United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Malvy Solomon
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PREFACE

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MALVY SOLOMON
May 2, 2013

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Malvy Solomon conducted by Gail Schwartz on May second, 2013 in Silver Spring, Maryland. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Malvy Solomon: Malvy Solomon.

Q: And what name were you born with?

A: Malvy Isaac.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born on, actually born on January 12th, 1938 but declared officially on January 17 because my father was unable to go to register the birth because of anti-Semitism. So officially on January 17, 1938.

Q: When you say because of anti-Semitism, they were not permitting Jews to register births.

A: There was some kind of a skirmish and they were beating up every Jew there to get out of the house. So my father was afraid to go. So I'm five days younger.

Q: And then when it calmed down a bit then he was able to go to register?

A: Correct.

Q: They made him put a later date the later date?

A: Yes the later date.

Q: Are you an only child?

A: I am an only child.

Q: Let us talk about your parents and how long your family had been in Romania. You were born in what city?

A: I was born in Bacu, Romania which was on the eastern side, actually northeastern side of Romania. Both my parents come up from very simple background. I am actually the first person who ever went to, above fourth grade or something. I have never known my grandparents, except my maternal grandmother. My paternal grandmother was killed during World War I. And my paternal grandparents both died from an epidemic of cholera. So my father and his four siblings were raised by a grandfather. Even a grandmother was not available. She died too from cholera. So in this situation my parents didn't go to school except to learn how to read and write and when they were able, I think at age ten or 11, 12 maximum, they had to learn some kind of a profession in order to be able to exist. So my father learned to be a tailor and my mother learned to be a seamstress. They were very wonderful people. My mother was full of pep and optimistic. My father was very intelligent and he sat with an encyclopedia in every single day just to learn and very interested in politics of course.

Q: What were their names?

A: My mother name was Laura and my father's name was Jacob, just like my grandson. And they, my father was born in **Iasi** which is a bigger city also in the eastern side, but he found work in Bacu. That's where he met my mother. They got married and –

Q: She was from Bacu?

A: Yes. She was from Bacu. They got married in 1936. And, because they both worked they made money. They moved out from the ghetto cause my mother lived with her mother with my

grandmother in a Jewish enclave, let's say. Not call a ghetto. So they moved out and they got an apartment and it even had a bathroom and they did very, very well until the war came.

Q: Do you remember what street?

A: Where they lived. No I don't remember. I know where it is though cause they showed me exactly where it was. They did very well financially, socially, but then the war came and because my father was such an excellent and known in -- The city was about 40,000 people so everybody knew that he was the best tailor in town. So of course they -- he was taken away with the intention to use him to make suits for the upper echelon of the military. And he was taken away to a certain military camp which was far away from us. You needed to go by train at least five, six hours.

Q: What year are we talking about?

A: We're talking 1941, 42, something like this. 41, I would say. So my mother was the only, left to be the only breadwinner. Therefore she had to move out of that apartment and come back and live with my grandmother in that Jewish ghetto. That's the house that I remember.

Q: What street was that on, do you remember that street?

A: **Leka**, **strada Leka**, famous for dirt and misery. My grandmother's house was close to a river. It's called **Bistriţa** and across from the stables where somebody who had a business of, kept the horses. This is where the house was. The house you went down into the house, not up into the house. Had two rooms. One room where you cooked, you slept, you sat, you did everything and the other room was for guests. I never knew why, why we never used that. There was never any guests but that's my grandmother. She was beautiful. I remember the **melihki** [ph] dishes on the wall like this, on a little shelf. There was no running water and no bathroom. There was a like an outhouse of some sort. I remember being me being maybe three and a half or four and going with a pail. I would say three, four hundred feet where the water spout was. But I didn't know any better. I was happy that our neighbors loved me or I used to go to a friend that

had eight, nine siblings. And play with them and come home full of lice. And, but I was happy. My mother was working every single day. And she –

Q: As a seamstress?

A: As a seamstress. She went to people's houses for the day to either make dresses or repairs or whatever. And she made sure that we have -- food was impossible to obtain. There was no food, but she somehow she was able to bring the bread or the cornmeal that was the main sustenance, main meal I would say and I wouldn't eat it of course. I was a very skinny child. And I remember like yesterday. I mean there are some things that's so imprinted that my mother went to work for the day for a lady who had a toy store. So at the end of the day the lady asked what would you like, money or something from the store? So she said I want the nicest doll that you have. So there she comes home with a doll in one hand and with a bag with two eggs. Two eggs was like gold. And she comes to the house and as I told you, you came down in the house, three steps to go in the house. And I saw that doll and I jumped on her. The eggs fell and they broke and that's the first doll that I had that closed and opened the eyes. It was -- I had it for years and it was the most fantastic thing. I don't think I was more than three and a half. Another memory in that particular place, except that the smell coming from the stables and I was so afraid of horses. And is that the Germans by the time they got to where – that's why we were lucky we didn't end up in a concentration camp cause it was close to Russia. They have some other worries and, but they were bombing. They were bombing and throwing – where do you go? There was no place to shelter from the bombs. So we used to run into an open space with a crater, previously made by another bomb and that's where we were lying down and I thought it was the greatest entertainment seeing the planes just going this way and that way and so on and so forth.

Was very traumatic for me is that I grew up without a father. In 1944, when 45, when the war was over my father came home and I couldn't understand why do we have a strange man living in our house. And eventually he went back to work. They moved out –

Q: We'll talk about that in a minute. I want to go back to the war time. So here you are this little child. Your mother goes off to work and what did you do?

A: What did I do?

Q: I know you were so young.

A: Yeah, I remember going to some kind of kindergarten or some – it was school. A Jewish school, of course. The school, my mother always wanted the best for me, like any mother. And she sent me, it was a fortune to send me to that particular school. And it was very far away from home. And there was no way to get there except walking. And the schedule was you go in the morning. You come home for lunch. You go back and forth. If I would tell you, that was at least a mile and a half or two. But back then you let your child walk. There weren't too many cars. There were no street signs or lights or anything of that sort. But I hated going there because what do you teach rich people? You teach them manners, how to eat. You teach them how to waltz and tango and music and things like this. And I didn't like that at all because I already knew how to read and that was –

Q: This is during, we're talking about during the war.

A: Yes. During the war, before. Before. We were still with my grandmother and I already knew letters and I knew I was already four or five years old. And that was I hated every single day to go to that particular -- There were only rich kids there, you know.

Q: Were there other children living around you?

A: Oh a lot of children.

Q: You said you played with the one family –

A: I played with all the kids. There were so many.

Q: Were these all Jewish children?

A: All, everybody –

Q: Was Jewish?

A: Everybody was Jewish.

Q: So you obviously didn't experience any anti-Semitism at that time?

A: Oh yeah so I did.

