

Interview with Florence Eisen

[Date not labeled on audio tape]

Question: This is an interview with Florence Eisen.

Answer: I probably won't _____, if you don't mind.

Q: Okay. If you want to stop the tape at any time, just let me know.

A: Oh that's okay. I'll manage. I'll manage. I didn't talk for many, many years. I did not talk. When my kids started to understand, more or less, I just did not talk what I went through. I tried to have good times. I tried to forget. I tried to, I blocked out. I just didn't want to inflict the pain. I was in so much pain, deep-knee, that I didn't want to inflict on my children. I suffered so much as a child and when the kids were born, they were my whole life. I didn't expect to be alive, I didn't expect to get married, I didn't expect to have children. And when this, God gave me two kids, it's just, why should I put the pain on them? It's not enough that I went through? This is all I have now. I lost my mother, my sister, a brother who was one year younger, a sister who was five years younger than I was. And just to put this kind of pain on my children, I said no. When they'll grow up, they'll go to school, I raise them as Jewish. I'm not orthodox but I am very much Jewish orientated, all my life in this country. I gave my life to Judaism. I work for the ZOA. My name is quite known in the ZOA. Florence Eisen, Fanny Eisen. I give big donations. I love Israel, it is my life. Anything that was for Israel I raised millions of dollars for Israel, for bonds, UGA, they all know me. But to tell the children about the ghetto and the war, and what I went through, I just, I stopped right there. I didn't want to do it. I couldn't. I couldn't put this pain on them. I want them to grow up not to know what mother went through. But to be happy. To grow up as American, normal children. I was not normal. I didn't grow up normal. I didn't have a normal upbringing. From twelve years of age, since 1939, and I just wanted, that's all I have is my kids, and to let them lead a normal life. Let them grow up like all the other American next-door children. Not by a mother who is always worried. I did put my overprotection over them. I did. I didn't let them swim. I didn't let them play ball. I didn't let them, food was always eat, eat, eat. Push, put on them. I knew my abnormality. I knew it, but I couldn't help it. Now, they're now in school, and then they went to High School and college, they know Grandmas, they call me Babba, overprotection of them. Even up until now, I still don't want them to ride a bike. I just can't bear for them to get hurt in any way. In any way I can't bear for them to get hurt. Now I

have grandchildren so I am even more overprotective. But now we talk about it. As soon as my kids, my grandchildren, not to my children. They start to go to school and of course it came out, schools talk about it. I was able more to talk about it. They called me, there's not, my children live in Connecticut and when they started High School, even, when _____ public schools they wrote about their grandma. In schools, and I'm sure you know that they say, you know, you have grandparents? Tell me about you're grandparents. They always say that my grandparents are survivors but I don't know much about them. They called me into Connecticut, to schools. I talked a little bit about it. I told them. They wrote about my life. They always got A's, always got A's. When they graduated, my older one's bar mitzvah, and it was like some kind of a Friday night, they called me, I went there. I told them what I would like to do. They brought the whole school children. I told them that I want to tell them how lucky they are that they were born here and raised here and educated here. They didn't have to go through what grandma went through. And how overprotective I am over them. With both boys I did that, both boys. And really they take pride in me. They take pride in me for that.

Q: Let's talk about you're children and you're family life a little bit later on. Let's go back to the stories that . . .

A: To the ghetto?

Q: . . . now you're beginning to talk to them about these stories. Why don't we start?

A: Start to talk about the children?

Q: Yes, start when you were a child. Let's talk of you're experiences in the ghetto and just give, first of all, you're name then, how old you were, and a little bit about you're family and then we can talk about the ghetto.

A: Okay. Actually the war for me started in 1939 when the Russians came in. In 1939. I was born in 1928. My name then was Fagel Giterman. Fagel was my Jewish name, Giterman was my father's name. A family of five, my father, my mother, three children. I'm the oldest of the three. My brother was one year younger, my sister five years younger. Also lived with us a grandma, my father's mother, who was an old, lovely lady. And in 1939, when the Russians came our lives started to change. My father was a barber, he gave the kids a good education, he worked very, very hard. My mother never worked. In Europe, in those years, women didn't work. They took care of the children and we lived in a small stet-ill (ph) by the name of Lock-mul (ph), not far from Pease (ph), from Mun-yeah-yetz (ph), it's a stet-ill (ph) but a nice stet-ill (ph), with a beautiful you-gont (ph), beautiful, beautiful young crowd of people which, I didn't even know them yet

because I was what? I was born in 1928 and this was 1939, I was eleven years old, right? About eleven years old. And the war started already. They sent us to school. They put us like a year younger. I felt as a child that life started to be hard. Anyway, two years the Russians were there. It wasn't too bad. Then, in 1942 I think, the Germans came. As a child, I was a curious child. I use to, we had a radio. Some people didn't have a radio, we did have a radio. We use to sit, my father use to sit by the radio and listen what's going on the world. And I was hiding and listening. I was unhappy. I was very unhappy. It made me very unhappy. I cried a lot. Then they started to talk about they are going to go to a ghetto, they are going to put us in a ghetto. We lived like, we had our own house, and we lived like outskirts of my town. And they are going to put us like in the middle of the town. They divided the ghetto, this is only what I've heard talking from the grown-ups. Like their going to divide the town, not the town, but in the middle of the marrick (ph) they use to call it, middle of the city or the town or the stet-ill (ph), and they're going to put us in the ghetto. I remember what they gave us, a buggy and a horse. They didn't give us, my father had to borrow it from the next door, a peasant, non-Jewish people. But they had a good pull you put on it and I walked in the back. I looked at my house. I cried. I remember like now. This was 1942, I must have been fourteen I guess. I cried my eyes out. I looked to the house. I said, "where are we going"? Anyway, they took us there. My father had a stepbrother in this particular ghetto. There were two ghettos split in half and we were in one ghetto, not far from the Shul (ph). And he had a big house, but they gave us a small room. And this small room, very small, tiny, maybe, my father made bunk beds. And there were five people, and my grandma was six, and they put another couple there, an elderly couple, and they also had like a bunk bed. And that's how we lived there. We were there from, it must have been around Pacer side (ph), before Pacer side (ph). So Pacer (ph) is usually April sometimes, the end of April probably. And I didn't know, there wasn't enough food. I heard my father talk about trying to get together a young group of people that, they are going to make like an uprising and they are going to go to the other ghetto. I was always kind of, as a child I was hiding and crying and hiding and reading whatever I could put my hands on, some books, reading. And my mother never talked a lot. She was a nice, quiet lady. My father was a barber and he was a good barber. And him I think, and the guy, the other couple that was with us, they opened up a barbershop special for the Germans and also for the non-Jews outside of the ghetto. And he worked there. So he use to bring in, probably smuggling, hiding, a piece of bread, a piece of fish or a piece of _____ because whatever the ration they gave to you it wasn't enough. I remember after quite a while, my mother's walking around with a pair of swollen feet. I said, "Ma, what is it?". "Oh, nothing my kin, nothing. Don't worry about, I'm fine." Later on I found out it was from lack of food. She didn't eat. Whatever little food she had she gave it to the children. And she didn't eat it, she

got swollen. She was only thirty-six years when she went to her grave. When they killed her. Thirty-six years old. And then old grandma was with us. I was never in the kitchen. I was never, there was one kitchen, it couldn't have been for ten family's maybe, I was never in somebody else's rooms. I couldn't, I was just in pain, pain, pain, pain. I couldn't, I was mainly in my room. I don't even remember playing with children. I don't know why. I was just trying to get books and read and read and stay in bed and read. There was no school, of course. I never went to school there in ghetto. And my little sister, I don't remember. I can visualize them very well now, but I never went to school in ghetto. Maybe there was some school, I don't think so, if there was any schooling there. And one day, they use to send people to work. What was the work? Later on I found out, at the end. That they use to take a bunch of people from on ghetto, send them to a different, out of town place or out of this, to another town, dig graves and that's how they use to kill the people. They didn't know about us. They wanted my mother, my mother was a very brave woman, and one German was like after my mother. So instead of sending my mother to work, work means to dig the graves for other people, I went. I went to dig these graves and I remember the graves, they was like long, deep graves. I was in one grave, digging, and there were some other people digging, and on the way back they brought us home in trucks. And it was like in the middle, this work was always done like in the middle of the night, like from supertime around, before it got dark, until like the middle of the night.

