

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Ninetta Feldman
September 14, 2010
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PREFACE

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NINETTA FELDMAN
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Question: Good morning.

Answer: Good morning, **Joan**.

Q: It's really lovely to see you.

A: Thank you. Lovely to see you.

Q: Thank you. What was your name – what is your name now?

A: My name is **Ninetta Feldman**.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: My name at birth was **Ninetta**. I was actually named after my grandmother, which was the tradition in **Greece**, to have the daughter of – the first daughter to be named after the mother of the father. So my grandmother's name was **Sarah**, so I became **Sarah**, **Serena**, **Nina**, **Ninetta**. So I ended up with **Ninetta**. I had many first cousins with name was **Nina**, they also were named after my grandmother **Sarah**, but they used the **Nina**. I-
It –

Q: Was her name **Nina** also?

A: No, her – my grandmother's name was **Sarah**, **Sarah**, but the – the granddaughters were named either **Nina** or – **Nina**, for the most part. I was an exception.

Q: You were **Ninetta**.

A: **Ninetta**.

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Q: And your last name?

A: My n – my last name, maiden name is **Matza**.

Q: Now, th – when it's a male, it's **Matsas**, is that correct?

A: **Matsas**, right. And if it's a female is **Matza**, which really means you are the daughter of **Matsas**. In – in **Greece**, you're either the daughter of someone, or the wife of someone. So it's the – you – you decline the – the – the name, **Matsas**, of **Matza** – of **Matsas**, which becomes **Matsas**, the generative – you decline the name. And so my name, maiden name is **Matza**, not **Matsas**.

Q: Right. Now, wh-wh-when one is named after the – your grandmother –

A: I'm sorry?

Q: **Sarah** – when you were named after your grandmother –

A: Yes.

Q: – was she still alive?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So this is different than in the **Ashkenazi** tradition isn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: That you can be named in the Sephardic tradition with someone who's alive.

A: That's right. I think the Greek Jews adopted this tradition from the Christians because the Christian Greeks also name their children after the grandparents, regardless whether they're living or not, and so the first son is named after the father of the father, after the

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grandfather. The father of the father. The second son will be named after the father of the mother.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: The – if there's a daughter, the first daughter will be named after the mother of the father, and the second daughter after the mother of the – the f – the mother, after the mother of the mother. So it creates a lot of confusion, because there are so many people with the same first name and surname.

Q: Right, right. And what – when were you born?

A: I was born March 21st, 1938.

Q: Right, so you were a very young child at the time.

A: Very young, yes.

Q: Now was – y-you have a brother, **Michael**.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Was he named after –

A: After my grandfather **Nahoum**.

Q: Right.

A: Now, to have a name like **Nahoum** in **Greece** does not make a child very comfortable, because it's very unusual. So he was – he grew up known by that – his nickname, **Mykas**(ph), his friends called him **Mykas**(ph), but his official name is **Nahoum**. And

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then when he came to the **United States**, he changed his name further, from – **Mykas**(ph) became **Michael**.

Q: Right.

A: But his birth name is **Nahoum**, after my grandfather.

Q: And his – and his middle name now, is **Nahoum**.

A: Right, right, he retained the name, but became his middle name, yes.

Q: Now, since you were so young at the time, do you think you can distinguish between what your earliest memories are, and what you were told happened, or is that difficult?

A: That's a very, very good question, I often sort of struggle with it, trying to determine whether my recollection is a firsthand experience, or it's a reconstruction of what I heard from – so many times from my parents and my brother. There are certain scenes that I know for sure; I'm talking about the earliest recollections, when I was perhaps three years old. There's certain scenes that I – I know, I remember very vividly. And I know these are firsthand recollections.

Q: So perhaps when we speak, you can make a distinction between what you know, or your f –

A: Yes.

Q: – your own memories, and what you're not sure about –

A: Yes.

Q: – and what you were told.

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A: Yes.

Q: Maybe we can do tho – all – all of those three things.

A: Yes, yes, I can do that.

Q: So what – what is – what are your earliest memories?

A: My earliest memory is when I was three years old, and I was a – in 1941 –

Q: Right.

A: – there was a time when my father was drafted to the army, and we decided, the whole family decided to move to **Ioannina**. He was supposed to report in **Ioannina**. That's where his company was going to assemble, and march north towards the Greek-Albanian border. And we decided it would be better for all of us to move to **Ioannina**, since we had so many relatives there. And so we – we lived at my aunt's house, my mother's sister's house. And there we were surrounded by – by so many close relatives, all our entire family was there; grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. And I have this image of a very long table in my grandmother's house, where all the grandchildren were assembled, and my grandmother serving **rizogalo**. **Rizogalo** is rice pudding, and I had to have this very vivid scene in my mind of my grandmother and all the children gathered around the table. That's my earliest recollection.

Q: Do you remember moving to **Ioannina**, or – or you don't remember that?

A: The actual move, the transportation?

Q: Right, yes.

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A: Not really, don't have recollection of that.

Q: Right.

A: I just know I found myself in –

Q: In **Ioannina**.

A: In **Ioannina**, right.

Q: With the family.

A: Right.

Q: Have you, with your brother or with your mother and father after the war, do you re –
do you remember saying this about that scene and saying – do you remember that, or not?

A: Do I remember saying, or describing this to them?

Q: Yes, to – to them, an-and –

A: I – I probably did, because it is a very fond memory. It was – it was probably the last
time that I remember seeing my grandmother.

Q: I see.

A: Yes.

Q: Was she – was she deported?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh, she was?

A: Yes.

Q: From **Ioannina**.

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A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: The other vivid – vivid scene that I have is rushing to the shelter from my aunt's house. There was a f – an old fortress in **Ioannina**, which perhaps, I don't know exactly when it was built, perhaps Middle Ages, but then it was reinforced during the Turkish occupation, and it was a very thick wall, and it was used for shelter, and it was a very short distance from my aunt's house to the shelter. So I remember being in this dark place, and I remember that it was something dangerous that was going on, but we were safe in this dark place. Th-Th-This was the time when Italian airplanes would fly over that **Epirus**. This is the province in **Greece** where **Ioannina** is the capital.

Q: Right.

A: And there was a fear of bombing of the city and so we would go into the shelter. So I remember that scene of this dark place, and a lot of people crowded down there for safety. Tha-That's a first – I can say very clearly, this was a first re-recollection, first hand recollection.

Q: And do you remember being held by your mother, or your father? I mean, do you have a rec –

A: Yes. I – I – not – not my father, because my father was already drafted, but my mother, for – for me, my mother was my – my security blanket. I thought that as long as

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she was with me, nothing bad was – would happen. A-And I always, I – throughout the war period, I had that feeling, that as long as she is with me –

Q: That it's okay.

A: – I'm gonna be safe.

Q: Now, did you a – do you remember feeling frightened, or being told that th – it was dangerous? I mean, do you remember what she told you?

A: During this particular period, or later on?

Q: No, this – in this – in this period.

A: This is – yes –

Q: Cause this is when the Italians take over.

A: Yes.

Q: So the Germans are not there yet.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: Not really. I just remember that it was day – it was dangerous to be outside this – this fortress. Once you were there, you were safe, and – and it was – I didn't have a sense of fear, real fear, it was – I don't remember what the – my feelings. I knew that as long as mother was near me, I was okay.

Q: You were okay.

A: Yes.

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Q: Right.

A: It was – it was [**indecipherable**] there, when my brother, of course was probably 11 years at the time, he was –

Q: Do you remember your brother at the time?

A: Was another early recollection that I have. This is – this is in 1941 - '42, when there were tremendous food shortages in – in **Greece**, and I remember, you know, my – my parents had to go to the nearby villages surrounding **Agrinion**, such as **Moustafree**(ph) was one of the – one of the villages, and **Verkini**(ph) was another one, where they would go to buy food supplies. So my mother would absent herself for long periods of time, and my brother, who was 11 - 12 years old, was very concerned that when – that when I woke up in the morning and I opened my eyes and I realized Mother wasn't there, I would start to cry. So I remember him with his spoonful of fruit preserves, is like st – not strawberry, preserves like some other kinds of fruit, waiting for me to open my eyes and put this teaspoon full of – of jam, so that I wouldn't cry. I remember that very vividly. And we have a thing, I remember where my brother was making dolls for me, massive production. They were very simple little dolls with sticks and you know, painted faces, but he would do that to amuse me, and I remember that, too.

Q: That's very sweet.

A: Yeah, he was very sweet, very attentive, and very loving.

Q: Well, you – I'm – I'm suspecting that you were told how long you stayed in **Ioannina**.

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A: Yes, we – we stayed in **Ioannina** from the time my father was drafted, which was – he – he was supposed to report to his company April 1st, 1940 – 1941, until the Italians surrendered, which was the end of April, and we – my father was actually among the last soldiers to return from the front. He never saw battle, because as soon as he reached the front, negotiations started, **Germany** came to the aid of **Italy**, and negotiations started for a peace treaty. So he never saw battle, but he was – he was untrained. He was – he – this was the second time he was drafted. The first time was when he was 21 years old. Now, he was 35 - 37 years old, he was overweight. He was not trained the first time, he had an office job. And certainly not trained the second time. So he didn't really know how to use a rifle – basic, he never had basic training. And so he was forever not – he was not able to keep up with the others – Greek soldiers. He was separated from his company several times. He had to deal with a mule that was not very cooperative. So, going to the front and returning, he was – was a struggle for him. So he was among the last soldiers to return, and so my – I – I heard my mother and brother saying how they would go out to the main street every morning, every day, waiting for my father to show up. It was a very anxious time for them. So, after he returned, we – we, the whole family returned to **Agrinion**. This is – this is the time when German and Italian troops began pouring into the – the country. A-And Germans actually first came to – to **Ioannina**, but then later on, as we will discuss, later on the – the – the – the occupation zones were determined and the Germans occupied the northern part of **Greece**, and the Bulgarians another section.

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Q: Yes, the ri –

A: Small section –

Q: Small section of the north, yes.

A: – in the north, while the rest of the country was i – occupied by the Italians, with the exception of half – half of **Crete** and some major islands in the **Aegean**. So – so we – we returned to – to **Agrinion** after my father was discharged.

Q: But you were born not in **Agrinion**, right? You were bo –

A: I was –

Q: – you were born in **Arta**.

A: **Arta**. **Arta** is a small city near **Ioannina**, because my father was transferred to – he had several transfers. First he was transferred to **Arta** and then – then to **Preveza**, and from **Preveza** to **Agrinion**. So when we came to **Agrinion**, I was two years old, but I – I was born in **Arta**. And I often think of how chance events determined, at that time at least, your – whether you were going to live or die, because had my father not been transferred to **Agrinion**, if he had stayed in **Ioannina**, or **Arta**, or **Preveza**, the chances of our survival would have been very ni – much diminished.

Q: Right.

A: So this – this chance events determine –

Q: What happened.

A: – what happened.

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Q: Now, he was working in bank, is that correct?

A: Yes, he was working for the National Bank of **Greece**, yes. He started his career in – in – in **Ioannina**. His father was in the milk and wine business.

Q: Milk and wine?

A: Yes, yes, dairy products. He made yogurt and cheese, and wine. And several of his sons worked in the business. And my father actually, when he became – finished high school, he thought of going into the same business, but on a more sophisticated level, so he decided to go to **Athens** and study in the school of agriculture in **Athens**, of the production of dairy products. But unfortunately the – the war caused the – the university to close, and he abandoned those studies, and he passed the entrance exam for the National Bank of **Greece**, which was a – a rather prestigious job for **Greece**. So he – this is – he started his career as a bank employee in – in **Ioannina**.

Q: When did your parents marry? Do you know?

A: Ah, they married – I should know that, right? See – my – 19 – 1927, I believe. Yeah, I believe it was, yes. My mother was 21 years old, my father 26, so –

Q: Right.

A: – it was '27, '28, perhaps.

Q: Right.

A: Maybe '29, I'm not sure.

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Q: But eight or nine years before you were born. Something like that. And then your brother obviously was born first.

A: Yes, yes, right, right.

Q: And your mother didn't work, she was i-i-in the house.

A: No, my –

Q: I shouldn't say she didn't work, I mean she managed [**indecipherable**]

A: Sh – my mother, no, she did not have a job, she – she was a housewife, like most Greek women of that middle class were. But she was a very – very dynamic person, and she took great pride in the fact that, growing up in **Albania** – because my mother was born in **Albania** – her parents moved to **Albania** from **Ioannina**, because there were better economic opportunities there. And she took great pride in the fact that she was – she worked in my father's fabric store, and she loved dealing with – with – with the customers, and they liked her. The customers liked her. And my grandfather would always say, oh **Esther** – that's my mother's name – **Esther** is my right hand. So she was a business minded woman, but she never, during that period, didn't have the opportunity to – or it was – it was unusual for women to – to go into business at that time. As my – my father was born in **Ioannina**, and he attended the – a school that's called **Alliance Israélite Universelle**. These were schools that were established by the **Rothschild** family, th-the – the branch of **France**, to raise the educational level of the Jews of that area. So there were several of these schools established, and they were really excellent

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schools, where the children were taught Hebrew, French and Greek. And when you – when you were graduated from this school, I think it ended up to the – went up to the sixth or seventh grade, you really had mastered French, because all the subjects were taught in French, including history. Then, of course, Hebrew; the biblical Hebrew, and some modern, conversational Hebrew, and of course, Greek. And then my father went to the Greek high school, and he was fluent in – in Greek, of course. And [indecipherable] my mother, she grew up in **Albania** where the, I think at the time, the illiteracy level was very, very high. But her – her brother was well educated. He had gone to a private school since he studied in **Italy** as well. And education was very important, so they send them to a private school in **Albania**, in **Delvina**. But unfortunately there were some anti-Semitic comments made that made my mother and her sister **Eftyhia** very uncomfortable. And so their parents send them to **Corfu**. In **Corfu** there was a school run by French nuns, and it was an excellent – it was a boarding school, only the rich girls could go there, it was a girls' school. And there she studied French. She was a very smart woman, and she entered the school know – not knowing a word of French, and within two years she b – she became fluent. So that was her education, took place in – in **Corfu**. So –

Q: When you were a small child, when you moved to **Agrinion**, you're three years old then?

A: At **Agrinion** was, when we first moved I was two years old, yes.

Q: Two.

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A: Two.

Q: So that was 1940.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Does your – does your mother and father school you at all? I mean, clearly schools are going to be cl – I assume schools are closed, or you're too young to go to school at that point.

A: In **Agrinion**?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, I was too young to go to school. No, I – my – my f – my brother was in high school at the time, but I was –

Q: So he – he was going to school?

A: Yes, he was going to school.

Q: So when the Italians occupied, the schools kept going; they didn't close down the schools?

A: They had to close my brother's high school, because it was used as a hospital, along with a tobacco warehouse [indecipherable] tobacco warehouse. **Agrinion** is a – a great producer of tobacco, so there were a lot of tobacco warehouses in the city. So my brother's high school closed because it was converted into a hospital and there were – and **Agrinion** is in the main artery connecting **Athens** with **Ioannina** and the front, the Greek-Albanian front, so there were – so the soldiers, the wounded soldiers from the

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conflict with the – the Italians were brought – were passed through **Agrinion**, and so they – they had to close the high school because it was converted into a hospital.

Q: Your father was working in the bank –

A: Yes.

Q: – in **Agrinion**.

A: Yes.

Q: And he didn't work that way through the entire war, I gather, because at a certain point, when the Germans take over –

A: Yes.

Q: – from the Italians –

A: Right. This is the – the time my – my father worked at the bank until September – oh no, I'm sorry, October – October, 1943. This is the time when we had to leave the city.

Q: Do you remember that, that you had to leave?

A: Yes, yes, I – by then I was already five years old, and I do remember quite vividly our departure from –

Q: What was that like?

A: Well, what happened, this is the time when **Italy** withdrew from the – surrendered, withdrew from the war, and the – the Germans moved into the areas that were controlled by the Italians, so – so I remember – I remember seeing German soldiers in the streets. I remember the way they looked, the way they're dressed in their starched uniforms and

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the – the – their cap was pushed down, and I remember that very vividly. Remember sole – German soldiers in the streets. So, this is the time when **Yonas Mionis**, who was a resident of **Agrinion**, and was a – he was a teacher, and he was a member of the Greek resistance, a leading member of the Greek res-resistance, he came to and met my father and told him that – that the Jews of **Athens** had gone into hiding, and that the Jewish families of **Agrinion** have de-decided to leave the city. And so this – this is when I – I remember – I remember when my father, we – I remember this scene also, this is a firsthand experience, I remember –

Q: Can you hold onto that?

A: Sure.

Q: Cause we have to change the tapes –

A: Sure.

Q: – we can start with that.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape One

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Beginning Tape Two

Q: We've come to a scene that you remember quite vividly, as a – as a memory of your – of your own, with your f – your father in **Agrinion**, and when a Mr. **Mionis** –

A: Yes.