Q: From the other children you didn't because they were Jewish

A: Not from the other children but during a new year's you know, new year's eve, they used to wear costume like we do for Purim or something. And intentionally come into our street and scare the children.

Q: This is the non-Jewish would come in costume.

A: Costume and scared us and we knew to run away and go home but it was scary. But that's the only time that I knew that I'm different. Otherwise when you grow up with only with Jewish people, and especially my grandmother was extremely, extremely religious. To the point that when we moved out she wouldn't drink water in our house because she said we're not kosher enough for her.

Q: Drink water

A: Yeah, drink water.

Q: Anybody in your family have to wear a Jewish star?

A: This I don't remember but as you see my mother did. I'm sure they all did but I don't –

Q: You don't remember wearing?

A: No, but you see in the photograph that you had to. Maybe when we went out of the neighborhood to the photographer maybe that's when my mother put her Jewish star

Q: That was going to be my next question. When did you leave this enclave?

A: I think it was 1944.

Q: No, I mean just to do things.

A: Ah, to do things.

Q: You went to the photographer. Anything else?

A: No.

Q: Was there a synagogue in this enclave?

A: Yes, there was a synagogue but I never, my grandmother – it was not a building. But it was some house that I remember where my grandmother used to go to that. They called it a synagogue where there was a room for men and a room for women and there were tables and everybody sat with **batailla** [ph].

Q: A kerchief?

A: Yes, a kerchief. And they prayed. There was nothing else. I don't think they had a cantor or I don't think they had. I don't even know. I don't remember, but we didn't go out.

Q: what about the German soldiers and Romanian soldiers? Did you see them during, while you were in the Jewish section?

A: No, no. Only Russians when they came we saw them. I mean it was scary. Very scary. But I remember when the Russians came and everybody said the Reds are coming. The Reds are coming. So I expected to see red people. I didn't know what it is and we all went out in the street, on the street to see them marching by. This is – but later encounters were not very pleasant with the Russians.

Q: Did you at this very young age ever hear of a man called Hitler?

A: No, I don't think I knew anything about that.

Q: Even Hitler, his name or –

A: No.

Q: No he didn't, and your mother didn't?

A: No they didn't talk about that. They didn't.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: With my grandmother I had to speak Yiddish cause she didn't speak Romanian. She didn't speak Romanian. Otherwise we spoke Romanian.

Q: To your mother?

A: Yes.

Q: And to your friends?

A: Only Romanian yes, but Yiddish with my grandmother cause she didn't speak or read Romanian. She did not. That's it but I spoke later I went to a Jewish school and my –

Q: What is your earliest memory?

A: I would say I was three maybe. Three and a half when what I just talked about with my mother going away every day and coming with the doll. I, something of that sort. So it's beginning of the war I would say. That's my earliest memory.

Q: And you didn't, as you say didn't hear your mother talking to other people about what was happening in other countries or what was happening to Jews?

A: No, no.

Q: Of course you were such a small child.

A: Even if they talked, I might not have understood so I do not remember, no. This.

Q: So you played with other children and you went to this Jewish school and then when was the next change?

A: The next change is when my father came home and we moved out.

Q: Was your mother, do you know if your mother was in contact with him while he was away?

A: Only by letters.

Q: They could exchange letters?

A: Yes, they could exchange but he never came home.

Q: In those two years.

A: Two, maybe more. I don't remember exactly until he didn't come home. And I have, it was my first memory you know to see him and it's very shocking to see him. So –

Q: Do you remember what physical state he was in? I know you didn't know who he was.

A: No he was in a pretty good shape because he had some kind of a privileged position, working with the generals and the colonels and you know just –

Q: This was the German army?

A: No, Romanian.

Q: Oh, Romanian army.

A: Romanian army. They were worse than the Germans at the time. Because the German were in a hurry when they came through our city. I don't even know. We have never seen one because it was, they started being defeated and they didn't have time for the Jews I guess. That's how we were saved. They went more to the northern part like this, like what Elie Wiesel and seek it, and we were a little more to the south. That's how we – this came, but the Romanians were just as bad. Just as bad.

Q: Do you remember anything specific about what you saw?

A: No, because I stayed in the Jewish enclave. I didn't go out. No. I don't, I don't remember.

Q: All right. Now your father has come home.

A: So we moved out.

Q: This is what, 44?

A: 44.

Q: Beginning, middle or end?

A: I would say middle.

Q: Middle of 44.

A: Yes, he came home and we -- my parents rented an apartment. The front became a store, front. They fixed it beautifully. The half was a working area and the other half was a, you know to talk to customers with the mirrors and the chairs and then there was one room, after that front room. We all slept in the same room. And then in order to – but that was the façade was the most important thing in order to you know to get some clientele. And then you had to go out, step out and there was a kitchen. That's all we had. The front one bedroom and the kitchen and a big yard. And my father was able to get somebody who wanted to become a tailor and he built us a swing for me. And I started going to a Jewish school. I started going to school. I think I was six.

Q: But you had gone to school before in the ghetto, you said, in the enclave. No?

A: No, not to school. Just some kind of a kindergarten but I went yes, far away. I told you.

Q: Yes, right, right.

A: And then I started going to primary school which was a Jewish school and I loved it. It was very close and they taught us Hebrew. I was a very, very good student. I loved to read books and because I was very skinny my father used to give me, I don't know five cents if I drank a glass of milk. So I was to take the five cents and go to the bookstore and buy a book. I loved books and I

loved to go to the movies. And I used to take my grandmother who didn't understand anything that was, and I had to translate her in Yiddish what's going on. I loved, I mean from that age I loved entertainment.

Q: Did she come live with you? Did she –

A: No. She stayed there.

Q: By herself?

A: By herself. She used to come and visit sometimes and then when we went to Israel, she didn't want to go. She said I lived here all my life. I have my own little place. She didn't want to go. But my mother had four more, three more siblings cause one died from at birth, the birth of the baby. And my mother said how, we are all going to go to Israel. How are you going to stay here? So finally when one of my mother's sisters from who lived in the capital, in Bucharest left, she went with them. She lived maybe six months because you know they stayed in those prefabricated sleeping c –she don't know. My mother always felt guilty about it, that we forced her to go.

Q: Let's go back to 44 now.

A: When we moved out.

Q: When you moved out and you're going to school.

A: Things got better and better. My father made money and I was a, at the Jewish school and I loved everything about that school. Just adored the school.

Q: Had you heard of a man named **Antonescu**?

A: Antonescu? Of course.

Q: When you were little. I'm talking about at that point.

A: At that point yes. I knew about Antonescu, when I was a little older. Yes, that he was a, a war criminal and but at that point not really interested in politics. I'm not, right now I am a child. But I, of course, I did. I heard my parents talk.

