United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Feiga Hollenberg Connors
November 1, 2009
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Feiga Hollenberg Connors, conducted by Judith Cohen on November 1, 2009 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Newton, Massachusetts and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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FEIGA HOLLENBERG CONNORS
November 1, 2009

Question: This is **United States** Holocaust Memorial interview with **Feiga Connors**, conducted by **Judith Cohen**, on November first, in **Newton, Massachusetts. Feiga**, I'm wondering if you can start by giving us your name before the war, as your birth name, and the date and place of your birth?

Answer: Okay, my name – my cu – my mother gave me – I was named after my grandmother, **Feiga**, my fa – on my father's side. And the Polish name, the school registration was **Fanci**, **f-a-n-c-i** or **c-y.** And my last name was **Hollenberg, h-o-l-l-e-n-b-e-r-g**.

Q: And your – your date of birth and place of birth?

A: My date of birth, I'm not totally sure. I picked a month that I love, I love May. I didn't – I think I was born in March, but I really we – don't know. And I think I was born – I'm – I'm registered in 1932, when I was in **DP** ca – '30 – 1933, when I was in **DP** camp, either I was not totally understood when I gave the dates, or I was just t – it was just written down for convenience, because if you were younger or older, you went on this ship or on that ship. And I certainly couldn't pick any ships, or where I went. But anyways, I don't think my birthday is that accurate, but I have been – always gone by May 28th, 1933.

Q: And can you give the names of your parents and siblings?

A: Okay. My father's name is **Hirsch Hollenberg**, and I think he was born in – in 1898, because I remember him telling us the stories that he was in the first World War when he was 16 or 17, so that puks – puts him approximately that age. My mom was **Sally Rosenberg**, and I was told that she was 10 - 11 or 12 years older – younger than my father, and I'm not totally sure. So that would put her about – her birth date about 1910 or 1912. I know she was 18 when she got married in 1930, and a year later, or two years later, I was born.

Q: And you have – did you have any siblings?

A: I have two younger brothers, I was the oldest of three. Actually four. But I had a brother that was 15 months younger than I was, and his name was **Haskell.** And I had my second younger brother was about four years younger than I was, and his name was **Bunion, b – b-u-n-i-o-n**, I think. And – and when we were in the ghetto, my mom had a tiny baby, and about January of 1943, or February, and he died during one of the pogroms.

Q: Mm-hm. Let's step back before the war. Can you tell me what your life was like before World War II broke out?

A: Well, I remember my parents as extremely loving. My father had a big farm. We had lots of land, and we actually were quite well off. My mom family lived down the street from us, the **Rosenstocks**(ph) and my grandma had a restaurant bar kind of thing. And her place, and her house was just across from the marketplace. So – the

marketplace where they sold horses and cattle, so I remember going there on Thursday and early, very early Thursday morning, my grandma would come – she – to our house. And I remember her brown buns hair in the back. And she would say, okay children, it's time to get dressed. And she was just the most loving person. My mom, she was one of six children, I think, maybe five. She had a older sister. She had three younger brothers. I think she was one of six, maybe five. And – and again I remember one of my mother's brother, when it was my first day of school he came by my house, and I had a white bow on my head, he made – wanted to make sure that I look my best, and – and I was sent off to school. But it was always, you know those memories a-are so vivid, and so important to me, that sort of – but it was sort of secret-like. It kept me alive for so long.

Q: And what was the Jewish life like? Was – how was the Jewish community integrated into the general life in the village, a –

A: Well, we – w-we – in **Korolówka**, there were houses a-along streets, the streets were unpaved. And the town, the center of town was all Jewish, and there were synagogues. My fa – my family was not very religious, and neither was my mother's family very religious, although my mom's father, my grandfather which I never knew, everybody talked of him being as a religious person. M-My – my – the **Hollenbergs**, my – my father's two sisters were not too religious. So we'd go to synagogue and I'd go with my father and brother, and my father would take us to synagogue to keep us

out of the house so my mom would have free time. But – and – and he loved the studying of Judaism, as a studying, as – as a point of discussion. And I remember very high falutin' discussion, and very serious because I remember the voices going up and down. But in the sense of devout, on the sense of – we were not. But again, i-in the morning, he would say his prayers with the tallis and the – oh, whatever. And so in one sense we were Jewi – because we were Jewish my father said that it was important for all of us to know ar – and understand who we were. And I remember my younger brother would go to **chayder,** I didn't go to **chayder,** I had a private tutor at home. And my father would talk about the stories in the Bible with my brother and I would pipe in and tell the stories before my brother, and – and my father would say, now who am I talking to here? So, it w – it was just a very loving family.

Q: And for holidays, did you celebrate with the extended family, and your cousins, and –

A: Ah, ye – sometimes. But my mom would start cleaning the house and – and preparing bread on Friday night, and bake it in the oven. And the house was cleaned for **Shabbat**, thoroughly every week, and on **Pesach** it was over-cleaned and painted anew an – on the high holidays again. So twice a year the house was re-cleaned.

Q: And in terms of social life, did your family socialize mostly with relatives, with other Jewish families, or with Polish neighbors also?

A: No, we didn't social – well, we socialized because my mom had brothers and sisters, so we socialized with them, they would come and I remember playing **[indecipherable]**, all that stuff. And my father would spend an awful lot of time at his sister's house, and my mom would say, you're never here. But, because we had a lot of land and a big farm, we dealt with the **Ukraine** more than the Polish people on a daily basis, but it was more in terms of labor and work being done than coming to a house and having coffee, nobody did that.

Q: Did you help out on the farm also, or it was just –

A: Well, I helped out if I didn't bother anybody.

Q: Let's jump ahead to start of World War II in 1939. I know that this is an area that the Soviets occupied. Can you describe how life changed for you when you realized that the war was entering your own little town?

A: Well, when the Soviets came, the first year went according usual. But my father had to report m-more precisely how many – how much grain wi – came in, or how much potatoes, that was important. And by the summer or spring of next year, my father, I remember him worrying that if we had too much land, would they think us being rich, and would we have to be shipped away? So I remember already him worrying what will happen if the Soviets would stay – would have stayed, because the imposition and the taxes or the contribution of grain to the **Soviet Union** was quite different than before, and he couldn't hire the – as many people as he did before.

