

FLORA MENDELOVICZ SINGER

Interviewed on June 30, 1992 in Potomac, Maryland

The date is June 30, 1992 and we're speaking with Flora Singer in Potomac, Maryland. Mrs. Singer, could you tell me your name, your maiden name, your date of birth and your place of birth. And then anything you possibly can about your childhood.

My name is Flora Mendelovicz (that was my maiden name) Singer. I was born in Berchem, a suburb of Antwerp, Belgium in 1930, August 16. Things I remember most, my earliest recollections were going with my father on trips to buy merchandise. My father was a carpenter and he had a furniture atelier. He used to go and buy the new catalogs and furniture styles in a town named Mechellin [ph11] which later on unfortunately became Maline in French where many Jews were gathered during the war before they were transported to Auschwitz. However, during the time that I'm talking about, I was around the age of five, six, my favorite times were going on those trips with my father. I went to an elementary school about a mile and a half from home with my two sisters. It was a public school. We walked, there was no bus transportation like in the United States. And then after school we'd go to Yiddish school. The boys would go to Hebrew school, the girls would go and learn Yiddish. We lived in what was called the Jewish neighborhood of Antwerp which was between the Pillicon Stradt[ph19], the Longakivicz Stradt[ph20] and the Leverik Stradt[ph20] and the Somer Stradt[ph20]. It was almost like a self-imposed ghetto with butchers, bakeries, book shops, and the synagogues. We did not in those days speak about Reform, Orthodox, or Conservative. Everybody was just Jewish. We were either religious, a little bit religious or not religious. I remember enjoying going to the synagogue in the morning. In 1938, actually a little earlier, because of the depression, my dad had lost his shop and obtained a job with a ship's company. I think it was, [oh I have the thing upstairs somewhere], I'm not sure if it was the Star Line or the..., I have no recollection of the name of the line. I have it written down somewhere. Anyway he started traveling the seas as a ship's carpenter. During that time he befriended a German Christian. I don't recall his last name, his first name was Carl. It was important later on in our lives. He would come home only about every three months or so, stay a few days and then go off again. In 1938, November of 1938, we received a notice from the ship's company advising us that my father had defected and that if we heard from him to notify them and of course his pay check was going to be stopped. Mom was very upset. Remember we all cried. It was a terrible day. Meanwhile also at that time many refugees started coming in from Germany. It was right after Kristallnacht. We had several people living with us. The whole Jewish community opened their doors and their homes to these German and Austrian refugees.

Can we before we get to this, can I ask you this: Were your parents born in Belgium?

No, my parents were not born in Belgium. My parents were born in Romania. My mother was born in Sighet and my father was born in Viso-de-Sus. They left in late 1928 or early 1929. A whole group of young people had decided that they didn't want to deal with the anti-semitism in Romania any more. I recall my mother telling me stories about Saturday night. The peasants would get drunk and then come into the Jewish street as they called it and break windows or beat a few people up. And it was also difficult to get jobs for Jews. Jews couldn't own land, etc. My father and mother decided, as I said, with a whole group of young people, to leave Romania and go to a country named Belgium where they had heard not only were jobs available, but that it was a country where the people were very tolerant and there could be Jews without worrying about getting beaten up. My mother, of course, left against her father's wishes because my grandfather was very religious and it was said that a girl does not leave home until the day after she's married. My mother was the second youngest of six sisters and the only one daring to pick up and leave home to make a life for herself. She did leave, however. Once in Belgium the group started marrying amongst themselves. One young couple would make a wedding for the next young couple. Anyway my father and mother decided to marry and they married in Antwerp, Belgium, 1929. I was the first of three girls who was born, August 16, as I said before, 1930. Things were difficult but they were happy because they felt very free, especially as far as religion is concerned. People were very tolerant, Belgians were very tolerant and Dad eventually opened a shop where he made furniture.

What language did you grow up speaking?

The first language I ever spoke was Yiddish until I went to Kindergarten and then I went to Kindergarten and I was surprised to find out there was another language and there were other people beside Jewish people. My world was my Jewish neighborhood. And I then learned Flemish and of course went to elementary school in the Flemish language until we escaped from Antwerp which is later on.

Okay, thank you for filling all that in.

You're welcome. Do you want me to just go on?

Do you want to go back to the Kristallnacht...?

Okay, let me go back to 1938. Up to 1938 even after my father had left my childhood wasn't bad. We were, of course, very, very happy when my father would come home to visit because the thing that we did when he came home to visit which we had done earlier also was people were very

friendly in our neighborhood and always seemed to be in groups with each other. On Sundays everybody used to take their bicycles and go to the Langakivicz Stradt[ph87] Park which was at the end of the street that we lived on and had picnics there. I would sit on the back of my father's bicycle and my sister would sit on the front of his bicycle. He had a little seat on the front and one in the back. My mother would have the third one on her bicycle. Then later on when I was old enough to have my own bicycle I would ride my own bike and we'd get together in the park and sit in circles and have picnics and sing. It was a wonderful time. Then when he came back occasionally we'd still go to the park but less and less often. The one nice thing though about his visits back was that Carl would come with him because there wasn't enough time for him to go back to Germany to visit his family so he would come to us. And we grew quite close to Carl and we loved him very much and he seemed to love us. Anyway, let me get back to 1938. In 1938 we had, as I said, several people living with us and one of them was a Mr. Gross, Mr. and Mrs. Gross. Herr Gross as we used to call him would talk about the things that had gone on in Germany. And I remember becoming very frightened--I was then about eight years old--and asking my mother about these things that Herr Gross would tell us. And she said, oh, don't worry, old people exaggerate. Speaking of old people, I think Mr. Gross was no more than about 45 or so at the time. I knew that later on when I grew up. But he was old to me then and to my mother who was only in her thirties. So she said, no he exaggerates. Those things couldn't possibly happen, that there was always anti-semitism and being a Jew we had to know that these things would happen. People would occasionally want to beat us up. Times would sometimes be better, sometimes worse for Jews. But that the very things Mr. Gross talked about couldn't possibly happen, especially in a country like Germany, that there was more anti-semitism in other countries than in Germany. However, I found out later that Mr. Gross was not wrong. Early 1940 there was a program in Antwerp whereby poor children would be sent to a camp near the sea for two weeks to sort of rehabilitate their health and their malnutrition and feed them good food. My sister and I were eligible for the program, the middle one and myself. She was at the time almost seven years old. As a matter of fact I think she was just about seven, right, because she had been seven in March. This was the month of late April, early May. So we were both sent away to camps for...they used to call it Etholunk[ph115] which was to get into better health, to become healthy. She was sent to one camp, I was sent to another. May 10, the morning that war was declared and the Germans marched into Belgium, I was at one camp, my sister was at another, and my mother was home with Betty who was not quite four at the time. All I know is coming down to breakfast that morning, on May 10, and there was a small radio in the dining room on a shelf and one of the monitors turned the radio on. The music stopped and an announcement was made that the Germans were walking into Belgium. I remember not realizing what that meant but suddenly chaos reigned in the dining room. The monitors were running around and rushing us to finish our breakfast and rushing us up to the dormitories, making us pack our bags, putting us on busses and they took us back to Antwerp. When I got back to Antwerp I remember chaos reigning there too. People were loading cars, they were loading horse wagons, they were loading bikes, and going. People were screaming and carrying on. When I asked my mother what was going on she said the Germans are coming in and they are terrible. They tortured people during World War I and she described some horrible things. Supposedly they cut off ears and breasts of women and all that. Whether it was a rumor or whether it actually happened of course I personally don't know. But everyone was terribly frightened of the German, not only the

Jews, the Christians also. Everyone ran, Catholic and Jew. My mother was a little confused. She didn't know what to do. Someone who had a car and had a trundle seat in the back offered us that seat. At that point there was myself, my mother and Betty, the youngest of the three. Charlotte was not with us yet. My mother didn't know what to do. Should she wait and see if Charlotte would be brought home. She tried contacting the camp. Apparently either the phone lines were cut or no one was there to answer, but she couldn't make contact. She was very upset because the people who owned the car said, well look, we're leaving in an hour. If you go with us fine, otherwise we're giving this seat to someone else. I didn't know it at the time, however, later on I learned from my mother that she had a terrible dilemma to deal with. Her decision had to be does she stay and perhaps have her two children killed and lose all three because she started giving up on Charlotte at this point not knowing what happened to her, or does she take two children, run to France because that's where everybody was headed for, and save two children. Apparently her decision was to save two children because we got into the trundle seat, the three of us with two small valises. My mother carried Betty, who had the measles at the time and was feverish, and we went to France. The car broke down before we ever got to France or ran out of gas, I don't know which of the two but we continued on foot. We became part of the hord of refugees heading for Northern France that were preventing the allies from pulling back because the roads were crowded with refugees. We slept in the fields and occasionally in the barn. We got rid of one suitcase because Mom could not carry Betty and a suitcase. I could not handle both suitcases so we were down to one suitcase at one point and we continued walking.

You were headed for northern France?