Q: That was going to be my next question about when your father came back. Did you overhear your parents talking about the war and all the terrible things that were happening?

A: I don't think they talked about this in front of me. No. We had the Russians that were at our throats, continuously. They used to come to the store and look for something to drink.

Q: Come into your father's?

A: In my father's store. Take away the watch if you had on your hand. You had to give them money. But then the horrible political dictator stuff. I didn't know much at the time. Communism came.

Q: That's after the war.

A: After the war.

Q: Let's finish with the war. Anything –

A: I don't remember finishing the war. To me it's a continuing saga. I didn't, I don't think I remember when 1945 came and the war was over. Don't remember.

Q: You don't. And are there any, until the end of the war, any blatantly anti-Semitic incidents that you remember?

A: No. No, except what I just told you. No we didn't go out of that you know, we didn't like to go out. But no and things got better.

Q: So now it's 45. The war is over.

A: The war is over. I go to school. I, I have friends. I play. I read a lot. I get a bike which was the epitome of –

Q: Luxury.

A: Luxury and I was happy at that point. At that point I was a happy child. And they closed the Jewish school. The communists came. They said there couldn't, shouldn't be religious schools. So I had to go to another school where I stayed in that school until I finished high school. But –

Q: And there were non-Jewish children at school?

A: Non Jewish children. I have non-Jewish friends.

Q: So you were friends with them? Were you comfortable with them, because up to that point you said you know obviously you had only been with Jewish –

A: Most of my friends were still Jewish but I had some non-Jewish. And I, I was very upset that I'm not learning Hebrew anymore. The teacher that taught me Hebrew in the Jewish school was hired. You had a choice. French was mandatory. Russian was mandatory and you had a choice of a third language. So she was made a Yiddish, to teach Yiddish. They didn't want to completely abolish I guess, so I signed up for her class. Just because I loved her as a Hebrew teacher. I –

Q: But you already knew Yiddish. You said you spoke to –

A: Yes, but not to read or write or not at that – but I mostly signed up because nobody else wanted to be in a Yiddish class and I wanted because of her mostly because of her. Not because I needed it. You know. And then they abolished that too eventually, they did. In Romania, they were only ten. You don't' go to 12th grade but when you reach the tenth grade, you're done with high school. I remember an incident. I was very competitive and I always wanted to have straight A's. And I always, I guess when you are not a beautiful girl cause I've never been beautiful but when you have the brains you do want to be good at something. If you're not very good looking, then you want to be good at something else. And I had a friend who was not Jewish. One of the teachers was the wife of a man who was executed for being a criminal, war criminal. She was our teacher. I think it was science teacher of some sort. And she gave that non-Jewish girl an A, ten. They used to go from one to ten. And she gave me a nine. And I went to her and I said I don't think it's right because I know as much as she does. I think that the grade, but it's just being too competitive. What's a nine and what's a ten. You know. I had to be the best. So she said no. She said no. I said why don't you check us out? Let's see who knows more.
So she, she put us in front of the class and started asking us from the whole material of the whole year you know. And I knew I'm good at science because this is what I eventually did. You know I'm never let her go. And that to me, it was beating anti-Semitism. Cause you have to do something. Not to keep your mouth shut. I could have, they could have, I don't know maybe throw me out from the school or something. You don't just do things like this, yes. So in the end I got the ten also. That's one incident which to me that's anti-Semitism. You know just to make her – and she was my friend. We remained friends you know. So by –

Q: When your parents, at the end of the war and other people, heard about the terrible slaughter of the Jews and everything, were they affected?

A: I don't know cause they never mentioned it in front of me.

Q: You don't remember a change in them?

A: No, no, no. I'm sure they knew.

Q: What happened in Iasi? Am I pronouncing it correctly?

A: Yes, my husband is from Iasi. There were lots of persecution in Romania but I just –

Q: But as a child you weren't –

A: No, as a child and later as an adolescent, we suffered, I suffered more from communism. I remember one of my best friends, her father told a political joke. He was arrested and condemned to death. They didn't execute him, but my friend and her mother went to Israel and I think the Catholic Church had some kind of fund to help the Jews. They put up $10,000 and they let her father go. Go to Israel. So things like this. I grew up being afraid of my shadow. I grew up looking always to see if – you couldn't tell a joke. You were always afraid they can arrest you, persecute you, do whatever they want. We never went to the synagogue cause we were afraid. Eventually they forced my father to close his store and go and work for the government.

Q: Because he was a capitalist having his own –

A: Yes, yes because he was a capitalist. But anyway, I finished high school and I was 16 years old. And you know I already spoke perfect Russian, perfect French and I wanted to go to learn languages. So my mother says but you were so good in science. Go to medical school. And I said I don't think so. She said go and try. I said it's so difficult. It's so this, it's so that. And she said just do what I'm asking you to do. Take the exam. If you get in, fine. If you don't, it's fine with me. Go and be, learn languages. So I was 16 years old when I went to Iasi where there is a medical school. There were like six, seven candidates for one spot. And in addition to written, you had an oral interview of some sort. And there I go. I got into medical school.

Q: Was this all women or women and men?

A: No, no women and men, boys and girls. And there I go again living in a miserable room with another girl from home, from my city. And again no bathroom. No nothing. If we wanted to go

to the toilet, we had to go outdoor, go all the way down in the corridor to some outdoor place. But it was close to the university and the food was provided. Don't ask what kind of food. Just a piece of black bread and butter. There was no food. But I guess when you're young everything goes. You don't – and –

Q: At that point since you were you said 16, did you know, I know it was many years later, what had happened to the Jews?

A: OF course I did. At that point I did. But to be interested in what exactly happened and why it happened the way eventually I became. No, I guess you're young.

Q: You're still a teenager.

A: You were a teenager, you're young. You have your daily problems. And you were restricted in, even in your thoughts. I guess we were brain washed in school. All we wanted is we used to call it Papa Stalin. That's what we knew. No, no, just brain washed.

Q: What did you think about Stalin at that point?

A: Oh we thought that he is the greatest on earth. And I became a Pioneer. You know you get in a youth organization and so on and so forth. When I got to be in high school, they wouldn't take me on the youth you know cause my father had a store, was a capitalist. So I had never been part of the back, I think at age 15 or 14 you were able to graduate from being a Pioneer with the red --

Q: Kerchief.

A: Kerchief to belong to some other kind of organization but they wouldn't take me.

Q: Were you upset that they wouldn't take you?

A: Not really, no. No, I wasn't very upset but if you eventually lived there and go to get a job, they go and ask you how come you were so on and so forth. So I left for Iasi to live there. But there is one good thing about communism is that cultural events are cheap. So I was, this is how I got my taste for classical music. This is how I got my taste for opera, for theater. There was a Yiddish theater also in the city.

Q: Proud of that.