Q: And as a young child, did your life change at all under the Soviets?

A: No, no, as a matter of fact, it was quite nice. You know, I – I went to school freer; I was not as fearful. I don't know what to be fearful, I couldn't tell you specifically, but it felt that the police was more on the Jewish side. As a matter of fact, one of my mother's brutha – brothers, which h-he is in the photograph, he served on the police force as a consultant for awhile. So, that never happened before. No Jew would ever s-serve in government or a thing like that before the war. And one of my cousins – well, that was maybe before the war, he tested so high in school that they were going to send him to a high school in **Borschev** and that never happened in **Korolówka** before, that a Jewish boy would go to a Polish high school.

Q: Do you have any memory of whether your family was aware of what was happening on the German side of the border?

A: I didn't know how – there was no newspaper in our town, or – or radio, although the radio was just coming in, but it would be through a loudspeaker, so you never knew what the news were. But what happened, the Jewish community would get papers, a month or two months old, from **Lvov** or **Krakow**, or sometimes even from the **United States,** and that's how they sort of got their news. The best news, if anybody got the **London** paper, or the other English, or other foreign papers, which could have been six months old, I don't know, but it was old papers, you know, that we got the news. But somehow, when – when in May or June, when the schism

between **Russia** and **Germany** came about, everybody knew immediately what was happening. And I don't know how.

Q: Can you describe those first days when the town fell under German occupation in June '41, were there – did it take awhile before the front actually reached your town, or were you immediately aware?

A: Well, we were immediately aware because the soldiers walked through, the German soldiers walked through the town. And I was watching them walk through, you see, so just marching, and everybody was happy and laughing. But everybody in town knew that something terrible was going to happen, because a few months before, there were a lot of people from **Silesia** running to the Russian borders, and wa – and that was even before the war, before 1941, and there were some people that stayed with us in our house, because any – you have to offer hospitality to any strangers that c-come through the town. And there were quite a few different couples that – or families that stayed in different houses, and I remember them staying in our house.

Q: And these are Jewish families –

A: Jewish families –

Q: – from **Silesia**.

A: Yes, who were running away from the Germans. So we knew that something terrible was going to ha – is – is about to happen, but we didn't know the extent.

Q: And did your life change immediately that day of –

A: Yes.

Q: – when the German soldiers –

A: Yes.

Q: What were the first changes that you experienced?

A: Well, the first changes, it was in June, and we were told, my father was told that he cannot hire people to work on the farm. So, my mother went to work on the farm, on the – on the land with my father. A-And – in haying and all that stuff, he couldn't hire laborers any more. So I re – the reason I remember, because I was the oldest, I was left in charge of my two younger brother, and I remember washing the floor, and being so proud that, you know, at seven, eight years, I wa – I – a-an – and – and I remember my mother being prou – but the point is that my mother couldn't do the daily chores and I was left to do the daily chores, so it was immediate.

Q: And, were there any anti-Jewish restrictions other than the hiring, that were imposed that first summer?

A: Well, I-I – as a kid I don't know what they were.

Q: Were you allowed to go to school come September?

A: No, oh no, no. No, school was cut off even before then, right. And that was in '41.

Q: Now, do you remember the attitude of your neighbors changing? You talked before about how they were all laughing when the Germans marched through. Did they start to react differently to your family after the Germans came?

A: No, not really. I don't remember. If they did, I don't remember. Di – my family didn't talk to them about it. And I don't remember any **Ukraine** family, even the people that worked for my father **[indecipherable]** at least I don't remember my father talking. Now that you mention it, I don't know, maybe some of those memories will come back, but I don't remember it as of right now. I don't remember any **Ukraine** family or Polish family being happy on what was happening. Even as much as they hated the Russians, I don't remember anyone coming over and saying that they're happy the Germans are there. The only people that I remember being happy is the police force. They hired immediately – there was a new police force, and they were happy, a-and they looked – went with their batons quite co – a-around, and everybody was in their houses when the police went through town. But I don't remember any – any Ukraines being happy that the Jews were –

Q: So other than the fact that your father couldn't hire Ukrainian laborers, for the first war of the occupation, I'm talking before the fall of 1942, during that first year of – end of 1941, beginning of '42, were there any other changes in your life, or is it basically carrying on as before?

Q: Well, it was basically sort of the same. We heard the stories getting much worse, and – and all of a sudden there was a Jewish – a Jewish committee set up. And when the Germans, or whoever it was needed things, they went to the committee and the committee obliged them. So I remember putting – asking people to give money at first.

That was right after the high holidays of that year. I don't know when it was, whether it was before the first pogrom in **Korolówka**, or when, but my father's older sister had three boys. And I told you one of the boys was this genius type who was going to go to high school for the first year. And I think it was sometimes before the first pogrom that they asked for young boys as laborers, and they would go to the committee and the committee would provide. And I think two of my cousins were taken as laborers and I think that they were sent either to **Lvov** or to **Belzec**, or – I don't know.

Q: Did you have to wear any identifying badge, or –

A: Yeah. I don't remember when it was put on, whether when – after the first pogrom, I think, when we went to the ghetto, we had to – or maybe – maybe before. I'm not totally sure when we – we – we didn't wear yellow stars, we wore white stars, white armbands, and the white armband supposed to be pressed and very designating. And if it wasn't, you were taken off to labor camp, and so people had plastic, white plastic things with elastic, and then the Jewish star, so the – the – the band was very neat and clear. And that I remember. And I always wanted to know where they got those plastic bands, and I didn't dare ask anybody, and I still think about it, yeah, 70 years later.

Q: So the first pogrom, that was fall of 1942?

A: Yeah, that was the first pogrom of 1942, it was during the Jewish holiday, or just as the Jewish hol – or the first day of the Jew – it was sometimes in September, or whenever the Jewish holiday was at that year.

Q: So describe the – your memory of what happened. It was the Jewish holiday, you were getting ready for the holiday, and I mean, wha-what happened?