Q: Did you know what you were doing?

A: No. I really didn't know what I was doing. Because I, I had a hunch maybe, but I really didn't know. I had no choice. Whatever it was I had to dig the grave, I wasn't the only one. Not directly, I didn't know that this is really for killing people, to throw people in there. And we came home, it must have been about 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. The ghetto was already rounded, all around. There were trucks, there were soldiers. It was like, the ghetto was barb wired all around and we looked around and one German said, "Well, you're going to be killed tonight." And the people that were with us, they said, "This is it. I think we're going to get killed tonight." They dropped us off. We went into the ghetto. Everybody was up, it started to get like a little lighter, everybody was up. My mother was up. Everybody was crying and screaming. But they didn't take anybody yet on the trucks yet. I said, "Where's my Dad?". Dad wasn't there anymore and my brother wasn't there. And I couldn't stand the crying, the yelling, the screaming. So I went out of the house and, excuse me for the expression, to go to the bathroom they had like booths outside. And you go into that booth and it was like a hole with a seat in there so when they dropped this came down, and I hid there. I hid, that's why, when I saw Shindler's List, I saw myself, that little girl. That little girl who dropped in the, excuse me, in the droppings of the people. I was there. And when I saw this, it

just, I was screaming. I was yelling, I was crying. When I saw the movie. It's true, I was there. And I went in like halfway, I just wanted to drown and I couldn't drown. All of a sudden, my mother came running after me, grabbed my hair, pulled me out and said, "You can't do that, you can't do that." I said, "Ma, I can't go on that truck. I don't want to be killed. I can't do that." Anyway, she schlepped me into the house, she washed me off and I hid under the pillows. I went into bed and I hid myself. I covered my eyes and I put this blanket over my ears. She said, "No, you come out of there." She schlepped me out of there. She dressed me and she put some clothes on me and she says, "Listen, my child. You're father and you're brother went to the other ghetto. They might survive. They might not survive. But I want you to go there. Get dressed fast." She dressed me, she put some shoes on me, she put a school thing on me and I started to run to the other ghetto. Now why didn't I say, "Ma, come with me."? Why didn't I say it to my sister? She was running after me. She said, "Take me with you." I said, "I don't know where I'm going, I don't know where I'm going."

[Mrs. Eisen overwhelmed at this point, unable to make out what she is saying]

She continues: Who's going to take care of you're sister, my great grandmother, old grandma." She said, "You go. Maybe you'll save yourself, maybe." Anyway, I started to run. The ghettos were closed, they wouldn't let me through. I started to beg, "Let me through, let me through. My father's there." So one guy opened the gate, I was the last person crossing from one ghetto to the other. And they opened the gate, I crossed the street, the only one, and they wouldn't let me in there. So I started to scream and banging and knocking and they let me in. I went into the other ghetto, ten minutes later the ghetto exploded, like exploded. They started to shoot into the ghetto. The houses were on fire. I saw my first cousin, he lived in a house in the other ghetto, in the Rabbi's house, I saw the Rabbi standing, wrapped in a talus (ph), his little children next to him, with their heads up. My cousin, her mother was in the back yelling, "Schmish-oil, Schmish-oil, Schmish-oil" (ph). There was another guy next to him burning, on fire. And they started the shooting. The shooting came in like a hail. I didn't see my father. I didn't see my brother. I didn't see anybody. All of a sudden, I got killed. I got killed, I fell and I see people, I look around me. I see people lying dead with open mouths. Children, blood, flesh, pieces ripped apart. And I'm just laying there. I said, I touched myself, I said, No, I'm alive. I'm not dead. I fell, I don't know why, but I fell and I touch myself. I got up and a bunch of young, Jewish guys, I think you have it on the record, somebody who was in the front there, ripped the gate and they started to run through the town into the gardens, straight to some woods. Everybody ran. I was running, I was running, I was strong. I got weaker. I still didn't know what happened to me. And I was running. I was running after everybody, I'm looking, maybe I'll see my father, my brother, nobody. I knew my mother's not there, this I knew. And I passed my

house, we passed the house where I lived in, I looked at it. And I ran. And we came to a place by the name of Prepitch (ph) and I said to myself, there's something running in the back of me. There's something not right about, my shoulders are getting weaker, I'm getting dizzy a little bit. I said, my back is wet. And I looked, I touched my back, my behind, and I'm full of blood. A girlfriend who lived next to us came over and she looked at me and said, "Fanny, you know you are wounded. What's the matter?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "You're whole wet back is ripped, the clothing is ripped, I could see an open flesh there." I said, "Well, I must have got hit in the ghetto by a, you know, when they hit me." She took off her kerchief from her head, she took off her shirt, she had that little shirt underneath. There was water there, the name of the place called Prepitch (ph). She dipped this in the water, she wiped me around, she cleaned me off and she put this around me and I was okay. I mean, there was a wound there. I didn't know anything else anymore. And that's it. And I was on the Prepitch (ph), unfortunately people are cruel, I guess when the Mo-ha-movis (ph) is in front of you you're trying to save yourself not somebody else. And the grown up people took off. Nobody wanted me. I was very skinny. I didn't look like, I was thirteen-and-a-half I think, nobody wanted me. I was running after the young males, you know, they said, "My sister, my brother, my father, my mother, they are going to die and I can't schlep here with me, I can't save my own life. Go home." I said, "What do you mean go home, the ghetto was on fire, where am I going to go? I can't go anyplace, it's burning. Where am I going to go?" Anyway, I was on my own there with some, one guy who had two small children of his own took me under his arms. And another two kids, they are all alive, he died, never, he shouldn't have died, he should have lived forever. And he got in touch with some kind of peasant guy. We were there for about a week on this Prepitch (ph), for about a week. Do you want me to . . . ?

Q: So how many people, let me just go over, when you left there, when you ran from the ghetto, how many people were you with? Were there many people running?

A: Running, they were running for about, out of the Prepitch (ph) there must have been around 500 people who ran away from the ghetto.

Q: And did people scatter? Did you go . . . ?

A: But they scattered all over the places, all over the places. Some, then quite a few weeks later, I was traveling, we had to cross the Prepitch (ph) with some kind of a kayak or something, otherwise we couldn't be over. And this guy who took me under his wings, he had two small kids of his own, one is my age and one a bit younger. And he said to him, "Well, if you're going to take care of _____, you're going to _____ us a little bit. I have like a big pot of gold hidden behind

my house. When the war is over, I'll give it to you." It's true, he gave it to him, but this poor peasant got killed for saving Jews. They killed him. And we were there for about eight days. This peasant use to come, like everybody took off in different directions, nobody wanted the kids. I'm talking about the Jewish people. Nobody wanted us. And he use to bring, every day, like a little fish, cooked fish. A small piece of bread. It must have been for about 7 or 8 kids there and this grown-up man. And this is how we survived this Prepitch (ph). And then he said, "Over there, on the other side of the Prepitch (ph) there are partisans. I'll take you there, but one at a time." It was like a kayak, a metal kayak. And he started to, one day, like a week later, with that whole week. And the Germans was looking for us. There was one incident. We were laying, all of us together, in the woods. I lost my shoes when I was running, my feet were swollen. At that time they take off, like the corn, and it is so hard, it's like needles. And when you run, when I was running, it like went through and through my feet, and my feet were huge and swollen. And it was cold already, it was September I think, it must have been September. When did they take off the corn? September, right? After the ghetto already, you know? So, it was the end of September, or October, no, September, the end of September I think. And he says, and I was laying there hungry and some kids were swollen already too, and he said, "I'll take you over there." And he took like two, three people on this little kayak and he took us over on the other side. Little by little, it must have been about 7 or 8 kids. This grown up man, and he should rest in peace, he saved my life. Because nobody wanted me. My own people, they knew me. "Why are you running after me? Go back to you're mother." I said, "I don't know where they are. It's burning, how can I go back there?" Twice they left me sleeping. I shouldn't say it but it's the truth. They left me on a stack of hay. I wake up in the middle of the night, there's nobody there. I'm laying there all by myself, on the Prepitch (ph), I'm laying there all by myself. I got up. It's dark. Where am I going to go? I don't know, so I was listening quietly. I've heard some talking but I didn't know for sure if it was German or Yiddish, but at that particular point, I couldn't care less. So I figured if it's Germans, they kill me, it's enough. If Jewish, let's see what's going to happen. I followed the voices and I got it there. It was the same people who left me laying under the stack of hay. Twice like this I survived, twice.