A: Yes, we used to go so it's you know we had, I had friends from home, from Bacu, my roommate was from Bacu and, or friend and but I became interested in other things. And by the time I was in my fourth year of medical school. Over there, there is no college.

Q: College. You go directly to –

A: You go directly to medical school. So I was in my fourth year of medical school I was 21, something like this. They –

Q: This is like 1959 or something.

A: I think 57, yeah cause I was born in 38. 19 something like this. They started allowing people to go to Israel. So my father and my mother said let's get away from communism or –

Q: Had they wanted to go to Israel before then?

A: They would have but it –

Q: They would have but they didn't allow them.

A: Absolutely. They maybe started earlier because my mother's family and my father's family went way before us. So we knew that there would be grave consequences.

Q: When did those two families go, your mother's and your father's family go?

A: In the, I think much earlier. Maybe after the war.

Q: Oh it was after the war.

A: After the war, yes. They went, they were there already. They were there already but we were the last ones left. And at the moment we submitted our application I never forget as long as I live. They call a meeting of the whole, fourth, the university or our – and people get up and pointed me and start screaming traitor, traitor. You are not worth a penny of the money we spent. That's what. You have never seen, it's like I'm sure it's choreographed or they tell people you do this and you tell that and you do and there I was, accused of being a traitor because I want to leave. Next day I was not a student anymore.

Q: Expelled you?

A: Expelled. I was expelled immediately.

Q: Was it the middle of your fourth year?

A: Yes, so I got expelled. So what do you do? The thing is that they expel you but they don't let you go either. They just don't. So I was in Iasi. I didn't want to go home. I was away from home for almost, more than three years. My parents just would take a train, four hours by train with a soup, chicken soup and just to be with me and took my laundry home and cause where do you wash. You don't have where to wash. You don't. And I lived on a street cause I remember my boys, I was telling them there were so much mud, just go and taking out of the house and trying, there was next to the university, there was no paved streets. Nothing. And my boys say mom you're pulling our legs, just unbelievable. But we didn't know any better. We just didn't know any better. And I knew somebody who gave me a job as a pediatric nurse. So for three years I worked as a pediatric nurse. Believe me, my father had to help me because the salary went to pay the rent. So for three years I was pediatric –

Q: This was a private –

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: In a hospital?

A: There is no private there. There was no private.

Q: So it was in a hospital?

A: No it's in the clinic. Pediatric clinic. The clinic I was to work every day three hours in the office. Either morning or afternoon and the rest, the midwife and myself had to go and visit newborn, up to one year you know. They used to give body the injections. There were no pills like today. And check well babies or follow up with sick babies. I'm telling you if I, you know how winters are in Romania. There is snow up to my chest. There is no, nobody comes to clean the streets, nobody comes to – there is no other method of getting anywhere except walking, except walking. It's just un – you cannot, cannot describe when I – but there you are 21. You are full of hope and you are optimistic and so on and so forth. My landlady had a son who was an opera singer and I married him. I was so infatuated yes. Because I you know I told you I was in first year and I used to run here and run there. Yes, I was young.

Q: How long had you known him?

A: I would say less than a year.

Q: So you got married.

A: I got married.

Q: While you were the nurse?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Where did you live then?

A: Oh he had a nice apartment.

Q: He had an apartment?

A: Yes, they used to give you an apartment. I mean it's not the – they built apartments specifically for the opera singer and if you were a soloist like he was you got a nice apartment. But we had to share that apartment. There were like two big bedrooms, one kitchen, one bathroom, with another couple.

Q: And your husband's name?

A: Schwartz. His name was but he didn't use the Schwartz name. He used **Negria** [ph], which you know Schwartz is black. And the meaning is **negra**.

Q: And his first name was?

A: The first name was **Begno**, but he was **Bucher** which means joyful, something. Yes nobody wanted to use the names. So we were married and then there was trouble getting to Israel of course. His parents, my parents. Don't ask how. So we left but I remember while waiting for approval to get out and I was not married yet. My father said take off and go on a vacation or something. The communists wouldn't let you go anywhere but in a communist country. You couldn't go, dream of going to Paris or -- so I applied for a passport and I got an answer. You are an embarrassment to this country. You do not, did not earn the right to represent us. Can you imagine this?

Q: You're an embarrassment because you want to go to Israel.

A: Exactly. And I remember to this day how hurt I was that I couldn't go anywhere because of that. And I remember saying to myself one day, one day I don't know when, I will go to Russia with the most expensive tour ever available. It happened in 2007. There is a famous travel agency called Abercrombie and Kent. Abercrombie and Kent who is with a companion, with a translator, with a VIP. I did it. That's what my revenge. The way the trip people is just they treated us unbelievable, unbelievable. So –

Q: How long did you have to wait between applying and –

A: Three and half years it took. I was a nurse for three and a half years. Would you like to, what else would you like to?

Q: So then you were married, you were a nurse. And then you got the permission to leave.

A: And we all did. But my husband were also thrown out from the opera.

Q: Oh he was thrown out too?

A: He was thrown out and he worked in a factory. Can you imagine this, a person with his culture and yeah.

Q: And then when did you leave?

A: In 1960. 60, 61, 1961 we left. And we –

Q: This was you and your husband and his parents.

A: And his parents. We all left and his parents went to **Bersheva** where he had a brother. And my parents went to Holon. And we got an apartment very nice for an **Olim hadash** [ph] in Tel Aviv. And we went to first we went to a kibbutz. We didn't have any money. You know some

people left Romania. They took a chance, they took a risk you know. They hid money. They hid gold. I didn't want to do that no matter what. The troubles just to get out. People cannot imagine what it meant to get your paperwork to get out. You had to have approval for every library in town that you don't owe them books. You have to have approval from the electric company, from the water company, from the, this company that you don't owe anybody anything. The apartment that didn't belong to us, we paid rent, had to be spotless, inspected. The rugs, the walls, ever – you have to leave everything. And if by any chance anything was – you can't leave. Such persecution is, it's just unbelievable.

Q: How much money could you take?

A: No money, nothing. Absolutely not one penny. Some people -- they went to jail. Is it – if you hide and they find it. They put you in prison you know. No way that we were going to – so there you go. You come to Israel and you have nothing.

Q: How did you get to there, how did you get to Israel?

A: Oh they paid us the **sofnoot** [ph]. You know the Israeli sofnoot or whatever charitable organization. They took us to Napoli. Yes, we were in Napoli for about a week. And we had cigarettes and salami that we sold. And the other people brought, I don't know what they brought. We went to the opera. We took a, this is what we did. And then we came and his parents went – we went to a kibbutz?