Q: – comes – ha-has already spoken to your fa –

A: Has already spoken to my father, yes, and it's actually Friday night, and my f – we – we were – my mother – remember, my mother, my brother and I are sitting on the balcony, waiting for my father to come home from work. And w-we saw him and we – and I remember my mother commenting that he looked very downcast, you know, his head was sort of down and his shoulders bent over, and she said, something is wrong, something's wrong. And so my father comes in, and he takes us all inside, and he said, I just spoke with **Yonas Mionis** and he told us that the Jews of **Athens** have gone into hiding and that all the Jewish families in **Agrinion**, they're considering – no-not everybody had decided yet, but they're considering leaving the city. A-And so I remember that.

Q: And you remember that conversation.

A: That – that –

Q: Sort of.

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A: – the v – not in such great detail, but that – that – that th-the Jews of **Athens** have gone into hiding, I remember that. Now, the rest of it is very hard to tell, whether it's firsthand experience or not.

Q: Right, right.

A: Well, of course, you know, later on, as adults, we found out why the Jews of **Athens** had gone into hiding. The reason was, you know, when the Germans occupied **Athens**, they asked the chief rabbi of **Athens**, **Barzilai**, to supply them with names and addresses of all the families – of the Jewish families of **Athens**, and they gave him three days to do that. And it's not very clear exactly what happened, but the Greek resistance that had gone – grown pretty strong by then in – in the cities, and they decided to – to help the rabbi leave the city, sort of almost abduction, and **Baruch Shidis**(ph), we learned later on was a Jewish journalist, he was instrumental in arranging for this, the removal of the rabbi from the city, so to prevent him from providing the lists, and also give a message to the Jews of **Athens** that they're in danger. Because as soon as he – the word got around that he was – he ha – had left the city with his wife and daughter, they took him to the mainland, to the mountains in central **Greece**. Then the Jews of **Athens** either left the city, went into the mountains, or hid in the – within the city. So the word got around that the Jews of **Athens** had gone into hiding, and that was the message that **Yonas** brought from a merchant that had just returned from **Athens**; he had the information.

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Q: Do you remember feeling the fear in your parents? Do – do – would you remember that part of it, or –

A: My mother was a very emotional person, very excitable, unlike my father, who was a very calm person, and he – h-he – so my mother was – were very emotional an-and I could sense that it was something wrong, something bad was about to happen. But – but my father always tried to as – reassure us that everything was – he's a ver – perpetual optimist. Everything is going to work out fine. And they – they had a very nice – very different personalities, but they complimented each other, and in our situation during the war, it turned out that their traits and personality were very, very useful to have.

Q: As a ch – for a child, yes.

A: Yes.

Q: So, was the decision then made to move to the small village outside of **Agrinion**?

A: The – the decision was made that we have to move, we have to leave the city. Where we were going to go, there was a question mark. My parents immediately started distributing our possessions to neighbors. And we had amassed a lot of food from the villages during this period. People in – in **Athens** were starving to death, but we had plenty of food, because we had brought a lot of food from these surrounding villages, and they were stored in the house. So, we get some of the food to neighbors, and – and also the bank, the National Bank of **Greece**, they had a special room where they had stored food for the employees. And they stored our – some of our food supplies also there. We –

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we moved our furniture into one room. We – we occupied the upper floor of a two story house, and we moved the furniture in one room, and we distributed our other clothing and other household items to neighbors. But we really didn't know where we were going to go. That had not been decided yet. All we knew was that we have to leave the city.

Q: Right. Now, do you remember all of this movement in the – in the house?

A: Not firsthand.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: No, I don't remember that. But I should say something that I remember very vividly, that really goes back in my story, maybe.

Q: Oh, that's funny, yes.

A: This is before the – the Italian surrender. There was a – an Italian officer, or soldier, I don't know his rank, who lived downstairs, the lower part of our house, and he liked me. And I have a picture of him with me, and he, one day sort of disappeared. We didn't know where he went, and when he came back, he brought me a beautiful doll. It was the most beautiful doll I ever owned in my life. I don't know where it is now, if it – I – I – it was misplaced, I lost it. But it was the most beautiful doll. And it was sort of a – I never questioned at that time, you know, why he brought me the doll, because I didn't know that he was the enemy, he was the occupying force – represented the occupying force. But it was a very – have a very nice, fond memory of that – of that man.

Q: But he was living on the fir – in the first floor.

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A: Y-Yes, yes.

Q: But you weren't afraid of him, were you?

A: No, no. The ital – we were not afraid of the Italians. The Italians were not – they did not list – create any fear in us. Although, in 1942, the Italian authorities requested that all the Jewish families register with them. But we never thought that anything bad was going to happen. And so – and so my father later on, he tried to explain to me why this Italian officer, soldier, brought me a doll, and he said maybe you remind him of his daughter, maybe he wants to show that underneath his uniform, he is really a human being. And you know, my parents, they both spoke Italian. At some point in their lives, they learned Italian in their youth. **Albania** was occupied by **Italy** for a period of time, and then – my father was always interested in languages, the si – he managed to learn Italian and – and they knew Italian songs, which they used to sing. And I always grew up with a love for Italians, Italian culture. I – I-I never felt afraid of Italians. And – and the house that we moved in after the war had a beautiful garden, and it was a garden that was made by the Italian soldiers. Wherever they had – they went, they tried to – to create something beautiful.

Q: So for you, as a child, was – there's a real difference when the Germans – when you see a German soldier.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And you – you must have felt something different –

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A: Yes, yes.

Q: – when – when they occupied.

A: Yes, the – the German soldiers are – are – cause I ha – I saw them in the streets. They were – they were real – they elicited a sense of fear and just – and we were advised by our mother to avoid looking at them, or interacting with them, and – but there was a difference, yes.

Q: So, but – but you were also told –

A: Yes.

Q: – to be different with them.

A: Yes.

Q: So it must have all – so – elicited this is – must be menacing in some – and you weren't told that about the Italians.

A: Right. Yes, we were not –

Q: So it's hard to know what the – what you're sensing, and what you're being told to sense.

A: Yes, right, that's true.

Q: Yes, it's hard.

A: Yes. So we – we didn't know where to go – coming back to the story. And at that time there were two resistance movement in **Greece**. One was based in the countryside in **Epirus**, near **Ioannina**, the outskirts of **Ioannina**. **EDES** was headed by **Napoleon**

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Zervas, and they were known as the – but, at that time, the country was polarized between the – the nationalists, the right wing people, and the leftists. And so the resistance movements were also polarized. You have **EDES**, headed by **Napoleon Zervas** in **Epirus**, and then **EAM-ELAS**, much larger, very well organized resistance movement in the countryside of **Greece**, but also within the cities of – of **Greece**. And so we had neighbors, friends, who advised us to go to **EDES**, and other friends who advised us to go to a territory controlled by **EAM-ELAS**. So we had some very close family friends, the **Bokoros** family; there were three brothers and two sisters, actually three sisters. There was **Christos** and **Thermas(ph) Bokoros**, and we knew them, we became fam – we became family friends because their sister **Elestair(ph)** was married to a man who was a colleague of my father's in – in the bank. I think we met – they met them either in **Preveza** or **Arta**, I don't know. And unfortunately her husband, **Elestair's** husband died, and the whole family moved to **Agrinion** and they lived – and so she and her children lived with her brothers, **Christos** and **Thermas(ph)** and **Kostas Bokoros**. So, we decided to ask them for help, and they were wonderful people, they did everything they could to assure us that we'll find you a place, we'll get you out of the city. And so after we distributed our belongings to the neighbors, my mother, my brother and I, we – we sent some of the material, clothing and food and household utensils, with a porter to transport these things to the **Bokoros'** house, and then we, the three of us, my mother, my brother and I followed behind. My father went to work that day, he had to – they received

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a very large amount of money, and he was replacing the – the cashier, so he had to go there and to count the money. And so we reached the **Bokoro – Bokoros'** house, and a few minutes later – I remember this very vividly, I know this is a firsthand recollection. I remember a German bursting into the house and – and then my mother, you know, she saw this – she saw him, and she quickly pushed him in – pushed me into the adjacent room and she quickly pulled the covers off the bed, and pretended to calmly make the bed, as though she belonged there. She's a very quick thinker, sh – amazing person. So th-the – the German sort of looked around. I don't – we don't know what – who he was looking for, and then he left. But it was a very frightening experience for – for – for all – for my mother and – and my brother. I don't remember where my brother was at this point. All I remember was my mother making the bed at this point. And she asked **Christos**, one of the **Bokoros** brothers to quickly go to the bank and tell my father to – to drop everything and come to the house, we had to leave immediately. So **Christos** goes to the bank, and told my father that – does he have – even though you haven't finished counting the money, you have to drop everything and leave. An-And certainly the people in the bank were very cooperative. They signed everything as though they had cou – as the mon – as though the money had been counted and everything, or the transaction was very orderly. And so my father comes to the **Bokoros** house. And then, where there's another problem they confront is the lack of transportation. The Germans had requisitioned all means of transportation; trucks, taxis, mules, horses. And so the brothers

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couldn't find a way for us to leave that day, which was October second. And so we spent the night in their house, and the following day they came with a taxi. They found a taxi that was going to **Kremasta**. This was a spa near the river **Acheloos** river, nearby. Was so-some distance, few kilometers outside **Agrinion**. And he had – the taxi driver had other passengers to transport to the – the the **Acheloos** spa. And so this is we – we got in the taxi with some blankets, and you know, some household ma – equipment, materials that we brought with us, and so we left the city. I remember that, I remember how my mother said we should crouch into the – the taxi, not to draw attention to ourselves, because people did not use taxis then to – to – to move around, we didn't want to – to draw attention to ourselves. And then as soon as we – we came to the outskirts of the city of **Agrinion**, we had to pass through a German checkpoint. And the driver, who apparently did this route quite often, he knew how to deal with the German guards there, and he gave them some raisins and cigarettes, and they let us pass. And then –

Q: Without checking you.

A: Without checking, yes. It was – was actually, you know, we – we learned much later that at that point, it was easy to go in and out of the cities, th-they were not checking. But then – a-and then a few kilometers later, we encountered another checkpoint that was not German, those were the resistance fighters. These were the **EAM-ELAS** members. And then, you know, we reassured that we were in safe ground.

Q: Was your brother a member of **ELAS**?

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A: No, my brother –

Q: Because it was –

A: – was very young then, he was 13. He wished he were. That was the dream of his life, he – to this – to this day, he wished he had had – had had the opportunity to b – to be a member of **ELAS**. There was a – a youth division of the resistance called **EPON, e-p-o-n**.

Q: Right.

A: And they were – these were mostly young men and women. They were 15 - 16 years old. They were – they were doing very valuable services, carrying out very valuable services for the resistance. They were used as runners, to – to carry messages for communication purposes. They would paint slogans in the cities at night, to lift up the spirits of the citizens. And then in the villages, where people didn't have radios, they would call out or read the news of the day, using a megaphone, like it was taken probably from gramophones, and – like a bullhorn, carry – you know, shouting the news, or if – if there was th – if the s – the village had to be evacuated, they would – they would carry out this service, very valuable. But no, my – my brother never had the opportunity.

Q: When you were in this taxi, did – did you feel the tension? Do you remember feeling a lot of tension, or not?

A: No, for me it was wonderful, because riding in a taxi was a unique experience. People did not ride buses and taxis in – in –

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Q: Right.

A: – in the city where I grew up. And being in moving vehicle, no matter what it was, whether it was a **Jeep** or a bus or a taxi, didn't matter, it was a thrilling experience. And so I remember it was – it was a wonderful feeling that I had being in the taxi. And then the anticipation of going up to the mountains, these are mountains that I could see from the city, the – you could see them from the city, and I always wanted to go there.

Q: So for you was an adventure –

A: Yes.

Q: – in a way.

A: Yes, yes, an adventure.

Q: And for your parents, it's not quite an adventure, right?

A: No, it's a difference –

Q: Or if it's an adv – a different kind of adventure, yes.

A: Right, right, right. It was a – actually a very beautiful ride, up to a certain point, the – the road was paved, and so we were able to go as far as the village of **Houni**, and – and there, this is as far as the taxi could go. And this is another thing that I remember, and it's a firsthand recollection, this very beautiful fountain that consisted of heads made out of kind of – some kind of ceramic material, and the water was spouting out of these heads. I don't know, maybe there were seven or eight heads in a row. And e – thou – that – this was a fountain that was also built by Italians. But this is as far as the taxi went, then he

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had – he – he transported his passengers to the – the spa. And at that point, the driver, the taxi driver found a – a mule driver to transport us to a village. Now, I don't know who made the decision that **Psilovrahos** was the village where we should be taken. I don't know whether it was the taxi driver recommended it, or – or the mule driver thought that this would be – but he – but the – the information that was conveyed to the mule driver was that it had to be a place that was off the beaten track, a remote village, and so the mule driver brought two mules and a donkey to transport us to the – the village.

Q: So you don't think that your parents, before you left **Agrinion** were quite sure where they were gonna go?

A: I – I –

Q: They knew the direction, but not necessarily where.

A: I really don't know, I don't even know whether the **Bokoros** brothers had told the taxi driver th-th-this is the final destination. I – I – I'm not clear on that.

Q: Right, right.

A: Yes.

Q: So you get out of the taxi with the few things that you're carrying.

A: Right.

Q: And you get on a donkey, or a mu – or a mule?

A: Not exactly.

Q: No? Do you walk? What happens?

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A: My – the mule driver and my father, they load all our belongings onto these mules. And we carry these rugs, they're used as blankets, they're called **flokati**. **Flokati**. It's tufted blanket. Very heavy. Very heavy. I think the **United States**, they use it as a rug, a very elegant rug by the fireplace, but it – it has these tufts, very long ones. And it's made of wool, very heavy, and so they load all our belongings on these two mules, and they cover the mule with this tufted blankets, and they create sort of like a nest for me. And they lifted me up and they place me on the mule in this – in this little nest that they created. And then my mother was riding the other mule, and my brother rode the donkey for a little while, and my father on foot. So that was the scene. And there we are, following this path that is – it's a – it's a path that only animals and people can walk on. It's very rocky, I remember. And I remember a very – the rhythmic sound of a creek that was flowing along this path. That I remember. This is probably why I love mountains, because of – of my experience in the mountains during this period of my life. I don't like the sea very much, but I love the mountains, yes.

Q: Why don't we stop there –

A: Sure.

Q: – and change the tape, okay.

End of Tape Two

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Beginning Tape Three

Q: When – when we closed the tape the last time, you were talking about being put in that nest, an-and being taken by the – you were on the donkey. So – oh –

A: I was – I was on the mule.

Q: – was on the mule, you were on the mule.

A: My brother was on a donkey.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And you think that – that this experience was beautiful to you, so that you're very attracted to mountains and not the sea, yes?

A: Yes, yes, very much so.

Q: Did you fall asleep?

A: On the mule?

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh no.

Q: No.

A: No, no, I was wide awake and I – I just – I have this very vivid image of this trip up to **Psilovrahos**. It's very vivid in my mind; the sounds, the smells.

Q: So what sort of sounds did you hear?

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A: Oh, well, first of all, the creek that was flowing along the path. The sounds – th-the sounds that I remember the most are when we were approaching the village, there were sounds of sheep braying, goats, the – the bells of – of the goats. They – goats always had bells so the villagers can locate them, you know, if they strayed away. And roosters crowing. Those are the sou – th-the – the – the sounds of the village.

Q: Did the mule also make sounds? The mule, and the donkeys, did they bray?

A: Yeah, de-definitely the donkeys. The donkeys do, definitely very loud, very characteristic loud sound they make. And I remember my mother turning around and telling my father, when we were approaching the village, we didn't get tired **Leon**, did we? She was sitting on the mule and my poor father was perspiring and – and really having a hard time climbing the – this – this is a very steep mountain we were climbing, very steep.

Q: Right. So you're about five years old at this time?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So you're quite conscious of what's going –

A: Yes.

Q: – what's going on.

A: Yes, I am.

Q: Now, did you ex – when the villagers ca – di-did they come out to greet you? I mean, what – what happened when you came into this village?

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A: Well, when we came into the village, there were villagers that came out, because this is a very small, small village in a very remote location. Not many things happen in the course of a day, and th-they – they were curious to see who are these people who just arrived. We looked, obviously, city people, the way we were dressed, and so they were very curious to – to see what was going on.

Q: Did your parents say that you were Jewish, and that you were – you were escaping from the Germans, or were – didn't you – don't you – do you remember, do you know?

A: I don't know whether my parents told the villagers that we were Jewish, but it was known, it was known that we were Jewish. But we were trying not to act – you know, behave differently than – than the j – than the villagers. We were trying not to draw attention to ourselves, to the point that we even went to church, to give them the impression that, you know, we are like you, except that we don't make the sign of the cross. But my parents knew that – that as long as **EAM-ELAS** is in control of that region, we were safe from spies. Because even if a villager had – got in his mind the notion of betraying us, he would be afraid of retaliations by the – punishment by the resistance.

Q: Right, right.

A: So we tried to sort of keep a – a low profile and not look different or act different.

Q: Did you play with the kids?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You did?

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A: Yes, I –

Q: So this was good for you, this was nice.