Q: How did you meet up with you're father again?

A: This was quite weeks later. I was laying in some woods. Some people went away, some people got connected with some other groups. There was a lot of traveling Jews from different towns. Some grown-ups. They knew the way and they went to look for partisans. I was laying there with another woman and she had, like a little child, a little boy. And I think this, Romanofski's (ph) his name, with the two girls. We were laying there in a ditch in the woods, and of course I had a lot

of hair, I had long hair. Skinny I was all my life. And now, after weeks of not eating, I could hardly move. We were laying there. "Mommy's dying." All of a sudden we hear, some people hear some talking, either Yiddish or German. So we gave up, figure, look, whoever is going to be there, it's going to be there. If it's going to be Jews, fine. If not, if it's Germans, you're going to be dead. They are going to shoot us out like worms in this ditch and put us there, you know, get it over with. And they came closer and closer and closer. I can hear now, the echo in my head. And they were Jewish. And this Jewish, and there was a man, just a man. A few men. There was a woman with one child, I think, too. And they came closer and I looked. I didn't know if my father ran. I knew he was in the ghetto where it was the uprising, but I didn't know if he ran away or he survived or he got killed running. Nobody saw him running, you know, and nobody knew if, nobody saw him. I mean, I didn't see anybody. All of a sudden I see my father. I start yelling in Yiddish, "De-tock-n-key, de-tock-n-key (ph)". He backed it up and he looked, he didn't recognize me. He said, "De-tock-n-key?". "Don't you recognize me? It's Fagel, you're daughter." He just didn't recognize me. He grabbed me and touched me and opened up the hair over my face, took it away, and looked at my face and he started yelling, "No, this is not my Fagel." And he passed out. I said, "Oh my God, finally I found him and now he got a heart attack and he died." He didn't recognize me. He just didn't recognize me at all, I was like a skeleton. And lots of hair, the hair was all coiled, like all over my face. And he passed out. He passed out, of course, we started to yell and scream and put some, there was no water there. I remember we use to squeeze down our food and take some moisture out of it and that's what we drank. We survived, we didn't get poisoned. And that's what we did, and we tried to, and he woke up and he recognized me, of course. And this is how he found me, this is how he found me. And then he said he knew his way a little bit around and he said, "Well, let's see what you can do now." And we started to walk. And in the morning, when it was light, the peasants, they go to the fields. It was field time. And they leave the house open. So we use to go into the house, grab a piece of bread, you know, steal. Steal a potato. Sometime we went in, like during the day we would pass by some fields and this was like September, there were like beets and potatoes and carrots. So we use to steal from the fields and sometimes we stole from the houses. If we saw a house standing there, nobody was there, we ran in and we stole a piece of pancake, whatever it was on the table. And this is how it was for quite a while, for quite a few months. And then my father had a profession. He asked me if my brother was running too. He thought maybe he was running out of the ghetto, maybe he survived. All his life he was looking for him, but he didn't survive. Later on we found out what happened to my brother. He was running. He ran from the ghetto. He got wounded very, very badly. Worse than me. And a German caught him and he said to him, "Run. Maybe you could save yourself. Run." My brother was working in a stable with horses in the ghetto, so he use to

bring in like little things from an orange, a piece of bread. And these Germans recognized him. And he started to run and he was weaker and weaker and weaker and he came to, like close to my house where he was born, and the peasants recognized him. And believe it or not, they finished him off with sticks. They killed him with sticks, they finished him off with sticks.

Q: At this point how much information did you have when you found you're father again and between . . .?

[End of Side 1 of Tape 1]

A: . . . to my ghetto. When I walked out of there, when I went out of that ghetto, what they did. Like I digged graves for other towns. They, some other towns dig graves for my hometown. And what they did, they put all those people on trucks. Whoever survive. In my ghetto there was not killing, I mean, in the ghetto, there was no fire there. What they did from my side of the ghetto, they took those people like my mother, my sister, my grandma, my aunts, my uncles, they put them on those trucks. They took them to this grave. They put them, they lined them up close to the grave. They told them to put their clothes off and, an old lady of over eighty years of age. Why? You ask why? They took off their clothes, they shoot them and they threw them in, like rows and rows. They threw in one row, they put this disinfectant stuff, I don't know what it is, like a white type of thing, they put it over, then another. They killed another row of Jewish, all, they had to get undressed. And shoot them out, throw them into this grave. This was going on. Whoever was there, there must have been about 2 1/2 thousand people. I think in these grave, I think in this grave, there is about 1,900 people in this grave.

Q: When did you, how did you find out this information? When did you find that out?

A: After the liberation, after the liberation. My father also knew, like through the war we didn't know exactly, but my father knew from some peasants. They saw it. They were standing there watching. There was a lot of peasant people standing and watching. And they saw exactly what they were doing. But, either they were afraid of their own skin or they were happy about it and they didn't care. And what could they do if they did care? They'd shoot. But they saw something like this going on, they could have been dead too. If they would say one word for the Jews, he would have been dead too, the peasant. And that's, they finished it off. They said that the grave was up and down, raising, for three days. This grave was like breathing for three days, up and down, up and down, up and down. After the war I went to that grave. And it wasn't, it was like dropped already, fell already. Me and some, another two girls. And we started to clean up around and I saw these shoes, baby's shoes, baby's clothes, baby's, just like they left it there, that's how it was

there. The peasants didn't touch, they had the goym (ph), they were afraid to come close to it, I don't know. And we started to clean it up and we put it in bags and then I saw little bones and I took off. I took off. I left my hometown. I lived in Swooz-ka (ph) after the war, I was liberated by Swooz-ka (ph), a town. It was Russian there, like where I was born it's like the borderline was. Poland and Russia. So I was like on the Polish side of the border. And Swooz-ka (ph) was on the other side. And I was liberated there, in Swooz-ka (ph).

Q: Let's talk about liberation. What were you doing? You were with you're father? Tell me about what you were doing, what they daily life was like leading up to liberation?

A: Well we were walking. We were looking actually for the partisans because the peasants said that there are partisans. And being my father was a barber and he knew a little bit how to sew, he didn't have ammunition on him. And we were Jewish. And we had no other choice. I mean, we walked and we came across some groups and, say they were partisans, and he got in touch with them, he got connected with them. And they said, well, they'll take in my father. At first, like the partisans in that area, they were organized from Moscow. They use to, they had to obey Moscow's orders. And in real life they were not allowed to kill Jews, but if they caught the Jews they killed them. They killed a lot of Jews, the partisans, a lot. And we were walking and walking and walking, my father with his _____, but when he found me I was full of lice. I was like one lice from toe to head. And in the middle of the night, I remember like now, we went into somebody's house and I started to cry, this is after he found me, he said, "I have to save my child." She looked at me, she said, an older lady, she said, "Oh my God, my child, my child. What is it? What's happening to you?" I was swollen here, I wore the same outfit, you know, it was hard already from the blood. And full of lice, I had a big head of hair. She took me in. She was a nice lady. An older lady. She had like a big, how you call it? Made out of wood where you bathe someone, bathe the children or bathe a pig, who knows? She put in some water there. My father had his, this machine that you cut hair off. First of all, the first thing he did he cut off my whole head of hair. The lice were gone. They put me in this _____, how you call it? In the val-it (ph) we use to call it. And they gave me a bath, he said, "But I have nothing for you to wear. I can't give you anything to wear." She said, "I'm going to give you some of mine." So she gave me something to wear, something what she was wearing. Everything, I mean, panties, those _____ panties. And she gave me a pair of lop-chess (ph), it's made out of straw to put on my feet. And she said, "I have nothing else. It's cold. How could you walk on that?" So she went into her stable and there was a big pig there. And the pig was covered with a big blanket, it's like a burble, how you call it?

