell you, when I came in October, it was pretty much in the Jewish community. It was guided by the Unruh (ph).

Q: Yeah, you, would you explain what Unruh (ph)?

A: Yeah. United Nation Relief Organization. And so it was guided. They had a person that was in charge. But more or less they let the Jewish community, there was a person that was like president of the camp, people that were in charge of, of the food, distribution of food, there were, at the very beginning, there were two kitchens. Public kitchens. One was kosher and one was not. Now when we came, because my brother knew somebody, my husband got the job in the kosher kitchen. So when you, you had the job, you were better off, you got, at that time was

everything rationed. You got your ration card, you went and that's when they gave you food. So at the beginning, you really had to go to that kitchen to get your food. After while, they kind of gave you the food and you could cook it in your little room or in your little kitchen, wherever. But at the beginning, you just had to go to those kitchens. Also, packages started to come from the United States, from the Red Cross or whatever, there was a, a warehouse for clothing. Like we give now for the poor and they come. I was watching the other day how the children came and when got their toys and how happy they were. And it reminded me how I went to the warehouse and I picked a pair of shoes and I picked a dress and there I had already two dresses. So all this somebody, people don't realize, they think you were free from the camps and you picked up your life. It didn't work that way. It didn't work that way. Few of the people had the wisdom to try to go back to school. I really maybe, maybe I got married a little too quick, maybe if I would have gone to school before I got married, maybe my mother's idea wasn't the best one.

Q: Tell me more about the, how quickly most people married and how unusual is it for your marriage has lasted and been very happy but did that, were most of the marriages [talkover]

A: Let me tell you, right after liberation and in the displaced person camp, everybody got married. I, I don't to say everybody, most of the people. Everybody

would be everybody, everybody. When women were alone, if the, if the guy could buy them a pair of shoes, they were willing to get married. You were alone, you were not, the men started the little bit, Trades (ph) started a little bit black market business. There was something that you could do but what could women do? So most people were getting married, also, also, it was very much encouraged by the community. Let's rebuild our nation. Let's have children. For every child that died, let's have another child. And within a year, that's all you saw, is baby carriages. When I was pregnant, every woman was pregnant. Every woman in the displaced person camp was pregnant. You talk to survivors and they'll tell you. I'm 47, my child was born. And everyone that you will take interview they will have a child born 47, or 48 or 49. This was not just in spite of the Nazis wanted us dead. Let's rebuild our people. So people got married, not necessarily before, because they fell in love. I don't say, not everyone, some fell in love, young people, but most because they needed each other. Mostly because they needed each other. I tell you the truth and I sit with Jack and we talk many times. He says to me, "I gave you a kiss, why do you say I never gave you a kiss before we got married?" But maybe gave me a peck on the cheek. I'm talking what we see now, a kiss. We were not in love when we got married. We needed each other. But among survivors, you don't see divorces. You don't hear about divorces. Very seldom you will talk to a survivor

that divorced. We needed, we raised our children and I tell you, Jack and I, I don't think there was a prettier love between two people that got married without love. And that's the truth. The truth we cared for each other, we, we raised beautiful children, we worked hard because we were not professional people . . .

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

Q: Going back to that time in the barn when the Russians came in and liberated you, why you think you gave up then?

A: Well actually I, I gave up when I was already in the hospital getting better. When I, I didn't give up all through that. I, I lived day by day saying I'll resist the Germans, I will live. And then once I started to get a little better, and, and healing myself, I was gettin' ready to give up. That's the most stupid thing that I could have done. But don't forget I was just 17 years old. Now when I look back at it, if I would have succeeded to starve myself and die, who would I have helped? I would have helped the Nazis. After the fact, they would have had one more human being dead.

Q: But when you think about it, why do you think you were giving up? Do you think [talkover] breaking point? [talkover]

A: I was at the breaking point or I was sorry and I thought what am I going to do? What do I need to live for? I don't have anybody. I was a child. The reasoning for that was really no reasoning. When I think back about it, I think it's the most stupid thing that I thought to do. But when you're young, sometime you, you not happy with a girlfriend or you're not happy with a boyfriend, you going to commit suicide. As I told you before, I go out to speak to children about my life in the Holocaust. And I just don't go out to speak so they will learn the horrors of the Holocaust. I go

out so they would understand how precious life is, how you can help each other, how you don't join a gang or, or a group that you will be sorry about. And many times they ask me about this suicide. And I tell them, I never tell them that I one time thought of doing that, I always tell them if you do suicide, who do you help? Yourself? You help your enemy.

Q: We're resuming with the interview with Nesse Godin on December the 14th, 1995. Nesse Godin, yeah, my name is Margaret West.

A: And, so, we were talking about the displaced person camp, how it was. Now you ask me about my brothers. Now as I told you before, I'll just briefly go through. On my other testimony and videotape, I speak a little bit maybe about it. But my father was taken with the children selection on November 5th of 1943, to Auschwitz. Somebody corrected me now and they said that nobody was killed in Auschwitz, they were killed in Beerkano (ph). But this is after the fact, people decipher it and they tell you. But when we were told, we were just told they were taken to Auschwitz. So before all the information that was available that we have now, it was just said to Auschwitz. So he was taken to Auschwitz or whatever, Beerkano (ph) where the gas chambers and the crematorias were and he was killed. My mom as I told you survived the same type of camp as I did. My older brother, Yerhuskel (ph) survived Dachau concentration camp. Now my brother who is older than me five

years but I always refer to him as my younger brother because there was the older. His name is Manasha (ph) Galperin. His experience was entirely different. When we were being deported to the concentration camp, when we were being taken to the railroad stations, all of a sudden we were there, my mom and my brother and myself and two uncles and a aunt and my brother Manasha (ph). And all of a sudden we didn't see him. And my poor mom cried, she said, "Oh, that delinquent, he must have done something and the SS men must have killed him," or whatever. You see when he was a young boy, he always got into trouble. I don't mean trouble like we say now, stealing or dope or whatever. He always, if he rode his bike, he held onto a truck and that's how he rode his bike. He was always daring and doing things and he had all kinds of friends and, that my mother didn't approve in the younger days. So he had a Lithuanian friend that always told him, if things get very bad, he's going to help you. Young guy. And this guy always said to him, "Manasha (ph), don't come to our house cause my parents may not approve of that." But my brother knew his house, he knew the, the little forest next to it, a little woods there, he say, "You know that smokehouse that we have there? You sneak in there and when I will hear that the ghetto is being deported, I'm going to look and to see if you are in that smokehouse. I'm going to put out food for you. But if they catch you there, don't you ever tell that I let you in." And this is what happen. That

day before we were really being taken, this young man found out that we were being deported. And my brother says that somehow, he did send word to him, that he's ready for him to come. So he just somehow snuck away. We were walking, he snuck away, they didn't see him and he was in that forest. About three weeks later, the Soviets took over this area, the outskirts of Siauliai and my brother was free. So this is how he was liberated in Lithuania. Now his story was entirely different because after a few years, 1946 or '47 maybe '47, I don't know exactly when, he was called by the NKBG. And they told him that they know that the mother and the brother and the sister were liberated from the camps. And how come we did not come back to Lithuania. We must be Zionists. And if we are Zionist, we are against Communism. So he was sent to Siberia for 15 year. Now after being there all this time, when Stalin died, some people, you know how when somebody that the government gives you amnesty? So after being nine years in Siberia in the gulags, he was given an amnesty and was let go. And because of our own involvement in the United States and the involvement of the Israeli government on behalf of Soviet Jewry, he was let go and he came to Israel. He lived there for 20 years. Then two of his children married Americans and now, as we talk, he lives in Baltimore. I have tried many a times for him to give testimony but he says he just cannot do it. He says his blood pressure goes up too high. So you see, we are two people of one

family. I feel that this testimony is very important, to remember the dead but most of all to teach the living what hatred and indifference can do. God bless him, he's lovely, he's great, I love him, but he wouldn't talk to anybody. Not even to me. I wanted to go with a tape recorder, take his story, he doesn't want to bring it up.

Q: What, what, what do you know about his time in Siberia?