A: Yes, it was – it was a wa – the village kids were – village kids all – all around us because – and – and it – became friends with them because my father enrolled me, after we settled down, enrolled me in the – the one room schoolhouse of the school. And I think it had maybe four classes, four second, third, fourth grades, but it was mostly the younger children that came to school. The older ones were taken away by their parents to help out with – with the – the farms, or to learn a trade. So the – the educational level of the villagers was very, very low. Was an extremely poor village, with few exceptions. There were a few rich families.

Q: Do you remember going to school?

A: Yes, I remember that very well.

Q: Oh, what was that like?

A: Well, I remember – first of all, the school was a – was just a plain building that had a few desks, where the – the desk and the seat were attached. I think they were desks like the ones that were used in colonial times in the **United States**. We had –

Q: Listen, I went to school and they had desks like that.

A: And they had them. Okay, so I should –

Q: This was a long time ago [indecipherable] to school –

A: Yes, yes, right, it was attached, yes.

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Q: Yes.

A: And you would sit like three children, one next to the – the other. And the – the teacher was Mr. **Alexandras**(ph) **Hemandritis**(ph). And I remember him very well, he was a very nice person. When my father brought me to the school the first day, they – you know, they didn't have books, they didn't have paper, it was – we – we had slates. You prob – I don't know if you used slates also?

Q: No, I didn't.

A: Slates.

Q: Slates.

A: You know what slates are?

Q: Yeah.

A: And he didn't have enough books for all the children, so he told my father that he wouldn't have a book for me, but – but my brother could – could make one, he would just copy one of the books that was used – that were used in the class. There was a fireplace for heat, and in fact, every day we had to bring a piece of wood, all the children had the piece – piece of wood for the – the fireplace. And I was rather uncomfortable at the beginning, because of two reasons. One was I looked different than the village children. I – you know, my mother fussed over me a lot, I had very pretty clothes, and a huge bow on my hair; that was the style, and curls like – my mother would say like **Shirley Temple**. And so I – I drew their attention from my appearance alone. The worst thing for

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me was that the day would start with the Lord's Prayer, **Pater Hemon**. And this is a Christian prayer, which after I analyzed it as an adult, you know, is very acceptable prayer, could say universal prayer. However, it had to be – was followed by the sign of the cross, and I did not make the sign of the cross. I – I did not know much about Jewish religion at that point. I knew that I was Jewish, I knew we celebrated Passover, and I knew that on Yom Kippur, we fasted. But other than that, I didn't know anything. However, I knew a lot about the Christian religion, because I was growing up in a Christian environment, and – and – and of course I knew about the – the accusation of the Jews being responsible for the crucifixion and –

Q: So you knew that at that age?

A: I knew that – I knew that – that – that there was something – not – not specifically. I did – perhaps it's – maybe I'm – I'm adding information that I acquired later on. But all I knew was that we did not make the sign of the cross, and so I did not. And I remember, you know, the children turning around and looking at me. I was not making the sign of the cross, and I didn't know what to do with my hands. I put them behind me, in my pockets. I just had no – I felt extremely uncomfortable. And – and then of course, during recess they – they asked me a lot of questions, you know, why didn't you make the sign of the cross? And I s – I did – just don't make it. A-And I didn't know how to answer the questions. I was not prepared for this and I guess my parents never thought of I was going to experience this, and – and didn't prepare me.

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Q: Did you go home and say, what am I supposed to do now? I mean –

A: Yes, when I went home after the first day, I told my mother that I wanted to have braids, because all the girls –

Q: Had braids.

A: – had braids. I didn't want to have curls. And she protested, she said, but they're so beautiful, like **Shirley Temple**. No braids, and no bow. I had a huge bow sitting on top of my head. These children had very little, very little. Many of these children were barefoot, or they wore pigskin sandals, made out of a piece of a pigskin, and you know, rope to – to tie it to their feet. And I had shiny shoes, and pretty clothes and a bow and curls. All of that had to go, I told my mother and sister, because I – children don't want to be different.

Q: Mm-hm. Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that was a – was that a difficult time for you in a certain way, or do –

A: It was uncomfortable, uncomfortable that I – I made friends easily and they accepted me no matter what I looked or how I acted. An-And I made friends, I – I – I – I never felt lonely, you know. There were times when I did, when I did, later on. And I used to go up in the – the fields, you know, my – our house was – our house was a very primitive looking house. It was really – consisted of one room with a fireplace and an [indecipherable] window, and a table and – and chairs. There were no beds. I mean,

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when we arrived, my parents had to immediately buy wood sawhorses and boards to make beds, two beds; one for my mother and me, and one for my father and my brother. And then of course, they had to purchase food supplies. This was the harvest time, this is October and there are dry figs and walnuts and corn, lentils, beans, dry beans and my parents immediately bought food supplies.

Q: A-And from whom did they buy it? They – they buy it from the farmers, or –

A: Yes. Th-There were two sources of – of sa – food supplies. One was we – my parents had, as I said earlier, they had stored a lot of food in the – the bank. And so they send a man with a horse to bring food supplies from – from ours – our supplies in storage in the bank. And the other food supplies were from the villagers. There were some that were very affluent and they would – would sell in large quantities. And so my parents stuffed a lot of stacks of these food supplies and arranged them up against the wall, and it formed sort of a sofa. And so we had a place to sit and we had the table and chairs and beds to sleep on. But that was all. There was no running water, no electricity, no bathroom. But my father was a very resource – resourceful person, he – he said just – just let's pretend we are living in primitive times, before electricity was invented, and we just have to – to learn from the villagers how they live, and we'll do the same.

Q: And how – do you know how they found this place to live?

A: The – the first place we lived in, you know, when we arrived, and there were villagers that approached to see what was going on, one of them stepped forward and said, oh, I

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have a room, and they – and they rented – we rented a room. The – one thing that my mother had brought, she insisted that we bring to the village was soap and sugar, because the – the Greek money had lost its value because of inflation that the Germans had printed a lot of money, and the ger – the Greek drachma had lost its value, so people conducted these transactions with goods, with bartering that was going on. So soap and sugar was a very desirable, important commodity, and we had brought a lot of that, yeah.

Q: Interesting that she thought of that.

A: Yeah, she was a very smart person, very smart.

Q: So you stayed in this first place for a little while?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Like wa – like a couple of weeks or something, or less than that?

A: Well, we stayed in – you see, after we – we – we purchased food, and we also – we got a goat. Now, I'm not sure whether we got a goat at this point, or later on, I'm not sure. But I remember that for me, getting a goat was the dream of my life. It was a goat of my own, and the – and it was really a – in order for us to have a source of milk. And the goat spent most of the time with the **Tsulamitsu**(ph) family, they were very nice, very hospitable, kind, generous people. And they spent the time there, they would milk the goat and bring the milk for us to drink. But we also, you know, I spent a lot of time with – with the goat, I – I really became very attached to her. So after we – we acquired all these food supplies, we felt very comfortable in the village. It felt like a vacation. I

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was going to school, my brother had brought his high school books, and my father said, you should start studying. And my father had brought a book of English method – how – a method to learn English without a teacher. I remember that book. My brother has it – still has it. And – and of course my mother didn't need any – any additional work. She really had to work very hard because there was – she had to do the laundry and the cooking and all the washing of the dishes, without – without a stove, without running water. It was a real hardship for her. And so we didn't felt comfortable at that point, and my father started writing letters to our rel-relatives in **Ioannina**, urging them to leave the city and – and go to the mountains. And we used friends t-to – to transport these letters from – from the village of **Psilovrahos** to a colleague of my father's, **Evyanea(ph)** **Papadapoulou(ph)** I believe was her name. And she would in turn send the letters to her sister or brother in **Ioannina**, and they would deliver them to our relatives. And everything was written in code, and we never used the word **Psilovrahos**, it was our – it was a code word like, our place in the mountains, or our vacation place. And so we were urging them to leave, and the reply was that everything is fine here. We have plenty of food, and they were actually worried about the children catching cold up in the mountains, because at that time, the ger – there – there was no indication of anything was going to happen to them now. **Ioannina**, or **Ioannina** at this point is occupied by the Germans, but there was no indication that anything bad was going to happen. So – so we felt very secure in the village, and we actually began to enjoy our life there, vacation

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spot, until suddenly it was – I believe it was November, the end of November, when

Yonas Mionis, this is the same man –

Q: Same guy, yeah.

A: – same guy, he comes – he – he – he was – he had been running, he – he – he – he arrived to the village, and from another – another village called ios – **Agios Vlassis**, a nearby village, and told my parents that we have to leave and find another place, we have to leave the village immediately, or – or by – by tomorrow morning, and go to another place, because the Germans have advanced to – ar-are-are – are in **Agios Vlassis**, and they are advancing in the direction of **Psilovrahos**. By that time there were two more Jewish men who had ended up in **Psilovrahos**, they had come from another city, I believe **Helkese(ph)**. And of course you know we were – my parents, they panicked. They – they were advised to go to a higher place up in the mountains. And we arranged with a mule driver to come the following morning, to transport us to this higher place. And I remember th-the – oh well, during the night – during the night, was a very frightful night, because we didn't know whether the Germans were advancing during the night, but there was a big explosion, a distant explosion. We didn't know where it was coming from. I should say that when **Yonas Mionis** came to alert us of the advance of the Germans, there was there – the church bells started to ring alarm, and these young men of **EPON** was calling everybody to his feet, and urging able-bodied men to take their weapons, rifles, whatever they had, and go to **Agios Vlassis** to stop advance of the Germans. So,

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the following morning, this mule driver arrives and – and now again, I don't know whether I heard my mother say that, or I heard her say that much later, but it impressed me that these – what kind of mules are these? These are just a – they look like big – big dogs; they were very small. And of course, we were very grateful that there was a means of transportation, so we loaded a few – a few things and along with the other Jewish men, we started climbing the mountain. Now, this part I know is firsthand experience. I remember my mother saying – I was getting tired, and my mother kept saying, keep walking, keep walking, you have to – because I was behind everybody. And I don't know whether she said the Germans are coming, but all she was urging me to walk faster. And so it – it was a – it was a rainy day, and I remember my mother insisted that we all wear extra clothing for warmth, and finally we reached a house, this mule driver took us to the house of a man called **Chiandafelis(ph)**. It was a – th-there were no other houses there, just his house. And of course, he opens the door, sees this unlikely group of people, city people at his doorstep, he didn't know what was going on. And – and it was revealed that – that wi – th-the – the mule driver told him who we were and why we were there. So they probably – he probably told them that we are Jewish, and that the Germans were advancing. I – I don't know exactly what he told him. But when the man, Mr. **Chiandafelis(ph)** heard the word **Agrinion**, he became very excited, because he told us that his daughter **Theandafela(ph)** was working for a family in **Agrinion**, the family of **Davaroukas(ph)**. And it so happened that **Davaroukas(ph)** was a colleague of my

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father's in the National Bank of **Greece**. So he became very excited, because my father told him, oh I know your daughter, she came to the bank several times, and I know her, she is a very nice girl. And you see, a lot of villagers would send their daughters into the city to work as maids in hope that they would learn to grow – to learn – acquire some skills with city people. They would take them out of school and they would work as maids to bring some income for the family, and also learn to be nice young ladies, the way city people were. So he welcomed us, you know, from strangers we became friends. He welcomed us and – and offered us a place to – to sleep. The Greeks are very hospitable people.

Q: Even – even in danger.

A: Even in danger, it's – it's a – it's a tradition, and i-in fact, in danger, they – they sense that there is a common enemy, and we have to help one another. And that was from my mother's memoirs, when she describes her many visits into the countryside, this is the feeling that I get, that the people were welcoming. The-They saw this woman and her son, because she would go around with my brother, and they'd try to help as much as they can. So we make arrangements to – to spend the night in Mr. **Chiandafelis'**(ph) house. And then the next morning – or rather it was, perhaps – no, I think it was the same day; it was raining and then when the rain stopped, we stepped outside. And it was at that point that my brother saw a group of men with horses or mules, ascending the mountain. And – and he said, the Germans are coming, the Germans are coming. And that, you

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know, created panic, and everybody just dispersed and hid behind rocks, behind trees.

And then the **Chiandafelis**(ph) re-realized that we were terrified by the Germans. And so at this point they decide that it's best for us to spend the day in a cave. In **Arapo**(ph) **Kefalas**(ph) was the name of the cave, and spend the day in – and spend the night in his house. And that's what we did.

Q: That's what you did.

A: Yes.

Q: So let's start there on the next – on the next tape.

A: Sure.

Q: Okay? Okay, we can –

End of Tape Three

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Beginning Tape Four

Q: I want to go back a little bit, right before the cave, when you've tra – when you're traveling –

A: Yes.

Q: – to go to the cave, do you remember what you brought with you?

A: Yes, we – we brought some blankets, soap and sugar, in pillowcases, because as I said earlier, my mother used the soap and sugar to barter other items. And in this case, we didn't know wh – where we were going, but this was a way of paying the people in whose house we were gonna stay, soap or sugar.

Q: But I wa – I was interested to know whether you as a child brought – brought a toy of some kind, would you – would you bring one of the dolls that your brother had made?

A: Oh yes, no, I didn't have any toys. I do not remember having any toys. I really did not have toys. And I didn't miss them because none of the village children had toys.

Q: Had toys.

A: Yes, we – it was always improvising things. I remember one of the activities I used to engage in was building a clay oven, like the one my – a small one, like the one my father had built, cause I had helped him build the clay oven on the side of the house.

Q: This was in a – **Agrinion**, or –

A: Oh, no, no, no, no –

Q: No, this was –

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A: – in **Agrinion** we lived in a – a –

Q: In a regular house.

A: – in a regular house with running water, and bathroom and a stove. But no, in the village. So my – I remember my father built a clay oven and – and I know exactly how to build a clay oven.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. If you want me to build one for you, I can do it.

Q: You can do that?

A: Yes.

Q: So you helped him do this?

A: Yes, all I had to do was I had to gather rocks, and there were plenty of rocks, because this village is just covered with rocks. And so he made a – a mound of rocks, and then he dug up the soil and extracted some clay, mixed it with hay to reinforce the – the mud, and then – oh we – we piled the rocks on the top of the – a large flagstone. You pile the rocks and then you cover the rocks with this mixture of clay and hay. And so you create a dome, and there's two o – there are two openings, one in front to put the food in, and out, and then one at the top for the smoke to escape. And so when the clay is dry, you remove the rocks from inside and you create this hollow space, and you use wood to sh – heat up the oven, and this is how you – you bake things, and –

Q: So did your mother bake in there? She – she –

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A: Yes, yes –

Q: – and she cooked food?

A: Yes, there was the only way to cook, to bake something. We had the fireplace in – ins – in the room, and at first she used the – what they call a **gastra**. It's – it's a metal dome piece of like – well, the – the cover of a pot, but fairly large, and you light the fire and then you, in the hot ashes and the smoldering charcoal, you can bake something, provided you have this **gastra** on top of it, because it keeps the heat inside.

Q: Right.

A: But in a – I believe **gastra** was something that we borrowed from – from the villagers. Villagers were very generous, very helpful, the – they realized that we were not equipped for this kind of life, and they were willing to share their tools or – or kitchen materials of – to – to help us manage. But for some reason this **gastra** had to be returned to the villager and so – so my father had to construct this oven. It was not his invention, it was very common and I'm sure the villagers told him how to construct one. But my father was always interested in learning things and experimenting with different devices. So – so, going up to the – so really, I did not have any toys, but this is – so I used to build small ovens fol – following that model.

Q: Right, right, with other kids.

A: With other kids, yes.

Q: And did you do anything with these little ovens?

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A: Yes, we – I wanted to light a fire, but of course, you know, my mother, you know, was absolutely against it, because it was dangerous. At some point in my life, in my childhood, I did light a fire. I was fascinated by this – by these – this structure of the oven.

Q: Right.

A: And after the war, I think – I know that I – I lit a fire in there. It's quite interesting, yes.

Q: It's interesting, right. But you didn't bring any of those little doll – like one doll –

A: No, no –

Q: – nothing. You – you – you were not attached to anything?

A: No, not really.

Q: It's interesting.

A: Yes. The thing that I was attached, in the village, was this goat. I – I really was – became very attached to that animal.

Q: So did you miss the animal when you left?

A: Actually, I missed this animal when it had to be killed, because at the later point in our stay in – in the village, the – the goat became sick and had to be slaughtered. And so they killed the goat and I wa – I was really – I don't think my parents realized how devastated I was. I was a rather quiet child that didn't share my feelings or talk about things. I don't think I did. And so when they killed the goat, they – the villagers told us that you have to

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cut it into small pieces, and put it in a barrel with a lot of salt to preserve it for the winter.

And that's what we did. And th – it turned out that the goat was pregnant, so –

Q: Not sick?

A: Not sick, or perhaps it was both, and my father threw away the fetus, but one of the – the Jewish men in the village, those that had joined us at a la – later point, was told that the fetus was thrown away, and he was starving, literally starving, and he went, picked up the dead fetus, cooked it and – and they ate it.