For northern France, right, because see the Germans were behind us. They walked into Belgium. Troops were pulling back and we were following or getting mingled in with the troops that were pulling back because the Germans had not entered France yet. And northern France is the closest to Belgium, like Lille, Calais, and those areas. Anyway we got to Calais. We got to Calais and once in Calais, let me just retract a little bit. The reason we had gotten the letter that my father had defected from the ship was--of course I learned this after the war--he had a sister in New York who had been here since she was eleven years old, right after World War I when their father got killed on the front and my grandmother was left with five children, her sister in New York, an aunt in New York rather had offered to raise the girl. She was the only girl of five children, the others were all sons. So she lived in New York. My father was in contact with her. His ship docked in Canada and was going to be there for about three days. He called my aunt being he was so close and she immediately, as soon as she realized that it was her brother, said David, don't go back because Kristallnacht had already happened. She told him what happened; he wasn't aware of it. He insisted that he had to go back to Belgium, that he wasn't going to leave Fannie and the three children but somehow she convinced him that she would shortly after he would come to the United States, would bring Fannie and the three children out. She sent a car for him. They smuggled my father into the United States in a hollowed out seat of a car. So not only did he defect but he entered the United States illegally. I didn't dare say this for many years. It's only very recently that I started

telling this story but it is typical of how people got into the United States when the United States closed its doors to so many. My aunt immediately under her own patronage and her husband's started working on getting us a visa after they had written my mother a coded letter letting her know, in Yiddish, letting her know that my father was safe. It didn't work. At the time the quota, especially for Romanian citizens and even though we were born in Belgium we were considered Romanian citizens, not from Roumania, Roumania did not recognize us, but as far as the Belgians were concerned, who did not recognize us as Belgian citizens. Anyway, we never made it. We remained in Belgium and the war started. So anyway, getting back to Calais. When we got to Calais it was evening and my mother noticed a big Red Cross ship at the port; we were at the port and she noticed a big Red Cross ship. She then made a decision. She decided if she could just find out where the ship went and if she could get on to that ship and make her way to wherever it was and from there to the United States we'd all be safe, the three of us of course, not Charlotte who we didn't have with us. Before we left, however, my mother told people, neighbors and friends who were packing and going off in different directions, that if anyone saw Charlotte to please take her, keep her, and she'd be back for her. Anyway she walked up to the ship, found out that the Red Cross ship was taking wounded soldiers to England, and asked them if they would take us on. They said that if we would wait they would see if they had room for us and they would then perhaps take us with them. We sat at the port on our little suitcase, the one that we had left, and waited until dawn. Dawn came and they told us that there was no more room, they could not take us. So we turned away from the port and we tried to find some food. The Red Cross was giving out food in churches and all kinds of places and so we were fed a little bit. We got some milk for the baby, I mean Betty who was not quite four and ill, to boot. I still don't know how she survived the measles without after effects because she's a fairly healthy woman today. We ended up in a shelter because an air raid came and Mom left the shelter after the alarm came on that people could leave the shelter. I was left in the shelter with Betty on my lap. Betty was thirsty, started to cry. There was no one left in the shelter but the two of us. It was dark. It was frightening. Mom wasn't coming back. I recall sitting there for the longest time and not moving because the one thing we always did - we always obeyed my mother. There was never any thought of disobeying her, Mama was always obeyed, even into adulthood it was rather difficult to disobey her for different reasons. I remember becoming so frightened at one point after having sat there for so long and Betty crying because she was thirsty. I was thirsty also, I was also hungry. Finally I was frightened enough to stray outside of the shelter. It was dark and I was even more frightened. There's something I never tell my children to this day and they are very comfortable in the dark. I am still frightened of the dark although I hate to admit it. That doesn't mean I don't go out, I'm not a prisoner of it, but there is that deep-seeded fear of the dark to this day. I went out; I started running; I started crying; I started calling Mama, Mama. There was no one in the street. Finally I heard a voice from a distance saying Flora, Flora. And I yelled Mama, Mama. And anyway we found each other, We tried to find a shelter and we ended up in a railroad station. We saw a train being mounted by a lot of people; we tried to get on the train. We didn't know where the train was going but anyplace was better than where we were. The train was so packed that we couldn't get on it, so we were left behind. It seemed like it was the last train out. We sat down in the corner of the railroad station and spent the night there. In the morning, I just couldn't carry the suitcase anymore. I felt very weak and tired and Mama just told me to leave the suitcase in a corner and we left. Mama was still

carrying Betty. We made it all the way to Boulogne-Sur-Mer. Our goal at this point was Paris because my mother figured that if we can just get to Paris, we could get from Paris to London. We did not make it to Paris because the Germans caught up with us in Boulogne-Sur-Mer. We were taken in by a cafe owner. Her name was Marta, I'll never forget that. We stayed there for several weeks. There's something very interesting, a little side-tracking here. There was a lot of pillaging going on. Every time there was an air raid and stores got bombed, people were going in and pillaging. I was out when there was an air raid but I couldn't get into a shelter, I couldn't get home, so I crouched down in a doorway and sat out the air raid there. When I came out of my little corner I noticed people running into a store and taking things. It was a shoe store and I had noticed a pair of white boots there before. I noticed the white boots were still there. So everybody else was taking things. I didn't realize at the time that it was something wrong about it. I might have felt it deep down but I didn't realize there was something wrong with it. I took the white boots and I put them on and I went to the cafe where we were staying with them. Anyway Mom was very angry but she didn't have the heart to take the boots off. But a few days later, as I was walking the street, someone grabbed me by the collar in the back and pulled me into a store. It was the store owner, pulled me into his boarded up store and pulled the boots off my feet and I went back to the cafe barefoot. These are some of the side things that happened.

What time of year was it?

This was sometime in June of 1940. Meanwhile Germans were already in Belgium, they were in a good part of France. The Germans gave out a decree that all non-French residents had to return to the country of their origin. So we had to make our way back to Belgium having just a few francs given us by Marta to keep us fed on the road back. We couldn't afford transportation so we walked again. By now Betty was better and we walked. We hitch-hiked and one of the cars that we hitch-hiked was a German car and Mother gave me strict instructions not to understand either German, Yiddish, or Flemish. Anyway we made our way to Antwerp. When we got back to Antwerp, one of our neighbors had also returned and had Charlotte with her. Charlotte is alive today and is a grandmother and lives in New York. Things seemed slowly to return normal except that there were Germans there and in September school started again. There were air raids, there were bombings and all that but the Jews were not really bothered yet. We returned to school in September. The one thing that did happen within that following year I don't recall the exact dates but men were called up for labor. They were told that if they voluntarily present themselves for work in Germany that wives and children would not be bothered. I don't recall whether this was for both Christians and Jews or just for Jews. But anyway, my mother's youngest sister was also in Antwerp at the time. What happened after my mother had settled down in Belgium in 1929, she had eventually sent, when I was about three years old she sent for her youngest sister and brought her to Belgium. My youngest sister? [I assume her mother's youngest sister] had met a Polish emigree by the name of Alex Chechanoff [ph304] and married him and had a boy in 1940 by the name of Nathan, we called him Nunu. My uncle's name was Alex Chechanoff [ph307]. Uncle Alex and his brother Adolph Chechanoff [ph309] who was also in Antwerp, they were called up and went to work in

Germany with a lot of other men. They came back about three months later. This happened twice and twice they came back. When they got called up the third time my mother, she had an amazing instinct and very often her instinct served her well, had this gut feeling that something was wrong this time. She said, Alex, I wouldn't go. Alex said, come on Fannie you're always worrying. And she said, Alex please don't go. She said I have a bad feeling. Alex listened to her and he took his wife and child and moved to Brussels. He left because otherwise they would have probably come to arrest him. They moved to Brussels and they lived in Scarbec [ph323] on La Place de la Cage aux Zusa [ph324]. The men who went this time did not come back. I don't know what happened to them. However, they never came back. Time went on. We were called up to register and buy, quote buy a Jewish star. My mother had to go to a Bureau and the Jewish star, they were cut off a bolt. It was like buying a yard or two of goods, fabric, textile. They decided how much each family needed. They cut it off the bolt and you paid accordingly. If you didn't have the money you had to find it somewhere. Anyway Mom came home with these Jewish stars, cut them out and very neatly had to sew them on, two inches from the top, two inches from the arm on the left side of our outer garments. So now I had to wear a star to school which was not very pleasant. Needless to say, my sisters and I started being subject to insults, to a few pushes, etc. And I started hating school whereas I had always loved school before. At about that same time, I don't know if it was two months, three months later we were told that we couldn't go to public school anymore, that we could only go to our Jewish school.

What grade were you in at the time?

At that point I was in middle of fourth grade. I was in fourth grade. I was ten that August and I had entered fourth grade that September, so I was in the middle of fourth grade when I stopped going to school. My initial reaction was I hated not being able to go to school but at that point I was glad also because I really had a difficult time dealing with the children and with the crying of my sisters when they were pushed around. I said to my sisters, "Well don't worry so we won't go to school, we'll go to the park and play." We could always go to the park. The park was a beautiful park. It had a lake, it had swans, and we really loved the park. It was almost like a refuge. And we headed for the park. We get to the park and there was a sign, NO JEWS ALLOWED. Actually NO JEWS AND DOGS ALLOWED. But there was no gate, no door. There was no one around so we decided, well we'll go in anyway. We walked into the park and after we had gone just a few yards a guard appeared out of nowhere and he didn't say a word. He just shook his finger back and forth as if to say No, No, No, and pointing towards the exit. I remember making a face as if to say why can't I go in. He kept shaking his finger and pointing to the exit. So we left and I told my sisters, don't worry we can always go to the movies because I had a few francs. Mama always gave me a few francs to take care of my sisters. So we went to the movies, we get to the cashier's window - the same thing. There was a sign NO JEWS ALLOWED. By now I was getting pretty upset. My head started drooping. My sisters of course were upset also. We couldn't understand why we couldn't go in. Our clothes were clean, we didn't do anything that we knew of, so we decided to get some ice-cream. We get to the ice-cream parlor, the same thing, NO JEWS ALLOWED. And by