Q: Burlap?

A: Burlap. She took it off. She said, "This will keep you warm." And she gave this to me, they gave me a bath, they cut off my hair. And she said, "But you have to live." And she gave me something to eat, and she said, "But you have to leave my house. You have to go. Go, go, I don't want to see you. You were never in my house. Just take off because they are going to kill me. The Germans are going to kill me." And we took off. That little old lady, I'll never forget too. And we walked again, the two of us, and two more people. And we walked and we walked and we walked, and my father who use to walk daytime, we use to hide at night. We walked and stole a potato. We stole carrots, in the woods, I mean in the gardens. And he used to give the peasants a haircut because in those years they didn't have those automatic razors and how to take a haircut. So they had pity, kind of, for us, some of the peasants, non-Jewish people. And we walked and we walked and we walked until we came to this particular place, close to _____, it took us months. And the name of it was Lublin. And he said, "Look, I have a profession." They said, "Do you have ammunition?" He said, "No. I don't have nothing. I don't have a pistol, I don't have a, I have nothing." He said, "But I have a profession. I could give you haircuts. I could sew. I'll make you jackets". You know, whatever, jackets from the ship things. He said, "But I have a child with me." He said, "No. We'll take you _____." They wanted to take him in, but not the child. He says, "Well, I'm not going without the child. Either you take us both. I'm sure she could be useful, she could work." They had kitchens. They had, we lived underground, like they call it in Russian _____, underground. And there were only left over soldiers from Russia that they took off. When the Germans passed by they were going and there was no war there actually, the Russians they were running, in the Russia and the Germans just took it over, that's it. It wasn't any shooting there. And so they said, you know what, they said, "We have a town that, the partisans own it. There's no _____ there. We are going to put you're daughter in one of those houses. They are going to keep her. But we're not going to take her in." There was no children there. And they did. They put me in this peasant's house. For some reason, I must have been there for quite a few months, I don't remember nothing of this particular house and what I did. I must have been, I cleaned probably. I go to the fields. I went, as my father use to tell me later on, why I blocked this out I cannot understand. I just remember I slept on top of an oven. And it was so hot. Like, the cooking was in the middle and the oven was like bricks. And this heated off the whole house. I slept on it. It was impossible. This pain and this burning in my flesh I'll never forget. And also this house had cockroaches. Lots of them. Lots of cockroaches. This I remember. But the rest of it, what I ate, how I ate, I really don't remember. But of course they needed my father for haircuts. He use to sew something, fix something. So they

kept him and he was of course after them to take me into, to bring with him, because who knows? Here I am okay with the peasants, a minute later they could give me out. You know, a German could come in or, but _____ was owned by the partisans. This town was owned by the partisans. So I was kind of in a safe way but my father wasn't sure. And there was no transportation. I didn't know where he was, where he is, if he's going to come back to pick me up or if he's going to leave me there. Because I saw on the Prepitch (ph) how running people left their children to die. I saw it. And this was in my mind. Some of them were wounded, some of them were not wounded. And they left them and the parents took off. And this was in my mind all my life, even when I came here to this country, that my father's going to leave me. Which he never did. He was the best father. He saved my life. Not just this time, there was other incidences, and the partisans, true, they wanted to kill me. And he said no. But this was in my mind because what I saw on the Prepitch (ph). The parents left their children. And one day, all of a sudden a buggy came with a horse and two soldiers and they came into the house. But I stayed. And he brought me like a little, he made it, he put it together for me, from wool, sheepskins. Like a little jacket. And he brought me a pair of, put together from little boots, you know? And he put me on that wagon and he took me to the partisans. I was useful there actually. I peeled potatoes. I went into the kitchen, they had an organized kitchen for the soldiers. I went into that kitchen at 2 o'clock in the morning, 1 o'clock, peeled potatoes. Served them. Food I had enough already, I had enough food. I wasn't hungry anymore. I use to knit for the soldier's gloves. They got it somehow, wool. I use to knit for them gloves. I use to knit for them socks. I use to sew up certain things that they were ripped on them, you know? Of course, I was under the protection with my father. Otherwise, they would have raped me, they would have killed me, they would have never taken me in. They didn't need me. But they needed my father. Sometimes I use to even go, they taught me how to use a, not the piece of rifle gun, but the long ones. The . . .

Q: Rifle?

A: The rifles. They taught me how to use it in case something comes up. They didn't want me, but there was other two Jewish girls there. One was older than I am and one was younger. Also because of their brothers. They had brothers. And this is all, there were three children, Jewish kids. There was no females at all, they were not allowed to have any females there. It was a regular army, organized army.

Q: And what was life like with the partisans? Like, how many people were there? Did you travel? Was their fighting?

A: We traveled, they were fighting. They were not so many fighting, they were bombing us. The Germans knew that the partisans are there but it was town and

towns and miles with partisan, soldiers, armies, that the Russians left there when they took off and they ran. And the Germans, they were so busy with the Front and with the fighting, it was a real organized group, thousands of partisans, thousands. And they use to, my father knew more, unfortunately my father's dead. But they use to put bombs, when the Germans use to send, let's say ammunition to the Front, into deep Russia, the partisans knew about it. And they use to put bombs under the trains and stop them and just explode them. They shouldn't be able to take it to the Front, the ammunition and the soldiers. They killed thousands and thousands of them, thousands of Germans. They never made it into deep Russia because the partisans really, so they tried to bomb us out. They tried, they kept on constantly bombing. And in one of these bombings we ran and I lost my father. I lost my father. I was one who always was running in the front for some reason. And my father, he was only thirty-six years old so he still was a young man, but for some reason, I was younger of course, and I lost him. I lost him and I couldn't find him. And we passed by a river. We passed by a river, I was like in the front. The partisans, what they did, in order for the other to cross the river, because it was really burning and bombing heavily, they put like ropes. Some partisans swam through and they put a rope and two ropes on this side and this is how you pass the river. A few of them passed, it was, of course, I think it must have been a very, very hard thing to do, and having partisans with ammunition. I got hold of this thing and I started to walk over, they grabbed me and they wanted to pull me back. I didn't let myself and I knew my father was like a few feet in the back of me someplace and I started to pass by and the bombing got closer and closer and they dropped the ropes and I fell into the river. But I was already not in the middle of the deep river, I was like closer on the way out. And they saw me falling into the river. I fell into the river. There's some Russian soldiers, the Chinese I guess from, they called them in those years, I remember, Ta-tongs (ph), I don't know how you call them now. They schlepped me out, they pulled me out. And of course I had nothing with me, whatever I had, clothing on, but they pulled me out and I was trying myself to be close to them. I saw that they took off, I don't have my father, I'm either 14 or 15 years of age, skinny like a toothpick, you know? That's it, this is the end of me. And my father didn't want to leave. He knew that I am in the water someplace, so he said, "I'm not going." They said, "Well, you're daughter's dead. I saw her falling." Which is true, they saw me falling in, he said, "Forget about it." I have a blouse from this incident, and he said, "No, you're daughter's not alive. You're daughter fall into the water and who's going to save her? Who's going to take care of her? She fell into the water. She got drowned. She's dead." But I didn't. I, these two Ta-tong (ph) from deep Russia, they really took care of me. They really took care of me. I was lucky. They, I gave them haircuts. I also was working with the partisans with the machine, they had a machine and shaving, so they needed me in a way. And they really took care of me. They really took care of me. If they