A: Well, I, what I know about his time in Siberia, he tells wonderful stories sometime, when he's in the mood of talking. But he always says that if you share a piece of bread, sometimes it saves your life. And when I say yeah, people shared bread with me and maybe this saved my life, he said, no and he went in and told me a story what happened to him. When he was taken from Lithuania, from Siauliai, to go on the train to be taken to Siberia, his wife gave him a loaf of bread. While he was sitting on the train, there was a man, a Russian man sitting next to him. The Russian man said to him, my brother is a big man, he was always very big and he was bald at a very young age. He said that this Russian man said to him, "Dyadya (ph), uncle, would you share some bread with me?" So my brother as he was taught by my mom, he took the loaf of bread, he broke it in half, handed it to this stranger. This stranger couldn't get over that my brother would give him a half a loaf of bread. After while, they were talking and he said to him, "You are a remarkable man," this stranger tells to my brother. "You don't know me, you gave

me, I asked you for a piece of bread, you gave me half of your bread. You don't even know where you're going." So my brother says, "Well, wherever we're going, we going. Whatever will happen will happen to both of us." He says, "I'm going tell you something. When you get up tomorrow morning and you don't see me here, don't be surprised. But when you arrive in the gulags, if somebody asks you for your name, you tell them that you are Uncle Misha." My brother's name was Manasha (ph), in the Russian, Misha. Dyadya (ph) Misha. So my brother just didn't pay attention, said this crazy man what is he telling me. That's all. So at night, he was sleeping, he wakes up, the man is not there. My brother thought, did he have a dream? He looks at his bread, half a bread is gone. So he must have given it to somebody, and, okay. He said, well, maybe the man, maybe the NKBG put up a man, you know how you start to think. Well, he arrives in those gulags and in Siberia wherever he was there, I don't know, and then he stands there and you register, register you and they ask him, "What's your name?" He says, "Manasha (ph) Galperin." The man said to him, "Do you have another name?" My brother said, "No, I don't have another name." He says, "In Russian they call me Misha." He says, "Dyadya (ph) Misha?" He's, he figures what can he lose, he will say. He say, "Yes." He say, "Well you are assigned to go to work in the infirmary." You see, in Russia, this underworld, even in the jails, even in the gulags, they had at that time

there, how do you say, underground. This man was one of this Russian Mafia or underworld or something. So because of this half a bread, my brother say, always says, he says he wouldn't have survived the conditions there if he would have had to go to in the mines or, or do other work. But because he had this, this, so he says, it pays to share your bread. And I tell young people now too, I said you always think you don't have much but if you have a quarter, give a dime to somebody. You never know when it'll come back. So it was interesting. I wish sometime that he would really give testimony but he, he says he cannot do it.

Q: Nesse, I wonder if you'd go back and talk first of all briefly about the circumstances of your father being taken. But then when did your mother give up hope of his being alive? I think it was, don't think she knew for sure what had happened to him.

A: Well I tell you. The children selection, as I speak in detail on my videotape which I'm sure you heard that, my father was taken on that selection and when they were taken away, the people on the railroads, the people that worked on the railroads, our Jewish community council, the, the, whatever, the Unruh (ph) or whatever you call them, they tried very hard to find out from different sources where were they taken to. And at that time, we knew that they were taken towards Poland. We did not know, every individual did not know exactly about gas chambers and, and

crematorias but now after all these years, I understand that maybe our leadership knew already, that there were such things, such camps. But they were afraid to tell to the everyday person what was happening in those camps. So there were rumors that they were taken to another camp in Poland, with no name. We didn't know Auschwitz, or no Auschwitz or whatever. What I remember at that time after the children selection after my father was taken, the mood in the ghetto was terrible. People started to believe in astrology, in astronomy. People sat in their houses and made seances, holding their hands and sitting at the table and saying to the table, if the children is, are alive, move three times, or move one time. And people really believed that those tables were moving. All kinds of stupid, started to believing cards, in laying out cards. I think this was all to have a flicker of hope, to not to give up. My dear friend, when you take a thousand children, among them infants that couldn't live one day without being taken care of, pushing them in, later on when I was taken in those trains, and I was already at that time 16 years old, I was thinking about how did those children live even to arrive? Somewhere. But after we were liberated, after I came back to Feldafing, people, and had already documentation that this transport was taken to Auschwitz. It was wishful thinking when, when I was reunited with my mom, we still hoped, we still thought that maybe they're alive. Maybe they'll be reunited. But when we arrived in Feldafing and I remember that

first high (ph) holidays that we were in Feldafing and it was decided to say prayer for the dead, for those children. At that time it was already, hope was given up. I myself, for many years, I used to have a dream. I used to dream that I'm coming to some remote place and there is my father. And I used to say, "Papa, where have you been? We've been looking for you." But I don't have the dream anymore. Years ago I stopped dreaming that and I really thought that was my wishful dream. I was hoping that one day I will find him. Now I gave up a long time ago to find him alive because we knew that they were all killed. But even, I don't know how many years ago when the Red Cross came up, that they found a documentation, they have in Baltimore some research and all that, and I wrote a letter to them saying that my father was taken on the fifth of November of 1943 with the selection. It has been proved that they were taken to Auschwitz. They were not even given numbers. What I am looking for is how many days did this transport travel. Why was I looking for it? Because I light a candle on the day that my father was taken. He was still alive. I thought maybe if I would know four days later, three days later, know, one letter I've gotten back from the Red Cross saying they cannot find my father. And after calling them back and telling them and explaining that I know you cannot find him, he's dead, just I need that information. They never found that information. Now I think that the museum got some new information, some archives

in the former Soviet Union because Auschwitz was liberated. So one day I'm going to upstairs and look and see if there is new information on that. So I light a candle on the day that my father was taken and I let it burn for a whole week, thinking, is that the right day, that, when he died, within my tradition, Jewish tradition, to light a candle.

Q: And your brother, you mentioned that your brother lost his hair early. [talkover] He looks like your father?

A: He was, he was, he was really very, very young when he lost his hair. And my father used to shave his head and so does my brother.

Q: I saw the photo of your father at 47.

A: Now we are talking about Feldafing. You see when you talk to a survivor, we wander away to another space, to another place, to another happening, but that's okay because it's, since we are sitting in my house we have this privilege of going back and remembering of things that are important for history. Going back to Feldafing, now, the way as I told you Feldafing was organized, it was overseen by the Unruh (ph) and ran a little bit by the own Jewish community. At the beginning you had, as I said, you had to go to the main kitchens to get your food, later on you received your, your rations whatever was assigned to you and I'm sure it was enough calories for you to, to live on. I remember we got rations of peanut butter

and peanut butter and peanut butter since, since the displaced person camp, I really never liked peanut butter. And dried condensed milk. And it was wonderful but it was still rationed. Eventually, people started to get little jobs like my husband got the job in the kitchen. My brother was working for the, well the clothing distribution and food distribution. At one time he was like a judge in the camp because if there were disputes among ourselves, among, in the Jewish community, it was taken care of by our own people. We had our own police that made sure that everything is taken care of properly. People started to work outside of the camp. After a few years, the people started, some people started little businesses, some shoemaker started to make shoes, some tailor started to make clothing. Some people started to barter, it became a barter system. Now we ourselves, as soon as my aunt found out that we were alive, we remembered her address, she lived on Sherman and Euclid (ph) Streets in Washington, D.C. They had a tiny little grocery story, it was called Sal's (ph) Market. In those days, you didn't have zip codes, you didn't have to write the zip code. We wrote a letter, Sal's (ph) Market, Sherman and Euclid (ph) Streets, Washington, D.C. My aunt got, she went to some relatives that had more money. You had to give a security so otherwise you couldn't bring a family. You have to show that the family is, can take care of the people that they are going to bring. So she had, we had some distant cousins, some of them were car dealer,

some of them at liquor store and they all signed that we would be taken care of for the family. But although those documents were done here, we could not leave Germany. Because we were from Lithuania. The United States had a quota system. I'm saying it very carefully because at one time people said, Nesse didn't have a quarter, that's why she didn't come to United States. Quota system was x amount of people were allowed to come from each country to the United States. That was in effect for many years. Now there was no more Lithuania, Lithuania was absorbed by the Russians, by the Soviet Union, but still, we the displaced persons had to come on this quota. So, assuming, if they let in a hundred people of Lithuanian descent to the United States, we had to wait our turn. So while we were in the displaced person camp, Jack and I had two children there, in the camp.

Q: In what years?

A: My oldest daughter Panina (ph) was born in 1947, Ed was born 1949. Now as I started to tell you, people started to have little businesses, raise a little money. Now my aunt started to send us packages, packages of clothing and packages of cigarettes, coffee. The German people were very anxious to have chocolate and cigarettes and coffee. So there was a barter system. Let's say if I wanted to have a sewing machine so I could sew something, I gave the man so many cigarettes and he gave me the old sewing machine. Or if I wanted some bed linens, if I gave him

this coffee, he gave, that was a barter system. People don't understand that, how at the beginning you didn't even need money. We didn't have money. You started to barter things and once later, people started to have jobs and little businesses in the displaced person camp. After a while, schools were set up for younger children. Now we didn't have at the beginning, children per se because there were no children from the camps but as people started to come like my aunt came from the occupied Russia, she had a twelve year old, he needed schooling. So there were children, so they had to have the schooling. Also, vocational schools were set up. I myself went to a vocational school to learn how to sew. Because people said when you come to America, it's very good to know how to sew. People went to learn languages. I went to learn English. At one time I went and I took a course in bookkeeping. People said if you go to America, it's very good to be a bookkeeper but they didn't tell me that you need, need, need a certified accounting degree. So peoples resumed a little bit a life and started to earn a little money. By the time, I would say maybe 1947, '48, people had already little money. People started to work, some people started to work in Jewish agencies for the American government. I don't know really of anybody that really worked for any German per se company.