the time we headed for home with our heads pretty low. But once we got near our house it was fine because there were other children there with stars who probably had experienced the same thing we had and we just played in the street. That became our playground for the next few months. As time went on things became worse and worse. It was not regular but all of a sudden the gestapo started coming around with little wagons, small wagons, they look like some of our own recreation wagons here in the United States where you can put in maybe ten, twelve people in the back. They would come around, they were unmarked and they would stop. Once they stopped a siren went on, several gestapo men would jump out, would go into a building and bring a few people out. In addition to the stars, in Belgium unlike the United States everybody had to carry an identity card. We have one here too. We have drivers' licenses, social security cards. However, there it was a regular identity card with your photograph, place of birth, date of birth, whether you were married or not, and if you were married - the children and when the children were born. It was literally an on-going record of your life that you carried with you at all times. The Belgian citizens' cards were green, foreigners' cards were yellow with a red band across. I still have mine from after the war. It still was yellow with a red band across and even though it says born in Belgium, it says in two languages "etranger" and stranger in both Flemish and French. In addition to that band and the word stranger or foreigner during that period of time Jews had a stamp put on just about the same time that the stars were handed out in both languages "Joff"[ph418] in Flemish and "Juif" in French and the size of the stamp, the letters were almost three quarters of an inch big so even if you couldn't read them from far, seeing those two stamps on the yellow part of the identity card, one knew immediately who you were. So my mother carried one of those. I was not old enough yet to have one. You weren't required to have one until you were fifteen years of age. But all Jews carried an identity card like that in addition to the stars. Well anyway when the gestapo then would jump out of these wagons and go into a building all they had to do was ask for documents and they were able to pick the Jews out and bring them in. In our neighborhood of course most of the people in our apartment houses were Jews, there were very few Christians. They came around irregularly. The men in our neighborhood built a sort of labyrinth between buildings. The buildings were attached. They built a labyrinth where they opened up a wall either in a closet or behind a wall, concealed doors, in basements and you were able to escape through these hidden openings from one building to another and exit several blocks away and be safe, temporarily anyway. It became a game. Every time we'd hear that little siren we would of course immediately be activated as you would say; we ran. It became a game with us kids. We knew it was dangerous. We knew lives were in danger. However, it was very exciting. The idea was well let's see who's going to get caught now. Anyway this went on for awhile. Meanwhile Jews were still able to work and earn some money but less and less so, depending on what you did. Mom worked at that point. She could only get work in a restaurant. She worked in the restaurant. Let me retract a little bit. Just before we put the stars on, Mom would smuggle food from northern France to Belgium. I won't go into all the details on it but I did accompany her occasionally. She would let me carry let's say like a box with five kilograms of sugar. I had to pretend that it was a doll and if someone, a custom's agent or someone else would come near me and would want to see in my box, I would start screaming and crying, don't touch my new doll. I just got it and you'll break it. Nine times out of ten people were sympathetic and they didn't touch my new doll. However, occasionally we did have things taken away from us and we had to pay a fine. After a while though it became too dangerous and Mom stopped doing that

especially after we had to wear the stars. Then it was stopped totally. We also couldn't get rationing stamps anymore so it became a very precarious existence. You work, you try to buy things on the black market and make do that way. Mom also sewed in the evening and we kids helped her. We also did this after the liberation. Lace could not be gotten so Mom made slips. I did the hand-work where I made like a little scallop on the bottom of the slips and on the top. One of us turned the shoulder straps inside out that Mom sewed. The other one ironed. It was a family affair to earn a little money for bread. Anyway time went on and the Germans, the Nazis rather, - I won't say Germans because I feel very strongly that there is a difference between someone born on a certain soil and someone taking on a certain ideology - the gestapo kept coming around, as I said, occasionally, more and more often. Sometimes they'd stay away a week or two, sometimes they'd come day after day. It was very irregular and one could almost not prepare for it. Meanwhile, one day as Mom was heading home and try to beat curfew [curfew for Christians was at that time I believe eight p.m. if I recall correctly and seven p.m. for Jews] she was trying to make curfew when someone called her name and she started to run, she turned around and saw a German in a gestapo uniform. Actually he wore the black uniform and we found out later that he was attached to the commandant of Antwerp. She started running quicker. It was Carl, my father's old friend Carl. Carl caught up with her, wanted to know where my father was, how my father was doing. My mother told him she had had no news of him which was really a lie but she told him she didn't know where he was. Sometimes she changed; she said once that she did tell him that he was in America and other times she told me that she told him that she didn't know where he was. So I really don't know because that was hearsay by my mother. But what I know is that Carl was there. He started coming to visit, bringing us food. My mother asked him one day though to not come around anymore because our neighbors would ask questions. What is this a German is coming to your house. Anyway, he didn't come around for a few weeks or a couple of months maybe even. One day, I'll never forget that day, Carl caught up with my mother again. He didn't come to the house but he caught up with her in the street. Apparently he must have been waiting for her. He said, Fannie if you can go home, take the children and see if you can get yourself out of town. And she said why what's the matter. He said I can't tell you, just trust me and get out of town. And with that he turned around and left. Mama came home, very little was said. She took our stars off our coat, rubbed the coat with her nails to make sure that the markings weren't showing, put a double layer of clothing on each of us, took the albums in a bag under her arm and we left. We were going to go to Brussels. To go from Antwerp to Brussels is really a simple thing. It's almost no longer than going from Silver Spring to Washington. It's about a forty minute, forty-five minute train ride. You go to the train station, you buy a ticket, you get on a train, you get to Brussels, you get off the train. That's the extent of the trip, very simple. However, we had a few problems. We were illegal, we had taken our stars off, Mom had an identity card if it were asked of her to be shown which had Jew on there, it was yellow with a red band with the two stamps of Jew. So it wasn't that simple. But she acted as if it were. She went over to the ticket window. She bought four tickets. We went on to the train. We sat and made our way to Brussels. Occasionally trains would be stopped, gestapo would get on the trains. They would ask for documents. In this case for some reason we got to Brussels, no one stopped the train. Now we have to get out of the railroad station.big, beautiful staircase that led down to the main level and to the exit. We get to the staircase. Mom was wondering, we were just following her, as to how she was going to handle this in case she was

stopped. We get to the staircase, the staircase was packed with a mob of people. We could not get on to the steps. We didn't realize at first why but then Mom noticed at the bottom of the staircase there was a check-point and there were several gestapo men with some Belgian police. The Belgian police weren't doing anything. They were checking documents. Mom says to us, "pick a fight." We never questioned Mom, we always obeyed, especially once the war came. We start fighting, screaming, kicking. I'm the first one who started being I'm the oldest. I knew exactly what to do. I started pulling my sister's hair, pinching her, pushing her. One started to cry, the other one started to cry; we started to scream at each other and we knew we couldn't stop until we got orders from Mama. People were getting very annoyed around us. They were already tense, apparently. They started letting us through just so that we shouldn't bother them. Anyway we get to the bottom still screaming, kicking, fighting and one of the gestapo men said to my mother to the effect "stop those kids" and my mother made believe she didn't understand. We continued fighting and finally he said "take your kids and get out of here." Mom pretended not to understand even though that's exactly what she wanted to do and finally one of the French police, not French police, one of the Belgians, I really don't recall whether it was the Belgian or one of the French. Someone in French said why don't you take the kids and get out of here in a very curt voice. So we did. Mom took us and we left still screaming and fighting, but not too fast and not too slow. We made our way out of the station. We walked a few blocks and finally stopped and caught our breath. We stopped fighting and we felt very safe. We still don't understand. We had so many incidents like that where we felt that we had literally crawled out through the eye of the needle. We made our way to my aunt's house because we knew where she lived. We didn't know this through the mail. We knew it by word of mouth, people who had come to Antwerp. That's how we got the address. From there we found a small apartment, we got settled in and we never put the stars on again. And my mother had the audacity of enrolling us in public school. She entrusted a neighbor with our story. You had to trust. That was one of the big problems. You didn't know who to trust but you had to take someone into your confidence. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it doesn't. We were lucky. Most of the people that we trusted were trustworthy as we can attest because we are still here. The neighbor who we took into our trust let us use her name. Her name was Fiers. So my mother became Fannie Fiers, I became Flora Fiers, Charlotte Fiers, and Betty Fiers.

Your first names weren't...?

We did not change our first names because they were Belgian names.

It wasn't indicative that you were Jewish?