Q: Could you eat this goat?

A: The goat? Yes –

Q: You could.

A: – it's regular meat.

Q: No, I mean, given your feelings about it –

A: Oh.

Q: – I was wondering whether you could –

A: Oh, yes. I-I don't think I refused the meat. I was so hungry and by then it was no longer a goat, it was just a piece of extremely salty meat, it wasn't even palatable.

Q: Let me ask you something, cause you said that you were a quiet child. Do you think that you became a quiet child because what was going on around you was so difficult, and you thought that maybe you shouldn't speak what you were feeling?

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A: I know that my parents many times described situations where I was hungry or very thirsty, and they said, but **Ninetta** did not complain. So I don't know what was going on through my mind that we were – had all these hardships, and there's nothing that can be done.

Q: Right.

A: So I – it's very hard for me to – to know – I don't think that the – the war experience affected me in the way that made me frightened and made me quiet, because for me, the experience of – of living in this village, where I was free, I was really free to go anywhere I wanted as a child, surrounded by this wild beauty of the village; the animals, goats and sheep and donkeys and chickens everywhere. It was – it was – it was a positive experience, and I think – I have a feeling that this is where I developed my – my love for nature. I – I – I just – cause I was so close to nature, so close to the animals, to this wilderness. So I don't think it had a negative impact on me.

Q: Doesn't seem like it –

A: No, cause –

Q: – when one meets you. Right. But you don't – you know, one doesn't know whether we – when you talked about the fact that you didn't express your feelings about some things, so they didn't know what you felt –

A: Yes.

Q: – that maybe that was a – that was partly a response to how difficult you saw that.

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A: It is possible that – I don't know how mature I was for my age –

Q: Right.

A: – but maybe that – made that valuation, but I never felt I was hiding. I didn't go into hiding.

Q: Right.

A: We were free.

Q: Right.

A: And – and – and so, really a designation of a survivor, a survivor, it had never entered my mind until I was identified as a survivor here in the **United States**.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because for us in **Greece**, survivors were those who returned from the – survived the concentration camps.

Q: Yes.

A: Not the ones who survived hiding in – in the –

Q: Right, right.

A: – up in the mountains, or even within the cities.

Q: Right, right.

A: And I compared notes with other people who had similar experience, and they felt the same way. They were not survivors. We didn't have to – we didn't have to hide, really, during that period.

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Q: Right, right, right.

A: Although we were hiding from Germans.

Q: Of course. But in a different – in a different way.

A: Yes, exactly.

Q: Yeah. And my suspicion is also that even in this country, the – the word survivor has taken on different meanings as the decades have gone on.

A: Oh yes, yes, it has really expanded.

Q: Expanded much more.

A: Yes.

Q: So you were going – you – you went from the – the small village –

A: Yes.

Q: – up the mountain –

A: Yes.

Q: – on me – on a mul – you were on a mule that –

A: On – on foot.

Q: On foot.

A: The – the mules were simply carrying –

Q: Carrying stuff.

A: – our belongings, yes.

Q: Okay. So now you know you're going to a cave? I mean, did you – did –

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A: N-No, we are going to this man's house.

Q: Okay.

A: And this is Mr. **Chiandafelis**(ph) –

Q: Right, who had the dau – the daughter who – who – so he was very comfortable with all of you.

A: Yes, yes. But then there was this incident of my brother seeing this group of men and horses or mules ascending this precipice and she panicked and said, oh the Germans are coming, and created a lot of panic among all of us, because in addition to my family, there were now three additional Jewish men; one of them was **Yonas Mionis**, the resistance leader. And we all dispersed behind rocks, behind trees and that is when – oh, and then Mr. **Chiandafelis**(ph) sent his son, **Spyros** down the mountain to see who these people were and he discovered just villagers returning to their homes. But then they recognized that we were terrified of the possibility of being discovered by the Germans, and so they rec – **Chiandafelis**(ph) recommended that we spend the day in this cave, called **Arapo**(ph). **Kefalas**(ph), and – and the night at his house. And that's exactly what we did, this **Spyros**, Mr. **Chiandafelis**' son guided us to the – to the cave, and that again, I have a firsthand recollection. I remember this very vividly as a child going into a cave. It was quite an experience, and I was – I was frightened. I was frightened at first, because it was so dark, especially, you know, before our eyes adjusted to the darkness, it was very dark, and there was all kinds of formations of stalactites and stalagmites. And my father

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found a little ledge on the side, sort of halfway into the cave. It was like an alcove, and we spread the blankets, and the four of us huddled together in this dark cave. And – and my father, he – he always tried to calm everybody down, and – and he – this a – he's a – was a very good storyteller. So he would tell us different kinds of stories about his exploits, ab – as a soldier going up to the – to the front, the Albanian – Greek Albanian front or – and then Bible stories, lots of Bible stories, which he embellished greatly to entertain us. And I don't know whether this is – actually happened. I don't know he – he – he – whether he explained to m – to us how these structures are formed in the cave. I-I don't remember whether he explained, but I have a feeling that he did, but I'm not positive. And so, it was hours that we had to s – to spend in this alcove, in the dark – semi-darkness. We could hear the dripping of the water in the back, as the water mixed with minerals, would drip down into a – a pond at the bottom of the – of the cave. And then suddenly we hear somebody call my father, you know, Mr. **Matsas**, Mr. **Matsas**. And we were frightened because we thought somebody discovered us. And so we decided not to – to say anything, to keep quiet. But the voice persisted, Mr. **Matsas**, Mr. **Matsas**, then he said I'm – this is **Spyros**. Come out, come out, it's safe, it's calm, this is **Spyros**, **Chiandafelis'**(ph) son. And – and I don't remember whether we came out, or the people outside came in, I don't remember. But later on my father said that he was afraid at first that they were going to throw a grenade, because at first we thought there were Germans, enemies. But what we discovered when we – we met the two people that

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Spyros had brought there, these were two other Jewish men who were seeking shelter, like we were. They were in **Agios Vlassis** and when the Germans advanced, at that point they left and they came to **Psilovrahos**, and then they were told that this Jewish family up – there's another family up in – hiding up higher in the mountains. So now Mr.

Chiandafelis(ph) had several people to feed every night. But we decided that the villa – the – the cave was not safe either, so my father searched in the forest for a secluded place. And so we decided to spend the day in this secluded place, and the nights at the house.

Q: So was it – was it your father who decided that it was not a safe place? And why would he decide that, do you think?

A: Because it was a place that was known by the villagers. This is not a cave, a remote cave that nobody knows about. He felt that it was known and it's best for the duration, you know, while the Germans were in **Psilovrahos**, because they did come –

Q: They came to the town. They came from **Psilovrahos**.

A: – they did come to **Psilovrahos**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It is best for us to be in a place that nobody knew, except perhaps **Spyros** and his father.

Q: Right, right.

A: And so I ev – again, I remember this secluded place. It was – it was underneath a protruding rock, to protect us from the rain. And so we – they gathered branches for trees

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to – to create a camouflage the opening. And so again we huddled together, the four of us.

Q: Was this another cave, or this is actually outside?

A: It's outside.

Q: It's outside.

A: It's outside, but there's a rock, a very large rock that protrudes, creating a roof, and so we – we sat underneath and we blocked the opening with – with branches of fir trees and whatever other materials that we're able to find. And we stand – we actually stand seven or eight day – days.

Q: So you would – would you go back –

A: Yes –

Q: And – at night –

A: – at night. At night we go back to Mr. **Chiandafelis**(ph) house, and **Spyros** would give us some bread and olives or cheese for the day. And at night he would prepare a meal. He acted like a waiter. He – his – Mr. **Chiandafelis**(ph) was very proud of his son, and **Spyros** sort of rose to the occasion, and he prepared bean soup, lentil soup or chickpea soup. That was the kind of food the villagers would eat. It would have meat perhaps once a week, or once every two weeks, if they could find it. And then we would spend the night on the floor. There were several people now. And then during the day, go back to that shelter.

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Q: A-An-And – and where did these men, these ex – th-the two – is it two or three –

A: Yeah, there were – actually at one point there were five.

Q: So where did they go during the day?

A: They – two of them decided that it wasn't safe for them to – to be even in

Psilovrahos, maybe another village is safer. But later on they returned, because the situation was not as good there as well. So, eventually there were only three additional Jewish men that stayed in the village, plus the wife of one of them. Her name was oreo – **Aureo(ph) Zeelavee(ph)**. Now, these people were not ordinary people. One of them, **Aron(ph) Romano(ph)** was a ship owner, very wealthy. And the other was an owner of a private bank. And **Aron(ph) Romano(ph)** always carried a little briefcase, which we thought was probably – contained gold coins, but did not want to use them, didn't want to reveal that he had gold. So he preferred to starve, because he didn't have the resources that we had; sugar and soap and oil, to barter for other items to eat.

Q: Did – did your parents barter with the person that – that had this house where you were staying in – in at nights, so they gave them –

A: Yes, when we – you know, at the end of the eight days when – that was the period that the Germans stayed in the village, my parents gave him sugar. This is how we paid. And he was a very hospitable person, a very, very hard life.

Q: It's interesting, because everywhere you go, it appears as if people are willing to help.

A: Yes, yes.

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Q: And it – it's – you're not turned away by anybody.

A: True.

Q: It's –

A: There is – that is the truth. There was one family – actually he happened to be one of the wealthiest people, who were not very helpful. There was a time when he could have helped us tremendously to avoid experiencing literally starvation during the winter, because there was – well, I think I should tell you this part later in the story.

Q: Okay.

A: But – but he was the exception. Th-The villagers were very helpful, very helpful.

Q: So – but you had no idea that the Germans were only going to stay in the village for eight days –

A: No.

Q: – clearly, cause they could have stayed for a month.

A: True, true.

Q: Right?

A: Yes.

Q: But after eight days they left. And who told you that they left, so you could get out? Do you remember?

A: The – the driver of the mules, who actually returned after he dropped us off, he returned to the village, he came back to get us. And so we knew that it was time to come

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back, that th-the – the – the Germans had left the village. But at the same time, the rumor circulated that – that the Germans, who had actually occupied the room, our room, had looted our room that – you know, they looted Mr. **Matsas**' room, the Germans did. This was the rumor that circulated. And so when we returned, soon as we returned, before we even entered the house – this is the story that I learned later on, the owner of the house came and said, you know, the Germans occupied the room, and they looted your house. They ate whatever you had, and they took away the remainder. And so we entered the room, and everything was in disarray and all the food was gone. And there was a substantial supply of food, you know, sacks of all sorts of things. And so w-we became – we panicked. Especially my mother, what is going to happen, because this is the end of November, actually was probably already December and the winter is coming. The harvest is over, there's no possibility of us buying food from the villagers or elsewhere. So – so my father tried to calm her down, saying well, we'll send a man down to **Agrinion**, we have a lot of food in the bank –

End of Tape Four

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Beginning Tape Five

Q: Okay, so you come back to the village –

A: Yes.

Q: – and you find out that your stuff has been looted, and your mother is very upset.

A: Very upset, and winter is coming and sources of food are scarce. And my father tried to calm her down, that we will send a man down in the village, in the – in **Agrinion** to get some food from the bank. And this is something we did, but the man came back with one small ca – one can of oil, that was all he could bring, because he was bringing food supplies for his family, and that was the only additional weight for the mule to carry. But I was friends with the – the children of the owner of the house, and they told me one day, oh – they were boasting, oh, we have so much food now. We have rice and beans, we have – we even have candles. We have things that we never had before. And I – I was very impressed, and I reported this to my parents, you know, I said the – my friends, they told me they have all this good stuff. And immediately my parents suspected that the owner of the house was the one who looted the room, and my father confronted him, and he denied that he – he took anything. And my father persisted, and he had to accept to – the fact that – he had to admit that he did take a few things. He was afraid of my father talking about this to the village, and that he was going to be embarrassed. And so he returned a few items. But my parents knew that he probably had a lot more, and was hidden somewhere. And so my father searched the – the barn and other hidden – possible

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places where he could have hidden food, and sure enough they – he found a can of oil. And oil was a real treasure, because was – this is olive oil, was very hard to find, very valuable, if you were going to use it as a commodity to exchange it for other kinds of food. So my parents were infuriated with this man because he – he really – he created the situation that we – we were trying to avoid, and that is lack of food in the winter. So they considered bringing this matter to the people's court. There were people's courts then, in villages. They were not official courts, but they were – consisted of the elders of the village, and all sorts of ma – matters of – disputes were brought to the people's court. And the people's court was actually very severe in punishments that – that they imposed on people. So my parents reconsidered that, because they were afraid he would be, who knows, imprisoned, or some very severe punishment; he had a young family, so they decided to drop the matter. And that they also didn't want to draw attention to ourselves. So they dropped the matter, and at this point we had to leave that room, and we went to another house to live in. This was very similar to the one we occupied the first time. This one had two rooms, one room was a **kafeneio**, a café. And the other room was the room that we occupied, and th – and it had a basement. And so – so that was a big change, it was – we adjusted to it very quickly. But the main concern now was food. There was a family by the name **Yovanos**(ph) who lived in **Agrinion**, but had come to the village for the summer, and they stayed on because of the – the war situation. But they had decided to return to **Agrinion**. And they had a lot of wheat with them. So my father, being a bank

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employee, he conducted a transaction not with checks, but with wheat. He told him, if you give us your wheat that is here, you can collect our wheat, which is stored in the bank. It was an exchange, and no wheat had to travel to **Agrinion** or from **Agrinion** to **Psilovrahos**, but it was a transaction that s-seemed reasonable to him, and he gave us a certain amount of wheat. But he had more wheat, but this other villager that was wealthy, who could have cooperated at this point and – and he could have made the **Yovanos**(ph) wheat available to us, he decided not to do that, and he kept the wheat for – for himself. And that was a very callous thing to do, and he, years later when – after the war, the man recognized that he had done something very, very bad, and he came to my father and my parents and – and asked them for their forgiveness, because by – by not agreeing to make this wheat available to us, he made life absolutely horrible for the family. So – so th-that is the situation now, we are – we have very little food. We do have this oil that the villager brings from the village, and this wheat. Then my mother started exchanging sugar for a certain kind of cereal that is called **Trachanas**. It's a – a coarsely ground wheat mixed with milk that is – that – that is in a dry state and when you add some milk, it expands, and it's a very nutritious food and very filling. So – so this is what my mother started doing, exchanging sugar for – for **Trachanas** or corn meal. Then some of the villagers would give us some eggs from the chickens, some milk, a piece of cheese. It was a very difficult situation and there's winter approaching, it's already winter. It is cold. And so then, my mother, wh-who is a very resourceful person, she decided that –

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that she is going to barter clothing, our personal clothes, for food. And so she became a peddler, and she went with my 13 year old brother from village to village, exchanging clothing for food. Or, she did other things. She knitted for people. She was – she had many skills. She knew how to make lace. An-And one – one thought came to her mind is that the girls in the village, they want to prepare their dowry, and I can teach them how to – to knit. I di – can teach them how to embroider, how to make lace, and so – and said, there are a lot of girls in the village who would want this, and they would exchange my services for food. And the one family that I mentioned earlier, the **Tsulamitsu**(ph) family, they had seven daughters. They had prepare seven dowries. So she went to – started with them. And she'd go there every day and help them, show them how to embroider, how to make lace and so on, in exchange for cheese or bread or whatever they had. So they ha – my parents had to start rationing the food. It was less and less every day. And I – I remember it was winter, still winter, and there were some mulberry trees and fig trees. There are a lot of mulberry trees and fig trees in **Greece**. And my mother said, you know, when these, you know, these fig trees, when spring and summer come, th-they'll be full of figs. And so I remember this game very vividly, you know, walking underneath those trees, waiting for someday to see figs up on the tree.

Q: And that you remember as your own memory.

A: That yes, I remember. In fact, at one point, it was in the summer when figs had formed, there was one fig tree that was growing on – on the edge of a retaining wall, and

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I reached to – to get a fig, and I fell off the retaining wall, and I – I remember that, of course. I didn't get hurt, but –

Q: Must have been a little scary.

A: It was, it was. It was scary, yes. But –

Q: Do you remember being hungry?

A: Yes, I remember being hungry, and to this day, I cannot bear seeing people throw away food. You know for me food is something very, very valuable, and I'm very conscious – I'm very conscious of the waste that I see around me these days. But yes, hunger was pervasive. That's all we could think of was in our em – our stomachs were empty, was – it was – we were very hungry.

Q: Now, were people in the village also hungry, or they were less so than you?

A: The villagers – well, you know, they – they had chickens, so they could get eggs. They would slaughter a chicken here and there to get meat. They had goats for milk. But we had – didn't have any of these animals, and they had stored food, as they always do, for the winter, like dry figs and walnuts, especially. Lentils and beans, dry beans. So poverty and hunger were pervasive, but we were – we were worse off than they were, because we didn't have these resources that they were used to; the animals that provided them with nutritious food.

Q: And – and your parents didn't have money either any more, an-and anyway, it was worthless.