Q: Nesse, do you know how different Feldafing was in these years from the other

camps?

A: I really don't know. I understand that I talk to many people that they were run pretty much the same because the Unruh (ph) was in charge of it. The only thing was in some places you, you were in more _____ barracks. Here at the beginning we just had the barracks, then they gave us those villas so all of a sudden we had like a bigger camp. Within the camp, some Zionist organizations were organized. I remember Ben Gur Yon (ph) coming to Israel, to, from Israel to Feldafing and I remember the whole camp was decorated with paper. With tissue paper. Now I did not know, I just found out by watching the tape of the liberators, a testimony of a person that was in charge of the camp telling how the Jews in the displaced person camp decorated with toilet paper, the whole camp. Now at that time, I didn't know what, they just took this toilet paper, twisted it and it became like decorations. We, we started within our own camp to have a little theater group, lectures, that we, the younger people were encouraged to go. Now as I said, I got, I got married very young. And I had to, I had my children, I had to take care of them. And because I had my mom, I could attend some of those lectures and go to some of those classes. But some of my own friends had the opportunity and they went back to school right away and got their college degrees in Germany. I have a friend who became a nurse. Now in the five years that I was personally in the displaced

person camp, until we got our permission to come to the United States, I worked as a secretary in between the camp at one time but most of all I did some alterations for people because I learned how to sew. So I redid a hem or, or as I told you I was so lucky that I had that sewing machine that I bartered for cigarettes. So I was a big maha (ph). And that's really, we did not have much at all. We came to the United States without a penny in our pocket.

Q: Tell me how that waiting would go. Would you be, would you be getting notification [talkover] every six months to say [talkover] maybe, maybe?

A: The notification was like this. You, they, you got the letter that all your papers are here . . .[end of side 1 or tape 2] Okay. Now you know that we were all sick people. Now I had right after liberation, in Munich, I had this surgery on my face and I tell you the truth. For a little while, I had forgotten why I had that, that thing or maybe I wanted to forget it. And they kept on saying that I have tuberculosis of the glands. Wasn't tuberculosis of the glands, it was I was beaten up. But I just didn't want to think about it or talk about, I don't know. So now if I had tuberculosis of the glands, they had to check me for a year so I wouldn't bring tuberculosis to the United States. So we were postponed for another year. They found always an excuse why you shouldn't come. I remember my mom went for her examination and she was so nervous she couldn't urinate at that time. So they, they wrote down

that she had trouble with her bladder. My mom says you know how you go to the doctor sometime, you cannot give a sample? For, for the test? Little things. Then finally, finally already we were, we got our quota, we are ready to go. I was pregnant with my son. They wouldn't let me go because I was pregnant. They said I have to wait until he was born, until he was a year old. And constantly postponing and postponing and people were frustrated. People wanted to go anywhere. They didn't care where, who, what, who would let 'em in. Yes, we personally really wanted to come to the United States. Cause my mom, four of her brothers and sister, two brothers and two sisters were killed in the Holocaust with their families and she had that one sister. She really wanted to come to be with her sister. This is, and with me, I was so young. My mother was the boss. Like she told me to get married, she told me I have to go to America. My brother, he felt that after suffering for so many years, we should have our own country. He is a Zionist, he lives in Israel and he, although it meant separation again from the rest of the family, he chose to go to Israel. And I remember his saying, he said, "We are free people. If God will help us, we'll be able to see each other. We'll be able to visit each other." And the truth is that Jack and I, that's the only vacations we take. Every few years, we go to visit them in Israel. It's easier for us financially to do that than for them from Israel. They were here a few times but mostly we go.

Q: Tell me about the hopes of most of the people in Feldafing. Would you have been unusual in hoping to come, planning to come to America? Would most people hope to go to Israel?

A: Well, I tell you. There was differences of opinion. I cannot say to you that everybody was patriotic, wanted to go to Israel. I myself as, as a young woman of 18, 19, 20, I was afraid of war. I didn't want to go to a place where there was war. I wanted to go to a place and I thought of America, I, we thought, gee in America, all the people, black and white and Jews and non-Jews live together. What I have learned about America even in the displaced person camp; the country of freedom, the songs of freedom, where no slavery and no this and no that. I came here I was a little bit disappointed to find all this and even now, even within last week when I see among our own ranks in the military, prejudice, white supremacist, Nazi _____, but to me, America at that time was the country where I thought I could live my life and my children as Jews, free. And I still think that this is the best country in the world. As I say, at the very beginning, at the very beginning they, it was like again , like a jail. We had the curfew, we were not allowed to do this and that and the other. There was, okay, there was American people that were in charge and even German police of the city. Even German, like when I came, why couldn't I register in the camp? I had to go to the German police to register that I am

there. And that was traumatic. So even this still had to go through the German authority. I don't know, maybe they meant well. They meant well whoever was in charge. Maybe they thought it's, that's a good way to do it. But until really it was given over more to the Jewish people to run their own, their own little camp how you say, it was difficult. It was difficult. I know, I used to even in 1947, when I went with the baby carriage into the little town out of, the camp was a little bit away from the little town. I don't know if you have a picture of Feldafing, well that's small, small little town, not a big town. And I think I had a feeling at that time at the beginning that like the German people looked and said, what is she doing here with a baby carriage? She belongs somewhere else. And many times we heard that. We heard the people say, although we understood German very well, what are they doing here? They belong in the camp. But later on, later on things really changed. There were young people that grew up that were children or teenagers and were more compassionate. There were people that we met, my mom by saying we, my mom and I, especially there was one lady, we called her oma (ph), grandma, that suffered from the Nazis. She was a German lady. Her husband was a postmaster before the war, before the Nazis took over. And he was put in jail and she was left with two children, two teenagers. And one day she just came, somehow, she saw my mother and she walked over and she said, "Lady, I'm a German lady that suffered

from the Nazis and if you would just let me come and clean your house and help you, I would be grateful if you would just give me a little wood or a little food," and we befriended that lady and we just loved her and so. There were different relationship, different people but in later years, Feldafing was not a uncomfortable place to be in, not a uncomfortable place to be in. It was like I said, a Jewish police, a Jewish little like a government and if you needed a extra coat or something there was like a, people that received packages, were not given as much as the ones that were, the social system was a little more righteous at that point. But I, I am, as, as a person that lived there for five years and talking to other survivors that were in Lunzberg (ph) or in Fairenweld (ph) or in Hightenhime (ph) or in different, it was pretty much the same. It was pretty much the same. People at the beginning, naturally having to be on ration and so forth and later on, people, people that were a little bit older that knew how to open a little business, they actually let the people started to sell equipment for a tailor, let's say a thread and zippers and buttons. They went somewhere and bought a little bit, came back to the camp and, and sold it to the tailors and raised a little money, so small little businesses I would say the type like the years ago, the pushcart peddler.

Q: I was interested in knowing, I assume that nobody had, when they came to Feldafing, had any family possessions but would you have had between you any

sort of momentos?

A: We had nothing. We had nothing. Because we were taken from home. We were taken to Shtoodruff (ph), we were stripped naked, we were not successful to bring anything, anything of our own through. Some people that went back to Poland, let's say if I would have been from Lodz, originally, maybe when I came back if I would have gone to my old house, maybe I would have found something. Also don't forget, many people came back to Poland and went to the little villages and were killed because of that possession. The people that moved into those Jewish homes were afraid not to give away the stuff, they were afraid that they would be prosecuted because they lived there. They killed them. So some people succeeded to bring something back. We had nothing, nothing from home. But I am still very lucky, cause you saw pictures of my family from home. Now how do I have them? Before the war, my mom sent constantly pictures to her sister in the United States. My mom had two aunts, my grandfather, her father's two sisters and their families lived the United States. And constantly how you send, they were in touch. They sent pictures. So every picture that you saw on a

tape or later if we have a chance I'll show them to you there on display, my family room. Those are pictures that were sent before second world war to the United States. So from home, nothing. What you see my house is everything that's

acquired after, given us a gift from somebody and the pictures from my mother's sister, Loddyjoffee (ph) that brought us here.

Q: Nesse, tell me more about at Feldafing, the rebuilding of lives but especially in the community, you mentioned the theater, but reviving songs. . .

A: Yes.

Q: Music, stories . . .

A: Yes.

Q: And that would probably well, [talkover] raising children then.