They weren't indicative and the reason that we didn't change them was my mother felt that it would be easier to remember if we were called by someone and we would not make a mistake of not knowing. She felt that just a last name was easier to work with, especially with the little ones. By

this time it was early '42. I was eleven and Charlotte was just about eight and Betty was five so Betty at five was still very young. I, of course, would have understood but it would have been very difficult for them if their first names were changed. They could have probably done it but there was no need because they were such Belgian names. Anyway, she enrolled us in school with strict instructions not to ever tell anybody that we were Jewish. We started school and the teachers were frightened of one particular child who happened to be in my middle sister's class. Her brother was a Belgian Nazi. A Belgian on the whole was very anti-Nazi but there was a Flemish element that felt they had lost autonomy and looked to the Germans to give them back autonomy of their country which they thought had lost to the French speaking people. So there were Belgian Nazis. There was a whole group of mostly Flemish Belgian Nazis. Her brother was. We called them the Black Shirts. Some of them wore brown shirts. They wore brown or black shirts. Anyway my sister Charlotte had a fight with this girl and she threatened to get her big brother on her. Normally this would not be a big deal but in this particular case it was. The teacher told the principal. The principal called me in and said I'd better call my mother in to come to school. She wants to talk to her. I said, well why we didn't do anything. She said, no, no, it's okay, I just want to talk to your mother. My mother came to school and the principal said to her before we go on with our conversation and why I called you, she said I want you to know I know you're Jewish. My mother denied it up and down. She said "you have no proof, what do you mean I'm Jewish." Meanwhile don't forget she still had the yellow identity card. We were just lucky up to this point. Finally the principal seemed to convince her that she was to be trusted. My mother broke down and did tell her that we were Jewish. She said, look she says I want to help you. And she tells her the story about my sister. And also at that point, just about that time people started being caught in Brussels already too, not as much as in Antwerp. Let me just go back. Okay let me finish this and then I'll go back to Antwerp. There was something that happened right after we came to Brussels. She says "I'm going to help. I think it's time," she says "that your children be hidden. It's not safe for them to be in school. It's not safe for them to be with you." She says, "I will put you in touch with someone who can help you." Before I go on with this, let me just go back. After we were in Brussels, my mother didn't question Carl, she just acted. And this was basically what she did most of the time throughout the war. Whether it was just luck or my mother's actions in themselves, I think her acting quickly without hesitation, without pondering did help a lot in our being saved. Of course, not minimizing the work of the people who helped us, all those righteous Gentiles which I will tell you about later on. After we got to Brussels and we were settled down, about 48 hours or so later Mother suddenly started thinking about what Carl said, about getting out of town and why. She said to me, "you know what Florika," she called me by my diminutive name, "you're going to go back to Antwerp and you're going to warn people. You're going to see so-and-so and you're going to tell them that something is going to happen." She said "because a child is not detected you can go safely." Being I wasn't wearing a star anymore a child at that point did not carry documents yet. So I went back to Antwerp, bought a ticket and went back to Antwerp. I walked into the Langakivicz Stradt[ph89] and it was very quiet. I didn't see anybody. The butcher shop was closed, the bakery was closed. It really was almost frightening. There I was walking through these streets and I didn't see anybody. I saw people in the Pellicon Stradt[ph92] which was where the station was. There it was very active; people were coming, people were going; the trams were operating. However, once I walked into the Langakivicz Stradt[ph94] and the Leverick Stradt[ph92] and the Somer

Stradt[ph92] it was very, very quiet. I walked around. I was afraid to go back to Brussels because I hadn't carried out what Mom told me to do. Finally it was getting to be late afternoon. It wasn't quite dusk but I could see the sun starting to go under and I didn't know what to do, whether to go back or not. And as I was walking trying to decide whether to back to the station to go back to Brussels, I heard a knock near my ankle from a basement window. I looked down and a hand was pointing to one side of the street. I knew exactly what they were showing me, to come in. So I went to where I knew how to get through the labyrinth [this was on the Somer Stradt[ph104] and I made my way into that basement. There were five people in the basement. One of them was a distant cousin of Mom's through marriage. And I said Chanita, Mama said you should all leave. I said what happened, where is everybody? And they told me that they came in with big trucks and literally emptied the neighborhood. That was probably the thing that Carl warned us about. I told those people to come with me to Brussels. They said no, there's no place to run, we have food for about three weeks, we're not going anywhere. I never saw them again. I left and I never saw them again. I went back to Brussels. My Mom, who died April 7, 1992 her whole life she carried a terrible burden of guilt for not having told people before she left. However when Carl told her and she kept telling me this her whole life her immediate reaction was to follow his directions, take her children and go. She did not even think or ponder as to what might happen. But afterwards it bothered her. Let me just tell you one more thing about what happened in Antwerp before we had left for Brussels and before Carl had warned my mother. I found out after the war that the Belgian Nazis in Antwerp had gathered one night and had been shown a film, "De Avaga Juda[ph123]" which is the "Eternal Jew" which is a horrible film where human beings are transposed into rats and back and forth. The film is still available now and I understand in South America it's still being shown. One day a horde of Belgian Nazis stormed into our street, I'll never forget it, we were in our apartment looking out our window. The one thing that we were able to see from our window was them breaking the window of the book shop across the street and throwing the books and everything into the street and stomping them and dragging out the old man; he had payes[ph131], he had beard; this was a religious old man and beating him up and stomping him with their boots and all. I'll never forget the sight. My middle sister got hysterical. I had to slap her face to get her to stop screaming, "Charlotte, Charlotte." Also I witnessed the burning of the synagogue in Antwerp, I'll never forget that. I remember the fire trucks standing by. They were standing there doing nothing. First they threw out the torahs and the prayer books and then they put it on fire and it burned for hours. Nothing; nobody made any move to stop the fire. I found out after the war when I went back, I found out subsequently that the Belgians, the fire-fighters were given strict orders not to make any attempt to contain the fire unless it started touching buildings.

Do you remember when this was?

To the best of my recollection it was late '41. I have it upstairs written down so I can give you the date. If you want I can fill that in at a later time. I think that was late '41 if I'm not mistaken but I will give you the correct date. I have it written down somewhere upstairs. I'm glad now that I wrote down a lot of things because my memory in small detail is starting to go, I noticed. Although

I'm still very confident because many things that I'm not sure of sometimes keep being confirmed that my memory is good, many details because of a book that was put together from diaries from one of the people that was hidden, from Father Bruno Reynders, is confirming many details that I had in my memory so I feel pleased about that. But anyway coming back to Brussels, to the Mother Superior, we went home that day and she did put us in touch with a Mssr. Georges Ranson. I have his photograph. I've corresponded with him. I went back there after the war to see him. I've got a wonderful postcard that he wrote me, incredible Sharon. Anyway, Mssr. Ranson was a member of a group that was our school's patrons. Here we have PTA's, PTSA's. In Belgium we had industrialists, some of the wealthier members of the town who would become patrons of a school. They would help out with things a school would need, they were especially instrumental in providing vitamins, winter clothes and help with sending children to camps like the one we had been in, in 1940. And Mssr. Ranson, as I said, was instrumental in this. At that particular time, something I didn't know until later on, Mssr. Ranson was an active member of the Belgian Resistance. He had a factory that made mica for, I don't know whether they were used in guns or some kind of armor, for the German army. But in his cellar at night they produced and manufactured guns for the Resistance. Mssr. Ranson had a cousin who was a nun in a convent in a small town named Doel in the Flemish part of Belgium. He got in contact with his cousin and told her that he had three children who needed a hiding place. She was more than happy to help out. She did not tell the Mother Superior that we were Jewish children. She told the Mother Superior that three children whose father was a prisoner of war and whose mother had become ill needed a shelter for a short period of time. The evening before our departure Mssr. Ranson picked us up and he split us up. I stayed at his home, my sister Charlotte stayed in his brother's home and my sister Betty stayed in his secretary's home. His brother was against what he was doing because he worried about the family's well-being. However, he did obey his brother and helped shelter us. I found out later on that he also sheltered a family in an attic throughout the war. He took care of them, fed them, etc. Mr. Ranson the next morning personally transported us and I'll tell you how. But first I want to share with you a small detail of the evening that I was in his home. Naturally, needless to say we were kind of frightened of being separated from Mom and all that. Actually what was strange is that for some reason, even though we were young in years, we seemed to understand what this was all about and we didn't cry, did what we were told to do; we were what we called good children. And why am I saying good children because even children who were hidden had to behave a certain way. Children who were not good children, who created problems, were not kept. So even to be hidden one had to be a good child so our benefactors had no problems with us. So anyway we were three good children. I remember Mssr. Ranson putting me to bed and kissing me good-night, then leaving and closing the door. A little while later I heard an argument between Mssr. Ranson and his wife. She was screaming, "you're crazy, you're mad. All those things you're doing," she says, "you can do whatever you want. You want to risk your life, that's fine," she says, "but you have no right to bring this child here to risk my life and the children's lives because of a couple of Jews." I remember laying there, my heart starting to beat, getting very upset, starting to cry, then leaving my bed, running into the other room shouting, "Mssr. Ranson, Mssr. Ranson please take me back, I don't want to create problems between you and Mrs. Ranson," Mme Ranson, of course, in French. I'll never forget it. Mssr. Ranson was quiet for a second and suddenly pointed his hand and said, "you get yourself back to bed immediately," "retourne au lit," in French, but