A: Well, let me tell you before. Before, my father's family s – I told you we knew what was happening and my cousins were sent off to labor camp. And so – so that was before my cousins, I think, were sent to labor camp. I'm not sure exactly, but my mo – my father's two sisters, their families, they had three boys, one had two, one was a hardware store manager, he had his own little hardware and another family on his side dug a bunker in my aunt's – my aunt's backyard. And there was a little outhouse, and under the outhouse we dug – they dug the – the bunker that could hold 20 people, or thereabouts. So, that summer, before the first pogrom, or that actually was even before the summer, because the earth was soft, so we already knew what was happening. I didn't know, but them digging a bunker for no particular reason how to camouflage, so my father and family knew what was going to happen.

Q: And describe this bunker a little bit, besides being very big. Were there provisions, any food stocked, or was it just a big hole?

A: N-No. It was a big hole under. You'd go through the outhouse, in the outhouse you'd leave the door open, so nobody would go into the outhouse. But underneath you'd lift it up like going down a cellar and you'd go into the bunker. But here, this – those marvelous people who dug the dunk – bunker, didn't dig a – for air to come in. They thought the air would come in through the wood cracks in the entrance. So when

we got into the bunker, there was no air. But that – I'll tell you that – what happened a little bit later.

Q: Okay, let's move int – describe the events before you went into the bunker. What tipped you off that there was an emergency?

A: Okay, so there was the ha – all that summer, everybody was apprehensive and on the lookout. So, if anything happened, our house was, here is the town, our semicircle of a town – is it okay?

Q: Yeah, it's just a little – but the – just switch the volume a bit, cause it's – okay. I don't know, there's some sort of noise, but I don't know what's causing it, but we'll –

A: Let me take this pen, and I'll draw you a picture. Here are two roads into the town, and here are the houses, right here. And my house is right here.

Q: Okay, see if this is better. Okay.

A: Okay. And my house is right here. And this road goes all the way to **Borschev.** So if you look out from my house, you can so – see the hill. So, it was a Saturday morning. My father saw trucks coming right over there, so there was a little space in here. And he calls me, he sees the trucks, and he s – calls me and he says, **Fanci**, go around and tell that the Germans are coming. We'll see you there in a bit, in a little while. Run. And I went, and they ran into the bunker.

Q: So the whole extended family was together?

A: Prepared to – whoever was there. I don't know if my aunt and her husband, because their houses were a little bit away, but my younger – my – my father's younger sister, her children. The bunker was full. And my extended family, they had a baby, about a 18 months old baby. And wasn't a baby, but it was a baby in terms of the comfort level of being in the bunker. Anyways, we are in the bunker for about an hour, and everybody's squishing back and not saying a word, and if somebody said, everybody would say sshh. And the baby starts crying, and wouldn't stop. And the Germans came into the backyard and they didn't have to look for anything, they heard the baby cry. So it – they found all of us in the bunker. So, when I went to my aunt's, my father and mother were not there with me, they didn't catch up with me, they hid someplace e-else, I – I assumed, after it was over. So, the Germans came and took everybody to the big common. There was a common right here, green grass, a common right here and they put everybody in this common.

Q: Including you.

A: Including me. And at one point when we taking out of the bunker, m-my uncle tried to run away and the German pulled him back and almost bra – broke his shoulder. Anyways, we all went there to the big common.

Q: And did they catch your parents also?

A: No, I'll tell you about – my – both my parents, my father went in a different direction, he went, and my mother ran into a hiding place of a neighbor up in the thing.

And he-her house was right here in front of this common with all the people. So when the trucks came to take everybody, that was about 10:30, 11 o'clock, because I – you know, you – ye – you knew – so, it was sometimes in the morning. So, everybody was screaming, and everybody, you know, they were families, hold my hand, don't run away, stay with me. And nobody said to me, hold my hand. There was no mother or father that was holding onto me. So, instead, I wasn't going to go in that truck and every – and there was so much confusion and screaming and crying, that I ran away, I ran this way, behind the monument. And there was a pharmacy here, and I ran behind the pharmacy, and once I was out of sight, I ran into the fields, and I escaped.

Q: How old were you, about, at this time?

A: About nine, maybe. Eight or nine. It was in 1943, let's say even 10, but probably nine.

Q: Did you ever find out what happened to the people who were captured that day?

A: Of course, nobody is alive. And at night, I don't remember exactly when I went back to my house, but I found my mother with my two younger brothers, ha – they were hiding. My father came back from the fields, he was hiding. And we were a family again.

Q: And were there any other relatives that survived?

A: My father's younger sister, where I ran to, she couldn't stay in the bunker either, so she left the bunker and she – and she fell on the floor and put a blanket over her and

the Germans came and looked and she even had stuff thrown in **[indecipherable]** and they didn't realize that she was there, but she survived. And a month after the pogrom, my ti –

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Hello, we're back. This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum with **Feiga Connors,** conducted by **Judith Cohen**, on November first, in **Newton, Massachusetts.** Okay, **Feiga,** bef – would –

A: Ah, can I say something about this –

Q: Sure.

A: – second introduction. My name is **Feiga Connors**, but if you put in that **Hollenberg** in the middle, it's just very important.

Q: Okay, we'll – we start aga – **Feiga Hollenberg Connors.**

A: Thank you.

Q: And – pleasure – and before the tape ran out, we were just talking about how you managed to escape from the first **aktion** and you were separated from your aunt and uncle, and you went around the back and escaped and came home. So tell me what was – mood was like when you got home and your parents found you. That must have been incredible.

A: Well, it was – it was – first of all, everybody said, who's here? We didn't ask how we survived, but I remember my brothers holding my hands, so I didn't even get to my parents and my brothers were just four and seven, or something, or three. I mean, they didn't know what was happ – I mean, they were kids, so – but the intensity of losing everything, and also what happened. The town was empty. Almost everybody was

taken away. I use that euphemism, taken away, and I use the euphemism, I-I lost my family in the war, because in my heart, noth – every – that picture of my town and home is static. So – and that also gives me excuse, I don't have to talk about anything, if things are the same. But the whole end is what I remember as a – before I ran away. It's not that I felt alone withou – without my parents, but I felt the urgency of getting to my parents, or getting away. And I remember standing on the hill, where the trucks passed me by, and feeling such a – va – I got you. You didn't get me. And I felt such a – a – a defiance. Do you know, I re – I have never felt that defiance like I did at that moment. So, what happened after that first ac – as you call it **aktion** or pogrom or killing – well, it wasn't a killing, because they were not – there were only one or two people or 10 people dead, but it was a town of – of about 15 to 2500 people, and there was nobody left, just a few people left, literally. So what they did after that, they send us into the next town, into a ghetto.