Q: Which kibbutz did you –

A: **Ma' Barot** which is close to Hadera and you work half a day and they teach you Hebrew a half a day. People who had money or had family could go to an **ulpan** and learn Hebrew all day. And now I built everything. We all did. We cleaned chicken coops. We picked lemons. You know how difficult it is to pick, cause they have those --. Can you imagine me with a machete in one hand preparing bananas for the next season. You have to cut it like this. We washed food dishes in the dishwasher. We served. We, they had a laundry where you had to also iron. This is

where I ended up because I was very good at ironing and they liked me so I had a permanent place. And why I was happy. There was no other language. Only Hebrew so I did better than anybody else in learning the language.
We were there for eight months. And –

Q: They had told you where to go. You didn't choose it. They assigned you.

A: Yes, they assigned you, they assigned. And I was very happy there. Life was not easy to do this type of physical work but I you know you're young. I don't know. And we slept in little prefabricated, was very hot and all kind of animals was whatever. It was fun. We were young. And finally we came out and I went to work and didn't have any money, any money so I went to work in a factory, an electronic factory. I don't know what I did, what those pieces were for. But I worked until – and I started interviewing to go back to medical school. My Hebrew was not enough, good enough to interview you know at that level. So I remember going to Jerusalem and to the, to medical school and interviewing in French because the president was from Netherlands or whatever. And he said look, you are 20 I don't know whatever it was, five, six, seven. I got married. Why would you want to go back and I looked at him and I told him in French whatever. Shame on you. You do not do that. Got up and left. So I went to the Tel Aviv medical school. They accepted me. They gave me a stipend. They helped me all through. I did fourth, fifth and sixth.

Q: They credited your –

A: Yes.

Q: Credits from Romania.

A: Yes, only three years.

Q: The three years.

A: In the meantime we got divorced because he also became a soloist in the Tel Aviv opera. Different worlds, different, different so and after I finished, I bought a car. First thing. Why? Because **Olim Hadash** have a tax break, a big tax break but of course my father found work. He helped me out all through, through that and moved back home. I lived in Holon and then I was internship in **Yafo** I did and then I was so deprived of money you know and didn't have any money for all those years so they offered me like twice as much if I go to **Safedt**.

Gail Schwartz: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Malvy Solomon. This is track number two and you were talking about being in Israel and buying yourself a car.

Malvy Solomon: Yes and I was an intern in Yafo and then I did my first year of residency in Safed. Best thing that happened to me was there because it's a beautiful city. It's an artist colony. I have people I knew from school, from medical school. I had a friend that I knew from Iasi and it's a small, small country. You meet people, but professionally it was always tough time, cause it's a small city. On the other hand, we catered to military. I have seen more dead soldiers.

Q: Israeli military.

A: Israeli military. I have seen more, more dead young people than I care to remember. When I was –

Q: You're talking about the 67 war. Is that what? 67 war?

A: In 67. I graduated in 67 but then I was up there at the Lebanon war. There were a lot of incidents. And I remember like yesterday. This, there are some things that you can never forget. In the middle of the night there is somebody dead in the refrigerator so there I am on call, on duty, whatever. I have to go in the refrigerator. It's a small hospital. It was Ya -- in the other – it

was. And then I go to the refrigerated room and put my stethoscope to listen. And I was so scared that I could hear my own heart. I mean to me, I was still young. But while I was there, a bus full of children stepped on a mine. I can't ever forget. So where do you bring them. To the hospital. I didn't – they called us all to come in of course. I was in internal medicine. I didn't do surgery or anything but I was on many, many times in emergency room. And I come in and I see on the left side of the emergency room, a pile of clothes mixed with flesh and hair and blood. I, they were children. I helped. I helped all day. I will never forget getting out and seeing those parents. I don't, I don't know exactly. (phone ringing)

Q: You were saying about coming out and seeing the parents.

A: Yes, parents. I, at the end of the day, I guess 5:00 I couldn't take it. I got in my car and I said to myself, I am a coward. I shouldn't, but I am not a surgeon. There was nothing else I can help with. Helicopters, they took them to Haifa. But that was a small hospital. I couldn't, couldn't accommodate the terrible wounds. And I remember just driving away to Tel Aviv because I wanted to be home. Not easy.
So one day I, then I came back to Tel Aviv to do, I became, I came to work on the staff in Yafo. There was a hospital. So I was an attending physician over there. Fun time. I had a good time. It was not easy cause I would say I would be in the emergency room three times a week. And I was there and I had a lot of friends, all from school. Mostly Romanian or we had a mixture. We had from Yemen and from you know this is –

Q: Was there a big group from Romania?

A: Very big. Very, very big yes. Like right now the Russians, the Romanians were a huge group. But not just, we spoke Hebrew all the time, not Romanian. And they all got married. I said I'll never get married again because I have a profession. I don't need a man to –

Q: Support me.

A: Support me. I'll make career. I'll be one day chief of the department or whatever. But as you get older, being single is not, at least for me it wasn't as interesting as I thought it was going to be. And I had some boyfriends, also colleagues. But nothing serious, nothing that – and one day a friend of mine, very good friend from Safed, she is calling me. She said come to the wedding of such and such. And I said no I'm on – I'm – I have on overnight. I'm in the emergency room. I'm not coming. She said come. And I was invited from the groom's side. **Chaim** came to a wedding of his niece, one of the nieces. Chaim had had two brothers and two sisters and Chaim left Israel in 1949 or 1950, came to America and that's when that little girl was born, his niece was born. And this sister was crying. She said who knows when we're going to see you. Back then it was you know in the 50s, to fly to America was no -- serious you know. So he was joking and says I'll come to her wedding. I'll – that's for sure. Of course he came many, many times. And there he was. I mean **bashert**. There is nothing like bashert.

Q: Where is he from?

A: Also Romania.

Q: What city?

A: He is from Iasi. **Bivolari** [ph] which is a tiny little shtetl. I don't know about 45 minutes to an hour from Iasi. And sure enough. We met at the wedding. They set it up. I'm sure they did set it up. But they knew me and him and I didn't. So it was not fair actually. And we had the greatest time. He, I love to dance and I like music and I'm full of pep and so was he. Not as much. He is much more mellow maybe. Over the years he mellowed. I mellowed too but not as much. I mean we just clicked. And we spent a few times, days together. And then he said I was, it was summer I think, yes, summer. June maybe.

Q: What year?