with a voice that could impose nothing else but obedience. And I went back to bed and lay there trembling not even daring to cry anymore. It was quiet afterwards. Anyway at dawn very, very early in the morning, Mssr. Ranson woke me and he had a little flat bed truck and I sat on it with him and we went to pick up my sister and the third sister. He had prepared the back of the truck in a very interesting way. He had gotten vegetable crates, the type of crates that were used, wooden crates that stored vegetables and fruit. He had turned three of them upside down, they were empty, and around it and on top of them he had put filled crates with vegetables and fruit. Apparently he must have gone out before he woke me to take me because the truck was all ready. And after we had picked up the third sister he put each one of us under the empty crate and covered us with the other crates and he told us that under no circumstances were we to make any sound, that he would stop, knock on the crate and take the crate off to let us go to the bathroom in an appropriate place, to feed us, give us a drink, etc. But unless he did so he didn't want to hear a sound. Now you have to picture Betty. Betty was at that point barely six years old. I don't even know if she was six. I think so because I think this was in the spring. She was quiet, it was amazing, she was quiet. And Betty basically was not a quiet child, she had a big mouth. Charlotte was a quiet child at all times. Charlotte sucked her thumb and would crawl into a corner even at home, would never really speak up. She was upset, she would just crawl into her little corner. Anyway, we remember the truck stopping at checkpoints because at that point there were checkpoints at the edge of every city, before you left the city. And the Germans asking for his documents, I remember at one point he asked, "Documenten," and he showed his document and everything was in order. And then they asked him, I remembered him asking what he had there and telling them that they could see it was vegetables, it was fruit. And then their coming and sort of knocking and looking around and letting us go. I'll never forget and I tell this to everyone I talk to because it still amazes me. I remember having at one of those checkpoints a tickle in my throat and remembering having to cough and thinking if I don't cough I will choke. However also knowing I may choke and die and don't cough but also knowing that if I coughed I would betray everyone and they would be killed and I would be killed because we were told that if we make one sound not only would we be killed but Mssr. Ranson would be killed and everybody else would be killed. I didn't know at the time how everybody else was going to be killed. Of course today I realize they probably would have tortured Mssr. Ranson and gotten the information from him or even from us. But anyway somehow, unbelievably, so I did not cough and to this day I have an exercise that I do every once in a while maybe to reassure myself that I can do it, if I have a tickle in my throat I'll hold off coughing for a few minutes. It sounds silly. Here's this middle aged woman who gets a tickle in her throat once in a while and tends to wait and not cough. That I did and I didn't cough and I survived the tickle. I coughed once I heard the truck really rolling. I do the same exercise once in a while with students of mine. I let them try because the kids will cough occasionally when someone's talking and I say okay, if anybody needs to cough see if you can hold out a couple of minutes. It'll help you. Anyway, it was serious. It sounds funny but it was pretty serious at the time. We get to the monastery. It turned out that we were going to be three only kids there with about a hundred and twenty nuns because it had been a boarding school. But because of the war there were no students at the school.

Could you tell me where it was?

That was Doel, I mentioned that, that was where Sister Odonia, Mssr. Ranson's cousin was. It was right near the beach. As a matter of fact there's a big monument now right near the water within walking distance of this convent in honor of British soldiers who were killed there in a battle. It was that close to the battle scenes. Today also there's a nuclear plant there. The town is totally deserted. I went back and even the convent moved. It's empty because a nuclear plant sits right in that town. We arrived and we were placed in a parlor waiting for the Mother Superior to come in and Sister Odonia to come and we were sitting there with a nun who was not Sister Odonia kind of keeping us company till the others would arrive. And then finally they arrived and we were sitting there with several nuns, the Mother Superior and Sister Odonia. As we were sitting, my younger sister looked up and noticed a cross on the wall. And being Jewish children we grew up having to hold our heads down when we crossed a church. We had never been in a church because we weren't allowed to enter a church and of course we had never been inside a building where a cross was hanging on a wall. So there we are and suddenly Betty's gaze went up to this cross and she said to the nun, "what is that." And the nun looks at her and said very surprised, ---no the Mother Superior wasn't in the room yet, she came in afterwards, I'll never forget that. and she said, " of course little one this is our Lord on the cross," she says, " you must have one like that at home, too." And she said "no we don't." Then she said, " well you must have one where you go and pray at church." And she says, "no we don't, we have something else." Meanwhile I was becoming very concerned and I sat next to Betty and I started pinching her under the table to be quiet. She knew that when she was pinched she had to be quiet. It was a code that we had. At this point, however, she chose not to obey me and says "leave me alone, don't hurt me, I'm not doing anything." And she says, " well I don't know what it's called but if you give me a pencil and paper I'll show you what we have" and she got a pencil and paper. She drew the most perfect Magen David, the Jewish star. The nun became hysterical, jumped out of her seat, ran out of the parlor and all of a sudden the Mother Superior came in and who I later found out was Sister Odonia came in with her and there was this big argument going on. I know now and I found out soon after that Sister Odonia had never told the Mother Superior that we were Jewish children as I said before. She just said we were children whose father was a prisoner-of-war and we needed a shelter.

What language did you speak...?

Okay we spoke both French and Flemish, however, they were speaking Flemish. This was going on in Flemish.

I was wondering like after you left Antwerp...?

In Brussels we spoke French. We spoke French in Brussels. To this day in Belgium you have three languages, you have Flemish, French and Walloon. In the French speaking part of the country, in school, only French is taught. However, in the Flemish part of Belgium both languages are taught, Flemish and French. This is another thing that the Flemish resent to this day; they feel like they're second-class citizens. Their language does not have to be taught in the French part but the Flemish have to speak French. As a matter of fact, you'll go into many small towns, if you attempt to ask an address or something in French, even if they know French, they'll pretend not to understand French. Anyway this was in Flemish. This was really in the heart of Flemish Belgium. They had a dilemma now. They didn't know what to do. They did keep us, however; they did keep us. We didn't stay too long. We stayed a little short of two months there because what happened is the Mother Superior, not because she was a bad person, she was really a good person, she was afraid to keep us because it was a real tiny town. And when I went back I first realized how small it really was. There was just the one church. You could walk across the whole town within less than an hour and a half to two hours. And there was a German post there. Not a Gestapo post, it was a military post, a small one. But still, the nuns, because of the war and the draft, they usually had a chaplain. But during the war the village priest doubled as chaplain so instead of having mass within the convent in their chapel, the nuns went to the village church for mass. One of the problems that they realized they would have is with me, the oldest, because I was old enough to have gone to Communion, to have had my first Communion and to go to Communion whenever there was mass, especially on Sundays. And of course I couldn't go to Communion now that they found out I was Jewish, so they couldn't let me go to Communion. They were, however, very very good to us. They knitted socks. They were as kind as could be, especially Sister Odonia who was with us almost constantly. We were really spoiled because we were like their three little pets for the two months that we were there. Anyway after two months George Ranson came back and took us back to my mother's the same way that he brought us. For a few days here and there we stayed with him and the secretary and the brother again but we were back with my mother. He made some other contacts for us and they found us another place. I realize today that the other place that we were hidden in was through Father Bruno although I had always been under the impression that the only place that he had been responsible for was the last hiding place in Ruisselede but I now know that Etterbeek was also through Father Bruno. We were hidden in Etterbeek in St. Joseph's Orphanage but it was really not only an orphanage; they also had some youngsters who were difficult to deal with. Someone said they were juvenile delinquents. We were there for about eight months and after eight months we went back home and a new place had to be found.

Could you tell me what it was like there?

That's exactly what I'm going to do right now. Etterbeek was a very difficult place for us to be. The little ones went to classes. I was recruited to peel potatoes and help with the kitchen and with the cooking and things like that, to repair socks, and help with the little ones because I was one of the older children.

What were you like twelve at that time?

At that point I was twelve, it was just before twelve, yeah I think I might have been just twelve at that point because I think we were there, we went there like in July and stayed throughout the period, past twelve. The place was dirty, I remember. I remember there was a garden but there was a big, almost like a - I thought it was a ten foot fence but it could be because I was little. And there were apples growing there and of course we couldn't get in there. But there was a small courtyard in the orphanage. We slept in a dormitory. I went back to visit it. On my second visit I finally rang the bell, on the first visit, I couldn't bring myself to ring the bell, I'll never forget that. I don't know why. I never found an answer to that. But the second time I did ring the bell to go in and I was received very warmly. There were just two people left of the ones that I knew. But anyway there were rats, but then there were rats all over Belgium at that point because things were dirty, things couldn't be kept up. And I remember there was a lot of water, the basement was always flooded. And I remember, being one of the older kids, I had to go help chase the rats. But anyway bathing was a problem. They would set up a big tub in the middle of the courtyard, of course not in the winter months, and we took turns going into the tub, washing, going out of the tub and getting a towel that was used by at least ten or more kids, and drying. And I'll never forget it, my middle sister, Charlotte, was very finicky and she refused to go into the tub. Anyway she finally did but they had to practically force her to go in. So these kinds of things. Another thing that I do remember from there is my mother did occasionally visit there because it was a Brussels suburb, Etterbeek, so she did occasionally visit and bring a little bread. The bread I'll never forget. It was war bread. The first day it was tough. The second day it was even tougher and the third day it started going moldy. It was heavy, but it was bread. Even at Etterbeek at the orphanage we would get a piece of bread that we had to save and we would only get it every three days or so. So I was responsible for the bread of my sisters. I slept with the bread under my pillow with one eye half open I would almost say, never sleeping very well because kids would steal from one another. There would be battles during the night with the kids; they would try to steal the bread. Another problem I had with the bread was I had to divide it between the three of us and hold it. The little one didn't quite understand that I didn't want to give her the bread because I needed it for the next day and the next day. And she always cried that I'm being mean and selfish and I wouldn't give her the bread. I also needed bread for another reason. We ended up having lice and I would take the lice out of my sisters' heads but I couldn't take my own out so I paid for it by the bread for every ten lice. I measured the bread and the other kids who took my lice out had to literally show me every louse that was killed, actually the nits that they would take out. I counted them very diligently and there had to be ten. Ten for a bite of bread and the bread was measured exactly from the nail on my thumb to my knuckle. So that was one thing. I had to help cook as I said before and I couldn't understand. I used to get very ill and vomit sometimes and then many years later when I was already in the United States, I remember that when I smelled cooked rhubarb, because Mom loved cooking rhubarb, I would feel nauseated. I recalled the reason perhaps why this happened was one of the vegetables that we had while we were at Etterbeek we used to cook the leaves of the rhubarb rather than just the stems and I learned since that the leaves of rhubarb have a toxin in them, not enough to kill one but enough to render one quite ill. Of course at the time we didn't know it and