Q: And describe the ghetto for me.

A: Ah, first, I don't remember getting to the ghetto. I don't know where I was, or I don't remember the trip. It's about a 10 minutes, 15 minutes – well, by car, but we didn't have a car. I don't remember how we got to **Borschev** or ho-how the few people got to **Borschev**. But what I remember is we getting into **Borschev** and there is a room waiting for us, so it means that my father or somebody went ahead and – and there was a place for us to stay.

Q: And in **Borschev**, did – were you able to go to school, or was there forced labor? How did you spend your day in the ghetto?

A: Okay. It was – in **Borschev** we got there right after the holiday, the end of September, October, so it wasn't cold yet. There was no school. There was no labor. We – my father must have – ho-how they found people to hide things, and – and oh, I remember too, when we closed up our house, when we left **Korolówka**, my mom giving things to people, and putting them in with Ukraines and Polish people for hiding, so we can use that either money, or linen or dishes or silver, all sorts of things, using that during the war as to get food. How they did it and what, I don't remember. And so I remember sa – us getting – finding **[indecipherable]** and there were five people; us, and my father's sister was with us at that time, she is the one that survived, too. And then a month later, how we lived. I was the one that, because I didn't look Jewish, I was the one that went to the market to bring home food. I was the only one that could leave the – the ghetto to get food.

Q: And how did you do it? Was there ration coupons, or you are bartering with the belongings?

A: No, somehow I had money, and I would go to the market and give money a-a – and for **[indecipherable]** and pick out what I wanted, and give the money and walk away, and, you know, just like what everybody does. So I did the market thing on a regular basis. I don't know what my two younger brothers did with their time, or me with my

time. It was – we were very good, nobody ever complained. I don't remember – I used to fight with my brothers, I don't remember one fight in the ghetto. Not that they were angels, but I don't even remember them.

Q: And –

A: And – and I told you that there was a baby that was born in the ghetto. I don't remember even my mother pregnant. I wasn't aware. She must have gotten pregnant at home and gotten to the ghetto, because we left in October, and the baby was born in February. So, she must have been pregnant, and I don't remember any such a thing. All I remember is that we were all in the same room, me and my brother and everybody, when my mother had her baby, in the same room. There was a midwife. So, again, how they procured the midwife, how they got the mid – I don't know.

Q: And, was a baby boy?

A: And was a baby boy. And what I remember about the baby boy, we were all happy, I remember that. And I remember we all saying, well, we don't have to worry about naming him, we have so many names to choose, because you name your baby after – well, after dead people. So my ba – so, in order to honor the people, we wer – so, we named my baby brother with certain names, know? And we – there was a **bris**. I remember somebody coming there, to that room. But I don't remember. I remember my mother being fearful of the **bris**.

Q: And who were some of the people that he was named after?

A: He was named **Mendel**. He was named – I forgot the other names, but I remember seven names **[indecipherable]** out, to honor the people, that they were – they were cousins, brothers. Some we didn't totally know that were dead, but we – my father told me, you know, wrote it down very clearly.

Q: And when you were in the ghetto, was your father forced to do any forced labor? Was he taken out, or he – you – stayed home with you?

A: I don't – he – we all stayed in the room all the time, but I don't remember seeing him. So, I don't remember what it is that anybody did, you know, as an occupation. I have no idea. And I know there was no school, there was no – before we had private tutoring, and all that stuff. If somebody didn't go to this school, they – they had all sorts of things, so schooling was an important thing. But I don't remember. And the other thing, just to summarize, we were in that ghetto, not for very long. So we were in the ghetto from October – September, October, til the summertime, June, July. So it was about eight or nine months. So, what happened in the ghetto, that every month or two, there was **[knocking]** – somebody at the door.

Q: Okay, let's pause for one second.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum, with **Feigy Hollenberg Connors,** conducted by **Judith Cohen** in **Newton, Massachusetts** on October 8th, 2010. It's a continuation of an interview started last year. Want to just say your name to make – into the mike to make sure it's working?

A: Okay. My name is **Feiga Hollenberg Connors**, and today is October –

Q: Okay, then I'll just **[tape break]** Last time – okay – we – we left off the interview right after your family had move **Korolówska** –

A: **Korolówka**.

Q: **Korolówka** to the ghetto, and you had talked about the birth of your baby brother. And you had discussed a little bit about what life was like in the ghetto during the first months. And as I understand it, around **Purim,** things changed. Why don't we pick up the interview over there?

A: Okay. After my brother was born, he was born a – e – February – the end of February, and then there was a pogrom around **Purim.** [**tape noise**]

Q: Wait a second. Let's start again. Okay, this is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum, with **Feiga Hollenberg Connors.** It's a continuation of the interview that was begun in 2009. Today's date is October 8th, 2010. Okay**, Feiga**, when we were last talking, we had – you had mentioned how your family was forced

into the ghetto, and you talked about the birth of your baby brother, and what life was like in the ghetto during that first month or two. Let's pick up the interview at this point, and can you describe – I understand that things changed a lot as of March of 1943.

A: Right. So, we moved **Korolówka**, we came **Judenfrei** after the major cleaning out of **Korolówka** and taking everybody away, and the people that were left were sent to the bigger ghetto in **Borschev.** And we first lived in one building, then we moved to another building. And my mom had a baby, I think the baby was stillborn in the o- other building before we moved to this building number two. And, he was a little boy. And he – and I remember him being born, and the midwife in the room, and all of us, my mom, my dad, my two younger brothers and my aunt were all in the room while my mom gave birth to the baby. And – and there was a **bris**, there was – the next day, or a few days later. So the ghetto had all the Jewish, the rabbis, everybody was there.

Q: Can you describe the mood when he was born? Was it feeling celebratory, that there was a new child, or was it fear?