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A: The money was worthless, yes, yes. One wonderful thing happened during this period of – of, literally, starvation. A group of partisans, or **andartes**, as they were known, they came to the village and they camped there, they – they settled there for 20 days. There were 60 of them. I don't know why they settled in the village, but my parents recognized there was an opportunity for us to get food. And it was either my father or brother who approached the captain of this band, and described our desperate situation and asked them if they could help us. And the captain agreed to give us the equivalent of two portions of a – of food for one partisan, for the four of us to share. And so my brother, when the – the bugle was sounded, he could go there with a pot, and they would give him the portion of – of a partisan, which was not very much. It was just corn soup and a piece of corn bread. But for us it was God sent. And he did that twice a day, and we would share the food, and – and that was for 20 days. That was quite a – a long time. So that was the situation. I don't know at what point my parents – my mother decided that she should use – not – to sell not only our personal clothing, but also household items. I don't know whether it was in that – in the wintertime or later on in the spring, but just all of a sudden she got this bright idea of – of using the cases – we had brought mattress cases. In **Greece** – in **Greece** you protect everything you have, like mattress, you have to have a case for the mattress, to protect it from dust. And so we – when we came to the village, we brought these mattress cases with us, and we stuffed them with hay to make mattresses. So my mother, out of desperation she had this brilliant idea, said, I have these mattress cases. I

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can – I can use them to make pants for – for boys, or men. These – the villagers are dressed in rags. And – but these mattress cases, usually, they have very bright stripes, red stripes. So my father said, nobody is going to wear these ridiculous looking pants, with these bright stripes. And then he thought further and said well, we – we can dye them, we can dye them brown. And that was my father's great opportunity to experiment and he – he said, we'll gather shells of – walnut shells, and they were plentiful in the – in the – in the fields, and – and poppies. So this must have happened in the spring, early spring, and there are lots of poppies in – growing in – in the mountains. So he made this concoction, boiled walnut shells with the poppies, creating this brown gooey material, and dipped these mattress cases when they came, and boiled them for a few minutes, and then they turned brown. Later on I found out that – that in colonial times they used walnuts to dye wool and – and fabric. So – so my mother made pants for – for boys, and then she used sheets, the sheets that we brought, to make shirts for men. And so she had all these wares to exchange for food, then she went from village to village with my brother, doing that. And she'd come home with – with cheese or bread or – everything was delicious to us, anything was delicious.

Q: And she did all of this by hand, because –

A: Yes –

Q: – of course, she had nothing else.

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A: – exactly. E-Everything by hand. It was – she'd work long hours and in the daytime. She had to do it in the daytime because one of the things we lost were candles, the candles that we brought. And so it was winter, the days were short. But again my father, he invented something, he experimented with pieces of rubber from the tires, car tires, that the village cobbler was using to repair shoes. He would use the material from tires as soles for shoes. And so he collected scraps of rubber and burned them. He – he mounted them with a – an old rusty can by the fireplace and – and it burned. It gave off light, but a horrible smell. The smell was absolutely horrible, but we had light at night. So – so he – he – both of my parents were very resourceful people, and they would always find the solution to – to a problem.

Q: Do you think your mother worked more than your father in some respects, that she – she had a harder time?

A: Yes, definitely, she – she worked very hard. And my father, he was – he had a sedentary job at the bank, so he wasn't used to his long walks on rough terrain. So there were times he had to cross a creek, or a – a river [**indecipherable**] that was not – not a very deep river, but he – he came down with aches on his legs, and then he had the dizzy spells. He had a few medical problems that had – had the – they were left unattended, although there were a couple of occasions when my mother and brother, they walked a long distance to a village called **Tatarna** that had a hospital for the partisans, and there was a doctor there. They consulted with him, and the doctor gave them some medicine

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for my father, but somehow the villagers and us had managed to recover whatever ailments we had, on our own. So that was the situation in the winter. It was a very desperate situation. Then when spring came, there were – things were a little better because they gave us a short – a small plot to cultivate. And then there were mulberries. The mulberry trees plentiful, which caused – and we lived on mulberry berries for a number of days until we developed stomach cramps and we realized we had to stop that. But it was a very difficult period, and my mother, she bore the brunt of it, she really did. That is the reason why, throughout this period she kept saying that I will go myself down to the city and bring a horse-load of food. And – and there were groups of villagers that were going to the city. And she said, I'll just join one of them and go down into the city. And my father and brother always say no, no, absolutely not. And she would say why? The villagers go. And – and she – they would say, yeah, but you're not an ordinary villager, you – you're Jewish. And she said, well, I have an **I.D.** card, because they – my parents had acquired **I.D.** cards issued by – by the Germans. The priests of the village provided them with baptismal papers and so the papers were given to the German authorities. The names had – were changed. And there was a picture and my – both my parents had an **I.D.** card with their picture and signed by German officials. But the – the ironic thing is that in the **I.D.**, they do not ask for religion. It's rather bizarre. Perhaps they didn't want to raise suspicions that – because that was one of the reasons why many Jews in the cities, such as **Ioannina** did not feel threatened, did not feel that they

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should leave, they should go into hiding, because the Germans were careful not to raise suspicions of what was awaiting them. And – and in fact, the letters that we were receiving from my relatives in **Ioannina** were – were, you know, why don't you come to **Ioannina**, we have plenty of food. Why should you be starving up there? And the same letter from **Evianir**(ph) **Papadapoulos**(ph), our – my father's colleague, you know, come to **Agrinion**, there is plenty of food. And there were many cases of Jews who returned. They had left the city and gone to the countryside to hide. And because nothing was happening in the cities, they returned, and they were eventually arrested. But my – my father, my brother were – an-and my mother were determined to stay in the village. So – but she, every time she saw a group of villagers going down to **Agrinion**, she would say, all I have to do is just join them and – and our situation will improve.

Q: So she became more optimistic at a certain point?

A: She just was so desperate that she was going to defy any danger that she was going to face. And eventually, in March, when the snow melted and the conditions for travel were a little better, she – she joined one of these groups, and went down, started a long trek towards the city of **Agrinion**. She walked for 12 hours, and on homemade shoes because her – she had a pair of shoes that was threadbare, and then the other pair were – had high heels. You can see how – how unprepared we were for this kind of life, she brought shoes with high heels to **Psilovrahos**. And so she – she went with – with a group of villagers down to **Agrinion**. This is very rough terrain, and all on foot. She walked for 12 hours,

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until she reached a village very close to **Agrinion**. I believe it was called **Frangokisa(ph)**. **Frangokisa(ph)**. And she had given – there was a young man, boy, who – to whom my mother had given a slice of bread. She had – she brought two slices of bread, one for herself – well, for herself, both of them, but she was so tired, she asked him, would you let me ride the mule if I gave you a slice of bread? And – and he did. And while they were doing this transaction, all of a sudden she hears her name, you know, Mrs. **Matsas**, Mrs. **Matsas**. And that was – it turned out it was a friend of ours that they knew from **Arta**, and her husband was the math teacher of my brother. What a coincidence, in this wilderness. And her name was **Zvolise(ph)**. And she said, Mrs. **Matsas**, where are you going, why are you here, where you should be far away from here. And went on to say, haven't you heard, haven't you heard what happened to your people? And then she went on to say, you know, the Jews of **Arta** and **Preveza** and **Ioannina** have all been arrested. The Jews of **Arta** and **Preveza** are now housed in the **Papapetrou** tobacco warehouses and I don't know where they took the Jews of **Ioannina**. And this is the first time that my mother learns of the fate of our relatives. It was a very – a very painful, unbelievable news that she heard, it was – she was totally devastated, crushed.

Q: Let's stop the tape.

End of Tape Five

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Beginning Tape Six

Q: Okay, you – you wanted to go back to the hospital in – in **Tartarna**, is that –

A: **Tartarna, Tartarna.**

Q: **T-Tartarna.**

A: That was a very affluent village, and it had this hospital for the partisans and then the villagers. One of the – the doctors there at one point was **Thanos(ph) Papatheodoro(ph)**, a very fine man, whose family also lived in the vicinity. And a – it's just a si – it was a – quite a coincidence, my mother and brother met them, met the family and the doctor and there were three daughters, **Hera, Ephemia(ph)** and **Irini(ph)**, or **Nini(ph)**. And the middle one, **Ephemia(ph)** became my best friend after the war. We're friends to this day. And there were – they were – played a very important role in the family, in my development. They were a very cultured family, and it was through them that I was exposed to classical music and paintings. Her father was an amateur painter. A very refined person. And – and this is the hospital where my f – my brother was asked by the doctor – I don't know whether it was Dr. **Papatheodoro(ph)** or Dr. **Panopoulous(ph)**, the earlier doctor, asked my father to sing the ma – I'm sorry, my brother **Mykas(ph)**, he was known as **Mykas(ph)** partisan songs. And my – my f – brother loved those partisan songs, they were in the air, everywhere. They were very idealistic, describing a wonderful society that is going to be built after the war, a society that was free of ignorance and poverty and injustice. And all of these wonderful ideas appealed to him as

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a young person. And so he – he learned all those wonderful songs. He sings them to this day. I – I learned a few of them, but he was the one who – who sang them, and he had a beautiful voice, he still does. So now I will come back to the – to this encounter of my mother with Mrs. **Volis(ph)**. So Mrs. **Volis(ph)** tells her that you have to leave as soon as possible. She talked to her husband, Mr. **Volis(ph)**, and he suggested that – n-now my mother actually, even at this point, she said – she insisted that she go into the city, in spite of all this. She said, we're starving, we – we have to get some food. And so her husband recommended that she go to another village called **Kamaroúla**, where he has a **kombarro(ph)**. **Kombarro(ph)** is a godfather. And his name was **Christos Zambarros(ph)**, and he – he was a teacher, and he said, he will help you. So my mother started walking alone with this horrible knowledge of – of what had happened to our people, to **Kamaroúla**. She recognizes the house where this man lived, knocks on the door several time, they do not answer. Eventually they open the door very cautiously, they let her in very quickly, and she – she told them who she was and who – who sent her to them, and she said, I'm looking for **Christos Zambarros(ph)**. These were the sisters of **Christos**, and they said – they were – they were frightened because the Germans has searched their house moments before my mother arrived. They took her to the window and they said – pointed to the – to the square and said, look down there. You see, the Germans are still there and they're still searching for people there. They were searching for partisans, because at this point the – the resistance had grown very strong and they

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were sabotaging the German advance and German actions; blowing bridges and destroying roads. And so they said, take this ker – they gave her a kerchief quickly, said put it on, and just pretend that you are our aunt from **Psilovrahos**. Don't say anything. They sent for their brother and he came, and my mother explained to him what was ha – what happened, and begged him to – to go – I think – I think what happened – I don't know – I'm not so sure at this point whether she had to go to their country home where a deaf mute aunt was guarding their store – the food supplies. I don't know where this meeting with **Christos Zambarros**(ph) took place, but he was very, very nice, and understood the situation, and he said, don't worry. I will go down to – into the city, and I will do my best to bring a horse-load of – of food. So in the meantime, my mother was waiting in this country home with this deaf mute aunt. This – **Kamaroula** was very close to **Agrinion**. And a few hours later he returned, but without a horse-load of food, and explained to my mother that the Germans were very watchful now, that they did not allow any food to leave the city. And they had – they had executed resistance fighters already in the city, about 200 of them. So the situation had really become very hard, very tough. And they said, the only thing that I was able to bring from your friends, your neighbors, were tea, a bottle – a bottle of quinine tablets, and some matches. Very useful things, but not what we expected. So – so my mother took this me – these few items and started walking back to our city – to the village. And at one point she – she met **Pepola**(ph) **Hannah**(ph). He was a re – a Jewish resistance fighter, and he already knew

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what had happened. So they fell into each other's arms and they cried and it was a very, very emotional experience for my mother. But she had to rush – I should tell you that there were a lot of Jewish young men that had joined the resistance up in the mountains. They have left their – their families to – to save themselves, and they joined the resistance. Unfortunately, a number of them, they joined the resistance, the – the **andartes**, but then they were afraid of reprisals by the Germans against their families, and so they returned. But a number of them stayed in the mountains. So they had to rush to – **Christos**(ph) and my mother – th-the partisans did not allow anybody to walk after sundown, and it was close to sundown. So they climbed a hill, and at the top of the hill was a little chapel, a little church that **Christos'** grandfather had built. And so they spent the night there, and this was Saint **Elias** chapel. And then the next day they said goodbye, and there is my mother bearing this horrible news, alone, walking alone from this place, **Kamaroula**, all the way to **Psilovrahos**, bearing the news alone, and crying all the time. So when she came back, at that point my brother, my f – and my father were outdoors working on this plot of land that they gave us to cultivate, and when they saw her coming, she was walking very slowly, they started to laugh, and they said, didn't we tell you not to go? You came back – she came back three days later and she – she was planning to stay for seven or eight days in **Aginion**. We told you not to go. And my mother was in terrible physical shape, bearing the horrible news and she said, don't laugh. Come in the house and when I tell you what happened, you will cry with bitter

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tears. And so she told us, and we were – we were just devastated. And I remember this scene. I had never, ever seen my mother in that state. Her eyes were – her – her feet were swollen, her face was swollen, her eyes were red, and she was physically exhausted and emotionally just absolutely drained. So we were just – just – just shocked. It took us – took a long time for – to recover from this shock, and the only thing that sort of brought a ray of hope that sustained us was the possibility that they were taken to **Kraków, Poland**, because that was the rumors that circulated when they deported the Jews of **Salonika**, that they were being relocated to – to **Kraków** to establish their own Jewish community, to be self-governed with their own mayor, to establish synagogues wherever they wanted. So we thought that th – these Jews as well, from **Ioannina**, **Arta** and **Preveza**, that that was their destination. And you know, my parents said, we have to do something, but – but what can we do in – we're in this remote village, what can we do? But my father knew that there was a contingent of the British mission in **Greece** in a nearby village, because the British, throughout the war, were there helping the war effort behind the scenes. Helping the resistance. The British were there helping the resistance, even though later on, after the war, the British were instrumental in preventing communism from becoming established in **Greece**. But we – my father knew of this British mission, and he said we – we – we have to contact them. We should write letters and we should send a letter to the – he said, the nations of the world have to know what's happening, they have to do something to stop it. We didn't really know what was – you know, anything about

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the Final Solution or what diabolic plans of the Nazis were at this point. So – so my father decided to write a letter addressed to the British government. And the letter, that was going to be delivered to my aunt and uncle, who resided in **Alexandria** in **Egypt**, and they in turn would give the letter to the Greek government in exile, which was in **Egypt**. It all sounds so naïve now, but at the time it was a way of doing something. And so sure enough, my father composed these letters and – and my mother and brother again, were to deliver these letters to the village of **Priantza**. They didn't know where **Priantza** was, they had to – to ask many people to find their way to **Priantza**. So they finally arrive in **Priantza** and the – the British officials are willing to meet with them. And my mother, when she came back, she described that they – they walked into a large room, and they sat on two chairs, my brother and – and her, and facing these British officers, and they told them what had happened, and they – they begged them to deliver these letters. And the British officers, they accepted the letters, but they didn't sound very reassuring. In fact, one of them said to my mother, you know – and I don't know if it was his wife and children or – or some other relative, they – you know, my wife and children died in the bombing in **London**, and – and that – I have to bear that loss. So my mother was in tears because she felt they were not giving her any encouraging words. And so they left with my brother and felt that this was a fruitless mission. I don't know whether these letters were ever de-delivered to – to anybody. But one – one good thing that they discovered while in **Priantza**, there were a lot of parachute drops that they were – th-they

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were delivering supplies to the British officers in the British mission, and – and so the villagers in **Priantza** had a lot of this material. So much of it they didn't know what to do with it. And so when my mother discovered that this material was plentiful, she went from house to house asking for some of this parachute material, it's like a dark, khaki kind of greenish fabric, and rope from the parachutes. And so when they returned home after their mission, my brother came into the hou – room with this big bundle of parachute material. And that was like gold for us, because my mother finally had fabric to sew dresses, blouses, and so on. But I – from what I recall, we did not dwell on this. There weren't many discussions about this between my parents, about the deportation of the Jews. And – and th-the hope that we maintained throughout the war was that they were relocated to **Poland**, and when the war is over, they will return. We were – my parents were primarily concerned with my grandparents, because they were in their late years, and they were very concerned about them, if they would be – they'll be able to survive. So then – so my mother started working again, sewing the dresses and blouses and resuming her bartering activities with my brother, from village to village. And that really was very, very helpful, because now it's summertime, the villagers have more food to exchange for – for dresses, and so the situation, the food situation improved with the – with the weather, you know, spring and summer.

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Q: Let me ask you something, because was interesting, cause I – I can't figure this out. When you talked about your mother coming back and talking about your relatives, you yourself got really upset.

A: Yes.

Q: And I was trying to figure out whether you were upset because your mother was so distraught, because I-I didn't know whether you knew these rela – whether you understood how bad the situation was, or whether you were shocked by your own mother, and still are shocked by that.

A: Yes, it is – it's really hard to distinguish, because I did have a recollection of my grandmother, as I said earlier, and all these cousins sitting on this –

Q: Yes.