everything that we could eat, we ate. We even cooked the leaves of carrots. I used to steal, of course. I stole potatoes for my kid sisters all while I was peeling them. And we ate the peels while we were peeling them because that was going to be food, got ground into food. So they were not the easiest eight months. However, I remember there being a few nuns who seemed to me that they were a little different from the other nuns. I can't quite remember what struck me about their being different. One of them in particular, she was much stricter than the other nuns were. I found out after the war when I went back that those were Jewish young women who were also hiding in the orphanage, but since they were adults, they were dressed up in the nuns' habit. Therefore I realized something but I didn't quite understand it at the time. I learned all these things when I went back. Anyway, after about eight months things were getting pretty dangerous there also. We had some visits from the Gestapo but things were still fairly safe. But anyway we were very unhappy there and Mama said that she had made a contact and perhaps we could find another place. So we were taken home. We were home for awhile. Meanwhile my aunt and uncle's apartment had been raided and my aunt and uncle had moved into our apartment so we were all, my aunt and uncle and Nathan, we called Noonoo. Meanwhile while all this was going on, Mssr. Ranson had provided Mom with a cross from his wife, had provided her with false documents under the name of Fiers with a regular green card which he did for other people also. And he gave Mom a job at his factory. But between the job at the factory just before that, Mom had worked - we had friends who lived right across the elementary school that we had gone to, Ricard Premier[ph489], and for a moment I can't think of their name, it'll come to me, I wrote it down somewhere, it'll come back to me, maybe I could fill it in to you later on. For some reason I'm drawing a blank all of a sudden - oh no, Mr. and Mrs. Hotton. They had an old metal scrap yard. When we first met them, we were good friends, but since at the time Mama took any kind of work, before Mssr. Ranson gave her the job and a false document, she worked for them as a cleaning woman. They also helped her with a little bit of food and to bring back for my aunt and uncle. However, Mssr. and Mme. Hotton's son had joined the Black Shirts. He didn't live with them but he did visit occasionally. After a while so Mom shouldn't have to walk the streets back and forth to the apartment, Mom ended up sleeping in Mssr. and Mme Hotton's attic. But then they told her maybe she'd be better off not coming anymore and sleeping there because they were afraid their son just might find out and would betray her. So she stopped going. I went back after the war. Mssr. Hotton had died and I went to see Mme Hotton but perhaps because of age she did not recognize me, and I was a little saddened because of that because I did go back to see her. But anyway she then got the job with Mssr. Ranson. Then later on, after we were hidden again and I'll tell you the details of that, Mssr. Ranson provided Mom with sleeping accommodations in his office in the factory. She would leave at about five o'clock, leave work like everybody else and then she would hide in.....Well, there are several things that happened. Mssr. Ranson provided her with a cot which was kept in a closet in his office. He also brought her food. He took her laundry to his apartment and believe it or not his wife did my mother's laundry. Some of it she did in the factory, but the things that she couldn't do, she did. With all that she still helped him. But anyway, he also brought her food to take to my aunt and uncle because after their apartment had been raided and they ended up staying in our apartment, they never left our apartment anymore. They never went out in the street again. So she took them food so that they would be well supplied. And she would sneak back to the factory and sleep in the factory. So she left with everybody. She then snuck back after dark. After she took the food and

then snuck back and had a key to enter. There are also people working downstairs for the Resistance throughout all this period of time and sometimes she helped out with that. At this point my aunt is in our apartment, Mom is sleeping in Ranson's factory and we get contacted by a representative from Father Bruno. The person never gave her name. The one thing that it is they did not give their names because of fear that if their network got infiltrated and betrayed there would be a problem. But anyway, that there is a place where they could hide us and they gave us very precise instructions. My aunt's child, Noonoo, my little cousin Noonoo, was also offered a hiding place. My aunt was afraid to let him go because at that point some of the groups were infiltrated by traitors and sometimes children were picked up, taken away, and were never seen again. And they were aware of that; the Jews were aware of that. My aunt decided that her Noonoo had a 50% chance of surviving in this neighborhood. But anyway to make a long story short my uncle and aunt were taken to Auschwitz. My aunt and my little cousin were destroyed in Auschwitz. So he was born during the war and he got killed during the war. My uncle survived but he met an ugly death in Poland after liberation. My mother was supposed to take us; she took us to the train station. We were supposed to go on the quai, wait at a particular train for a woman who was described as wearing a particular suit, a particular color, and we were not to address her. My mother was not to address her. We were just to wait until the train pulled in. Then the train pulled in. When this woman who was described to us very distinctly walked into the train, the three of us had to walk away from my mother without saying goodbye as if she were a stranger, without any acknowledgement that we knew her. Wherever the woman sat down we were supposed to sit down without acknowledging that there was any connection between us and the woman. I'm still amazed at times that we did it, but we did. Wherever the woman would get off the train, we would follow her, not to address her or anything else. We followed her. When we were several streets away from the station, and that was Ruisselede as we learned later on, she came over, took us around and said I'm going to take you to a safe place. We then ended up at the Convent of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Notre Dame de Sept Douleurs. There we stayed till liberation. After several months, I received a coded letter from my mother. The Mother Superior called me into her office and read me the letter. The letter said, Dearest Flora, Tanta Leah, Uncle Alex and Noonoo went away on vacation to visit the rest of the family. I don't know when they'll be back. I don't know what to do in the meantime. The Mother Superior handed me the letter which she had opened and already read, said what is this saying. I said I think what it's saying is that my aunt and uncle were caught by the gestapo and were taken away to a concentration camp. Because by then we knew. We didn't know exactly what happened in concentration camps, that we didn't know until later on, but we knew at that point that they existed. Remember at the beginning when I told you about Herr Gross? Herr Gross had been taken to a concentration camp, somehow was taken out on a work detail or being transferred to another camp and he jumped from the train. They shot after him; he was wounded. They left him for dead but a farmer found him in the bushes. He was a good man; didn't betray him, nursed him back to health. He was never really healthy again but anyway he somehow made his way back to Brussels. After we had left Antwerp and we were in Brussels, accidentally we once met. And that's how he knew that we were in Brussels. But anyway he made his way back and that's how we learned some of those things. He did survive and then died in the United States a few years after he emigrated. He was always a sick man though, for the rest of his life. But anyway, coming back there, the Mother Superior dictated a letter and I wrote, Dear Mama, while

Uncle Alex, Aunt Leah and Noonoo are on vacation, why don't you come to visit us. My mother came. She walked a railroad track at night not to get lost, because by then even with false documents it was much too dangerous to go on trains, and slept under the bushes during the day; stole from the fields to survive the three days that she walked and came to the convent. The Mother Superior gave her a beautiful little room. But we were told that nobody was to know that she was our mother, that she was supposed to be a stranger. If we saw her we were not to acknowledge her but every once in a while she would take us to see her. So once a week she would take us very quietly. Mama would be waiting in that room and we would go and we were able to hug and talk and see each other for about a half-hour. But the rest of the week we had to stay away. There were a few close brushes because the Germans used to come and look for soldiers who at that point started defecting already. They weren't looking exactly for Jews but they were looking for soldiers but in the process there was always a fear they would find us. There was a chain in the convent. Every time that door bell would ring the command went down the chain and we were taken and quickly rushed down into a cellar. At one point we were sitting in a cellar with a nun, hugged in a corner behind a big pile of potatoes; they stored vegetables in the cellar. Somehow we were always involved with vegetables. But anyway, we were hiding behind that pile of potatoes and the Germans did come down to that cellar to look. They poked, I don't know whether it was with their guns or their bayonets or whatever but they did poke into the pile because we heard potatoes rolling and everything. And they left. I mean it was amazing because all they had to do was walk around the pile a couple of feet further and they would have seen us. Luckily we didn't make a sound, nothing, and we were safe. And this happened several times. But anyway the end did come. I had one close brush. I still don't know whether this person would have betrayed me or not. Every once in a while traveling preachers came to the convent and this one time one of those traveling preachers who came to preach grabbed me in the courtyard and he says you're a Jewish little girl, aren't you? And I said No. I'll never forget it. I remember him shaking me and yelling at me. And he says you know what happens to little girls who lie? They go to hell and they burn in a fire and they suffer and he was screaming. Finally I said, you're mean. You're going to burn in hell and I literally fought him physically. He finally let me loose. I had the marks of his fingers on my arm. They were red marks. I'll never forget that. I literally got loose and I ran to the Mother Superior's office sobbing and told her what happened. She immediately stormed out and of course I don't know. She must have had a talk with him or whatever. As I said, to this day I'll never know. It was very strange, why he grabbed me like that, I still don't know because there were other children there.

Did you look particularly Jewish do you think?

Well compared to a lot of other kids, my hair was darker. Don't go by the hair color, you know. It was dark, real dark brown. This is sort of between gray and a cover-up job. My hair was dark brown. It was a little more of an ethnic look. Many of the kids in that area were blue-eyed, light-haired. My sister was a little more sallow skinned with almost pitch black hair. She certainly did not look Flemish. So I don't know. As I said I have no explanation. Maybe he sensed something, I don't know. But anyway maybe it was curiosity or what but I never found out.

That was pretty cruel.

But it was one of my closes brushes. It was cruel. And after the war I found out that Father Bruno who supplied the food stamps for us had to get them illegally. He had some arrangements with someone in the rationing office. But the Mother Superior also managed to get some stamps in a very interesting way which I didn't find out from her until after the liberation when I went back to visit. She told us that she knew little things about every one of the residents in the town. What she called she blackmailed the mayor intoWhen they buried someone, what they did is they buried them quietly and would not register the death. In that way the mayor was able to take those stamps and give them to the convent to feed us. But Father Bruno did most of that. He supplied most of the stamps. Father Bruno Reynders.

Do you want to tell who he was?