were stealing some food, because the partisans, the group fell apart. The majority group was left behind. I was with just about a dozen people, maybe two dozen people. Nobody wanted to take care of me, to give me a piece of bread, nothing. But these two particular people, they just felt sorry for me. Whatever they got they shared with me. And one night we were laying there in the bushes, it was cold already, it was close to winter. All of a sudden somebody stretching like that, I said, Oy-vey, what am I going to do now? It's going to, and he's sort of laying completely like, freezing. They took off their jackets, he covered me. He covered me with whatever he had, his jacket. There's some good people in this world, there really are good people. And then I walked with them, I held on to them and they were watching me. Until the other group of the partisans, the bombing stopped and we got reunited. But my father couldn't find me, he really couldn't find me. Do you want to hear the story, how he found me again? And we walked and we walked and there was a, you walk daytime, nighttime and you stay hidden, and these two people shared with me they're piece of bread. There was not really a partisan here. The real partisans were left behind. And we came to a town and I was with them and there was a doctor, not a doctor, it was a felcher (ph), a doctor. And people started to get sick on typhus, stomach typhus. I was the only girl. I wouldn't say a woman, I wasn't a woman, the only girl. And this doctor said to me, he said, "You know what? I'm going to show you how to take care a little bit of sick people." People started to get sick on the typhus, they were just dying under you're hands, under you're feet. He said, "This town is from partisans, it's a partisan town. Let's see what." And some other partisans came and I was with this doctor and he was telling me how to put a bandage on, how to give him, there was no medications, there's some tea. And we weren't, and the bombing started again. This was already a few weeks later. And the bombing started again. And a bomb, I was with the typhus people, I got sick on typhus. I got sick on typhus and the temperature was running high and then when the, and they were laying on bridges kind of, soldiers. Some dead, some alive, some dead, some alive. And I put myself at the very, very end. They were not allowed to touch me really because it was against the law. So I was, and then there were so many young, beautiful women, young women, in the towns that, you know, look at me? There's no woman, there was nothing. There was a skin and bone little girl. And they were not allowed. So I slept like against the wall most of the time but with the rest of the people, they were sick on typhus. And I got it, I got it. And I started to, I remember once they even brought, they flew down from Moscow, packages of medications. They had connections with Moscow. And laying there and they put out all the sick people, outside. Bombing started again. And they schlepped, we schlepped all the sick people out, they put them outside in barns, some dead, some alive. I was crawling a little bit and this house was burning and I got out of the house and I was laying in the back of the house. And the house is already on fire and I was laying there to

die. All of a sudden, my father's here. It's just like a miracle, a real miracle. How did you get here? When they were walking from the other side of the river and then they crossed the river and then they came, the bombing stopped, and then when the bombing started again and the town was burning, he kept on yelling, "I had a daughter someplace, I had a daughter someplace. Maybe you saw a little girl?" And they kept on telling him, maybe she's here, maybe she's there, maybe it's in this house. And until he came where I was laying under this building. But I couldn't walk. I was like dead, half-dead. He schlepped me, he put me on his back. This was just before the liberation I guess, this must have been like six months before the liberation. And we had bombing and bombing and the partisans more or less had started to fall apart. But we belonged to the group yet, and they wanted to kill me, the partisans. He was schlepping me on his back and he said, "Well, if you drop her and any Germans get her, she might talk a little bit. Maybe she knows anything, I mean, she knows something." And they just wanted to kill me. And I heard that, I wasn't unconscious. Maybe sometimes. And he said, "No, you will not kill my daughter. If you want to kill her, first you have to kill me so I wouldn't know it. Then you could kill my daughter." And they didn't. And he schlepped me, he schlepped me on his back. I was walking with a big, not a cane, but a big stick of wood, and after the liberation yet I was walking with that stick. I couldn't walk. And this is how he saved my life. We were liberated not far from So-you-sk (ph). When we got there, there was no government at all yet. They didn't have any government yet. But there were no Jews yet. There was, for about three or four days, there was no government at all. It was like, the Germans took off and the Russians came in and there was no government yet. And finally I guess the government got organized, the Russians, and they. I remember walking with this stick, with my father's help of course, and there was telephone poles and on every pole there was hanging a German with his head down. On every pole. I don't know if I should tell this or not. On every pole. The partisans cut some Germans or some peasants that were involved, who was a policeman and he killed Jews or he was a policeman and killed partisans, who was a guy who was with the Germans, you know? They caught him and they hung him up. They were hanging. I remember when we came to Sloo-sk (ph) that was the first day I think, but we just walked in there and they had caught some Germans, the partisans I guess, Germans, Poles, the others who were involved in the German government, and they threw them all, certain things I remember well, certain things I don't, I just don't remember, but this I remember. They put them like in one, big mountain of people, living people, alive. They were crawling on each other like worms. Some wounded, some healthy. And the partisans said to my father, they said to him, "You know what? You have this rifle. Why don't you hit them? Hit them in there. Give them for you're wife, for you're son. Give it to them." My father gave one hit and he passed out. He can't do it. So they said, "Come on, how about you? You're a young girl." I must have

been close to 16. "For you're father, for you're mother. You were there. You saw them doing that to you." I couldn't, I was like numb. I looked at this. I got sick to my stomach, I started to throw up. I couldn't hit one German. I just couldn't. And then my father got to his feet, he passed out. He gave one hit and he couldn't do it. These are Jews. Jews are not fighters. Thank God now, their Fathers in Israel, thank God. But those years were just, I couldn't. What they did to me, what I saw with my own eyes. This is just a fraction of my story, what I saw when it was burning. I got caught once, I ran, I walked out of the ghetto and I was going to my house. I got out, I just sneaked out. And I asked for some food. On the way back they didn't give me. On the way back, I passed by a garden and I was, maybe I took out a few scallions there, I don't know. They caught me. They beat the Hell out of me. They threw me back into the ghetto, they could have killed me on the spot. They threw me back into the ghetto with a swollen face, beat up. Not the Germans beat me up, the Poles. And here I couldn't hit one German. I couldn't. My father couldn't, he gave one hit and he passed out. There is Jewish people for you.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about how you got to the DP camps and what they were like?

A: Well we were liberated in Swoot-ska (ph) and my father was always a Yiddishist and he said, "Well let's go to my home town." He met a woman in Slot-skol-sa (ph) and we knew that my mother's dead, and we went to my hometown and then he went to a bigger town in Pinske (ph) to look for some more Jews. Pinske (ph), in Pinske (ph) a few people survived, not too many people. And another town by the name of Wo-nin-yetz (ph) and they were talking, there was the hagga-nah (ph) and there was the Brig-ha (ph) sneaking and looking and trying to organize Jewish survivors. My father, I really don't know how he found out about it, he found out about it and he got in touch with some people and he said, "You know what? There is a way, they are going to take us to Israel from here. There is the Bra-han (ph), the Haga-nan (ph), other Israeli organizations. And they are going to somehow get us out of here and we're going to go to Israel. My father had two sisters and a brother in America. But he didn't remember the address, he didn't remember nothing. I mean, he lost everything that was left in the house before we went into ghetto. And there was no way of getting in touch. But with the Hagga-na (ph), Abra-ha (ph), I really don't know which one it was, they organized the left over Jews who ever survived. And they were going to send us, we had to go I think to Bialystok, to some organizer. This was the main place where they tried to get some Jewish names and Jewish people and he went there and he registered kind of there and then he came back, this I remember, and then we went, they smuggled us, it was 1945 yet. We were liberated in 1944, in Sou-lska (ph), a year before the regular liberation. And they smuggled us as Greek Jews to Lodz. We came to Lodz, very well organized, they put us in a Kibbutz (ph) being we were partisans

and soldiers. They put us in a camp by the name of Ba-hack (ph). It was not a camp really, it was more like a group. And we came there and were registered there, they brought us there. I think they gave us papers . . .

End of Tape 1.