A: Yeah this is very important because we, we also, I don't know if it was in Feldafing, I think it was out of Munich, a new Jewish newspaper was printed. And there is cultural little events, our own Jewish community started to feel that we have to bring from, we started to bring from one displaced person camp to another, our, our stars, our, our little singers and dancers and, and, and people that survived that were actors in Poland. They started to bring old movies that were made years ago, Yiddish movies for us to see and to learn about. Eventually they started to bring operas for people that should get, like me, I never knew what an opera was. To learn that there is such thing as operas. People that were poets started to write songs and poems about the lives in the ghetto. Also people that remembered the songs that were born in the ghettos, in the camps, they were documented. Some of

the people were not even alive anymore that wrote those songs but some were. So all these be, started to be documented. They started to do books on, memorial books from their communities. They got like we are sitting now, at that time we didn't have tape recorders, everything had to be done on the typewriter or longhand or whoever knew shorthand to put, start to take testimonies of people. They started to look for witnesses that could stand up at those trials and say I was there, this is, this what happened. They, we had right away Jewish doctors that participated right away in Feldafing in the hospital with helping people. My children were delivered by Jewish doctors. The people in their professions that people that were loyal so, businessmen started somehow to, to participate in that field in the community. In five years, you could see the difference in the people. When we left Feldafing, it was already a different community. It wasn't just a victim community, it was already a survivors' community. That's the difference. And, I don't know why there was no, not too much documentation cause you would think that the United Nations Relief would have all this papers on it, really. Being there I can just tell you of I, S, A, I don't want to use the word inmate, inmate is maybe to strong, as I cannot use the word citizen because I was not, I was a displaced person in that camp. So _____ but really logistics you would have to go back to documentation that is a people that documented those things. _____ if you would ask me how

much calories we received a day, I wouldn't know what to tell you.

Q: Tell me what it was like, I imagine that when your two children were born in Feldafing, that it would be tremendously emotional for you, for your husband, for your mother, [talkover] what do you remember of that, that sort of joys of having . . .

A: Well, I tell you. When my oldest daughter was born, my mother was so happy. Although she was a girl, she could hardly wait to name her after my father. We name after the dead in Jewish tradition. And although I'm sure she knew that eventually I would have another child, there may be a boy, she could hardly wait to have that name. And it was like a rebirth, rebirth, not just rebirth to the individuals, it was a rebirth to the community. Every child that was born, it was not just your joy but the whole house, like five, six families were excited about that. Now when our son was born, that was really very, very special because Jack is the only survivor of his family. He cannot even stand to listen to me talk about the Holocaust. But can you imagine there was a Godin? He stood there and he just say, "Godin, Godin, Godin." That's all he was saying. That's all he was saying. He didn't even and Ed is named after his father. His name is Edward Isaac, Edward after my grandfather, my mom's father, who died a natural death before the war and after Jack's father. My oldest daughter is named after his mother too, my father and his mother. We always tried to give 'em two names so people would, all those people would be

remembered. And that's all I really remember and I'll tell you the truth. Even when our grandson Gabe was born, our son's son, Jack, that's second time in his life that I saw him, so emotional that that name Godin will continue. When the, I was _____, I say, "Look at, look at him, he's so cute, such a cute baby!" _____, he said, "Godin, Godin, Godin," that's all he said. So it really, you cannot describe those feelings. You really cannot describe those feelings because something happens in a family. Even in our own community here when we had this last spring were this poor people were killed. And I always says that this woman had a Holocaust. The husband and the children killed in one day. Can you imagine? Masses of families destroyed and you all grieve together and no counseling. So each child that was born, each thing good that happened was like a miracle, like a miracle. If somebody got married, you didn't have brothers and sisters to invite, you invited your, your, your neighbors that were your adopted brothers and sisters. Up to this day, we have friends that we lived in the displaced person camp together. They were strangers but they were our family. I just went to Cleveland to see a lady that lived under us. We, our room was over hers and unfortunately she never had children. When I went to see her now, she has diabetes, she had a leg amputated and that's all she was talking, she was saying, "That's all I remember is Eddie running around upstairs with his little feet," so.

Q: He was her child too.

A: Yeah, her child too. And she said, "I remember my husband used to come for lunch and runned, run quickly and bring your daughter down so she could have the chicken soup." See her husband drove a car. And he was like a chauffeur for somebody and the people used to give them a little extra and they could afford already to make chicken soup and we didn't. So she used to say, "Remember how Highmand (ph) used to come and take Nina (ph) to eat a chicken soup and the noodles with her hand," so even now all those years later, my daughter's now 48 years old, she, she, this lady remembers that. So it was not just your own family happening. It was all this joy was together. Together the sorrow and together the joy.

Q: How would the early years be with children cause I imagine you would be so thrilled to have them? But would that make you very protective? [talkover] Would you have, what you had suffered, would that leave you with sort of psychological scars?

A: Well I tell you. I spoke to some survivors and they said to me, "How could you have a child after all that that happened? Weren't you afraid that somebody will come and kill them?" I didn't and I don't know why I didn't think so. Maybe, I never thought that way. I was overprotective to my children, I'm still overprotective. Now

you, you, it may be stupid to say on the tape but I'll say it. You see this stupid crocodile there? I always, when my kids go away on the beautiful vacation, I say watch out for the crocodiles. And my daughter in law who's a new daughter in law, she's lovely woman, to, my son was married and divorced and remarried and she said, "There's no crocodiles where we are going." And I said to her, "It's not really the crocodiles, it's the memories. It's the experience in life that I went through. It's the fears and anxieties and I call them crocodiles." So she came back and brought me a crocodile there, so, this is very normal. If you experience something, whether a dog bites you or a disease, you're scared of it. You're scared of it. And we survivors are all overprotective of, for our children. Always thinking something will happen. Don't go here, don't go there and in reverse, our children are super kids. They always are afraid to do wrong because they don't want to hurt the parents. When I was very young and talk with my son, he always said, "I never wanted you to cry, mom. I always thought if I'll be bad and you will cry, I will hurt you and you were hurt so much." The most of the survivors are overprotective of the children and in turn, the children are super achievers because they want to do good to their parents because they suffered so much.

Q: Tell me about the Hebrew schools that were started in Feldafing.

A: Now in Feldafing they tried very hard to have different schools for the children.

As I said at the beginning, before we had children children, I mean tiny babies, when the, some families that were in hiding, or had the opportunity to escape to the Soviet Union, they came back with children. Among Holocaust survivors, there were no children unless you had a child in hiding and you picked it up. So they started schools. In the barracks there was no schoolhouse, in the barracks, in one of the barracks and they had, there were some teachers from, that were teachers from before the war that started to teach those children. Not just a Hebrew school, the math and the language and history and they, they had some rabbis or rabbinical students that taught them prayers, and taught them, it, it was from scratch. You had a few kids of different ages, maybe you had two, three kids that were nine years old and five kids that were twelve years old. So it was really difficult. Then as we were, when my oldest daughter was three years old, two and a half years old, she went to kindergarten. They started from the beginning. So then you had this type of school. Then you had schools like for me. Kids that went at the age of 13 into the camps, okay, I got married but I still wanted to go to school. So my mom was with my daughter when she was already born and I went like to a night school like we have here night school to catch up for what I did not have opportunity because of the war. We had a vocational school. Also in one of the barracks, men were learning locksmith, they were learning car mechanic, mostly women were learning

sewing. Mostly sewing because everybody said wherever you go, sewing will be useful. There were courses, I remember even taking a course how to make brassieres. Cause in Europe you made brassieres to order. There was no such thing you went in bought already brassiere. So I was learning, I think I still have upstairs the books of where I learned how to take. So there was very much really organized, even a synagogue. We didn't have a synagogue per se. We used one of those holes or one of those barracks as a synagogue where we came on the holiday to pray. Now let's say Passover came. Well did we, could we order from the bakery marker (ph)? It had to be done right there. Everything was like make right there. They decided okay, we have this place, we have the oven, we'll make a mattriss (ph). It was, everything was like new, like, like a beginning, like starting. It's not that you moved in in a town where you can convert and say, okay, we going to that school. And it was, I think, I think, that in the short time that we were in those displaced person camps, a lot of wonderful things were done. The only thing unfortunately that I feel that was not done is to give us counseling. There was no such thing as counseling. But I really don't know when this counseling really came into effect where people really started to believe that counseling is a good idea after you live through a trauma. Maybe in those days they didn't believe in that. I really feel that's the only thing that we should have had. After traumatic lives like this, is

some type of counseling and that was not.