A: 1971. And I said I'm getting ready to go to Europe because I wanted to go on vacation. And he said why don't you come to the States so we'll get – I wasn't sure. Sure and then I said hey

why not. I'm a modern woman. I, you know. And my parents said you must be crazy. You don't know him. I know I met the family. I mean those like regular nice people. I, let me see. And sure enough I came to the States. What a great time. We went to New York for several days. To the Statue of Liberty and did this and did that. We went to visit his uncle in Rochester. And then we went to a bar mitzvah in Detroit where he had a brother and one of the sons. We went to the bar mitzvah. Good time. And I left. He started bugging me. We should get married and we should get married, we should – I guess at this age if you've known a person and you click you have to take a chance. We got married in October of 1971, in Israel of course we got married. And I came here and I knew it was going to be tough for a physician that comes from overseas. And I brought my parents cause I'm an only child and I didn't want to leave them there. And we were still living in a small apartment that we – our first son who was born in 1973 was ten months old, something like this. We all lived in a one bedroom, huge beautiful apartment in Washington, DC, Fourth street cause Chaim worked at the Food and Drug Administration. He used to walk there. And there I have a baby, didn't – my English was not so good. I was, it's medical English that I knew. I didn't know conversational English. And I watched a lot of tv. I didn't understand. And then I went and I took a course at Georgetown, intensive course every day, every day, every day for a month and a half. This is all my education in English.

And then my parents came and we moved into a tiny house not far from here. It was Lockridge, it's off University. And Chaim was the only one working. We had another baby and I said time for me. I have my parents. Time for me to return to my profession somehow. And I had the initial exam that I took that allows you to work under supervision, meaning to be again an intern and again a resident and so on and so forth.

And I went to the University of Maryland, department of preventive medicine and I interviewed for a residency or an internship first. And they got me in that because I have two small children and I said I cannot spend my days running up and down hospital corridors. I was already 38. Just 39. I had a baby at 39. And I said I have to do something else. So I, what I start, I had my mother to help me so I did an internship at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, preventive medicine. I did a residency there. The residency included a paid master in public health from Johns Hopkins which I adored every minute. To do that. And, but it wasn't easy. You know you have two children. You have a husband, you have a house. It's not easy. I stayed with University of Maryland about four and a half years. When I decided that this is not for me.

Academia is not for people that are open and frank and tell the truth like me. This is for people that know how to – not, it's just not for me. I'm not this type of person. I come from a different background in which speaking up or telling the truth is the norm, not. And I told Chaim, even if it means never to work again, I can't do this type of work. Also, I was the lowest on the totem pole there and every project that nobody else wanted and I am the top w --. So I quit.

Three months later, it was in 1984 I got a job with the Department of Veterans Affairs. I worked until 2010 and I did a mitzvah on a daily basis. I either helped the veteran or widow or a prisoner of war. I did something good. And there I am. I'm 76 and looking back, would I change things? Probably not. It's not easy to live on three continents like I did. And you know people said how many languages do you speak? I say this and this and this and that. Oh how exciting. Not to me. I was forced into that. It's forced for Russian, forced for French. There I am. I come here. I have to go to Johns Hopkins and write papers and do presentations. And then at the Department of Veterans Affairs, we have to, we had seminars and we had lectures there. Sometimes I didn't mind which is not for this. But if you make it clear and concise and have a good slides it goes. You know you can do it.

And I remember being interviewed for the Shoah project and at the end they asked me so give us a final like a summary of – and I'll tell you exactly what I said because this is my summary if you want to ask me something else, I'll be happy to answer it. Look at me. I have two wonderful boys. Mention one has a PhD. The other one went to college and is a producer for a show. I have a beautiful house. I traveled all over the world. Ask me where I have not been. I have satisfied my hunger for classical music. Here and in New York. We went to the opera every year for three, four days. We stayed at the Park Hotel, across from Lincoln Center. I have seen Pavarotti and Domingo and everybody. I have been at La Scala in Milan. At the Covent Garden, Paris Opera. I have done everything. And you see this. This is my revenge over war, Nazi, communists and everybody else that against the Jews. If you push and you want, you can do it. And now you can ask me anything else. That's –

Q: Do you feel Romanian in any way?

A: Romanian, no. I have never been back since I left. No. My husband took the boys, I would

say about eight years ago. He went to Iasi and to Bivolari. He couldn't find anything. He didn't see anybody. He didn't recognize what's there.

Q: Why didn't you go back?

A: I didn't go back because why should I go? What did they do to me? Why should I go back? I don't want to go back. They threw me out. They took years away from my life. They throw you here, they throw you there. They take my father. Don't let me go to Russia. I am a traitor, I am an embarrassment. Why should I go? No, I'm not, I have no ties. We have no family. I do not feel Romanian. I feel more American because I lived here for most of my life. I think in English. I don't even you know we go to, we went to Israel every year because my husband has had a brother and two sisters there. The brother and one of the sisters died. There is still one there. We were there last October to visit. And we were at a wedding. There are, when the family, immediate family get together, all the siblings and all the from Chaim's brothers and sisters, there are 65 people.

My son, older son who lives in Wilmington was there last September or something like this. And there were so many people. They couldn't have met in a house. So they rented a, in a park there is some kind of you know there is a grill and tables. They rent it and they came from all over, from Bersheva, from **Rishon**, from Tel Aviv, from **Ramla,** from and those are cousins, all cousins with their children and it's just a pleasure. And we were there. There were hundreds of people at the wedding. And all immediate family. I felt like a coward leaving Israel. I still do. They put me through medical school I didn't pay any tuition. Yes, I did work there, paid my dues. I even worked in Safed where nobody wanted to go. That was, yes they paid me more cause I needed money but very few people would have done what I did. To go and work on a border. And I had – my best friends were there. They're gone most of them. I still have one and we Skype like two, three times a week because it's just the two of us left.

We have here, my husband when he came you know in the 50s, he was in, he's a graduate of Michigan State and he was very specialized in botulism. He's a microbiologist. So when he came here, he worked. There was a -- he lived in downtown Washington and there was a church that became a synagogue on Fridays and that's where he met a lot of friends. They formed a group. They were saying -- it's when I came 42, 43 years ago almost, they were already a group. So it

must be 45, 50 years, there was a group. I don't think I ever fit in the American friendships or groups or, because I'm different. I'm very different because of my background, because of my – I don't know. I have different tastes, different opinion, different ideas. But we used to meet every Friday, not every Friday night, once a month either in one house. But then the kids grew up and there were too many so we used to hire here on University Boulevard, a place to have Purim parties and Hanukah parties. All the kids grew up, they're gone. Many of our group, breast cancer, pancreatic cancer and lung cancer. Alzheimer's so we are unable to have a minyan anymore. So we don't see each other. And when we finally decide, it's either this one is sick or that one can't come. We don't have the group that we had before. Not that it meant a lot to me because they're different. My friend, for example, I'll give you an example.

One of the group had breast cancer. I didn't know until she died. And she had a metastasis to the brain and she died. But to me this is not friendship. Tell me and maybe I can help. It's a different approach here. It's a different, it's the era of the telephone when you – I grew up. If I have a friend, I come to the door and I get in. I open the refrigerator and it's not like this. It's different. I am different. I'm, different background.