Tape 2

Q: This is interview with Florence Eisen, tape 2. Okay, we were just talking about after liberation.

A: Yeah. And from there they smuggled us in, we're not allowed to speak any other language but Hebrew, I guess. I was the only one who knew a little Hebrew, how to speak Hebrew. But by then already my father remarried. He got married in Swiss government, a Jewish woman with a child. More or less my age, so we were the four of us.

Q: Who was she? How did he meet her and where?

A: He met her in Swoo-sk (ph), he met her in Swoo-sk (ph) right after the liberation. Some Jews started to come in from every part of Russia. They came from, she was born and raised in Swoo-sk (ph) but in the war her husband got killed right away, I guess, they killed him. And they kind of, I don't know how they got to deep Russia. But after the war, it was not after the war the war was still going on for a whole year, but in that area, in Swoo-sk (ph) the war was over. So she came with her daughter, also a son but the son was in the army, and my father was a young man, thirty-six years old, a lonely person with a child, and he met her. She just came from, I think she was around Moscow someplace, and he met her. And she was also a young woman, lonely. And they got married there. She knew that my mother's dead, I mean, they knew my mother is dead. And he married her. So we were like four of us. She wasn't a good stepmother. She was a mean stepmother to me, like in the books. I had another war with her. This woman really didn't give me to eat, that's how mean she was to me. Let her rest in peace now. And she, we traveled from Lodz through Czechoslovakia, through Germany, into a displaced camp not far from Munich by the name of Poke-ing (ph). They brought us there, they gave us clothes, they sanitized us, they cleaned us up. We were clean already more or less, more or less we were clean. And they start to give us, it was an organized camp for misplaced people. They gave us packages of food. And they started to leave, more or less, they gave us a room. It was like a barracks and like little rooms, so they gave us a small room. They gave us enough food. And, of course, my father always had a profession, he was a barber. So he started right away to work in the camp as a barber. We were free already, of course, and we

were there. We came in 1946 in January and we left and they closed this misplaced, the DP camp, they became like in 1948. I got married there, met my husband there, got married there, had a nice wedding. But then when Po-king (ph) got closed, they send us to another camp by the name of Feldafing where my son was born, my son was born there in Feldafing.

Q: How many people were in the camp? Were there many other children?

A: It was a big camp, yeah. Whoever had survived. I mean, they get at us, they took us to a place in Mechelen and Saltzheim (ph) and they _____ at us, I guess they sent other people to different camps too, but this was all organized from Israel. Hagga-nah (ph), Abra-ha (ph), I'm not sure which group did it, but that was well, also from Hi-yas (ph) already, we were supported from the Hi-yas (ph) from the United States. They found us, my father's two sisters. Unfortunately the brother just died when we came, but the two sisters they found out for us. It was, the food and everything, the clothing and food was mainly through the Had-dasa (ph), Hi-yas (ph), excuse me, not Had-dasa (ph), Hi-yas (ph).

Q: And what did people do during the day? What did people occupy themselves with?

A: What did people do? We start to get organized, like I knew like a little Hebrew. There was kitchens. That there were cooks and brought in food and whoever didn't have any food to eat, you came there, you ate in the kitchen, in the _____ kitchen. Or like we had like a family, my stepmother and my father, they gave us care packages and my stepmother cooked for us. My father is being a barber. He started to work right away as a barber. There were organized, they start to organize like schools for children. I was like a kindergarten so I was teaching, I was talking, I had to talk Hebrew to the kids and I knew some Hebrew so I spoke Hebrew to the children. I have pictures, I have a picture from it. And I guess whoever was a tailor and whoever was a shoemaker, everybody started to reorganize their lives a little bit, in that camp even. We had, next door to us, we had a Club with music and the young kids use to go dancing there, next door. We were liberated, we were free. We were already free. And this was, and we start to correspond with my father's two sisters. They send me packages, clothing, food, money. We had enough food. And we were there from about 1946 of January. In March my husband came with his group and we met and we were courting for over three years. And in 1948 we got married.

Q: How did you meet you're husband?

A: You know, the Jews somehow they are, they know how to live and they are survivors. So as soon as we got there it was a group like actors and I wanted to be

an actress. So I went over there and I said, well I could dance, I could sing, take me in, this kind of stuff. And they put up a show, there was like 7,000 Jews maybe in that camp. A show, _____, an old, old Jewish show. And they gave me a part in the other, interviewed me, this guy and they gave me a part in there. So they put up like a _____ and after the show, there was dancing. So I was in the show. I played my part and after the show I washed my face, whatever the make-up was on, and I went down and was dancing. And this young man came over to me and asked me to dance. I said okay. And once or twice, we were both very good dancers, and this is how we met. And we never left each other again. It was just instant love, instant love. And that's how we met and we were going steady, and then when they closed the camp, I got married there. We went to, they sent us to a camp, I was pregnant. They send us to a camp by the name of Fohrenwald. I was there, I gave birth there. Meantime, the family of my father, the two sisters, especially one sister, was working we should come to America. She just wanted us in America, it's a good country and she wanted everybody. She wanted her brother, his wife and stepsister, me, my husband. But my father didn't tell them that I got married. So they send us, at that it was affidavits, it was not contracts yet, it was affidavits. They made up papers and they were going to take us from Po-king (ph) to America. But meantime I got married and I put another name on the contract, on the, later on it was contracts, affidavits, whatever. And then, all of a sudden, I got pregnant. And they had to put somebody else on it, on the, so anyway, when we moved to Fohrenwald they, my stepsister, she says she doesn't want to go to America. She doesn't want to go to America. She got up and she went to Israel. She went to Israel and my father's sister started, I shouldn't go to Israel. I should come to America. They didn't have any children. They wanted me as a child, they will do for me, they'll give me, they'll give my husband a good job. He had no profession, he was 21 years old when he married me, he had no profession. We had no skills. I was already with a baby. We took some lessons in camp, in English, how much do we know English? Yes or no, maybe thank you, that's about the whole thing. But my stepmother, being her daughter, at that time it wasn't legal to go yet, being that the daughter's already in Israel, she wants to go to Israel too. So she schlepped my father to Israel. This was in 1948, must have been the end of 1948 because I got married the end of August, and a month later they left to Israel. So he saw what was going on there, bad. Mo-mish (ph) people were starving and the wars and he kept on writing letters, please my kin (ph) don't come here. I know you don't want to be without me, all those years, but now it's a different world, it's a free world. You're going to see, I never wanted to leave my father for one day. It's _____ in the partisans, there were a few children and when the plane came, they wanted to take them to Moscow. I said, I'm not going. Either I'll live with my father or I'm going to die with my father. They left, they went to Moscow by plane, they took them. I didn't want

to go. I said, no way am I going without my father. Whatever it will be it will happen to the two of us. I'm not leaving my father. So he said to me, "It's not the partisans, it's not the war. The war is over. Go to my sister's. You'll have a good life. You'll come here with a husband who has no skills, who does not know a word of English. Believe me, we are starving. There's no apartments. You can't get an apartment. He doesn't have a profession. I have a profession. I could work as a barber, but you're husband doesn't have a profession. He has nothing." Anyway, I let him, he said, "If you're coming over I'm going to commit suicide. And then you're not going to have a father all together. Go to America." And that's what happened. They send, but then already the contracts came in. They send the affidavits and they made affidavits for me, for my husband and for my son. Then they had to re-do it because by the time the affidavits came my son was born and they had to change everything around again, you know? And I said, well, let's go to America. My husband had a family there, they didn't want him to go to America either. Because they were going to go to Israel. My mother-in-law had two sisters in Israel. So we were kind of written aside, I won the case. And we went to America. It just turned out that I took my husband's whole family to America. A year later his brother came with his wife and a daughter. And a year later, two-and-a-half years later, we took over his mother, she still stayed in Fohrenwald and his married sister with her two children and a husband. So I won the case. I took them all to America. Think that I'm no sorry, it's a beautiful country, we've had a good life here. My husband works hard. And then my father, after quite a few years, her daughter went to Montreal. She got married in Israel and her daughter went to Montreal and I couldn't bring him here yet. So she took him to Montreal. Unfortunately he died when he was too young, he died of cancer, he was fifty-six years old. But the time came that I could have enjoyed my father and be with him and give him a little na-has (ph), he died.