Q: Would there by any kind of sharing that would, would one person sort of pour out to another, maybe as you were sewing or [talkover]

A: Yes, well this is very true. As much as many of us felt we didn't want to talk about it, many times we said oh let's not talk about it, this is a terrible thing to talk about, but every time we got together, whether we came to visit each other and have a cup of tea together, or we walked, took a little walk together, we started to compare our sufferings. Where were you, what did you do and in a way, that was like a counseling because you poured out and you found out, gee, I wasn't the only one, there was others and others and others. Even when we came to the United States because people, survivors did not have family. Okay, I had my aunt, my uncle, some cousins but. . .

End of tape 2.

Tape 3

Q: December the 14th, 1975 and I'm Margaret West.

A: As I said, even when we came to the United States and we, I mean we the survivors, even me, I'm talking personally, I wanted to, I wanted to talk about it. Why did I want to talk about it? As I always say in the most horrible times during the Holocaust, we used to sit and talk to each other, the women, hungry, cold, all the women used to say, please don't forget us. If you survive younger girl, tell the world of what happened. And I kind as a young girl felt that I have to fulfill this promise. So always wanted, always said, "Those women asked me to talk about it." But when I came to the United States, even my aunt who loved me, who helped me, my cousins that were dear to me, they always said, you suffered enough, don't talk about it. So who did we, we talk to about it? Survivors to each other! We started to, because we didn't have families, in, I was fortunate to have my mom, she became like in our Washington area, the mom of everybody. Five, six couples, survivors coming to our house on the Sabbath, having a little lunch, what did we talk about? The Holocaust. Comparing each other's suffering, telling how it was, talking about how by miracle we survived this selection and that selection and in a way, I think this was really beneficial to us. Many times we say enough already talking Holocaust but I think that this was good. At least we talked it out, we didn't keep it

inside. Now many times, people will say to me, as you know I go out to speak to many, many schools and people will say, well it must become easier as you talk about it. But this is not true. When I first started to talk about it, it was easier because I unloaded my, what I had in my memory, in my feelings. But then as time goes on, maybe it's time to leave it to,to rest. At this point it's like awakening wound, reopening wounds.

Q: In your testimony you again and again show the compassional kindness that was going on among Jewish people despite their suffering and, wonder if you'd comment on, on that. To survive meant that you had to toughen yourself up and at the same time there with that sort of compassion. In your testimony you talk and give many instances, I think of your mother saying, this was when you were in the ghetto, don't go out after we get back from work because . . .

A: Yes.

Q: Others have lost their [talkover]

A: Yes, you, you remember it well. Well I want to tell you. You're saying toughen yourself up, you had no choice. You became really not tough but you became numb. You become numb, not tough. You cannot be tough. I never, if I would have been tough I could have looked the SS men in the eyes, never looked 'em in the eyes. You became numb. You just hope that you live that day and you go

through. But I tell you. I really feel, my personal feeling that it was of compassion of all the women than me. Jewish women that I'm maybe here. Never forget, never forget a woman that, her name was Mrs. Fivish (ph). I remember her name. She was from my hometown. She used to call me over and say, "Nesa, come over. I'll wrap your body in straw." And first I thought what she crazy, why would she want to wrap me in straw. I didn't understand that this is insulation, that that will keep me warm. Now did she save my life? Another time, I used to like to leave a little piece of bread for the next morning and so I tore off a little piece of blanket, I wrapped it in the little bite of bread. The whole bread was like one slice and if I ate three-fourths of it, there was just one bite really of bread left over. And I wrapped it in that little cloth and put it in the straw under my head. The next morning the bread wasn't there. And I cried. I was a little girl, I cried. I cried, I was hungry. Another lady, "Little girl, why you crying?" "Oh, I put my bread in the piece of cloth and maybe a mouse came and, and ate it." And she, I remember her saying, "Child, no mouse ate your bread. People around us are hungry. Give me your little bread, I'll put it in my bosom and I will save it for you." And you see, I had no bosom, it would have fallen through. So she, every morning, she could've eaten up that bread, she, she gave me, I used to go over and say, "Lady," I even forgot her name now. I'm sure I knew her name at that time. And I used to say, "Would you hold my little bread?"

And the next morning she, "Here child, here's your little bread." She could've swallowed it. She was hungry too. Now did she help me? When I was beaten up so severely on the death march, if it wouldn't be for women that held me under my arms and that's all I heard 'em say, "Walk. Don't give up, walk." I really think that there was a lot of compassion, a lot of help, a lot of moral support among the inmates in the concentration camps. We always say oh, this one was bad, that one was bad, here there were bad people too but most of the people were there for each other.

Q: What, when you mentioned, I mean their bosoms, I was thinking of, for the first time the fact that during these years you would've been maturing and sort of started to have periods or perhaps not because you would be so badly nourished.

A: I never had my period. I got into the ghetto, was 13, I hadn't gotten my period yet. And at that time, my mother always said she got her period a little later when she was like 14 or whatever. But then in the ghetto the, because of malnutrition, I never had a period until after liberation. I tell you truth, I had one period and then I became pregnant so it was a miracle that I had even a baby. So, many times I talk to, when I came to the United States, my gynecologist, talking about that and they said if somebody's anorexic they don't have their period. So we were starved. We were starved. There is a myth that, I don't know if it's a myth, maybe it's the truth,

that something was put in our food so we wouldn't have our periods. I don't know. I didn't see a document on it. Could be. I know the men had like the same thing like men in the army get. A certain thing, I don't know what's called that's put in in the food, they shouldn't have any sexual urges. But for us women, somebody said that there was something put in the food. But I think it's just malnutrition that most women didn't have their period.

Q: I wonder next if you'd talk a bit more about leaving Feldafing for the United States. I know how long you had to wait, but tell me about the events as you presumably had a final letter to say . . .

A: Okay, that, the final thing came that, the, as I mentioned before, we had already finally the documents and I was pregnant with my son so again we had to wait until he was a year old. So after he was a year old, well a year went by. We had to go again to the medical examination cause no, they wouldn't let in any sick people in the United State. So we had to go to the medical examination and then we were taken to Bremen where this, where the ports are but we were outside of Bremen in a place, I don't remember anymore what the name of the place was: Weeldflecken (ph) or something like this. It was like a camp where you stayed three or four weeks, it's like a quarantine thing to make sure that you are in good health. In that particular place they, you have to go out to take certain lessons about how you're

going to be on the boat and a little bit about American, like a little Americanization thing. And there we were already, thanks God, all of us together: my mom, my husband, myself and the two kids. Three and a half years old and one year old. And after the few weeks that we had to be there, we were put on a Army boat. It was called the SS Blatchford (ph). It was a General Blatchford (ph) boat called the Army boat. Now I was assigned with the two children to be in a cabin. Women that had children were in a cabin. Listen to that and you will understand, was that a right thing to do or a wrong thing to do? My husband was separated, put into the hole in the boat. Now my mom, because she was a single person and at that time she was 52 years old, she was assigned somewhere else. So to us, it was traumatic to be separation. Whoever made this arrangement didn't think of it. Here we are going to America and children separate, mother separate, husband separate.

Q: And big distances, I mean this . . .

A: Well, I . . .

Q: Couldn't pop in on each other.

A: Wait a minute. We even had to eat in a different mess hall. The, we couldn't even be together. Now I tell you, it was a long journey. I don't know, two weeks or whatever we traveled on the ocean, I don't remember even how long. It was such a storm. One night I remember my mom coming up to me in the cabin and she laid

down next to me, she said, “My child, if we die in this ocean, let’s at least be together.” She said, “I don’t care if they’re going to throw me out, if they’re going to put me in a jail, I’m going to lay right here with you, with the children in the cabin.” So I, as I thought, years later, we were excited to go to the United States but why wasn’t there a little compassion? Those people were separated from their families. Why separate ‘em again? Poor Jack. He was laying there seasick. He was terrible seasick. We thought they’re going to throw him into the water, that’s how sick he was. He was by himself. Wouldn’t have been easier for us to be together? So that was the journey. We arrived in New York. Now when we came you didn’t go to Ellis Island, that was no more. You arrive there and you had to wait for your documents to be processed. Now if you had family, then the family was allowed to go into that room and my aunt and my cousin came from Washington, all the way, to New York to wait for us and that was the most exciting thing that ever happened to us. Cause here the dream came true. The, the family, at least one person of a aunt and a cousin, for five years we didn’t know what that meant. And we slept over one night in New York with some distant relatives and the next day we were in the car traveling to Washington. I like to tell you this because it may sound stupid to anybody but it’s a experience of newcomers. We are traveling in the car from New York to Washington, they didn’t have the turnpike at that time. You had to go on a

ferry across the Delaware. Now I don't know anything about the ferry, we are in the car, my cousin drives the car, he turns to me, he says, "Are you hungry?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "I'll get you some food." He opens the door, he goes out of the, the car and he comes back with some food. I couldn't understand how we are moving and, and he's bringing food in the car. I didn't realize that we were on a ferry and the ferry was moving. Little things that you have an experience or something that you could never forget. And we were, we came to the United States, we came to live for a few weeks with my aunt and my uncle and my cousins into their house. My aunt and my uncle were very kind. They had rented an apartment for us the year before thinking that we were coming but because we were not allowed to come until Ed was a year old, they had subrented it and it took two more weeks for us to be able to go to that apartment. So we stayed in their small house, they were very kind, they were very supportive, they were very sweet but they didn't want to hear anything about a Holocaust.