For example in my society where I grew up, you can ask somebody how much do you make a year? That would be the greatest faux pas here. It would be different. It's very different. My idea of a friend is very different of what friendship is here. Friendship is here, let's get together and let's have dinner. No, that's not for me. To me a friend is somebody that a friend when I need you. Tell me what's wrong. Maybe I can do something for you, that's a friend you know. It has to be in good time and in bad time. Here it's only the good time. I don't have any good times now with, that Chaim is sick. Yes, they were very attentive. They called, they came, they asked, they inquired, they this, they that. It's not the same thing for me. What else do you –

Q: So now that you've retired, are you doing any volunteer work or –

A: I did not because I retired in 2010. In 2011, he fell down the basement stairs and broke his spine. He was at GW for three weeks for fusion. He was at the Hebrew Home for a month. He recouped very, very well to the point that we went to Israel. We came back from Israel. Last December we were for Hanukkah in Wilmington and in the middle of the night he had 104 fever. He had some type of pneumonia. Such incredible lab finding that the hematologist thought that

he has lymphoma. He doesn't because we clarified that he doesn't. Same here. I had to hire a private ambulance to bring him from Wilmington to the Hebrew Home and he recouped very, very well until now. Now he has some inflammatory arthritis with severe pain and this. So we decided to move out of the house because it's too difficult for me. That doesn't have to go on the tape I suppose. Ask me something else.

Q: How do you feel about the Holocaust Museum? Have you -- being built here in Washington.

A: Incredible achievement but it's very difficult.

Q: Difficult for you?

A: To go.

Q: For you to go there?

A: Yes. The first time I cried. The second, second time I cried, the fourth.

Q: Have you been many times?

A: Many, many times. He volunteers since 2003, yes since 2003 he has been volunteering there and translating from Romanian two days a week like a job. He used to go at eight and come at four. Yes, until all this stuff. He worked in the library. And I would have loved to volunteer. I remember going and interviewing actually at the museum, but they didn't have something appropriate for me. I, not for a library. I could translate too but I don't have the patience. He is the one cause he is the scientist you know. Just patience. I don't. I might be good maybe to talk to people but I cannot walk distances because my back hurts. You know just to walk around. Besides you know now I am so busy with him cause he doesn't do anything anymore. I have to do everything, everything. Now with the arthritis he can't open a jar. He can't cut his food so it's tough but no I intended to – they had a program with the some kind of follow up of the twin

experiences and it fell through for some reason cause I would have loved to work with this as a physician. I would be good at it maybe. Look at the medical records or something of that sort.

Q: Did you see the temporary exhibit on Nazi medicine?

A: No I haven't been –

Q: That was some years ago.

A: Last year we had the niece that we met at the wedding with her family and some – they came with a big group of tourists and they came from New York and one of the stops was the Holocaust so we met them at the museum there. That's the last time I've been there. But I've been numerous, numerous times.

Q: Do you think you would have been a different person if you hadn't had the experiences that you had during World War II and communism?

A: I think that I'm a better person.

Q: Because you had to go ---

A: Because I had to go through, through it. Not just a better person. I am a more motivated to do whatever I want to do. I set my goals. I always did, probably higher than I should have. I am definitely a better person just because you see how other people behave and what they do. You say I will never be like this.

Q: Do you think the world has learned anything from the Holocaust?

A: That's the purpose of the museum. Because I don't think that the people today, they don't pay attention because they are busy. They have trivial issues to deal with. Depends on the person I guess. But the museum, that is the only factor in this whole complicated world that at

least maintains a sense of perpetuity. Hopefully it will – people, young people will know. They might not understand. But at least they know what happened. To this day, ask me. We were in Spain, we were in Switzerland. We were in England. We were in Italy. We were in Romania, not the Romania, Russia. We were. Never went to – of course we were in Prague and in Vienna. Never went to Germany. It's, I don't know. I don't feel like I should. I don't know why. It's and sometimes I think maybe Germans have the same resentment for Jews that I feel for them and it shouldn't happen. But I can't help it. I just – how can you help it.
It's, I'm definitely a better person because I –

Q: Was tested?

A: I was tested and every time I go to the museum and I go very often, not any more you know. Every gala, every speech, every survivor get together, every, we used to go. And you go and those people that have been in camps, they are so loveable, they are so happy to see you and they hug you and they kiss you and or he says look at the joie de vivre that those people have. How? How can you be so wonderful and happy and positive. I admire them. And possibly they feel the way I feel. I am better because of it.

Q: Are you more comfortable being among people who did have to go through the war than those of us who never did.

A: Not really, no. It's being in the wrong place in the wrong time. I mean that's, I believe it's faith. I mean it happens. Things happen to people you know. No. It's just that people have different ideas. For example that I see things differently. We have a friend who was born here and she is a professor at GW. And so on and so forth. So one day she tells me, Malvy I read a book. You have to read it. You have to read it. This book is called whatever, whatever. Of course I go and I get the book. So the book is about a family of very rich Iranian Jews who had a jewelry store. Their son was here in the States studying in the state and you know they are Jewish. I forgot to say, what's more important. They are Jewish. And it started with the shah and with the persecution there and of course, I know cause my son has a very good friend who run away from Iran. They went together to the Jewish Day School and he's a big doctor now. And

the book is about how they decided to run away because they knew they are not going to survive cause they were the shah's protégé.

They had Picassos and Renoirs in this all, already in Switzerland. They left with a little suitcase and one of their employees, they left the store with all the jewelries and everything so it wouldn't show that they are running away. They had a limo taking them over the border. They went to Paris and then they came here and so on and so forth. What's so terrific about – what's so incredible about that? You know why did you like the book so much? Oh it's interesting. Not to me. I went through hell to get out from Romania. I wish I were rich you know. So she was surprised. I said wait until I write a book. That's going to be interesting but I may be prejudiced. On the other hand I might be prejudiced because you know we were -- we weren't poor. We just were you know regular people. You know and we didn't have the fortunes and the Renoirs to tide us over and you know we went with no pennies, no money, no nothing. So maybe, I told her, I think my book would be much more interesting to you than this book. That's how but people who don't know. And many people I'm telling you if I – I told you a lot of things, but sometimes I just tell little bit of snippets of what happened to me.

And people look at me and they don't think I tell the truth. You know that's why I'm not going – I mean just like my boys, they say mom you are pulling my leg. They don't think it's true. But I wish we would get younger and we had the patience to write a book. You know. Real things, not adventurous things like those people.

Q: You said your husband was from Iasi, just tell me what happened to him during the war.

A: Oh they -- there was a pogrom in Iasi. And he and his brother were, they built a wall and that's where they stayed during the pogrom. Because they called people. They told them you have to come to that day to that this and that place, meeting place. And they didn't go. But whoever went, they killed them. They sent them to camps. They whatever. This is how they and who the mother who was a simple woman. She said why did you go. Don't go. I'm not letting you to go. And I think one of his brothers went and saw what's happening and had a chance to jump over the fence.