Q: Before we talk about life in America, just again, the camps. How much was it, like, did it feel at all like a sort of like a real life? You said there were classes, there were schools, there were dances, there were plays. How was it like a, how do you kind of build back a life?

A: To me I knew it's not a real life yet, but it was good. It was heaven. I had enough food. I had friends. Now I remember my friends, and the rest of the friends I just block out, I remember nothing. But in camp, in Po-king (ph) it was a good life for us. It was, but we weren't, if we had from 1939 until 1946 already it was, it was already after the war, it was heaven. They gave us the hi-yas (ph) and there's enough packages, enough food. It was kitchens, whoever couldn't cook for themselves they took care of us, they give us clothing. It was a life. What we had in the war, this was a good life. Some people from, survivors, they went to towns, they went to business even there, they got married there. I mean, like in Minute-hen (ph), Deblin, and those big cities, some of them got re-established there too but

my father was a, had a job and this was his profession and we went to this camp and we had it pretty good. But we knew that sooner or later we would have to go. This is not a place to finish, to make a life, the rest of our lives. It was, mainly it was Israel. Mainly our aim was to go to Israel. But being of his two sisters and alarming and coming and being, he was there before me and life was tough and life was hard and life was really hard, you know? So we said good-bye and life in camp wasn't a _____ camp. Everybody had enough food to eat.

Q: What did people talk about in the camps?

A: It depends. We came out like from cages. That's all we wanted to do, is have a good time. We went to work, we came back from work. I was working as a, first I was working as a Hebrew teacher, no, first I was working in a place where they use to make, it's a factory you call it. They use to make little sweaters and gloves for American, this was done through the Hi-yas (ph). So I knitted, being I knew how to knit, I knitted the little scarves, sweaters, little boots, gloves, and this was sent to America. Where it was, I think to Texas someplace, I don't know. So, for this we worked and every week we got a care package for that. No money. Just a care package of food we got.

Q: So we were just talking about working and the daily life in the camp?

A: Yes, and the daily life, we as children, we had some friends. Once or twice a week we went dancing. We belonged to this kibbutz (ph), Ba-hach (ph), which it was for leftover partisans and soldiers. As a matter of fact, they send us, being I knew a little Hebrew, they send a group of us to a different camp, Ba-drack-en-hive (ph) to organize. It was also a DP, there for misplaced people. They send us to re-organize Ba-hach (ph), to open up a new kibbutz (ph) and that's what we did. As a matter of fact with some of the people I am still friendly up until now. Lovely people, intelligent people. We were there for almost a year. And then that group, they send him to Israel and I didn't want to go and they wound up in the Cypress, and I went back home to my father, in Po-king (ph). It was, for a DP camp it was a pretty good life what we went through. Food, we had. Clothing, we had. We went dancing. The Ha-yass (ph) took care of us. I had family in America, they send me packages. But our aim was to go to Israel. This was our aim, is to go to Israel. But being for my father's two sisters, they were yelling and screaming, we should come here.

Q: And you were saying before that in the camps, people mostly talked about?

A: They talked about the past. They were still looking if anybody survived. They were still looking if anybody, someplace survived. So they use to go to different misplaced camps and look around there. They were looking, they were looking for

family. There was one from here, one from ten people, one from seven people, mostly from concentration camps. Most of them. With the numbers. And what could they talk? What we went through, and now what are we going to do now with our future? What we going to do now? And broken up families. If there was a family. My father made a family because he married that woman and she had a child, and me, we were like a family. But most it was like one person, one person, one person. Brother and sister? Not too many. Unless people who came from Russia, who had a few families where they came from deep Russia and they were like a few families together. But most of them, they were lonely, lonely people who tried to find a mate and get married and have a, to be with somebody, not to be lonely. Even some men who didn't know if the wife survived and they got married and then the wife came, from someplace, who knows where? There was trouble in this area. But we were two young kids with my father, my stepmother and we had like a little home, you know? In one room. And then we went dancing, we were laughing, we were playing cards, it was a pretty normal life in this DP camp, yes.

Q: Did people have much information about what had happened to their families or their neighbors or their towns?

A: They did and they didn't. It still was unbelievable that something like this could have happened. I went home, I knew what happened to my mother and my sister and my brother. I knew it because the peasants told us. They were watching. And from this side of the ghetto nobody survived, nobody. From the other side where it was the uprising, like me, survives. And some other people survived. 500 people run out of that area. But survive? Maybe 125. Some of them got starved from hunger, some of them got killed, some of them got killed in the partisans. Some of them got lost. Some of them remained in Russia. But the majority of people of my hometown went to Israel. The majority.

Q: So let's talk about coming to America.

A: So this was my life in Germany. Got married there and then right away I got pregnant and I had a little boy, which was like a miracle happened. I just, a miracle. I couldn't believe it. As a matter of fact, when I got pregnant I was only 20. I was 20 when I got married. And I went to this doctor, the German doctor, and he said to me, "You are pregnant." I said, "Well, yeah I'm married and now I'm pregnant." And he said, "You shouldn't have gotten pregnant, you're not even developed yet. You're not a woman, you're a child." I didn't even have, excuse me, my period normal yet. I was 19 and I still wasn't normal. So he said, "You'll never have this child. I don't know what's going to happen to you but you shouldn't have gotten pregnant." I had a tough time, I really had a tough time. In this country I would have had a cesarean, but then they schlepped them out, they ripped me apart, ripped me in pieces. He was born in a camp by the name of Fohrenwald and I was

four days in labor. This doctor was right, I wasn't developed, I just didn't grow as a woman. I was still, I was undernourished. I'll give you, food was good but it wasn't such a vitamins and such, good food. Even in the DP camp, like we had the cans of Spam, cans of, it wasn't the right food for a child to eat and the right vitamin food, you know? But then, of course, we got the papers and we immigrated to America, the three of us. Me and my husband and my son. As a matter of fact, my Uncle, they paid up that we shouldn't go by boat so he paid up to fly in here. We should fly to America. When we got here the Ha-yass (ph) gave us back the money. And we stayed, we came the three of us, without language, without real clothing, without knowledge of anything. I mean, just young. Very young. My husband was 21 and I was 20-something, not even 21 when I gave birth to him. And we stayed with my Uncle and my Aunt, they were pretty good to us. It was my father's sister.

Q: Where was this?

A: It was in the Bronx, East Bronx, Franklin Avenue. But to me it was heaven. As meager everything was and we lived with them and to me it was, I was free. But I had a problem sleeping. I heard the plane and I was flying but when I heard a plane I was flying out the window. This was going on for years, for years. And I tried not to think and I, whatever, for some reason the bombing made such a big impact on me, left me with such a, I was terrified for planes, terrified. I didn't fly for many, many years. Though I flew in here. But I was like, I had like anxiety, when I heard the plane fly I had an anxiety attack. And I was flying through the window. I was cold, I was relaxed, when we started to go to the _____ colonies. When I was in the woods and I could run, it's like, always I could hide and run in the woods. I was not safe in a building. I was afraid of buildings. I was afraid of planes, of the bombing. Because they tried to bomb us out a lot, a lot. And this was my, I got anxiety attacks. I almost got killed if my husband wouldn't have grabbed me, I would be out the window, flying out the window. The only time I felt good, I felt relaxed, when I was in the country, in the _____, in the _____, I was in the woods and I saw the trees and I knew I could run. I mean, it was still in my mind, of running. I'm going to run, I'm going to run, I'm going to run. Though I was safe but I wasn't safe psychologically. I just couldn't, I couldn't, it was still in my mind, I'm going to run. That's it. For many, many, many years. Many years.

Q: What did you and you're husband do when you first got here? Work? Did you find an apartment?