A: – long table, my grandmother serving rice pudding, **rizogalo**. And – and – and so i-it – this is very hard to distinguish, why I-I was very upset. Of course now, in retrospect, I was upset by the loss, the enormous loss that we – we suffered. But at that point, it was my mother, because my mother was, for me, a security blanket. And to see her in that state, it was very upsetting. She was physically, and of course emotionally, a rag.

Q: Right, right.

A: It was – it was a very difficult moment.

Q: But there really was no knowledge of the deportations from **Salonika**, or you knew the deportations which – but the rumor was that they were relocated to **Kraków**.

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A: Yes, yes.

Q: Not that they were sent to **Auschwitz**.

A: Right, exactly. When my father first learned about the deportations of the Jews of **Salonika**, which started I believe, in – in March of 1942 – was 40 –

Q: Or maybe earlier?

A: – 40 – no, it was '42.

Q: Was it '42?

A: I believe it was '42. He – was in April, he asked – this was the time when he asked – went to the – the manager of the bank and asked for a leave absence – he had the permission to use his leave of absence any time it became necessary. And my father told us later on the – the manager told him, you don't really have to worry about anything, you are different. In other words, the Jews of **Salonika** are more Jewish than you are. And – and it – and it was true that the Jews of **Salonika**, they spoke **Ladino** and they spoke French, but they did not have good grasp of the Greek language, because it was a very large community, with many educational institutions, and they could live isolated from the Greek Christian population. They were not assimilated the way the Jews are in other cities, who – who are known as the **Romaniote** Jews, who spoke grew – Greek fluently, and could blend in with the Greek population very easily and just disappear. So there was that perception that those – you are different from those Jews. The fact of the matter is that –

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Q: It didn't matter to the Nazis, did it?

A: Didn't matter to the Nazis, right. This was – this – the – the Jews of **Salonika** were descendants of the Jews that had come in 1492, expelled from **Spain** and they – they retained their language, while the Jews in the rest of there were known as **Romaniote**. They had settled there, some of them even before the Romans. And others came later on and they – they spoke Greek fluently, and –

Q: Did the – do you think that that fact made it easier for you and your parents, your family to survive, because you could blend in wherever you were?

A: Yes, yes, wherever we were. For example, the Jews of **Athens**, who were not seph – they – they were not Sephardim, strictly speaking, they were – they spoke Greek. A number of them hid in the city, and circulated in the city, and they could blend in with the population, but the Jews of **Salonika** had this added problem that hindered their –

Q: Well, let me ask you something. The resistance movement must have known what was going on. But that – but whatever they knew did not get filtered to your family, or to the population, is – is that correct? Or did they not know **[indecipherable]**

A: What did they know about the di – I don't know if they knew about the Final Solution. I know in – years later I – I knew – I learned that the British government and the American government knew as early as November 1942, of the Final Solution. But unfortunately – a-and – and – did not do anything to inform the Jews of what awaited them. And that is the very painful thought that – that whatever was known by the author –

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American, British authorities was not disseminated on time for the Jews to – so survive, particularly the Jews of **Greece**, and particularly these Jews that were arrested sort of late in the war. The arrests began for the **Romaniote** Jews in 1944, March 1944, and the war ended in **Greece**, October 1944.

Q: Right.

A: There was plenty of time for the Jews to be informed of what awaited them, and – and also **Greece** lended itself to – to the survival of the Jewish – first of all, there was a very strong resistance group, very well organized, in the countryside. The countryside was free, it was called – it was free **Greece**. Well organized, and then, they operated within the cities. So, when we left **Agrinion**, it was October 1943, beginning of October, it was easy for anybody to go in and out of the city. It was October eighth, a few days after we left, when the Greek press published orders prohibiting the Jews from leaving their place of residence. And if they were in another location, they were required to return to their place of residence. So, it was as late as the beginning of October, 1943, when you could move easily into the countryside.

Q: Okay. Well, let's stop the tape and change it, please.

End of Tape Six

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Beginning Tape Seven

Q: D-Do you remember going to the baths of krem –

A: **Kremasta.**

Q: **Kremasta.**

A: Yes, yes, I remember that very vividly, yes.

Q: Why did you go? You went with your mother, is that correct?

A: Yes, yes, the main reason I went – well, first of all I – I was always very anxious to accompany my mother on these many expeditions that she went with my brother.

Q: Cause you really didn't like being without her.

A: I didn't like to be – she was a pillar of strength for me, and I – I felt lonely – oh, my father tried to entertain me and keep me busy, but I – I – and – and of course, for me it was a mystery, all these villages, you know. Cause they would come back with many stories to tell about oh, how a sheep was slaughtered, you know, because the village – it was done, and it was a big event, and the dogs were barking. There were a lot of adventures that my brother and mother had on these expeditions. And so I felt it was just – when my mother suggested that, I – I was thrilled. I had some sort of a rash between my fingers, and – and my mother was really exhausted from her travels in the villages, and so she needed to recuperate somehow. So – and I was very thin, a-and the villagers had this belief that the spa can cure anything, anything you had, whether it was a skin problem or orthopedic problem, whatever you had. The place to go was in **Kremasta.**

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And so my mother one day, it was August, it was summer, she told me, you're coming with me and it will be a nice place, we'll be by the river. And so we walked – we re – you walked to every place, you didn't take a mule or anything like this, it wasn't very far. And we went to **Kremasta**, and this place was just teeming with people. There were a lot of partisans, ardat – **andartes**, recuperating **andartes**. Many of them were injured, and they were recuperating there. There were villagers that had orthopedic problems, and they would – would – would come to **Kremasta** for the baths. The baths were supposed to cure everything. And my mother st – I remember her saying how people would come curled up in a basket on a mule, take the baths and then they would walk straight, you know, without the assistance of a cane or anything. I mean, there were miraculous cures. So we – we shared a room with another woman and her child, and we started going into these baths, they were constructed of cement, and they would get filled up with this water that was – smelled of sulfur, like rotten eggs. And my mother kept saying, well this is very good, you know. I couldn't bear the smell – this is – this is very good for you. And th-the following day my fa – my brother joined us, and it was a sort of a nice, little vacation. But unfortunately came to an abrupt end when the captain of the unit of the partisans that were stationed in **Kremasta** announced that th-the – first of all, the partisans had to go back to their units, wherever they belonged, and the villa – villagers had to go back home because the Germans were advancing towards that area. So, people panicked, they immediately stopped their baths and they started just a huge group of

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people, some on canes or sticks – not canes, but sticks, or – or mules and horses, going back to their homes. And so when we reached the village with my mother and brother, the village was in a state of excitement, because this time all of the villagers were going to leave the village. They – with their animals, because the – at this point the Germans had become very aggressive towards the villagers, who at the beginning they were trying to appease, but now the villagers were supporting the resistance by providing them with shelter and food and so these – th-the Germans were carrying out retaliations against the villagers by executing them, or burning the villages. So that was known, and so everybody was leaving the village with their animals. And my father was in the process of baking bread in the –

Q: In the oven.

A: – his famous homemade oven. And there was no time for the bread to – to – to bake completely. This reminds me of the exodus from **Egypt**, with **Moses**. And – and now we, again we pack as many things as we possibly could. And this time we don't have any mules to transport things, so we have to travel light, with one blanket and very few food supplies. And so everybody is leaving the village, and this time we go to another – a place much higher than the earlier place of **Chiandafelis**. This place is called **Kamaria**. And so the entire village, with their animals, they camp this plateau at the top of the mountain, which offered a very good vantage point view of the villages below, not only **Psilovrahos** but the other surrounding villages. And so there we are, it's August, the sun

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is burning, there's no – they – we – we had brought the canteen, a small canteen full of water, but it was very quickly exhausted. The villagers knew of a – a spring, which my brother used to fill up the canteen again, but still not enough water. The villagers, because they knew the terrain very well, and they were used to this rough terrain, they were able to discover other sources of water, but – but not us. So my father actually had to – to go from villager to villager begging for a little bit of water to fill the canteen. And I remember we were allowed only three gulps of water, you know, no more, because it had to last. The other problem was that we didn't have – we brought only one blanket and it was very cold at night up at the top of the mountain, so my father borrowed a blanket from one of the villagers. And we decided – my parents decided that it would be best if we didn't stay with the rest of the villagers, but went to a secluded place, so in case the Germans came to **Kamaria**, they wouldn't find us. So again we were separated, we were separated from the rest of the villagers, and we found a secluded place and my mother or father or **Mykas**(ph) caught a goat, a stray goat, and we milked it. So we had a little bit of milk. And so we – we stayed in this place. Now, my mother was in – she was sick, she had fever, she was in very, very bad shape, because she had gone to – to **Kremasta** to recuperate from her ordeals, and now, all of a sudden, she has to go up to the mountains again. And I – I remember this – my brother doesn't remember this, but my – but I do – my mother saying, if the Germans come here, **Mykas**(ph) will take **Ninetta**, climb a rock and then a tree. And Father should hide somewhere, and I will throw all of our

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belongings off this – on the – off the precipice and I will get all – you know, fall off the precipice as well, not to leave a trace of our presence there. And for me, you know my mother, who was a pillar of strength, to say such thing was a very – a very shaky – shook me up. And probably that's the reason why I remember it. So we – from – from this location, we were able to see fires being set on the villages below. And it was, you know, one village after the other being set on fire, systematically. And they had reached our village, **Psilovrahos**, and they began to burn those houses as well. And – and it was – it was horrible, because these people were very poor to begin with, and now they're losing – to lose their house and their household, it – it was awful. But then, suddenly, the fire stopped – the sa – fires in **Psilovrahos**. They had burned a few houses, but then the – the f – the fire stopped. And we didn't know what had happened, but later on – in fact, on my last visit to **Psilovrahos** in 2005, some of the villagers told me what had happened. One of the villagers, his name was **Bulumbashez**(ph), a-an old, elderly person, became so infuriated with what was happening, that he defied the danger and he started coming down the m – the mountain with his cane and he had binoculars, creating a lot of commotion as the rocks were tumbling down, and the two Germans with the torches that were setting the houses on fire, they thought that the **andartes** were coming down. An- And so they stopped and left. And – and so this man really saved the village from – from being burned to the ground. So it – there's so many things that I learned afterwards, and at the time –

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Q: You didn't know, right.

A: – they were happening, but we didn't know what was happening. For example, that explosion that we heard the first time that we had to leave the village at – at – that explosion, we have an explanation now. We learned af-afterwards that the **andartes** in **Agios Vlassis** where they were supposed to stop the advance of the Germans, recognized they didn't have enough forces and so they set the ammunition depot on fire, and so they ex – that was the source of the explosion.

Q: Right, right.

A: But at the time, you hear sounds, we don't where – what the cause of it.

Q: Did your hand get better from even your brief time at the –

A: Yes, yes –

Q: They did get better.

A: – yes. And my mother suffered of an ear infection, and that also got better. I mean, there's no doubt that these waters had – and – and mud had medicinal –

Q: Right.

A: – factors, but –

Q: Do you remember having lice in your hair?

A: Oh, yes. Do I remember that? That was a nightmare. That is a story in itself. The blanket that my father borrowed from one of the villagers in **Kamaria** was infested with lice. And so when the Germans retreated and the whole village returned, we came back,

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and suddenly our clothes, our hair was infested with lice. It was a horrible situation, and there were no medicines, of course, to – and insecticides. So – and that again, I remember as a firsthand experience, how we went to a remote location. My parents had to borrow a large kettle and – and we had soap, so my parents, they washed all the clothes with soap, and then – and blankets, and everything, all of our possessions, and then they boiled them in water. They lit fire under this kettle and they boiled them to – to kill the lice. And we had to dry our clothes and fortunately it was August, so it was easy to dry them. We washed everything that we possessed. But unfortunately, I – I had the very thick, curly hair, and they – the lice were settled there –

Q: Comfortably.

A: – comfortably. And my mother – one way to – to control the lice is to crush the insect between your thumbnails and also crush the very tiny eggs that they lay on your hair strands. But it was impossible, and I had to scratch like mad. And then my mother said one day, what if I cut off this side of your hair? And I said yes. We didn't have mirrors, so I didn't know what I looked like. And it felt much better, so I said, let me cut the other side as well. So that felt better. Little by little she cut off all of my hair totally, totally.

Q: And this you remember?

A: This I remember. And I remember that she put a hood on my head so the children wouldn't make fun of me. And the children, of course, you know, this is summer. They'd ask me –

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Q: Right.

A: – why are you wearing a hood? And I said, I like hoods – and I don't remember what I said, but I didn't care what they said. I was really – it was a great, great relief. I remember this so vividly, yes.

Q: So did – did it actually remove all the lice when she did that?

A: Yes.

Q: Because they weren't resting on your scalp, they were ins – in –

A: No, she was able to wash my scalp easily, and –

Q: Uh-huh, right, which she couldn't do –

A: – so – but it was the hair where they had – I don't know if you're familiar with lice, but –

Q: No, I'm not really familiar, no.

A: Greeks who lived to the – with the – the war period are very familiar with lice, it was pandemic, it was **[indecipherable]**

Q: Well certainly when you talk to concentration camp survivors, they talk about lice all the time.

A: Of course, of course, of course.

Q: Right.

A: Yes.

Q: Because that's one of the –

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A: Yes.

Q: Well, that's interesting. So you were – oh –

A: Yes, the – the – the villager, I don't know whether it was the owner of the house or another villager, they gave my family a plot of land that had never been cultivated before, and it was full of rocks. It was a very, very rocky village. And so my father had to borrow gardening tools to hoe and shovel.

Q: This is after you come back?

A: This is – this was done in the spring, so this is before going up to **Kamaria** –

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: – because we started cultivating this piece of land in the s – in the spring. And so we had to extract the rocks and my brother had to carry manure. That was another thing that – the villagers were – were willing to share whatever they had, so they had to share the ma-manure from their animals and my brother would carry it on her – his back. And then my father didn't know anything about gardening, but he learned quickly; he had to learn quickly. And so we made a garden, we planted onions and beans, maybe potatoes as well, I'm not sure. So we did – we did get some – some food from the garden, not much.

Q: But some.

A: Yes.

Q: I see. Do you remember the – what – what might be called liberation? I don't know what you called it in **Greece**, but there was an end in 1944, right?

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A: Yes.

Q: Earlier than in other places, actually.

A: Yes, yes, yes. The first news about liberation reached us in – in September. There were –

Q: Of '44?

A: Of '44. There was this – the news that th-the Germans were being withdrawn – were – were with – withdrawing from **Greece**, because it didn't happen overnight.

Q: Right.

A: But my parents reaction was caution. They did not want to – to return right away, so they wanted to wait until we were certain that the Germans had retreated from **Agrinion**.

Q: And did you notice? I mean, you were six now.

A: Did I know that? I don't think I knew that. I don't think I – I was conscious of that at all, no, it's –

Q: Right, okay. So when did they become certain, so that you could leave?

A: It was in October when the Germans had – news had reached **Agrinion** that the Germans had retreated, and there were probably villagers that had gone into **Agrinion** and they witnessed that the –

Q: Right.

A: – Germans indeed had – had left the city. And so we didn't all leave together to return to the city. First it was my father and mother that returned, because the house where we

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lived before the war was no longer available because the owner o-occupied the house.

And so there was a housing shortage. There was always a housing shortage in **Agrinion** because the people preferred to grow tobacco than build houses. There were always tobacco fields everywhere, and it – it was a very big industry for **Agrinion**. After the war, the family next door, that was their livelihood, planting and selling tobacco. So I know all about the process of growing tobacco, from beginning to end, except for smoking, I never smoked.

Q: So your parents went first to try to find a place.

A: Yes.

Q: And di-did – did **Mike** – **Michael** – your brother take care of you? Is that wa –

A: Yes, **Michael** – **Mike** – **Mykas**(ph) –

Q: **Mykas**(ph).

A: – and I stayed back, and he was supposed to be in charge of me and himself. And apparently we must have eaten something that was stale or spoiled, and we both became ill; very, very ill. I-It was – you know, having survived the war, here is a situation where we could have lost our lives, had our parents not returned on time to – to rescue us. Because I don't think any of the neighbors knew of our situation. We – he – he – I don't know what he cooked something that burned the pot, and then I don't know what kind of food we ate, but we were very, very ill. But while my parents were in **Agrinion**, they really had a hard time finding a house. And my mother in her memoirs describes their

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first night in – in the city. There were – we really did not look like city people any more. My father had a long beard and he looked more like a partisan than a bank employee. And my mother was emaciated, and she was really transformed. And they were in the main square, **Letea(ph) Belu(ph) of Agrinion**, and my mother describes how a friend of ours approached them cautiously, because they looked vaguely familiar, and as he got closer and closer, realized who they were. And he was overjoyed, because he was one of the **Agrinion** residents that witnessed the incarceration of the Jews of **Preveza** and **Arta** in the warehouses of **Papapetrou**. And he probably thought that we also were among them. So he was overjoyed. It was like he saw people who were resurrected. And he ba – he asked them where do you plan to spend the night, and then he – he suggested that they spend the night in the house of Mr. **Zahoropoulos(ph)**, who was a bus driver, driving a bus from **Agrinion** to **Athens**. And he is the one who, when my mother and my brother were leaving the house to go to the **Bokoros** house, he was on his way to our house, and he encountered us on the street. And he said, oh, so Mrs. **Matsas**, I was just coming to your house to tell you that the Jews of **Athens** have gone into hiding. See, he was – that was his route. He was just returning from **Athens** and wanted to inform my family.