Q: How old was your husband at the time?

A: I would say 18, 18 something like this.

Q: What year was he born?

A: 24. And then when they had a chance, they went to Bucharest. They thought you know they cause they didn't want to stay in Iasi. They went to Bucharest. And they, cause it's a much bigger city. They thought they'll disappear there. But you know immediately after the war, they all left. And my husband went on a – with a youth organization he left. He was with, I don't know which **Hashomer Hatzair** or I was with Hashomer. They, he went on a ship and he was captured by the British cause there was no state Israel yet. And he was detained for a year in Cyprus. And then during one night, the Hagenah they came and they took, no they came out of the camp and they were hidden in the darkness, in a certain place. And then they came and they took them with a boat and went straight into the military. The Israeli and the, when there was Israel, he was in the Israeli army. And he had a brother in Detroit and came here and wanted to go to medical school. They wouldn't take foreigners. So he went to college. He taught bar mitzvah, he taught Hebrew. He worked in a store. Oh my goodness. And finally he finished college and he went for his masters and so on and so forth. Everybody has a – all of us have a story to tell. Mine is not as terrible as others. You know, it's all relative and it all depends on the right time. The bad time to be in a certain place.

Q: Did your experiences, did they make you feel more Jewish? Did it affect your thoughts about being Jewish?

A: It's, absolutely. That, that how much more Jewish can you feel when they tell you you're a traitor because you want to go to Israel. I mean it's –

Q: Also the fact that your father was taken away during the war.

A: Yes, that's true but I don't think that when you are young you think so much about what's happening around you. There's so much self-centered to you know the dates didn't go well. I

don't know a trivial, trivial thing. We grew up. You know your brain I don't think is geared to think to allow –

Q: Such development.

A: Yes, problem. But definitely I lived in Israel. I can tell you I love that country but growing up under communism, and not knowing anything about Judaism. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Yeah we speak Hebrew. That doesn't mean that I know anything about Judaism. So when I came here I felt out of place. Never went to a synagogue in Israel, never, nothing. So when I came here, Chaim comes from a very, very orthodox background. So he started telling me you have to keep kosher. Wow, how is that, you know. Just you cannot, very orthodox because there are so many orthodox synagogues. You are not driving out on Shabbat. I said there is no way. I am a working woman with two children, a husband and two parents. I have to -- Shabbat. He was so – but so it's, I am much more Jewish since I came here. At least I go to a synagogue. I go to the Jewish community center, much more aware, much more in tune with the world. I guess it's aging and being exposed to – I'm much more Jewish since I came here, definitely. Because you know you grow up. It's very important how you grow up, where you grow up, and how you grow up. That's why I sent my kids to a Jewish day school. I wanted them to have what I didn't have. And they already, they are always laughing cause it was very expensive. He said you could have had two Cadillacs. I don't care about the Cadillac. I drive a Honda. I don't care about, I'm not this type of -- what car do you drive? No. To me, when Chaim – I remember one year Chaim was asking me what do you want for your birthday. I don't, as you see nothing cause I grew up like this and I -- my profession never. What do you want for your birthday? There is a Picasso Gaugin exhibit in Chicago. That's what I want. And that's what I did. What do you want for your birthday? You know I don't want to go out to dinner or another, I don't wear them. So that's what I want for my birthday.

Q: Any message to your grandchildren?

A: I always said be truthful to yourself. Enjoy what you do. Don't look for money only in life because I could have when I came here I could have gone into a practice and make half a million

a year. And I said no. I have two children. I want to be home when they come from school. I want them to go to a Jewish school. I want to spend my weekends with them, going down with the mall, in the museum. This is how they grew up with museums and with malls and with theater and with concert. This is how they grew up.

So I always say, do only if you can. You know you have to have a job but if you can do what you like to do in life. That's why I have no regrets even though I took very risky, I made risky decisions. Yes, I suffered consequences but that's how it goes. You know you have to do – My grandson Jacob is seven and he goes to a school for talented children. And he said, he told me **Safca**, I have to interview you. I don't know what, where were you born or something? And the same thing at the end was, what's the advice that you give me? And I said Jacob, what do you like to do. I like math. That's what you should do. That's my advice. Do exactly what you like to do. In life. Yes. It's -- my life was really different from Americans that are born here. For example when I retired, somebody asked me so where are you moving. Why should I move? I said I want to be where my children are. What kind of concept is this that you would go away from your children to Florida or to I don't know. It doesn't even enter my mind. Everybody waits to retire and go to Florida. It's not me, that's not me. I want to be where my kids are. I never understand that. I never understand Americans and how they say when I retire. And I say when I retire probably I'll be old and sick. That's today is the day to live and it has to do that we've been through a war. We could have been dead. We could have been in jail from the communism. We could have – who knows. A bomb exploding in Israel, who knows. The time to live is now, whenever you are young or not young but healthy, that's when the time to live is. And I remember when I was maybe ten, 12, I made a list of wishes of things that you would like to do in life. And the radio was big deal in – I don't think, only after World War II we had the radio there. And I remember my parents listening to the -- we receive at Waldorf Astoria. What was the name of the --

Q: Guy Lombardo?

A: Guy Lombardo. And I listened, I liked the music and I said one day I am going to go for New Year's Eve to Waldorf Astoria and we did it in 1992. We did. It was – people that grow up like me where you have nothing. All you have is a dream. I don't know. Where, Metropolitan opera.

That was also cause my parents used to listen, on my list. The first time I came to the States after we got married, I told Chaim, I have to go to the Metropolitan opera. Of course only he was working. We didn't have a lot of money. Somebody bought us tickets at the balcony at the Metropolitan opera. I remember taking the train, going to New York, seeing the matinee and coming back. And when we, you know when we finally I started working and every year it's like the pilgrimage to Mecca for me was to go to the Met. That was my list, my list. I mean there are things that make children of my age probably never thought of this, that's a dream to be in some place. And Las Vegas was on my list. Yes, I went. Didn't -- yes but I remember Frank Sinatra and were at one of the hotels and Alan King and whatever. We do – I did go many times cause I love the Cirque de Soleil so I travel a lot from work and we went to San Diego. Wherever he traveled I traveled with him. Wherever I went for work, we used to stop. I went a lot to San Diego or Reno and so when I was on the west coast we used to stop and see Cirque de Soleil. When they didn't come around like they come now. Alaska, Hawaii. Everywhere. You know just did it right on time because now travel will be not anymore.

Q: Is there anything you want to say before we finish?

A: I would like to say what I said before was my life is an example of a Jewish victory over anti-Semitism.

Q: That's a beautiful way to end it. An important way to end it.

A: Ok

Q: Thank you very much for doing the interview. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial museum interview with Malvy Solomon.

(end)