Father Bruno Reynders was a Benedictine Monk from a monastery in Luvin[ph100]. Father Bruno got involved into hiding children without actually planning to. Someone asked him to hide a child and he couldn't say no. And then someone asked him to take another child and another one and before he knew it he was actively involved in hiding children. He ended up hiding three hundred children, most of them boys because boys were very hard to hide because they were circumscised. Most people were afraid to take boys but he managed to find places for boys especially in monasteries, even in his own. His brother Jean who is a dentist and is the only one of the three siblings still alive. There was a nun, Sister Bernadette who has died since who helped with hiding the children. Jean is still alive in Belgium and at any given time, I understand, Jean was hiding about twenty-five people in his cellar. Father Bruno Reynders was also helped by his nephew Michel Reynders who presently is the honorary Consul for Belgium in Denver, Colorado. He was fourteen years old at the time, Michel Reynders, and he would carry messages. Occasionally he would accompany a boy to a hiding place because he was able to get on a tram with him and he would face the people and the boy would face him and sort of make their way to a hiding place. Father Bruno almost got caught by the gestapo several times. One time they came to his monastery. A monk escaped from the back while the gestapo was in the front and was able to warn Father Bruno who kept a small apartment to do his work in Brussels. Father Bruno instead of going underground exchanged his cassock for secular clothes and continued doing his work until the end of the war. He survived and he died in 1981 at the age of 78. There is a monument in Utinyey[ph123] the town where he died, Utinyey[ph123], Belgium in honor for him. There is also a tree and plaque for him at Yad Vashem in the Alley of the Righteous. Not only did Father Bruno hide me but Father Bruno--after liberation I was working in a soap factory to help my mother feed my two sisters-- came to visit and when he found out that I was working instead of going to school, asked me if I wanted to go to school. I said of course but I can't, I have to help Mama feed the kids. And he spoke to my mother and he offered to bring more food just so I could go to school. He

enrolled me in a Catholic School. Even though at that time I already knew catechism very well he gave strict instructions that I should be excused when catechism was taught. In addition to that he paid for private piano lessons and they would let me practice in the convent which was across the street from the school. They would leave the door unlatched in the morning before school and I would go in there and practice piano. He also paid for typing lessons. And to this day when I type, I say thank you Father Bruno because I'm a very good typist. He also paid for Art classes, extra-curricular Art classes. It was incredible that he wanted to continue that. Also from what I understand, what I found out after the war and had confirmed several times, the children who did not have a parent or parents to come back to after the war, what he did - instead of leaving them in the monasteries to become good Christians, he took them out and handed them over to the Jewish agencies. In other words, these are your children, you take them. That was Father Bruno, a real Saint.

Tsadik.

Yeah, Tsadik. So was the Mother Superior, Marie Chrysostome, the head of the monastery, and Sister Odonia, and Mssr. Ranson, and the principal whose name I don't remember. I just found out the name also of the woman who took us to the train. I never knew her name until the last few weeks. In fact I have to call Michel Reynders in Denver. Hopefully he'll know whether she's still alive or not. If she's alive, I'm going to go back to Belgium and thank her.

Are there any other incidents or episodes during the time that you were.....?

Oh there were several. Between Etterbeek and having gone to Ruisselede, another person had jumped the train and had come back to Brussels. His name was Appel. Appel had been sort of a boarder in our apartment just before we had to wear the stars. He had lost a wife and four children in 1948. Exactly how he lost them I don't know but I know he did lose them to the Nazis. I remember him as being a very dour quiet sort of angry looking man. He always sat near the window almost in total silence. I remember disliking him because he was very unfriendly. Of course I learned later on why. You know, poor man, was so unfriendly. But anyway he was a boarder and it did help pay our rent a little bit. He was caught after we were in Brussels already. He knew where we had gone and so he knew where to find us. These things were sort of by word of mouth from one Jew to another. People ended up knowing where people were, where you could find people. He also jumped from a train and he did come and in touch with us. But there was absolutely not even space in the apartment because by that time my uncle and my aunt lived and the whole apartment was just two rooms. It was a real tiny apartment. We tried to find him another place. He was with us meanwhile. And then one morning he was gone and then he came back again and we were feeding him. He decided to find shelter in another building. That building was eventually bombed but he was outside the building when it was bombed. He then returned and he

stayed in the bombed-out building figuring he was safe in a bombed out building because nobody knew him. He was pretty sick by then. So I was in charge of taking food to Mr. Appel. I remember I took food every day. He was wrapped in his blanket. At that point we asked him to come back to the apartment but he didn't want to. He said it's better if he's there. He's safer in the bombed out building. All I know is one day when I went to take him the food his blanket was there but he was not. And I've never seen him again. So I don't know what happened to Mr. Appel. And afterwards we went to Ruisselede. We were liberated in Ruisselede. We went back to Brussels. My sisters stayed in the convent.

Could you tell us when that was?

That was in October of 1944. We were liberated. By the time it was safe it was around November. In November my mother and I made our way on foot to Brussels. We almost didn't make it because of the shooting and the bombing. We got caught on the roads and everything. But anyway we did make our way back to Brussels. We didn't go back to the old apartment. We found a place. I don't know. I think Mom might have gone back but found it totally emptied. What happened was which I didn't tell you. My mother went back to the apartment every day to bring food for my aunt and uncle and one night when she came there was a gestapo seal on the door. They were gone. Normally about two or three days after an apartment or a house was raided and people were taken away, they would come in with a truck and they would empty the apartment or the house. It was called meublation[ph198]. What my mother did, she was incredible, she took the seal off, went in, took out the photographs and the bedding and left and put the seal back. No-one else would have had the guts to do it but my Mama. That's when the letter was written that I spoke about earlier. So we made our way to Brussels after liberation and we found a small place to live. We furnished it with crates and whatever we could find. About four or five weeks later Mama managed to find some work and I was sent back to pick up my sisters from the convent. Transportation was a little bit more back to normal by then. We were able to come back by train. So we came back to Brussels. We enrolled the two kids back into the same public school that we had been in before we were put into hiding and I went to work. And then Father Bruno came to visit. He was already bringing us some food and I would visit him in his small apartment when he was there. He stayed in Brussels so he could give all the kids back, get them back from all the different monasteries and give them back to Jewish agency. He was incredible that way. So he asked me if I wanted to go to school. I said of course I want to go to school. He asked my mother then, he said he'd like to enrol me in a school, he knows of a good school and she said well I can't, she has to help me feed the kids. So he said, I'll bring you enough food. He said, I'll bring you more food. Let her go to school. So my mother did. And he enrolled me; it was a Catholic School. And even though I knew catechism well already, he gave specific instructions that I would be excused from catechism. In addition to that he paid for private piano lessons. I didn't have a piano, of course, so I went to practice before school in the convent across the street from the school. They left the door unlatched.

Can I ask you, at this point after you were liberated, did you have any contact with your father...?

No, not yet, not yet...

Okay, so you didn't know..

At that point, no. As a matter of fact what we learned afterwards, my father was very, very depressed. He had come out of the army and he wasn't working for awhile. He was just sort of laying around feeling life was not worth living because he was sure he had no wife and no kids because there was no way he felt that a woman and three babies could have survived. Especially he knew that my mother had no money, she didn't have anything.

Where was he stationed?

He was stationed in Florida. He had hoped to...that's how he became legalized and became a citizen. He had hoped that he would be sent overseas, but they didn't. He was - most of his army career was spent somewhere in Florida.

When did he find out about you?

In 1945 through a British soldier who made inquiries through the Red Cross and everything. As a matter of fact I have a photograph upstairs. I'll bring it down to show it to you. So what happened we realized that contact was made when one day the door bell rang, it was Christmas morning as a matter of fact. We were on the second floor and I ran down to open the door. It was an American soldier standing there with a box like this and he says, Merry Christmas. I didn't know what Merry Christmas meant. Merry Christmas - and then leaves. Just hands me this thing. First he says, are you Flora Mendelo - is this the home of Fanny Mendelovicz? I said, yes it is. He says, okay Merry Christmas. And took off. And there I was with this big box. We go upstairs. There was a letter on the box, an envelope, taped to the top of the box. I'll never forget Mama took off the envelope, didn't even look in the envelope, we looked first in the box. It was filled with food, cans of Spam, I'll never forget, Spam. We ate it though, everything, all kinds of food. And the best part was a couple of bars of chocolate. So we ate and we ate and we ate. We were so sick, all of us. We laid stretched out, we threw up, it was really...we overate. We weren't used to having that much food. We were so sick, I'll never forget it, especially me because I was a "chaza." So that's what happened. Then she opened the letter and it said we have been notified that you are the spouse and that there are three children who are the family of David Mendelovicz, Private whatever and we

should present ourselves with that letter at the army headquarters. So we did. The first thing we got invited to a big Christmas party. Meanwhile we had gone to a big Chanukah party because we met an Israeli soldier who was interested in me. Of course I couldn't move without my mother so I went with her when somebody wanted to go with her and she came with me when somebody wanted to go with me. But anyway we went to the Christmas party and everything. And then the next thing Mom went to headquarters a couple of times and we were told that the army was going to provide us with transportation to the United States but for some reason they couldn't do it out of Antwerp, that it would be done in France. But we had to make our way to Le Havre. The one problem that we ran into is Mama had to get a passport, which was fine. I was past fifteen. I had to have my own passport. I became a slight problem because the other two were on her passport so they were my father's children. I had to be an individual so it created a few problems. So they shelved[?275] us. They said, don't worry about it, they'll take care of it in Paris. So we went to Paris. In Paris they still didn't, they said, okay why don't you go to Le Havre, maybe they can take care of it there. In Le Havre they still had a problem with my individual documents and they suggested that my mother leave me in Le Havre and that somebody would take care of me, somebody from the army, and when she got to New York to finish up. But she said she's not going without, at this point, without the three children, you know. And so they said, I'll tell you what, they were nice, it was right after the war like, you know things were crazy, this was 1946 by that time, you know time went by. So he said, you know what, why don't you go on the ship. If they give you a hard time in New York, worse comes to worse they'll hold her. They let us on the ship. We got to New York, they just didn't say anything because we didn't go through Ellis Island or anything like that because it was an army ship. We came right into port and they just let us off the ship.