Q: Why not?

A: Because my aunt said she had enough pain losing two sisters and two brothers and she doesn't to diminish the joy of having a sister, a niece and her family. Now she was right too, but, again, people come to us, survivors and they will say, "How come you didn't talk about your experiences?" Many of us were willing to talk but

no one would listen. So after being there for two weeks, we came into our own apartment. Our apartment was at 529 LaMont (ph) Street in Washington, D.C., a one bedroom apartment. We were my mom, my husband, myself and the two children. We had a bed in the bedroom and a crib that someone had given to us for Ed cause he was a baby. My mom and my daughter Panina (ph) was three and half years old, slept in the living room on a couch. W were so glad to have two rooms and a kitchen and a bathroom inside of the, cause in the displaced person camp we still had to go to bathroom, we shared with other people a bathroom, so this was really something special. And we just couldn't count enough our blessings, to be here but then reality came. Reality came that we are in a new country without professions, without money. We couldn't sit there although in the paper it said that my aunt is going to support us but we couldn't expect them to support us and we started to hunt for jobs. We were really not skilled although I learned a little bit at sewing, I didn't know, I didn't know how to make a dress. Maybe I knew how to sew a hem. Poor Jack, he was involved in the, in the displaced person camp working in that kitchen, managing that kitchen. But what would he do here? He knew less English than I knew cause he was working already in the displaced person camp while I was going a little bit to school. So this was very difficult. Lucky my aunt and my uncle knew some people that had a glass business and they gave Jack a job to

carry crates of glass, carry them out of the truck into the warehouse, from the warehouse into the truck, labor work. Natural when we say now 75 cents an hour, it may seem very little but that was minimum wage at that time, 1950, '51. We will came here the end of '50, '51. And with me, because my mother was with us and she could take care of the children, I could go to work. So through talking to some neighbors in that building, I was asked to come for an interview in a place on Connecticut Avenue. It was called the King Needlework Services. And to, the lady was very kind, very compassionate, her name was Mrs. King and she really did not worry too much that I didn't know how to sew. She was willing to give me a job. And that's how we started to earn our living. And continue our life in the United States bit by bit with the hope that we can give to our children a better life than we had.

Q: How did you feel that you were accepted here? Was that also difficult?

A: I tell you the truth. I had no problem about that. I did not feel inferior because I was a Holocaust survivor. I personally did not have this problem. I was so glad to live in the United States. If my cousins didn't invite me to go with them to the movies, it didn't bother me cause I, if I could spend the 50 cents or whatever the movie was at that time, I don't, I just went. And we made our own friends. We, as I said, we reached out, survivors to each other. And we formed little groups and

eventually we saw that we couldn't meet in houses anymore so we decided to make a little bigger group and meet in some kind of community center or whatever and this is how our present Holocaust survivors group, Jewish Holocaust Survivors of Greater Washington was created. From the little groups that met in people's houses, that played a little bingo together and shared Holocaust memories among ourselves, that's how organizations were created.

Q: How much of a gulf do you feel there is between Holocaust survivors and others? I would think that you, being victims in a sense and you can never therefore be like other people.

A: I say it many a times. When I go out to talk to a woman's organization and I stand there and I tell them from my heart and my soul: I get up in the morning, I put on my makeup, I put on my nice suit, I come to talk to them. I want to look like them. I want to be like them. I'm American but I'm different. I'm a Holocaust survivor. My dear friends, my dear, dear young lady, what we went through we can never forget. We can never forget. Until I die, I will not forget this children selection. Until I die, I cannot forget the cry of their mothers for them. I will never, never forget that smell in Shtoodruff (ph) where they say was just a small crematoria. People say to me Shtoodruff (ph) just had a small crematoria. Tens of thousands of human beings, even before Jews were taken, euthanasia was practiced in Shtoodruff (ph).

If people would do research, they would know. Could never, never forget those years. And again, I'll never forget what the ladies ask me. To remember them. To tell the world of what happened. This is why I told you yes when you called me if you can come to do it.

Q: When the Museum was open too, I think, it was with the idea that this testimony be there for the world, forever. But it also seems so important as a, as a, as a healing place for those whose lives have been, who've suffered, who've been victims.

A: I tell you, this United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, I don't call it a museum. I call it the most wonderful institution of learning for humanity. Yes it is difficult for us survivors to come there, to help out, to open our wounds again and again but those wounds were never really closed. They never really closed. The only wonderful thing is when I come there and I say when I am dead, generations to come will learn what really happened. Generations will come, learn, understand and my promise to the dead people will be fulfilled. But this is not enough. I think by being there so much and what I see and what I hear from the visitors that come, when they walk out those doors from the museum, they are different people. They will be a little more compassionate. I hope they will look at each other and not see colors and not see religions and not see where I came from, from this country or

from that country, they will see another human being that they will respect and honor and through this, I hope, we can make our own lives richer. We can make our beautiful country that we live in, the United States of America, better. And we as examples to the world, that humanity should live together. We were not created to be exactly alike. Whether, whether evolution or God, I happen to be a, a believer, I, if God wanted us to look alike he would clone us exactly. He made us different, that's it.

Q: Nesse, tell me about your three children and really too about the ways in which your experiences have had an impact on your role as a parent, and . . .

A: Yeah. Well I'm going to tell you. I always said and I considered myself one of the survivors that's open, talking to my children. When I saw a book that said survivors' children and they said they were neurotic and they were this and they were that, I was annoyed. But the truth is that we survivors were always overprotective to our children because of the experiences that we went through. Now I always thought you, my kids were not affected in the Holocaust but my son has said, _____ , told me when he was a little boy, he was afraid that the Nazis will come for him. When I, actually didn't tell me that, I saw it written up in the paper, when he gave a interview to somebody. And I came to him, he said, "Yeah and I was afraid to tell you." So as adjusted our family is and as we are very

different. Now we were both protective. Because we suffered, we wanted our children to have more. We, Jack and I were never in business, we were always working people. We, I don't want to say it, but we sacrificed ourself so our children would have college educations but in turn they did their share. They made sure that they are achievers, maybe little overachievers because as we chatted during lunch, I said that kids didn't want us to suffer no more. My kids always said, "Ma, we don't want you to cry because you cried enough." So we can proudly say, we have two daughters that are teachers, our son a engineer and now thanks God we have five wonderful grandchildren and we do have the most wonderful children in law. That respect us, that support the work that we do and this is very important.

Q: Are there ways in which, that the children you think have, are there other ways in which they've been affected by your experiences? I was just thinking of how all the activities of every day for you, are affected by your experiences. The, the plentiful availability of food. [talkover]

A: Well, I tell you, naturally, when you are with, with food, if, every day's affected, every day's affect. I started to tell you before, I go to a beautiful restaurant, I go to the salad bar, there's a line. I stand with my plate for food and all of a sudden I get the chill. Why do I get the chill? It reminds me of standing in line for food. Many times I will come back to the table with a empty plate. And whoever I'm there, they

will say, “Didn’t you take any salad?” I say, “No I’ll go later for it.” Who would understand that? Who would understand that? There, yesterday was cold, I was going in the morning to the museum, my day to volunteer. Jack said to me, “Don’t forget your scarf.” And for that instant I thought of the cold weather without a scarf, without gloves, without a coat, without _____. How can you not be affected? Naturally if you were affected, it goes over to your children. If my children left food on the plate, unconsciously I said, “Oh the kids in the Holocaust would’ve really been happy to have that.” Or saying, “Please don’t waste food, there’s hungry children in the world.” So it does carry over without even thinking about it, you influence your children, your, when my grandchildren was little, I was sitting and watching “The Wizard of Oz”, beautiful show, right? Beautiful show. And I was sitting there enjoying, having a good time and there all of a sudden, was the scarescrow, how did I pronounce it right? The guy that has the straw in him around? [end of side 1 of tape 3] And there the scarescrow with the straw and there reminded me of the days when I was wrapped in straw. So there’s really not a day goes by that we are not affected by that Holocaust.

Q: What about nightmares? And I wondered too, does, does your husband Jack [talkover]

A: We both have nightmares. We gotten used to those nightmares. If we have a

night without nightmares, it's very unusual. The difference is, when at first I used to have those nightmares, was always with the hope that I'm finding my father, that I'm finding a relative. Then those nightmares went away. Then I was running from the Germans as a child, and as I get older, it's terrible to say, sometime I dream that my children are being taken, or my grandchildren. In your mind, all this get jumbled up and you hear of really many Holocaust survivors that are getting old and all this, like if they have dementia or something, all this comes mumble-jumble and they have this terrible times. You cannot erase that.