A: No, it wa – first of all, it was fear, not just for the baby's survival, but for the adults' survival, what would happen with a pogrom, with the killings, that we have to go into hiding. So we already knew that he might not sur – I mean, we knew that we were all in major danger, so I think, now that you mention it, that was probably one of the reason that we moved from building number one to building number two, because

there was a little bit more liberty, or people didn't say we won't allow the baby in the – in the bunker. Because every building had a bunker, and in building number one, the bunker was between the two houses, so it was a wall was walled off, and we'd crawl into a s – into a small place to get into th – this wall. And in building number two, the one that we moved, the bunker was in the cellar. So when the killing began, everybody went into the – to the building, that was during the **Purim** massacre, and – and they didn't allow the baby to come in with us. He was, by then, four or five weeks old, he was still tiny. And you know – and I know he was tiny in – in the recollection of what he did, he was just lying there, he cou – you know, he couldn't even smile yet. So he was very tiny. And so we all went into – into the bunker in the cellar, and we couldn't bring the baby, so we left the baby on a big bed, surrounded with pillows. And my mom was crying and they kept holding her down. And we stayed there, I don't remember how long, but we stayed there til it was almost dark, you know, from the morning. And when we got upstairs we found the baby dead. But not just this, the baby's cries were so loud, that the baby jeopardized the people next door, who were hiding in that compartment in between the walls, between one wall and another. So here were the people, here were the two – you know, and the cry from this bed – from this room to the – the police, it – this was not – this massacre wasn't a German massacre, it was the **Ukraine** police and the German and the Poles that did it. So it

wasn't primarily the German Gestapo like when they cleaned out **Korolówka,** like in the first pogrom. So this was a kind of cobr – co-cooperation with everybody.

Q: And the people who conducted this, were they, the Ukrainians and the Poles, were they known to the Jewish community from before, or were they brought in from the outside?

A: We didn't know anybody, and I don't recollect anybody knowing of retur – you know, being friendly. I knew one of my cousins worked for the **Ukraine** police, and one time I went to the market and the police caught me, and my cousin came and sort of rescued me in the poli – the **Ukraine** police let me go because of my cousin.

Q: This was during the war, or before?

A: That – everything was – that was in **Borschev** in the ghetto, a – a few weeks after – after the – the massacre. But – so, to finish the story with that – with that massacre o- on y – on **Purim**, after it was over, we went upstairs and we saw the baby dead. And the next day, or maybe it was even the same day, there was a cart with a horse, and would drive by each building and people would put their dead on this cart. And my mother was so upset and crying that I took the baby, she gave me the baby, or I took the baby – anyways, I took the baby out and put the baby wrapped up in a blanket, on the cart. So I don't even know where the baby was buried.

Q: And were these Jews who were doing the burial, or –

A: Yeah, oh yeah. Nobody in those situation would – none of the Ukraines or the Poles were just too good, nobody would do any cleaning, everything had to be done by Jews. And then during Passover a month later, there was the big massacre, where they rounded up hundreds of people and they shot them in the **Borschev** massacre. And they lined them up and they shot all the people. I – I might be confusing a little bit because of such a long time, whether it was just at the **Purim** massacre, or the – or the – or – or the one just before Passover, where they lined up hundreds, everybody in **Borschev** and they shot them in the big grave. And again, this wasn't just a German – a German there with the – the – the – the **Ukraine** police with their shooting. And that grave, it's still there, but what I recollect, maybe that's a childhood memory, was that the grave itself was very long. It was about – longer than this house, which is this – I don't know how long. Well, anyways, it was almost a half a block long. And when I went to market pe – the – the peasants were talking about the grave, how it was bubbling and the – and the blood was just going up and down, bluh, bluh, bluh. So I went to the grave, and wanted to see it, to the Jewish cemetery and wanted to see the grave itself. And sure enough, it wasn't as strong as the first day, but still, you can see the heave of the grave, kind of, just the moving of the grave. And – and I let it be, and there – one of the **Sturmers**(ph) – the people, the wife of Mr. **Sturmer**(ph), her name was **Chana**(ph), she said to me, she says, I just want you to remember that I saw you in a blue coat, walking around, and I saw where you were coming from, which means

the direction of the cemetery. So, do you know, I always thought that that was just a memory kind of thing that I remembered kind of, and wouldn't say it til anybody til 50 - 60 years later, **Chana**(ph) **Sturmer**(ph) affirmed my memory. So, I don't mean I was happy, but it was like the memories were really memories, because I didn't talk much about the Holocaust or anything like that, it was just like it was unshared. It was something that I knew, and it was mine. And to have somebody say, I saw from where – you know, in this blue coat, and all of a sudden, I remember the blue coat, and it was unbelievable. But after that big massacre, there were not that many Jews left in the **Borschev** ghetto.

Q: Let me just stop and ask you two questions. So, with the big ghetto – the big massacre, rather, on Passover, where –

A: Or thereabouts, I'm not –

Q: Yeah.

A: – totally sure.

Q: I'd like t – explain, where were you and your family? How did you and your family survive that massacre? And also, could you say, when you went to the market afterwards, and you heard the peasants talking, can you describe the mood of the peasants? Were they just talking about this with happiness, wer – with curiosity, with sadness?

A: No, they were – they were just talking like it was an **[indecipherable]** for them. It was an unbelievable situation. None of them were happy, you know, was a happy – it was a market where people come on Thursday to do their business, you know. So, it wasn't – I don't know if it was Thursday; in **Korolówka** market day was a Thursday, in **Borschev** I don't remember exactly. But anyways, it was – it was – people just were talking in wonderment, and si – and really trying to look to scripture for affirmation that those things will happen, and therefore they are happening. I mean, that's what I heard. That's why the complete amazement of what happened, and how it was actually the – most of the peasants were really scared that such a thing could affect them forever, you know, in terms of the crops and – and the growth in the fields, and things like that. So there was also a certain amount of wonderment and fear, and it was like, did you see this? Tremendous wonderment. And – and one of the reasons that, all those years later, 68 years, I want, before my time is up, I really wanted the kids to see that grave. And it was nothing what I saw, and what I remember a-and felt, and never talked about.

Q: So how did your family survive the big massacre?