Q: Right, right.

A: So this is where my parents spent their first night back in **Agrinion**, and my mother describes how hospitable people were, and they – they tried to do everything they could to make them feel comfortable. So they had a hard time finding a house, but eventually

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either Mrs. **Huopoulos**(ph) or someone else suggested to my parents that they go to an agency which was run by – by [indecipherable] who were really at this point sort of in control of the city and they sent my parents to this house. And the house had two levels, we were going to occupy the lower level, with a very beautiful garden, which we found out later that the Italians had constructed. And when the landlady found out that we were Jewish, she immediately went to this agency and said, why did you send me the Jews? And the young woman there, the employee said – said, close your mouth, and what difference does it make whether you're Christian or Jewish? They're people. And – and so she – she had to – to tolerate us.

Q: Mm-hm. And that's one of the stories that you were going to say about some people who –

A: Yes.

Q: – who were not necessarily helpful, right?

A: Right. There's – there were some people who were not very supportive.

Q: Right. I think we have to stop the tape now.

End of Tape Seven

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Beginning Tape Eight

Q: So, do your parents co-come within a couple of weeks or less to –

A: No, it was a matter of days –

Q: Days.

A: – days, days, yes.

Q: Okay. And the two of you are sick in bed.

A: Sick in bed, hardly able to speak, and they quickly had to – you know, there was no medicine they could give us, and they didn't even know what was wrong with us, but they – they gave us some nourishment, which we lacked for –

Q: Right.

A: – many days.

Q: Right.

A: And we recovered after a while, and –

Q: So that was okay.

A: – we were revived, yes.

Q: And so, did you then go to **Agrinion**?

A: Yes, then my – I – I believe they sent my brother first, with – with **Baba(ph)**

Yoros(ph) with a horse loa – load of food, because by then we had – having sold all these little dresses made out of the parachute, my mother had collected a lot of wheat. Because she would sell dresses to people who didn't have wheat, but with a promise that when

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they harvest, they would – she would be paid at harvest time. So now we have quite a bit of wheat to transport into the city. So – so my brother and – and this **Baba(ph) Yoros(ph)** and the mule, or horse, I don't know what it was, they come down into the city. I – I – I'm – I'm glad that I – you asked me this question, because I didn't say anything about **Baba(ph) Yoros(ph)**. There was a time, after the first time that – which was in November – when we had to leave **Psilovrahos** and go to **Chiandafelis'** house. There was another time when we had to leave the village. I don't remember which month it was, but this time my father and **Mykas(ph)** decided to leave the village, but my mother decided to stay, to guard whatever food we had. So my mother and I stayed in the house, and we were joined by the wife of Mr. **Lavee(ph)**, her name was [**indecipherable**], and she spoke German, and at one point she actually spoke with the Germans, and she claims that she protected the upper village of **Psilovrahos** from the Germans. I don't know, this is a story that I'm not very clear on. But – so my mother and I slept in the room, and then early next morning we hear a knock on the door. And we woke up, and there was **Baba(ph) Yoros(ph)**, who was a neighbor, he was a retired policeman, and his son was a partisan. And **Baba(ph) Yoros(ph)** said to my mother, what are you doing here with your child? If the Germans were to come to the village and – and take you and your child, I will never, ever forgive myself. And so when my mother heard that, she ha – didn't have to hear anything more, she packed quickly and – and – and she packed more than – than she could carry, and she – in her memoir she says how she – she didn't want to leave the

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– the things that she packed, which was food and – and a blanket, but at the same time she realized that she couldn't carry it. And at that point, Mrs. **Tsulamitsu**(ph), this – the – the mother of this – of the seven daughters who my mother was tutoring and knitting and crocheting and making lace, she appeared with her mule, and – and she saw my mother in – in this – in distress, and she said, oh don't worry, I will carry all of your belongings. And so, with her, we reached the upper village, and – and so this is how we stand this time when the – the Germans – that was their second foray into our region, but this time they never reached the village, and – and so – and so we all returned. So this is **Baba**(ph) **Yoros**(ph) who played a significant part in – in our story. As I said, th-the people really – they tried to – to help in any way they – they could, including th-the priest. You know, we – we used to go to the church, first of all to – not to show that we were any different than the other villagers, and also to eat some food there, because whenever there was a – a memorial service, they would serve **koliva**, which is a mixture of boiled wheat and pomegranates, cinnamon and sugar. It's a very nutritious, delicious thing, but we'd go there and – and the relatives of the deceased would give everybody a handful of this and so there was another source of food for us. And the priest, I don't remember his name. Papa **Demetrius**(ph), perhaps. I don't remember his name. He used to come to our house quite often, because he befriended my parents. And my mother would always serve him coffee, which was a rare find, a ra – a re – a real treat for him. And he would chat with my father. I don't know what they talked about, but we went to – attended even Easter

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services – Friday, Good Friday services. And this is the time when – I learned later on, you know, after the war, I – I used to go to the church with my friends a lot. And so as I said earlier, I knew a lot more about the Christian religion than – than the Jewish religion. But on Fridays, when **Jesus** has been crucified and – and he's dead, and the priest is supposed to exhort his flock to – to move them, that this wonderful human being sacrificed his – his life to save you. He's – and so he would – he – he – he would have had to give a sermon to make people cry, especially the old women cry, and so he had to go on and on with the crucifixion and the pain that he suffered on the cross. And so Sunday they celebrated Easter, the resurrection, he came to our house and apologized to my parents for having to give this kind of sermon in front of us. So it was, of course, appreciated by my parents. He was a kind man, and he said, what can I do? I'm expected to do that, I'm expected to give this kind of sermon. So now, go back to my brother and **Baba(ph) Yoros(ph)**, they're returning to the villa – to **Agrinion**. And so my – my brother arrived with – with food, to **Agrinion**. And then, after a few days, my parents and I came down into the city.

Q: What happened to the food in the bank?

A: The food that we recovered the food in the bank, was –

Q: You did?

A: Yes, whatever food was –

Q: So –

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A: – was available, stored, it was returned. Then they established – the **EAM-ELAS** established **ETA**, which was an organization to distribute food, and they made my father in charge of it, and my father was very, very proud of this task because he felt he was part of the resistance, part of **ELAS – EAM-ELAS**, yes.

Q: So the war is over, but then a civil war begins, doesn't it?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Does that begin almost right away?

A: Almost right away, yes.

Q: So you – you have a very long experience of w-war of various kinds, don't you?

A: Yes, yes, yes. And the – the sad thing is that the – th-the country is polarized. It was polarized before the war, but now even more. And **Agrinion** was dominated by the – by the people that were members of **EAM-ELAS**, and their personal friends that had joined the resistance, **EAM-ELAS**. And there – there are trials that are taking place. It is an absolutely horrible situation. Th-The people are drained from the war experience with the Germans, and now they have to confront the civil war, where literally brothers are fighting each other. There were – there were people belonged to the same family, and yet ideologically they were –

Q: They were in different places.

A: Different places, yes.

Q: And that's goes on for four years.

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A: Yes, yes.

Q: 1945 until 1949.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Right. Long time.

Q: So when it's over, you're 11.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And how is your life during that period? Is it – is it as difficult as it was during the w –
I mean, now you're older –

A: Yes.

Q: – and you – you experience more in terms of your memory, I don't –

A: Right. Again, my life, my personal life as a child growing up was rather undisturbed. I
– I was – you know, I was imbued with all these ideas of social justice and freedom, that
had been absorbed. You know, I would hear this all around me. People that admired, and
had fought s – and – during the – the – you know, y – they had joined the resistance, they
were my heroes. The people in **EAM-ELAS**, they were the ones who saved us. So I-I had
no – I – for me, those were the people I was –

Q: You were rooting for them?

A: I was rooting for them. The father of my friends, my best friends, who by the way,
they lived across the street from us, Dr. **Papethadoro**(ph) and the three daughters, they

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lived across the street. I admired him and – and I knew that his relatives and friends, they were – I knew the side they were with. So I just was sent to school, like – like all the other children, but I was – I was sent to the third elementary school, which served the – the children who lived in the outskirts of the city and the surrounding villages. So my friends were these children who came from the surrounding villages, and by comparison, I was from a middle class family, and I was sort of a more sophisticated person. So I – I ha – I always had the idea that my family was rich. We weren't, at all. But because my friends and – and – and classmates were from the surrounding villages, who were impoverished. But my association – a-and – and my friends, Dr. **Papethadoro's**(ph) daughters went to the fourth elementary school, which served the city children. These were girls who celebrate – had birthday parties. I had never heard of a birthday party.

Q: Right.

A: But they had birthday parties and they invited their friends, and they would have very good food, and they lived in the heart of the city. We lived in the outskirts. So there was this – so I remember this very vividly, of course, because I was already, you know, six, seven, eight, nine years old. And – but my association with the daughters of Dr.

Papethadoro(ph) was something that enriched my life and opened worlds that I wasn't aware of. They – they had a record player, I remember, and they had a few records of classical music. And we would listen to the music, and we would make plays with – write the plays and produce them for the neighborhood children. And this – the – my friend

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Hera, who – she’s going to give a lecture in just a few days on art, she would make all the costumes and the scenery. And – and my friend became eventually a professional actress, my best friend. So it was a – a very rich and happy childhood that I had, thanks to – to my assoc – my friendship with this family.

Q: Did they open you up to things that even your family wasn’t doing, in some – in some ways?

A: Such as what?

Q: Well, classical music –

A: Yes, yes, oh yes –

Q: – or art [**indecipherable**] because that was –

A: – definitely.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, yes, and – and I very vividly remember a painting that their father – an oil painting that the father had done, and it was prominently displayed in their living room.

But I became a part of the family, they jokingly would say, oh, this is our fourth daughter. And they were just beautiful people.

Q: Were your parents jealous of this, or no?

A: No.

Q: No, they –

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A: – no, not at all, they were actually very grateful, because my mother, when we returned to the city, she – well, a few days after we returned, a trickling of survivors become – began to pass through **Agrinion**, and among them cousins who had joined the partisans. These are cousins that escaped in **Larisa(ph)** and they joined the partisans and this is where they spent the war years. And they were returning home not knowing what happened to their families. They had absolutely no idea what had happened. So my mother, after these cousins returned, she decided to go to **Ioannina**. And at this point, we don't know what has happened to them. This is early on. Cause we didn't find out what happened until – see, this is October 1944. We didn't find out the war ended in the spring of '45, so we didn't know what was happening. So my mother decided to travel to **Ioannina**, and this is a heartbreaking experience for her because she goes into the homes of her sisters, **Eftyhia** and **Annetta(ph)**. Th-They had – they lived in **Ioannina**, they were married there, they had children. And these houses are occupied by villagers who had – whose villages had been devastated and they were coming into the city. They had been devastated because of the civil war. And there was nothing wrong with them occupying those houses, but for – for – for my mother –

Q: It was hard.

A: – it was really horrible. She was knocking on the doors and – and they opened the door and these strange faces were there, occupying her sisters' homes. And my cousin **Sam**, he was one of the young men who escaped and joined the resistance – **Sam**

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Meyer(ph) was his name, he was the son of my Aunt **Rezina**(ph). **Rezina**(ph) was one of my father's sisters. He kept on trying to console my mother, saying, you have me, you have – Aunt **Esther** – **Esthere**(ph), you have me now. I'll take care of you; you have me. And he himself didn't know where his family was, where his parents were. Yet for – for my mother it was an absolutely horrible, horrible time. So when she returned from **Ioannina**, she wanted to occupy herself with whatever she could. Something that would take her out of the house. And so she – oh, she says in her memoirs that while she was in **Ioannina**, she met a merchant who was smuggling fabrics from **Albania**. And she discovered that the person who was providing him with the fabrics, was none else but her father. Her father, in **Delvina**(ph), in al – **Albania** where he still had his fabric store because wa – he was still a merchant, because the Jews of **Albania**, even though they went into hiding, they were never deported, and so they all survived. And y – in fact, my grandparents never left the city of **Delvina**(ph) and the Germans occupied their house because it was a nice house. So they were never – never disturbed by the Germans. And there were other European Jews that had come to **Albania** to survive, but so – so the smuggler gave the idea that it's possible to – to get fabrics from **Albania**. And in fact, she got some fabrics from him and told him, when you go back to **Albania**, have my father pay you for the fabrics, because we didn't have any money, either. My father had not been paid in cash yet. There was no cash to be found, everything was bartering. So this is how my mother started becoming a merchant. And for her it was a lifesaving activity

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because it brought her out of the house with – had to trans – transactions with the public.

And I remember, she also smoked at that time, which was not common for women to smoke. It was sort of – people looked down on this.

Q: Right.

A: But it was her state, psychological state was such that she probably experienced some relief smoking. So she found a shoemaker, not far from our house. And she noticed that there were some empty shelves there, and she said, do you mind if I bring some fabric here and I – I sell it to the customers? And she said no, it's okay. So this is where she started going into business, becoming a merchant. And of course for her, becoming – being a merchant was second nature because she had learned all of this in her father's store in **Albania**. This didn't last very long because the owner of the shoemaker's store, she was – became angry when she discovered that he – he was subletting the store to somebody else. And my mother didn't want to make a fuss, so she removed the fabrics and she opened a small store in another location. But she was very, very successful, because – because of the civil war, these village women were coming from the villages that were being devastated, into the city. And they were too shy to go to a store run by a man. They were too shy to talk with a man and transact business with – with – with a man, so they would flock to my mother, who was – then started dyeing less expensive fabrics. The fabrics that she brought from **Albania** were silk and really high class fabrics, which the villagers could not afford to buy. So she started buying less expensive fabrics

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and she started traveling by herself, which was quite daring for a woman at that time, to **Patress**(ph) another city, to buy supplies and sell them to the villagers. So she was very, very successful.

Q: So it was both a psychological move, and – and –

A: Yes.

Q: – a financial move as well, but that wasn't –

A: Absolutely.

Q: – the major reason in the beginning.

A: Yes, yes, but in talking with my mother in later years, she told me how – how important it was for her to – to – to do this. And my parents did not talk about – you know, throughout this period, until – until the war ended in **Europe**, we maintained hope that they were going to come back. We didn't know about the camps of extermination, the Final Solution. All of this was totally unknown to us. And it was in the spring of 1945 when survivors – survivors of concentration camps –

Q: Started coming down –

A: – started trickling into the – int – in **Greece**. And among them was my father's brother, **Mikhail**(ph) or **Michael Matsas**. He had lost his wife **Rebecca**, and his son.

And then there were first cousins; my cousin **Nina**, who still lives in **Ioannina**, who I saw on my last trip. And then there was my cousin **Eftyhia** and **Sandra**. So these were th

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– just a handful of people, handful of relatives who – who came back, and they tried to piece their lives together. It was – it was a horrible time.

Q: When did you become conscious of what the – what was going on with these people, and what was going on in the world? How – how old were you, do you think?

A: I-I think it was when – when these concentration camp survivors returned, I became conscious of concentration camps, not through the people themselves, because they never talked about their experiences. They never talked. Even my cousin **Nina**, who I saw in 2005, I – I had seen her many, many times before while I was living in **Greece**, but never dared ask a question, until on my last visit, two thou – in 2005, and that was the first time that she talked about it to me. This is a whole lifetime –

Q: Right.

A: – of silence. It was too horrible for them to talk about.

Q: Okay, let's stop the tape and –

End of Tape Eight

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Beginning Tape Nine

Q: You were talking about your cousin **Nina**, who only in 2005, began to speak with you.

A: Yes.

Q: So, is your knowledge of the Holocaust not from personal exper – not from what people have said to you?

A: Exactly. Not from survivors, relatives or friends who had survived. It was from other sources, not from them. And when I was visiting **Nina**, I remember she – I stayed with her f-for a number of days, and every morning she would serve breakfast, and I wanted to ask her – and every morning I'd say no, maybe she – she doesn't want to talk about it. Until at one point, I don't remember exactly how it came up, she said to me, you know, I was interviewed by **Steven Spielberg's** project. And – and I said, you did? A-And – and – and I – and this was the first time that I realized that she had talked about it. This is in **Ioannina** now, there used to be – there used to be two synagogues before the war. One was demolished and the adjacent school, the **Alliance Israélite Universelle** was torn down, and they used that spot – land to build an apartment house for the Jews from **Ioannina** who survived either by going up in the mountains, or concentration camp survivors. And they live in that apartment house on **Josef Eljia** Street. And that is the name of – of a Greek Jewish poet from **Ioannina**, they named the street after him. But the – the horrible thing that I discovered on – after I made a tour of the – of the neighborhood where my aunt – my cousin pointed out all the houses of our relatives. This

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is where Aunt ri – **Annetta**(ph) and Aunt **Eftyhia** lived, and where my grandparents lived. When I returned to the apartment house, I saw this graffiti written in an ungrammatical way, saying, you die at 17 and we bury you at 70. It was obviously an anti-Semitic graffiti on this building that houses the remnants of that thriving community. This is a community that numbered 2,000 – almost 2,000 Jews. An ancient community that had existed there for many, many centuries. And there are th – a handful of people who live in this apartment house with painful memories, and they have to – to read this every day. So I asked her, why don't you – why don't you hire somebody to erase it? And said, we do it, and – and they come back, and they come back. I-It was – so my – my knowledge of concentration camps was not from our relatives that survived, yes.