Q: How did your mother do? I mean would she [talkover]

A: Well don't forget when my mother died, she was just two years older than I am. Not even two years. I'll be 68 in March, she was 69 and a half when she had the brain hemorrage and she died. She was not really sick, she wasn't a sick person. We just, something happened and she had that brain hemorrhage and she, in three days she was dead. So she also always dreamed and, about her son that she didn't, by the way my mother never got to see my brother, the one that was in Russia. Never got to see him. After she died, like a week later, we had a letter that he was let go and he would be coming to Israel. She never lived to know that he would be free again. Too late.

Q: That would be . . .

A: That's I always, always regretted, I said, I wished that letter would have come just one week earlier so she would have died knowing that he was free again.

Q: I'm jumping around again but I was, I wondered if you had, if you would have had that, the bowl and spoon that I'm told that many people found it hard to give up carrying that with them, after liberation I guess.

A: Well I want to tell you something. People don't realize what that bowl and spoon meant. That was your lifeline. If many a times, if a soldier wanted to play around, he took and shot a bullet through your, through your bowl. When you go to the museum and see holes in those bowls, you think oh those are old bowls. If you look carefully many of them have precise holes where a bullet went through. How did you eat? You couldn't throw this away and go get another bowl. They didn't, you couldn't say, excuse me my bowl has a hole. No such thing. So that became your lifeline. We watched that spoon and that bowl like, like, like the most precious thing in the world. But as I told you, when I was taken to that hospital, everything, I don't have anything, anything, anything, to show, or to share from that time. See some people that were a little older maybe had the wisdom to save something. Or even in the hospital to say, can I have back my bowl? But I didn't understand to say that. So I didn't. I know some people that went back on a visit to Auschwitz, just in, ten years ago, five years ago and they were able to purchase there, they have like gift

shops there where you can purchase things. Just like a memorabilia, so they, they did that. But like I have, I'm sure you heard my testimony about the money with the cat with the _____ document. And I have a stupid little cat sittin' there on my, on top of my china closet and many time people walk in, how come you have that stupid little cat sittin' there? But that is a symbol of my life. But I did not have the wisdom at that time to save anything, so I didn't, but I can understand that people didn't want to give up that bowl and that, that spoon. Honey if you gave up that, that spoon you could still manage without a spoon but that bowl, that food for, the dish for food, you were dead if you didn't have that.

Q: You talked earlier about being numbed rather than being toughened and I suppose the, clinging to your bowl and spoon as a survival thing would be something that would be the natural thing to do and also I was thinking of how, in many other ways I'm sure, just as when you were in the barn and the guards had gone, you would be too close to death, too numbed to immediately realize what was happening.

A: Exactly, you, you really didn't know what was happening to you from one minute to the other. You didn't know, even all through the ghetto, the, the traveling to the, the deportation, the concentration camp, the labor camp. You never knew what, what was going to happen next. Whether there, you went to work, you came back,

you went to sleep, next day you could be dead. They could kill you, they could take you to selection. You, unpredictable. And you just don't know. It's like I say, I prayed, I prayed every night to live through the night and every day to live through the day. You never knew. Some people say why didn't you run away? To run away you need a place to run to. My brother was lucky he had that friend to run to. Nobody wanted me, I tried to run and, and, and people that tried to run many times, the neighbor said, here goes the Jew, shoot him. Why did they do that? So you become numb and you just pray to live through and if you have the, the, well it's, it's the animal in us that wants to live, survival. This is the bottom line. The bottom line, nobody wants to be dead.

Q: Right and in fact, you were forced to live at an animal level.

A: That's right.

Q: You, you spoke in your testimony about at least in the ghetto being fortunate in having plenty of water.

A: That's right. [talkover] We could bathe . . .

Q: Right.

A: In the ghetto we were, we, on the outskirts of the city. There were wells, nobody could close the well there but in, I, I think I was a year without I took a bath. Almost a year without taking a bath.

Q: Right.

A: Can you imagine that?

Q: Well we, you, tell me what that would be like. I mean your [talkover]

A: Well at the beginning, [talkover], you're infested with lice all over. You itch. People are sitting there picking, like you see the monkeys in the tree picking from, from their bodies. If you were with one of your family, maybe they were picking it out of your head like the monkeys sat there and pick. If not, you sat and you picked your own. You got infected from that. That's how we had this, those one typhoids, I don't know which one, typhoid or typhus that comes from the lice. It's a infection like. It, it was just unbelievable. I cannot believe now sometime I close my eyes and I think, I hope that was a dream. Cannot, you cannot believe what things we went through. I, I don't remember if my originally

testimony, you, you listened to that. We were on the death march and we were sitting there so hungry, so hungry, so thirsty. Women were eating a little bit snow, then all of a sudden I saw women were running to something in the snow so I ran too. I didn't even know what I was running for and that, there was some blobs in the snow and everybody grabbed a piece and I grabbed a piece and then we, so women were washing it in the snow, so I washed it in the snow. What was inside? It was manure for cow. And when a cow eats, they, she doesn't digest the grain. So

when they had straw, there was a little grain and the women said, “This is nourishment. Let’s open those little grains, wash them in the snow and eat ‘em.” And we ate ‘em. Now if somebody on the outside would have looked on to us, they would say look at those animals! Look what they’re doing! But I think we did the most wonderful thing that there is to do in humanity. God says if you save one life, it’s like you would have saved the whole world? We saved our lives. We did the most precious thing that there is although it looked terrible.

Q: Just as you would go for a couple of years, would it be without any water, without any bathing [talkover]

A: In my case was about a year. Because not even quite a year, from June til March. Because when we came to Shtoodruff (ph) to the concentration camp, we had that bath. And then we didn’t a bath no more until I had the disinfectant poured on me after liberation so let’s say eight, ten months, yeah? Ten months without a bath. They gave us a little black coffee, sometime we washed our hair with it. Cause in my camp, they didn’t cut our hair when we came to Shtoodruff. They would have done us a favor if they would’ve cut our hair. But they didn’t. So there you were head a hair, no scissor to chop it off and that’s a place where the, the, the first thing you get infected. It, it was just terrible and the same little dress. The only good thing which was a bad thing, we were in, in those, in those tents that

everything was so cold that I think some of those lice died for the cold.

Q: Tell me about your boots because as you . . .

A: Yeah, about the . . .

Q: Told your story . . .

A: Yeah.

Q: It seemed to me that . . .

A: Yeah, I, I don't know if I ever told that story [talkover] but when we came [talkover] how important they were. When we came to Shtoodruff (ph) and we went through that shower so-called, and we stood outside for a long time naked and then we were given a dress, a pair of underpants, a pair of shoe. They just threw it to us. They didn't say what size or whatever. Somehow, usually as a rule, you didn't get your own, any of your own clothing because they figured if you get something of your own maybe you have something sewn in or hidden but somehow our group of women got the same shoes. How do I know that we got the same shoe? I was, in my, what I was handed was a pair of like oxfords, like a woman's pair of oxford. Big, nice oxford. I came wearing boots. Why did I came with the boots? Because there was a gold coin sewn into the boots and as we were being deported and we were not allowed to take along too much, my mother said, "Put on the boots." So you, so there, I see a woman, already we were settled in the camp. After a few days went

by and we were already in the barracks, I see a woman outside carrying my boots and she's barefoot. And I am carrying a pair of shoes that were very big on me. And I'm barefoot. I say oh, would I love to get my boots back. But I figured if I'll go and tell her it's my boots, she'll suspect that I have something in there so I didn't say a thing I just kept on being around her. She came over, she says, "Little girl, do me a favor. Let's exchange. You have a little foot, those boots maybe will fit you." And I was smart, I said, "Who wants boots in the summer?" She said, "Please, your shoes may fit me. You don't want an old lady to go around without, without shoes." And I exchanged with her. And this is how I got my boots. Now I put on those boots and I never took them off. I kept them on my feet because of that stupid gold coin. I was afraid somebody will steal my boots and I have this gold coin. Now as I mentioned before, I was with my sister in law who was not really yet my sister in law, in the camp at that time together and she knew about this gold coin. And I kept on asking her, she was seven years older than me, I said, "Laina (ph) what do you think? Maybe we should exchange this, this gold coin and get some bread." And she said, "Let's wait. Times may become tougher. Times may become tougher." Now I was liberated in, with those boots because when time became tougher, no one had extra bread to exchange for a coin. So after I was taken to that so-called hospital, they had to actually cut off, cut up the boots to take off from my feet

because my feet were frozen and almost like stuck to those boots. Never saw that coin again. And those boots.