A: The big ma – I don't – we were hiding. It was still in the same old cellar, in same house, but after that was over, there was rumors of sending the Jews to another place after this massacre, and we knew what other places they were. So – so here you have Passover in the spring, and by May and June, we were looking for a place. My father

went back to **Korolówka** to see if we could hide, if we could find somebody to hide us. And then in May, the end of May or the beginning of June of 1943, we left **Borschev** as a family, and went into hiding in **Korolówka**.

Q: Can you describe how you were able to escape from the ghetto?

A: The ghetto was not closed in, it was not – it was an open ghetto. The – the thing, the Jews lived in the ghetto because there was no other place to live. So di – you didn't need a gate or anything to close it in. There was an ordinance that nobody was allowed in or out of the ghetto except Jews. So, being non-Jewish looking and 10 years old, I was the one that would go in and out of the ghetto with no complication except once. So I did the marketing for, you know, people would give me whatever, and I would do the marketing for our family and for people around us. So that's how I-I – I left. There was no – no gate or electric stuff or anything like that.

Q: So aft –

A: A-And nobody would – no Jew would dare live outside the prescribed area anyways, because that meant – so no matter how much you complied, it didn't make any difference, you died sooner or later.

Q: So, did you leave in the middle of the night, or in the day?

A: No, no, we left about 10 o'clock in the daytime so we'd have enough – because **Borschev** walking is a long ways, and so we wanted to make sure that we had enough light when we – we didn't get to **Korolówka,** we got to some peasants house, and

from there they hid in the forest. And – and so w-we were six people, my fam – my mother, father, my two brothers and myself and my aunt, who survived from the big – from the **Korolówka** killings. And we went into the forest, and there were two or three other peop – families that we met up for it. We didn't know, but we met up with it. And by, I think August, the – the **Ukraine** police found out, and they were just two or three police, and they came into the forest and start shooting indiscriminately. And somehow my father and I and my brother escaped, and my aunt was shot in the heart **[indecipherable]**

Q: Oh. Let's move back just a little bit. When you were in the get – in the forest, how did you survive, where did you find food, where were you sleeping?

A: Well, by then we were sleeping in the open air, you know, in the forest. And it was summer, so there was no – and – and there was a stream in the forest, so we had water from the stream. My father went and got food for us. And then – I can't remember now exactly whether my mother and my younger brother left us, and I can't remember – she – she felt she would find a safer place. That if we divide, we would have a better chance of survival, and finding a place. So my father took me and my brother, and my mother went with my younger brother, **Bunion**. And my father and I and my brother **Haskell** sur – went with my father. We stayed in forest a little longer after my aunt was shot. Actually, maybe two days longer. My mother left. But I'm not totally sure if she left before my aunt was killed, or after my aunt was killed.

Q: Do you have memories of what it was like the day your mother and younger brother, when you decided to break up as a family and she left?

A: I – I don't remember y – feeling of reflection or sadness. I don't remember when my brother died, when the tiny baby died, or anything saying what a terrible thing just happened to us. I remember that I was glad that whoever was with me was with me. It was not in terms of the loss that I remember feeling sad, it was that I was there with somebody. And if we wait it out, you know, just like they did, out the massacres, or like in **Korolówka,** where the first massacre occurred and they put everybody on the – on the trucks, and every – and then the trucks came and everybody cried, hold my hand, hold my hand. And because my parents were not with me, nobody said to me, hold my hand, so I ran away. And that sense that I had some control and could run away, whether I went marketing, or whether I – I went to the grave to look at the feeling, the sense that I could do something for me, and for whoever was next to my body, you know. And I wanted everybody to be next to my body. And when they weren't there, the first part was the emptiness, the feeling of all empty, alone. You know, it's just like when you go camping, and then nobody – you know, the other kids go into the water, and you're still on the shore. It was a kind of unreal feeling, and it was a kind of feeling that, if I don't feel th – a true feeling about it, everything will come back. It will just go back to where it was. I don't know if I make sense, I'm sorry.

Q: No, it does. So, your mother and younger brother left, and – about the same time that your aunt was shot. Did you actually see the Ukrainians who came into the forest, or were they shooting from a distance?

A: No. No, no. What I remember, is my father put my head down and my brother, and we crawled on our be-belly out from the area were, and we went out of the forest into the field. There was a cornfield or some kind of field, and we were there. And when we se – heard, when the shots were fired, and stopped firing, we stayed there for a little while longer, but we knew that they left. And when we were back – **[phone ringing, tape break]**

Q: So, how much longer than – afterwards did you and your sa –

A: Is it working?

Q: Yes – did you and your father and brother remain in the forest?

A: Til it got dark. I'm not totally sure, but I know that we were in a village where we had land. I think I told you we were farmers and we had lots of land. So, ar – we – we always used the farmers, the peasants and the farmers to work for us. So my father knew almost everybody in the village – in the – in **Korolówka** and surrounding **Korolówka**. So, the – we left the forest, and that was still hot, so it might have been July.

Q: Did these people that you knew from before the war help you in terms of getting food once you were in the forest?

A: Not in the – yeah, well, my father went and got some food, so he must have gone there. But when we left – we paid everybody, by the way, nobody gave us, gave us, but we paid, either in goods, we had some goods in – in – with one farmer who gave us, you know, like – like pots and pans or bedding, or whatever, or whatever there was, we had some goods with one person. And my father went and got some of the goods to give it to anot – to give it to whoever gave us food and let us sleep over. So we always paid, but the payment was nothing in comparison to be allowed to stay out of the rain, or out of the – oh, specially in October of '43 to '44, when it was cold, when we found a woman who kept us i-i – f-f – til February 28th.

Q: Is that someone you had known from before the war?

A: Well, my father probably knew. She was an old woman, and I don't know how he found her, but h-he – we paid her to stay through the months, and we paid her quite well.

Q: And where did she hide you?

A: Sh – we hid in the – in the barn. She had the – the – the hay, you know, for the winter, and all the f-food that you accumulate through – you know, the way a farmer accumulates th-the wheats and the cornhusks and all that. And we stayed hidden under the – under the – the – the wheat, you know, the –

Q: And did she bring you food, or did you –

A: She brought us food every night and it was potato and water. Three and a half potatoes and water every night, sometimes four potatoes.

Q: And did she stay to talk to you, to tell you what was going on, or –

A: No.

Q: She just dropped the food and left?

A: And left. And – and she had to do it, she had neighbors on each side, so she had to do it dis – very discreetly.