What day did you come?

We came May 29, 1946.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your story that you didn't tell me now or we could keep it for our next meeting, when we talk about your relatives.

If you want to keep it for our next meeting, I'll check up on the dates, double-check on the dates.

Okay, so for the time being I want to thank you very much.

You're welcome. (Tape is turned off and then turned on again.) One never realizes the little details that create problems, you know what they call cultural shock. There we were on the ship. And we had boarded late at night and the next morning we came into breakfast. We were there with

soldiers, with war brides, all kinds of people. My mother was the oldest war bride. They thought she was a war bride. But anyway, people thought that I was the war bride and that my husband had brought my mother and my two sisters and everybody was very surprised. When they found out it was my mother who was the soldier's wife they were even more surprised. But anyway here we come down to breakfast and we sit down at these long tables that were lined up, don't forget it wasn't a luxury ship. It was a luxury liner that had been converted to an army ship. I still have a postcard somewhere of the ship, if you want to see it. Well, anyhow, there I am sitting and I see something in my plate but it wasn't food. It was a box; it was a little box. My mother is looking at me and I'm looking at my mother, my sisters. We were turning it and turning it, we didn't know what to do with it. They were looking around and finally we see some soldiers tearing the box open very neatly, a line, other line, another line, folding it back, and pouring milk into the box. And we thought that was the craziest thing. How can you pour milk into paper. Well, anyhow, we figure well we'll do the same thing. Then we noticed, not only did they pour milk in, they started eating right out of the box, not from the plate. We thought that was so stupid and so ridiculous. But we did the same thing and that's how we made our acquaintance with our dry cold cereals. I'll never forget it, we sat there looking at it. And the other cultural thing is when I met my first Mello Roll in New York. You know what a Mello Roll is? It's an ice cream that comes wrapped in paper. But there is no stick or anything and what you have to do is you have to push it up from the bottom. But I didn't know. I see this thing and since the one thing I had learned in the many convents I was in were good manners, I wasn't about to eat with my fingers. So there I was sitting in a high school cafeteria where my husband had taken me, that's Jack, and everybody looking at me and he had ordered this ice cream for me, a Mello Roll, he didn't say it was ice cream. And it's laying there and laying there. And since I didn't have any utensils and I wasn't about to embarrass...I couldn't speak and that was enough, I wasn't about to embarrass myself with eating with my fingers. As much as I was dying to have it, I left it on my plate.

That's funny, okay, anything else?

No, I don't really think so, except one little incident. I went to high school and I remember the kids were laughing in class every time I opened my mouth.

In New York City?

In New York City. I enrolled myself in Central Needle Trades High School. I remember the kids laughing in class whenever I tried to open my mouth. And one day I couldn't take it anymore. I bust out crying and I ran out, sobbing, and I swore I was never going to walk into that classroom again. And the teacher ran out into the hallway after me, took me around, consoled me, and took me back in. From that talk it came out that I was determined to learn English. Not only that, I'll never forget, I came back into class and I started screaming at everybody, I want to see if you talk

French like I talk English, I'll laugh too. I'll never forget that I screamed. Well, the classroom was quiet, nobody ever laughed at me again.

That's right, you're right.

There were a few things over the years, like one of them when my son came home crying from school, the first grade, because I had a very strong accent yet at that time. And he came home crying and he said, Mommy please when you come to school, don't talk because everybody says you talk funny. Well at that point I really started to practice with a radio and listening carefully and working in front of a mirror to correct my accent. Eventually I did become certified to teach English. I don't know whether it's something I had to prove or what. But I made my way. I did leave high school after a while. I had to leave because I had to go to work. I had to help feed the family. I never finished high school. Never finished elementary school. Never finished Junior High School. I took an exam. I got a diploma, GED by examination and I was allowed into college, actually on the dare of my son who was entering his first year of college then. I had to show the kids that Mama wasn't going to back off and he said why don't you go get an education. I knew I was going to fall flat on my face. As it turned out I didn't totally although I was sitting at Montgomery College, I'll never forget. I had gone to American U., spoke to someone there. They gave me a stack of books to read and said come back in two months, I'll see if you're college material. So I went back two months later. Most of the books I had already read because I was teaching myself English at the library and apparently I had chosen good material, Classics. So the person felt that yes I was college material and they'd be glad to enrol me, except being that my kid already started college for me to go to a private college...So I found out that Montgomery College existed. So I went to Montgomery College and they let me in as a Special student. I had to get a "C" or better. I got A+ on my first paper. I described the beach that's right out my window here in the fall. It's gorgeous in the fall. But anyway I got an A+. I didn't know an adjective from an adverb and when they start discussing grammar I was totally lost because I had basically just photographed in my mind structure and paragraphs. So I wrote well but I didn't know why. I read and I understood but I had never really learned the grammar. So there we were in class and the teacher asked some things and I didn't know and I raised my hand to ask questions. There I was this old mature woman with nineteen year olds and I'll never forget this little frog came out of my mouth. I just (croaking sound). I could barely speak. I was so embarrassed. I kept quiet after a while. I said to myself, what am I doing here, am I crazy, who needs this. And I vowed that I wasn't going to come back again but being who I am, I did go back, went to the teacher and said, look this is my story, I don't know grammar. She said, no, I can't believe that, not the way you write. I said, I'm telling you, I don't understand what you're talking about. She gave me her lunch hour, very nice. I spent several weeks with her during her lunch hour. She helped me understand grammar, gave me a couple of good grammar books to study, which I studied on my own. And the rest is history. From there I went on. I was offered a scholarship to Maryland. It was supposed to be on need so at the last minute someone else got it because Thank God, I didn't have the need. Went to Maryland, graduated magna cum laude. Did not intend to become a teacher but one of my

teacher's said, well what are you going to do with your education? I said well nothing because I was working with my husband at the time. I said I just wanted an education. I told her the story. She said, " have you ever considered.....? There are two things you'd be good at, public relations and teaching. Have you ever considered?" I said, " Well no, not really, I just want an education." She said, "you never know in life, Flora, what would it hurt? Why don't you get a degree in teaching?" So I said, " well, what do I have to do?" because at that point I had started English Lit and then I majored in French literature and civilization. I said, " what do I have to do?" She told me what I had to do and I said, "oh it's no big deal." I went, took those courses with Dr. Lorenzo, I'll never forget it, and graduated with my BA, with a certificate to teach. We were going on vacation. I went out shopping. Finally, I had time to go shopping for some clothes. I come home. The phone rings. My husband's on the phone. He says, "are you standing or sitting down." I said, "who died, who's sick?" He said, " does somebody always have to die or be sick?" I said, "well, what is the matter." He says, "do me a favor, sit down, I have something to tell you." I sit down. He says, "I just got a call from Maryland." I said, "yes, is something wrong with my transcript, with my diploma, because it was just before the actual graduation ceremony." He says, "no, they want to know if you want to come teach and go to graduate school. They're also willing to waive the GREs." I said, "what are the GREs?" So they waived the GREs and I was invited to be an assistant. I said "what shall I do, Jack?" because he really didn't enjoy my going to school but he was supportive. Because I was up typing at night and every time he wanted to go out with friends I had to say well, Jack, I have no time, blah, blah, blah. Well, anyway to make a long story short he said, well you have no choice. I had already taken a job as a tri-lingual tour guide. But anyway, I turned down the other job. He felt that I had no choice, I had to do it. I said, what about you? He said, I'll survive it. And he's really been my best friend and supporter. So I went to Graduate School, got my Master's, finished, taught. You said about Baltimore. They offered me a job in Baltimore because the French Department had gone downhill and they thought I could build it up again. And I had accepted it but Jack started complaining. What are you going to do in the wintertime? You going to drive to Baltimore in the snow and everything. And he nudged me. He said, it's not like you have to feed ten kids anymore and all. He nudged me so much that I finally called the dean and let him know. He understood. He was sorry. He understood. And then I went to visit my Mom who was at the time in Florida. I get a phone call in Florida. Flora, there's a job open in Montgomery County. They need a French teacher, how would you like it? I said, what level. He said, high school. I said, you're crazy, me teach.....at that point I was a big shot, I taught at college, why should I go teach high.....me teach high school, you're crazy. Well, he says, you know, you might want to try it, you haven't tried that yet. So I came home, wrote resumes to several.....and I went to Einstein High School and I liked the idea of having kids and knowing their names because in college, one semester and they're out. And the rest is history. I've been with Montgomery County ever since. Then I went back for a year to Maryland. I was under the sponsorship of Montgomery County and the university. Taught for a year in the Honors Department, not French. It was called a Learning Community. But I had my own agenda. I was able to incorporate the Holocaust and all that because I taught Victor Frankel, "Search for Meaning," "Nature of Man," "People in Society." I had a ball. It was fantastic.

Very interesting.

Really. It was really great, yeah.

Well I'm glad you could participate.

Good. This is good stuff.

All right, thanks.