Q: Did your parents and – and **Mykas**(ph) talk with – talk with you about what happened when – and they said when you were a little girl this happened, and that happened? I mean, is that where some of your memories come from? Or it is mainly from the memoirs that they wrote?

A: They always talked about our adventure in the mountains, always. And they didn't put it down on paper until they were in the **United States** already. And it was really, as my father says in his memoirs, always the driving force behind us. Because by then my brother had two daughters, and I had the daughter, and we realized that they had this treasure of information that should be recorded. And so we both, ma – my brother **Mykas**(ph) and I urged them to – to write down their memoirs. And I promised my father

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I was going to translate them, and I did. But my mother, I do remember the stories she came back with after her first visit of **Ioannina**, when she went to visit her sisters' house, **Eftyhia** and **Annetta**(ph), they were both married, and they had, each of them, two daughters. And they – and she said that the neighbors – there was also a woman, **Stavrypoulo**(ph) I believe, who occupied my aunts' house at the time, and she was a mistress of one of the German officers who lived in my aunt's house, Aunt **Eftyhia's** house. And my aunt – my uncle – Aunt **Eftyhia's** husband **Naseem**(ph) **Samwheel**(ph) was a dentist, and they were well-off, they had a very pretty house, very comfortable. And so the German officer chose to – their – that house to live in. And my aunt would serve him meals every day. She was actually expecting a child, and yet she had to go up and down to serve him. And my mother learned this story when she came to **Ioannina** that first visit after the war, that the – this German officer asked my aunt to bring more wine that na – particular night. And she said, tomorrow we don't know who lives and who dies. And so she brought more wine, it was a very sumptuous meal that she had prepared. And it was the very next day, March 21st – 25th – March 25th, when they rounded up the Jews of **Ioannina** – of **Ioannina**. They had to be awakened very early in the morning. It was an unusually cold day, it was actually snowing. And – and they knocked the door very early in the morning, 5:30 in the morning, people were still sleeping, and they told them, you have, you know, 60 minutes to pack and assemble in the sert – in a square by the – by the lake, **Pamvotis** Lake, of **Ioannina**. And this is what

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they did, and – and so my aunt – this is all totally unexpected, because up until that point, things were relatively calm in the city, and so this was an unsuspecting Jewish population that all of a sudden is rounded up. And so my aunt approached the – this German officer, and said, we too? You know, you lived with us, and I served you so many meals, we too? He said, yes, you too. And my uncle was still shaving, and it was a very – a horrible situa – a horrible scene that my mother described. And now in retrospect, when I think – when I think of it, it's very, very painful. Because I can – I can just picture now my grandparents being awakened early in the morning, in their later years in their lives; small children, pregnant women, they had to – to pack. What – what could – they didn't know what to pack, what to bri – they didn't know where they were going. And when I bring that scene in my mind, I – I can't – it's so painful, so painful. And then my grandmother was a very kind person. She was – she had many children and she was a self-trained midwife. And she was a – and – and my grandfather had a lot of transactions with the villagers, because he used to buy milk from them. So she would – so they had a lot of people that they knew in the villages, and whenever a woman was expecting a child, they would always ask my mother – my grandmother to come and help her deliver the baby. So my grandmother would always go around the neighborhood collecting baby clothes and food for – for the – the – the – the mother, the young mother and the baby. And so she was that kind of person. And why was she taken away? There was a – a book that someone wrote, I can't remember her name right now, about the Jewish community of

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Ioannina, and the deportation. And she interviewed survivors that were brought in in the same – the same truck with my grandmother. No, actually the same – they were transported by trucks from **Ioannina** to **Larisa**(ph), and from **Larisa**(ph) in boxcars to **Auschwitz**. And these women survived the concentration camps and they were interviewed by the author of this book, and they happened to be riding in the same boxcar. And their – a relative of theirs was expecting a baby, and her mother-in-law was frantic, because what are we going to do? How is the – the mother and the baby going to survive? And – and they quoted my grandmother, saying, d-don't worry, I'll deliver the baby. I know all about babies, I'll take care of you. So I don't know whether she delivered – whether she delivered the baby in the boxcar, or when they arrived in the concentration camp. But I do know that they were among the first people to – to go to the gas chambers, because they – they had – they – they took the elderly and the very young to the gas chambers. And so that was the end of these wonderful people. It's something **[indecipherable]** my brother and I live with this – this pain all our lives. And it's just – there's no – there's just no answer, there's – there's no answer, and – and what makes it so painful for – for us is that there was a possibility they could have been s – they could have survived, they could have – it was late enough in the war. The countryside was free. The partisans were there. They could ha – **Greece** is a mountainous country, they could have left, they could have survived. And it didn't happen. It – it's a – we'll – we'll just never – we'll never rest. I-It's a pain we'll never – always carry with us. When I went to

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Ioannina in 2005, I went to the synagogue, the only remaining synagogue inside the – the walls, the castle, th-the **frourio**, as they call it, that's still standing there, and it was renovated thanks to the generosity of American women o-of that background. And the walls are lined with marble plaques on which the names of all the victims, all the people who were deported, on marble plaques with the day of – the date of their birth – the names and the date of their birth. And th-the entire synagogue interior is – is covered with these plaques. It was my Uncle **Mikhail**(ph) that the – a younger brother of my father, wa – he's a survivor of the concentration camp, he's the one who collected all the information; the names, the occupations, date of births of all the people who perished, and then they etched their names in marble an-and – and there is a – it's a – a good monument, you know, a way to remember them. But it is – it is so painful to think – when I was in that synagogue, I – I had already learned a lot about the history of – of the community, and how rich their lives were, rich in – in long traditions, they – these unchanged traditions for hundreds of years. And it all perished overnight, literally overnight. So with – with my aunt – with my cousin **Nina**, when we were in the synagogue, and Mr. **Samwheel**(ph), who joined the partisans during the war, and this is how he survived, he joined them as a young man. Now, when I visited he was an elderly person. But he – he had a beautiful voice, and he knew how to play a musical instrument. And he took it upon himself to – to learn the liturgy, because he's the one who condu – conducts services in the synagogue, only very few times, on like **Yom Kippur**. That is

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when relatives and friends from other cities in **Greece**, they come to the synagogue. And so – so he – he chants the liturgy. And while we were there, the three of us; my cousin **Nina**, a survivor of **Auschwitz**; he, a partisan; and I, we recited **Kaddish**. And it was the most memorable moment of my life. And when I looked at the wall, there were the names of our relatives, and – and cousins that were my age when they were taken. And I s-sort of – I – I – I appreciate life. I'm very conscious that I was – I was just very, very, very lucky to survive. So I'm – I'm one of the very few – among the very few Greek Jewish survivors. And – and now I'm – we're – I'm eternally grateful to whoever ever helped us to survive those terrible years. And there were many people with small acts of – of – just a kind word here and there, or giving us a sip of water up in **Kamaria**, or – or the blanket, in spite of the lice, they – they shared everything they had, and I am – we're the – eternally grateful t-to them an-and to the place of **Psilovrahos**. **Psilovrahos** is a very special, special, very special place for me. I'm sorry.

Q: No, don't apologize. When I think about what you're saying and what you're feeling is, you – you don't cry from your own experience, you cry because other people didn't survive. It's – it's different.

A: Yes. That is –

Q: Because your experience is – was not horrible for you –

A: No.

Q: – in a certain way.

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A: No, not at all, it was – it is the loss that is so painful, the loss, and – and knowing that – that there's nothing you can do, and – and it isn't, you know, th – you know, people think that, you know, da – time will – will – will heal the wound, and that is not so. Not for me.

Q: You think about this all the time, don't you?

A: Yes, I do. And – a-and it's such an enormous loss. And a-as – as I advance in years, all I can do, I feel, is talk – talk about it so that people will remember them. They will have a memory of their names, at least, they existed. They were kind people. So when my Aunt **Rebecca**, who was my father's youngest sister, and she and her family survived in **Egypt**, see, because they lived in **Alexandria** during the war, then after the [indecipherable] took over, and they had to – to leave **Egypt**, they came to **Paris**. Well, she came to visit us about maybe 10 years ago. And she had left **Ioannina** when she was 17 years old. She got married to my Uncle **Laylee**(ph), and then they moved to – to **Alexandria, Egypt**. So she would come back to visit her family. So she retained that period of – of – of the family as though it was encased in amber. I always thought of that, that – that it was like time stood still for her for that period. And so she would – she had so many stories to tell about my father's brothers and sister, about their wives, their – their families, all of their – their lives. And she was a very articulate person and she loved to talk and I spent a lot of time with her. And then one day I realized, she is a treasure trove of information. And so I asked her if she would be willing for me to interview her

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using the family album. And even though it was – I know it was painful for her to talk about her brothers and their families and her sister that perished, an-and her parents, she – she let me interview her. I was not a professional interviewer, of course, but I – I really treasure the information that she gave me, because for a brief period of time, she brought these people to life. And they were – they had their own achievements in life, their own disappointments and – and while in life perhaps they were ordinary people, having perished the way they did, they became extraordinary.

Q: Well, I know there's much more to say, because your – your life went on for many years.

A: Yes.

Q: But I think we have to end now, and I just want to thank you.

A: Sure.

Q: I'm very grateful to you for being willing to talk with us.

A: Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Q: Well, it's been wonderful. Thank you so much.

A: Thank you.

Q: And we will do the next tape with the pictures, okay.

End of Tape Nine

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Beginning Tape Ten

Q: Why don't we start from –

A: Start with my grandparents, perhaps?

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. This is my grandfather **Noam(ph)**. **Noam(ph) Matsas**. And this is my grandmother **Sarah**, or **Serena(ph) Matsas**.

Q: Where do you want to go now?

A: Then now we can go to my – this is my father. My father and his younger brother, I can't remember his name at this moment.

Q: Okay.

A: And this is **Raphael**, is **Raphael**.

Q: Is **Raphael** a brother?

A: **Raphael** a brother, yeah, these are all brothers and sisters of my father. This is my Aunt **Rozina(ph)**, my father's sister **Rozina(ph)**. This is his youngest sister **Rebecca**.

This is **Raphael**.

Q: No, you said this was **Raphael**.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Okay.

A: Or no, wait. I-I'm sorry **Elijusaf(ph)** is the one on the left, extreme left, yes. And then this is **Hore(ph)**. His name, his real name is **Yeshuah(ph)**, but he was known as

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Hore(ph), the **Hore(ph)**, the firstborn. And this is **Elias**, and this is **Mikhail(ph)**. This is my Uncle **Mikhail(ph)** who survived the concentration camp.

Q: Okay. And who is this?

A: This is my Aunt **Annetta(ph)**, this is a sister of my mother, and her husband. This is a sister who was married in **Ioannina** –

Q: And she was –

A: – and her – had two children, two daughters.

Q: And she was deported.

A: She was deported. All of the people in these photographs – in this particular photograph had been deported.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: This is my Aunt **Eftyhia**, sister of my mother, and her husband **Naseem(ph)** **Samwheel(ph)**, he's a dentist. And it is in their house where the German officer stayed.

Q: And is she the one who cooked?

A: Yes. And this is her wedding picture. And down below is **Graziela(ph)**, my cousin **Graziela(ph)**, she's the daughter of my Aunt **Eftyhia**, yes.

Q: So they're related.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

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A: And this is another photograph, a later photograph of my Aunt **Eftyhia**, yeah, the same person.

Q: Okay. And what is this picture?

A: This is a picture depicting the deportation of the Jews of – of **Ioannina**. And this particular portion of the photograph happens to have relatives of ours. This one is – we identified it's **Sam**, my cousin **Sam**. She – he is the son of my Aunt **Rozina**(ph), who we – who we saw earlier in the family picture of my father. This is my Uncle **Naseem**(ph), husband of **Eftyhia**, who is my mother's sister, in whose house the German officer resided. I don't know if this person was identified. Possibly –

Q: It says **Dilyas**(ph).

A: Oh yes, yes, this is another person that we were able to identify.

Q: But that wasn't a relative.

A: I don't think it was a relative.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: And this is my Uncle **Elijusaf**(ph), brother of my grandfather. And then there's a – just a very small portion of the head of someone, we're not really sure who that person is behind Uncle **Elijusaf**(ph).

Q: Okay. And this picture, on the bottom?

A: This is a picture that has the name **Psilovrahos**. This is the entrance to the village **Psilovrahos**.

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Q: And above it?

A: And the one above is sort of a picture taken from a distance that shows – the village is located at the bottom of this hill, or mountain. And it explains actually, the name of the – the village, the – **Psilovrahos** means high rock, and one can tell easily why the village was named high rock. This is a very precipitous kind of mountain.

Q: Is that the mountain you had to go up?

A: It was not as high as – as that, but – but this is the mountain, yes.

Q: Okay, and what's the picture here on top?

A: This picture was taken in – on my first visit to **Psilovrahos** in 1991, and that's me sitting in front of the door, the entrance to the room where we spent a year in **Psilovrahos**. And then over on the left, and – on the left of that same picture.

Q: Uh-huh, here.

A: Yeah, there. This is the exact location, a little bit below, where my father constructed this primitive oven, with clay oven, right there.

Q: Here?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: This shows the entrance to the room. The – the building material is stone; as you can see, there's plenty of stone, plenty of rocks there. And this is the interior of the room. You can see the narrow window, and – and the fireplace that was used. It's a little bit

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covered with a cloth, but is a source of heat and cooking for us. And this is where my father mounted the – this contraption with the – the rubber strips, that we were burning for lighting.

Q: Right.

A: And – and the – the contraption is still there. Things don't change –

Q: I guess not.

A: – very fast in these villages.

Q: And who's this?

A: This is **Marika(ph) Surpano(ph)**. Here – she is the wife of the man in whose family house we stay – th-this – his family, his – her husband's family is the one that was renting this room to us. And **Marika(ph) Surpano(ph)** was there when I visited the village in 1991, and recognized me, and it was a very, very emotional reunion.

Q: And that's the same house that we saw –

A: That is the very same house, yes, that we saw earlier. This is a fountain in **Houni**. This is the village where the taxi brought us, and is a fountain constructed by Italian soldiers at some point during the occupation.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is taken in **Ioannina**, and it is the – called the **frourio**, it's sort of reinforced walls of the original city of **Ioannina**. And this is where, in these thick walls – these thick walls were used as a shelter during the air raids by – by the Italians during the Greek-

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Italian war. And the Jews – the synagogue that still survives is inside the **froúrio**. Behind these walls is the synagogue.

Q: And the top picture?

A: These two pictures depict the same building. They're taking in **Agrinion**. They are the tobacco warehouses, **Papapetrou** tobacco warehouses. This is where the Jews of **Arta** and **Preveza** were taken before they boarded the trains to **Auschwitz**.

Q: And this photograph?

A: This is the first photograph my parents took of themselves in – they actually went to a photo studio, soon as they returned from **Psilovrahos**, the very first day they arrived, after the liberation.

Q: That's when they were looking for an apartment, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: A house.

A: A house, yes.

Q: And what is this document?

A: This is an **I.D.**, my father's **I.D.**, that was issued by German authorities. In the village, my parents obtained baptismal papers from, I guess the priest, and they sent these documents to **Agrinion** and they were issued the **I.D.** cards by the German authorities. The names have been changed to sound more like Greek Christian names. Names of my grandparents are mentioned there, and – and my parents' names are mentioned but they

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have all been changed to sound more Christian Greek. The interesting thing about these **I.D.s** is that there's no mention of religion, which is quite interesting.

Q: And who is this good-looking group here?

A: This is my family. This is a post-war picture, depicting my brother on – **Mykas**(ph), or **Mike** on the left, my mother, my father and me. I'm – we don't have very much money to buy good clothes, but somehow we managed to look presentable. But I do wear a pair of shoes that I borrowed from my friend **Ephemia**(ph), from the **Papatheodoro**(ph) family. And of course I have my huge bow perched on my head. It was – it was the latest in fashion for little girls.

Q: Do you remember what year this was?

A: I don't know the exact year, but I believe that it was perhaps '46 – '46 or '47, I'm not sure.

Q: And what does this represent?

A: These are two fragments of stalactites from the – the cave of **Arapo**(ph) **Kefalas**(ph), where we had to hi –

Q: And where was that?

A: This was in – in **Psilovrahos**. And the date is November fifth, is it? That was probably the day – 1943. That was probably the day that we were in that cave.

End of Tape 10

Conclusion of Interview