Q: So this time did you think that anybody else knew that you were there, or she was –

A: No, I don't even know the woman's name. There was one time – and we stayed from – from October, on – or November til February 28th of 1944. So we stayed there for a long time.

Q: And how did you pass the time while you were hidden?

A: We just sat there. And me and my brother would sometimes whisper. We couldn't talk, whisper, h-how – what we would do with food, and how happy we would be, and of the memories, how things will be as soon as this was over.

Q: Did your father whisper also, or –

A: Yeah, my father was between me and my brother. And one time toward the end, I – I got very peculiar **[indecipherable]** with the end. I don't know why, it was night and I screamed and I said I didn't care if I died, and I hope we all die today, and it was just not worth. And I felt so sorry afterwards.

Q: And –

A: But my brother, who was two years younger than me, he was just so brave, he never, never complained. I – I one time lost my temper with everybody, and my father felt so helpless, he didn't know what to do. So my brother tried to talk to me. My father felt that if nobody said anything I would calm down, which, that was what happened.

Q: And were you able to move around at all and stretch your legs –

A: No, no, no.

Q: So you were lying flat?

A: Lying and sitting. As a matter of fact, we had to sit close by because you don't want to make a big space under the – under the wheat, you know, uh, what is it called? The brush, whatever. And you don't want to make a big space, because if anybody comes in, it has to look like nobody is there.

Q: And were there times when other people walked into the barn?

A: Well, toward the end, I think, in – either the end of January or the beginning of the February, we her – we heard somebody coming in, but we didn't know who it was, and they left. And so, what happened, on February 28th is, there was a snowstorm. It started early on, and the woman who kept us, asked us to leave. And when we got up to walk, stand up, it was hard, but what happened to me is I became very bloated. My

feet were just so bloated. But anyways, we put on – and the clothes that I ha – because I was so bloated, just didn't fit. But anyways, w-we did leave, and –

Q: Did she say why she wanted you to leave, why she changed her mind?

A: There's no question ah – she says, you have to leave. And we didn't question too much, or I didn't hear any discussion, let's put it that way. Maybe my father talked, but th-there was no time that anybody sat down and talked with her, because then the neighbors would know what's going on. So here we were in the hiding place, and she delivered th-the food at night and she said, you have to leave tomorrow. And so there was no discussion, can you keep us a day longer, or anything, cause the – we didn't, at the same time, we didn't want to give the place away, we didn't want to give ourselves away i-if anybody heard. So, we – we had to leave, so it was very obedient and very quiet, with no – no discussion. She said we had to leave, I don't remember my father even saying anything else. So we left, and in – and the s – and the snow was very high. You know, in my part of the world the snow gets – and the cold gets cold, and the snow gets very high. And so, for me to pick my feet up and down, I just couldn't do it, so we got to one place, and I just couldn't – and my father said that, if you just walk just a little while longer to this place, I'll see if you can stay there, so your body will calm down. So we got to this one family – actually, there were two families, there was wa – one man and his wife lived in one side of the house and one woman, the other one, lived in the other side. And so we got there at night and – and my fa – and my

father begged the man to keep me. I think that was a kine – either Friday night or Saturday night – to keep me overnight and he'll come back for me the next day, and he promised him he would. And they knew each other, because you know, people worked for us. So I was left there, and then the next day was either Saturday or Sunday, anyways, it was February 28th. Peasants come to that house. They must have known we were there because the footprints were all over, because of the big snow. And I heard people saying that my father and my brother were killed, and put in the – in the grotto. And the – the grotto has this big hole, this – the grotto where the **[indecipherable]** were hiding, and they put them there. And they said that the woman's son-in-law, the woman that was hiding us for three months, her son-in-law killed us – killed my father and my brother.

Q: Do you know anything about who the son-in-law was?

A: Well, he was the woman's son-in-law, so she had a daughter who had a husband, and the person that came in, I was telling you there was only one person we heard coming into the barn, must have been the son-in-law sort of teasing us. And he must have demanded from the woman to throw us out. And his name was **Mucha, m-u-c-h-a,** which in **Ukraine** means fly. And I don't know if it was his last name or it was his nickname, but that was his name. And – and those people that my father's supposed to come, they – they kept me, and because the Russians were back and forth for the last week or two. And a month later, on March 28th, the Russian occupied the whole

territory. So, this son-in-law**, Mucha**, must have known that the Russians were on the border, or were within 150 miles of whatever, because there was – back and forth they would progress, then they had to step back, then they – and so they were very close to **Korolówka.** And so he must have known, so that's why he decided to make it unify. And so, when I went back in July of 209, and I asked about this person, nobody seemed to know about him. So, the anti-Semitism, and the quietness, who did what, is very, very strong today, in 209.

Q: So, the Russians came in in March, and you were, at that point, 11 years old, about?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So, and –

A: 12 or – or – no, right, 11. '44, right.

Q: And so, as –

A: '44, yeah.

Q: So, your basic – you're still a young child and you're all by yourself. How did you – what was your reaction about liberation? You were liberated but an orphan, it must have –

A: I didn't –

Q: Or did you know that your mother – did you still think your mother might be alive?

A: Well, that was the thing. I – I thought my mother was alive, and I never thought of myself as an orphan either, because an orphan means that somebody is dead. Although

I know that my father and brother are dead, somehow, because I didn't see it, they were not dead. So, it was a word, and it didn't apply to me at all. As a matter of fact, through the whole 60 some years since '65 – eight years, I still have the fantasy that my mother is alive, waiting for me. And my granddaughter, who is eight years old, who is about that, you know, 10 years old, and I was saying to my son and his family, I said, gee, I'm really afraid to go back. And my granddaughter **Meagan** said, but what if your mother stands in front of the door and is waiting for you? And that was the same fantasy that I had. She didn't tell me anything new, and that's exa – exactly how I feel, that she is still, you know. So, I don't know if I'm **[indecipherable]** teach on that, from grandmother to granddaughter, or whatever. But that was – and also when I think of home, I don't think of myself as a 78 year – 78 year old woman, I think of myself as 10 and 11 and 14 and 15 years old.

Q: After the Russians came, did you tr – go back to the house where you grew up?