Q: Nesse, I wondered to what extent in the, during the war when you were wandering, you might say without your mother, do you remember getting strength from thinking about your old family life? And I wondered to what extent that loving family, your mother was very charitable, I wondered to what extent that was sort of feeding your spirit?

A: Not just thinking about your family but thinking about all this that there was. I remember in those worst of times, this lady that, that wrapped my body in straw, this Mrs. Fivish (ph). She used to sit down and say, "Let's reminisce. Let's think of home. Let's think of our families. Let's think of the Sabbath and the candles," and some women used say, "What you talking all this nonsense!" She used to say, "If we don't, if we stop thinking of what we had, we'll lose everything." She was a very wise woman. She, she's, survived the Holocaust and I never saw her but she had _____ she was also in Russia and in Israel, she was very wise woman. And she used to say, she always said, "Let's dream, let's hope. If we give that up, then we don't have anything left." And I think she was very smart by giving us younger people something to hope for. She encouraged us all the time, she used to say, "Think of the good times, think of your mother, think of all that," and this was really

like a therapy. Because even now when we live in time of counseling and therapy and people always tell you, if you have a problem, think of something wonderful. I know, I had to have some surgery on my ankle, years ago, and the doctor said to me, "Think of flowers when you go to, when I put you to sleep so you'll have a pleasant dream." So even in worse times, you need that hope. You need that, something precious to hold onto, that you want it back and you hope for it.

Q: Would you ever sing together or pray together?

A: Yeah, oh, sing together all the time. In the worst of time, we used to sit and, and, some people just say, "You crazy, you're singing again." The, this lady, or this we used to say, "Well, let, let's sing a little something of hope. Let's make a little prayer of something." Somebody else say, "Ah, what you praying, what you praying, nobody listens to you, you had all this." But we believed. I believed. I always thought that, when I was a little girl, I remember learning psalms, psalms that most people, today in Christian religions follow psalms and there is a psalm, I think it's 112 or whatever, it says, and God created the heavens for heavenly bodies and the earth for, for the people on earth. And I always used to think, the people on earth are bad but God will come with the heavenly bodies and stop those bad people from doing bad things. I always hoped. I really did. I hoped until I saw those mountain of dead bodies at the very end. All through I, I always thought, we'll

be free. This will end. This will end. It cannot be forever. So we used to sit and hope and pray. I remember a, that year in the labor camp on Yom Kippur, you know Yom Kippur is our holiest of holidays and who knew it was Yom Kippur? We didn't even know it was, one lady said, "You know it's Yom Kippur tomorrow." And people say how do you know? She said she made some markers or whatever. So we believe it's Yom Kippur. Now we were hungry, we were not eating anyway. You had nothing to eat. They said, "Let's pray." Now nobody knew the prayers were Yom Kippur so people started to make prayers. A prayer on bread, a prayer, any kind of prayer that they could think of, thank you God for the bread, thank you God for this, they, nobody really knew the Yom Kippur prayer. But we prayed. Never, never forget it and I remember people saying, don't tell the Germans that's Yom Kippur because every time when we had a holiday, they always came to kill people. So we were very afraid they shouldn't know it was Yom Kippur.

Q: Is there any song that you particularly remember? I wondered if there's anything you, do you sing? Do you want to . . .

A: Well I want to tell you. I'm a very poor singer. I love to sing and we have a song that, it's called the Partisan Song that was created in one of the ghettos. That it says, never say you're going the last road. It's true that the clouds are covering the blue days but there will come a day to say we are here. We are here.

Muzainundoor (ph). Muzainundoor (ph). Means we are here. You, ask me.

Q: What, what was a day like in Feldafing?

A: Well it, in, a day in Feldafing, when we first came, as I said, we were very restricted. We were not allowed to go out to the city, just a certain time. We were not allowed to go take her, buy a, well we didn't have money. Maybe if we would've had money we could take, buy a ticket and go to town, to Munich. At the beginning was not. But later on, your life became pretty much good life. You had your child, you had your mother, you had a husband, you okay, you didn't have an apartment, you didn't have, you couldn't go into the store and shop or like we do now, three pair o' shoes in one month. But your life was pretty much scheduled. The only thing that really was bad, you still didn't know where you are. You were a displaced person. You were praying to belong to some country, somewhere, like with us. We went for checkups, we thought we are leaving, no. Again, our hope was up. We think, we thought we were going. No. So all this was the uncertainty. The uncertainty was going to, are you ever going to be able to leave the displaced person? This hung over you. But otherwise, human beings, young people fell in love. People had children. People I'm sure died. People were born, people had weddings. It, it became a pretty so-called in parentheses normal life.

Q: It, it occurs to me that one of the things you wouldn't have much of would be

privacy. [talkover]

A: No privacy, no, not really no privacy.

Q: But you know in fact, I would think that your mother became Jack's mother too in a strange way.

A: Oh, she, people, oh, everybody thought it was his mother. Because we naturally asked, when I found her she was precious, but then if she started to tell me how to raise my kids or what to do, you open your mouth sometime. And then you're sorry but Jack, never opened his mouth to my mother. Ma, ma, ma, ma, that's all to, to respect, she, well naturally you didn't have the privacy for husband and wife, but you see we managed to have two kids with my mother living with us in one room.

Q: Yes. But there would be countless adjustments like that and things . . .

A: Yeah, naturally, naturally.

Q: In your last months in Feldafing, the, the numbers of displaced persons there must have been dwindling. Would you, would you have been there as others were leaving for new lives in Israel or Australia or Britain?

A: I want to tell you, it was dwindling and it was not dwindling. Because some other smaller camps were being eliminated so they brought from different, I forgot now from which camps, they brought people. They resettled them to, to Feldafing. Now this even this resettlement for Holocaust survivors is easy to go from one displaced

person camp to another? It was also tough. Instead of taking a thousand people and shipping them off to the United States, did they have to ship them to another displaced person camp? I, I've always thought of that. I always thought, is United States so little that they don't have room to take and there wasn't many Holocaust survivors. But people were leaving, you were a little bit jealous when you saw people leaving. Then you heard people were going to Israel on illegal immigration and some of them didn't succeed and came back and there were different times even in the five years after the war, after the war ended. It was different experiences. But I'm really surprised that there isn't more documentation on Feldafing.

Q: How much, in your community there at Feldafing, how much discussion or how much frustration would there be because you'd suffered so much and still the world was not opening its arms?

A: That's all people talked in Feldafing is when do we go, where do we go? What country, maybe opportunity country and some people were looking. We didn't have money to pay off, some people said well, maybe if we would have money, we would hire a German lawyer or an American lawyer. Somebody used to say well, somebody in the, in the United States consulate maybe could help you. You tried to find somebody, somewhere that could help you. That's all people talked about:

how to leave. Nobody wanted to stay forever in displaced person camps. This what I say many times when I hear that people that suffered want to keep on staying at the same spot. I say that we Holocaust survivors did not want to say, stay in the same spot. We wanted out of it. Out of the displaced person camp, most of us. Yes we have our memories, yes we're not going to forget it. But we went forward. We went forward with our lives. We had children, we made sure our children are educated. We put a good name for ourselves in our communities, in our countries right where we are. Wherever we are. I don't think you find among Holocaust survivors, people in jail. I don't think so. I may be wrong but I don't think so.

Q: How typical do you think you are in, despite what you suffered, being able it seems to move forward and to sort of focus on the joys in life? Would, would it, would this experience have destroyed many people who'd be so, so hurt, have such a chip on their shoulder that they couldn't move forward?

A: Unfortunately, unfortunately there are many survivors that cannot move forward. And I understand, I understand it. I tell you why, assuming, I would have been already 25 years old, I would have been married. I would have had two, three children. My husband, my children would have been killed and I had to start life all over again. I don't know if I would be like I am now. I was part of my parents' family. I was lucky to have my mother survive the Holocaust. Through four years I

was suffering one year all by myself, was lucky enough to have two brothers, I just had two brother, and both, they suffered but they survived. So I always think that I cannot judge the people that cannot pick up their life and, and I have a friend. She was lucky to find her husband but she had two children that were killed in the Holocaust. She had a new child after the war, wonderful child, very devoted but that woman didn't even dance at her own daughter's wedding. Cause she promised herself when her children were killed that she'll never dance again. So it, at her own daughter's wedding, she didn't dance. Now can you blame her? Can you say she's, something wrong with her? No. Yes there are many survivors like me that, most of us, I think, without counseling, we picked ourselves up, we found a spot in the community. We chose to use our suffering to teach others a little more love, a little more compassion, a little more understanding. We're not throwing our memories, we keeping them. We using them for a purpose. For a purpose to remember the dead within our Jewish tradition and to teach the young, teach the young what can happen if we allow hatred in our hearts. And this is . . .

Conclusion of interview.