A: Yeah. I – when the Russians came back, just what I did all the other times, whenever – after the first killing of, we all went back to the same place to see who survived. And all the people in **Korolówka** went back to **Korolówka** and – and – and first of all, my house, or the whole of **Korolówka,** all the Jewish houses were destroyed, so it – there wouldn't be any Jewish house left. The only thing that was left was the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery, that's all that was left.

Q: And, did you find anyone?

A: And the pharmacy, and the pharmacy.

Q: Did you find anyone to stay with, or were you staying alone?

A: Well, I found an uncle and aunt, my mother's brother. My mother's brother and his wife, they were hiding someplace else. And I stayed with them, and we left **Korolówka,** and – oh, we moved to **Borschev**. And my uncle served in the army for – in the Russian army. And then we left. We – we left **Borschev** in '45, as soon as the war was over, and we went to **Germany**, and I was – we were all in a displace –

Q: All three of you?

A: All three of us. And I signed up to come to the **United States**, and came in '47, and – 1947 in August, and – and – and came to **New York**, and – and I think you have some of the pictures at the museum, of the – of the place, the **DP** camp that we stayed. And – and then –

Q: Were you with your aunt and uncle at this point also?

A: No, they wouldn't allow them to come to – to the **United States,** so I could come on the children's visa, and there was, from **U.N.** all one – **U.S.** something, a Mrs. **Brown.** She was, I think must have been a social worker. She was just so nice, she talked so polite. And I wasn't sure of my birth date, and my birth – and I – I know I was born in March, but I wasn't sure. She said, and what month would you like? And I loved my little brother, and he was born in May. So I said, I think I was born in March, but I love May, because the way I held on to my family is remembering things about

them, not as much about me. So, if I remember all those little things about them, they were never – they never died, you know. So she said, oh, May is a lovely month, how about May? So we put down May 28th, but I'm not totally sure of my birth date. We have a – and one of the reasons too, I went back in – in July of 209, is another person told me they went back and they found their birth date in the school records, and I went for one year to school. I said, oh, I must go back and see if they have the record. And of course, that wasn't true.

Q: And, so when you got to the **States** were you living alone, or did anyone adopt you, or –

A: Oh, no, no. They took the children to a – oh, I should have written down the name of the places – to the **Bronx**. Oh, I want to say – anyways, it was a – an **orphagenage**, and then the Jewish Family and Children Service asked the kids where they want – some of them had relatives in **New York**, some of the – and, of course, every – I wanted to stay in **New York**. And the reason was, in case anything happened, I could take a boat right back. So, there was this lady, another very nice person, and said, well, where would you like to go? There's a pl – Jewish Family and Children right now, **Chicago** or **Boston**. And so I said, well, is **Boston** on the coast, you know. Yes, it is. So I went to **Boston,** and the Jewish and Family and Children's Service took me in, and they found adoptive families for me, and they found very nice families and they wanted to adopt me so badly. There was a Mrs. **Wachs**(ph) and **Morris Wachs**(ph),

he was a soldier in – in – in – in **Germany**. And – and they were so nice, they had no children. And I just couldn't be adopted, because you see, I had all those birthdays and all those little things in my heart, that I didn't tell anybody. And so I couldn't be adopted. S-So I remember one time, it was another nice family that I don't know, they di – I don't think they wanted to adopt me, but anyways, I sort of ran away from them an-and ended up at the harbor when the agency found me. So they found a – a – a very nice overnight school for ma – for me, called the **Windsor** Mountain School in **Lenox**, and it's a high school. And I went there, and it was the most marvelous, beautiful place for me, because I was among kids who were kids in this school, and I didn't have to give loyalty to somebody that – that wasn't mine. Do y – do you understand? I didn't have to love anybody except from sheer goodwill. So I was in this beautiful school that saved my soul. You know, maybe coming to the **United States** saved my life, but that school saved my soul. And also, what I discovered is books and reading. And so, after I graduate, I applied for scholarships, got scholarships. Oh, the first year, I was with the Jewish Family Servi – there was a social worker named **Edith Costa**, and she took us to **Revere** beach, around here, and we had an accident, and I broke my nose because I was sitting on somebody's lap. And bingo, like this, and so I got 500 dollars for the broken nose. So when I graduated high school, I applied for a scholarship and I had 500 dollars, that paid for room and board, and I got scholarship. And then, when I

graduated from – with my belach – bachelor's, I applied to the **VA** and got a scholarship to go to school of social work.

Q: And let me ask about your decision to become a social worker.

A: Well, I think Mrs. **Brown**, the first person that was so inviting; then I had a – a social worker named Mrs. **Levine**, who wa – who told me always, don't worry, that's okay, if I messed up. That's okay. And – and she – and there was a woman in particular, Mrs. **Carter,** of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, who worked very hard to get money to send kids like us to a private school. And there were other kids, and it was really Mrs. **Carter** that made the difference.

Q: Let me just ask if there's anything else that you would like to say that we haven't covered?

A: Well, not in terms necessarily of my story, because I'm telling my story 68 to 69 years later, as an old woman. The silence for me was not that it didn't happen, but the silence for me – are you looking at –

Q: No, no, no, I just –

A: The silence for me was to keep everything in place. And if I talk about the Holocaust, or missing my mother, or wanting my father so badly, and when in – and not going to my own graduations, because I didn't have who I wanted, was because I might lose that in my memory. That if I share those truths with somebody else, then that might be taken away, too. And it was a peculiar kind of thinking. And I've been

sort of reading more about it, and – and the kids, my own children, who run from 50 to 40 now, really are telling me now how they wondered why they didn't have a grandmother and why I never talked about it. And my husband too. And – and my husband in particular felt that he wa – I was who I was, he didn't need – he knew enough to know, but I did-didn't have to talk about it, and the same thing his family. His ma – his mom, that I like very much, my mother-in-law said, don't – don't hurt her any more. So, it was really – the thing that I think needs to be shared is not that I want to forget them, but I just need to say it. I don't know if that's appropriate or not, because it's not the story

Q: Oh absolutely. No, it's absolutely appropriate, and just want to thank you so much for sharing it and just – despite the pain. We're very grateful. Thank you so much.

A: Okay.

End of Tape Three

Conclusion of Interview