A: Well we got here. My family picked us up. We stayed with them. It was very hard in 1949, it was very hard to get an apartment. It was impossible to get an apartment. So we lived with my Uncle and Aunt, they took us in. They had a private house on Franklin Avenue. We live with them. They gave us food. They

gave us a little spending money. And then we knew there was a ha-yass (ph). My husband use to go, I had a baby already, and he start to go to school, learn the language, went to ha-yass (ph), got some information. They tried to give him a job but he had no skills. So he was, I had a cousin who was a painter, he painted apartments. He gave him a job as a painter. But before that he was a carpenter. He didn't know how to keep a hammer in his hand, he was a carpenter. Then they put him, he got a job, it was Moisher's (ph) Supermarket. He got a job there in Moisher's (ph) Supermarket, he use to put the cans on the shelves. And then my cousin took him in as a, to teach him how to paint, paint apartments. He was very good at that, once he learned how to paint, and he learned and he painted and he made some money. We stayed with my family for six months, with my Aunt and Uncle. And then they got us an apartment, also not far from Franklin Avenue, I remember the address, 638 Catona Park South, East Bronx. They got us an apartment. My family paid \$600.00 under the table to get me this apartment. But they were very nice, they were not poor people, and they got us this apartment, came with some furniture. And my Uncle bought me a brand new bedroom set, I'll never forget, if I would have that set now it's an antique. I could have made a lot of money. So I, beautiful two-bedroom apartment, it was on the second floor, two bedrooms. But the rent was expensive, \$42.50 a month. So what did I do? A lot of _____ came in there and there's one single guy who I knew him from Po-king (ph). I rented to him as a boarder. So he lived, I rented the apartment to him and he gave me like, \$25.00 or \$30.00 a month, so that was a big help with paying rent. And then a year later, to me it was heaven on earth. If I could go to _____ Avenue shopping, buy food, I didn't have to buy expensive food, in those years we didn't know about cholesterol, but if I could make them a chicken, three meals, which I did, I was always a big with bala-boosta (ph). I learned from my stepmother, she was a _____ bala-boosta (ph). From my Aunts. And I didn't know how to cook, but I learned. I wanted to learn. I wanted to take care of my family. And I loved every minute of it, from the day I came to this country. Because I was free. I was free, except when I was on the plane flight, I was free. And I had food, I had enough food. I had my own refrigerator of food. I opened up and I bought bread and milk and I baked cakes and I went out with my kid to the park and, I was afraid to go. I was looking with kind of a, I was always suspicious, but you get use to it. And then a year later, we brought his brother and his wife and a child here. And he worked, being my husband worked a little bit by Moisher's (ph) Supermarket and my brother-in-law who worked in Germany, he was in a different camp in Germany, also with this kind of a supermarket goods, and they were thinking of going into business. No profession, what do you do? You go into business. So they start, they looked into it and they bought like a small, little grocery. Money we didn't have. And my Uncle said to me, "Humph, I gave you everything. I'll give you a business? What does you're husband know about

business? Was he ever . . . [End of side 1 of Tape 2]. . . but to give us money? To go into business. He said, "You're not, you're still green horns. You have to bring yourself up first before you go into business." Anyway, we borrowed here a few dollars, there a few dollars, and he worked. Those years he made nice money as a painter. And we saved up. He didn't even know, I saved up \$1,500.00. And then when he went to business, where are we going to get the money? I took out the \$1,500.00, I said, "Here's \$1,500.00." He said, "What? Where did you get the money?" I saved it up. And his brother brought a set of Rosenthal (ph) dishes from Germany, he sold that. And they bought like a small, little grocery. And they cheated us from top to bottom, from top to bottom. We couldn't make a living out of it. Not two families. I remember they started to take out, like \$30.00 a week, and some food when they could. By then already I had a beautiful apartment, they had an apartment. The ha-yass (ph) helped with apartments, a lot of people, a lot. I was lucky that I had my Uncle, my Aunt, my father's sisters helped us. But the other newcomers, _____ they use to call those years, the ha-yass (ph) helped. Help with money, paid for rent, gave money for food, for a while. Until you got jobs. They tried to give you jobs, they got you jobs. And luckily, as I said before, my family was very helpful. They gave me kosher dishes, they gave me _____, they gave milk, they gave _____, I was kosher in those years, very kosher. And this is how we bought this little store and they cheated us. They were _____ green, they were green. But they never gave up. They didn't give up, and then there was, they started to build a huge, big building on the concourse. The store was like off the concourse and they started to build like a big building with a huge supermarket on the bottom. Well, they got panicky. If this huge supermarket goes in, we are completely out. At least, legally we push through days and months thinking what to do for the future, but now with this supermarket coming up, forget it. So they looked at each other, the two brothers, and they said to themselves, how do we get this supermarket? We could buy it. But we don't have any money. What are we going to do for money? There's no money. My Uncle says he's not giving me any money because you're going to lose it, he said, they cheated you out of this little store and now their going to cheat you again. He wouldn't give it to us. Here I have already another child was born, my daughter was born in 1952. What are we going to do? We started to talk to Green-na (ph) and Green-na (ph) are really helpful, you know? And they lended us money, they got \$2,000.00 here, \$1,000.00 there. Maybe we got something for this little store here, I don't know how much. My husband maybe knows more about it. And believe it or not, we bought this Supermarket. They went to the people that put in the electric supply and they went to the people that gave us the food, you know? Am I correct, Heshew?

Heshew: About what?

A: How we got into the supermarket, to the big supermarket? It was the first air conditioned supermarket in the Bronx. I think in New York, maybe.

Heshew: Yeah.

A: The first air conditioned supermarket. We have pictures. There was a line when we opened up, there was a line around the corner coming into the store to buy. And we worked hard, I mean, they worked hard. They worked very, very hard. They still took out very little money, and to pay up all the debts, that we owe people money. And the business, I was in seventh heaven. I have enough food. I could give my kids food, food, food, food. Until now, my gut obsession is food. Just to have enough food for my children and for my grandchildren. They are always right about me. Why is my Babba so obsessed with food? So I explained it to them, how many years I was hungry. That I had raw beets and raw potatoes, and now I have food and I don't want my kids to get hungry. We're not going to be hungry, don't push on us. And thank God the store was good. And we saved and we saved. We lived very, how you say it? Within splash, with lots of money. And _____ they had and they worked very hard. In those years the supermarkets were open seven days a week. And later hours. He hardly saw the children. By the time he came home the kids were already in bed, like 7 or 8 o'clock. Until 7 o'clock the store was open, Friday until 9 o'clock, I think it was. And Saturday, Sunday, it was seven days a week. And then they opened up another store. On Kingsley _____ Avenue, another supermarket. In the beginning it wasn't good, in the beginning it was really, it was bad. But then with hard work and a little by little it was good. It was good. He made money, we made money and I had my home, which I didn't have a house but apartments, which I was always in seventh heaven. I kissed the ground in this country. I had my family, I had my food, I had my FrigidAir, I had my home. What?

Heshew: She had nothing else to do, just kissing the ground. Her husband was slaving and she was kissing the ground. Not a bad idea.

A: [Laughter]

Q: You were making him do all the work?

A: Yeah.

Q: What sort of network was there among Jews in general and Jews from the war?

A: Here?

Q: Here. In the neighborhood or?

A: Well here we started like accumulating together. Like all the survivors. One family was looking for another one. We got together. We had our own groups. I really didn't, I only mingled with my family, which I had family, cousins, they were very nice to me, very nice. I had a big, beautiful family and they took me in with open arms. But concerning the _____, that we were called all those years, the newcomers, the survivors, we got together. We had our groups. We start to play cards, we let a normal life. Tried to lead a normal life. Of course, the past, you cannot forget. And you cannot just let go. It's deep in you're mind and in you're heart. I think of it until the day you die. It will never, never, never leave us for one minute. Those years back, even up until now we have the same organized organizations, which is only by survivors. We have New Years Eve parties. I got involved, years later, I got involved in the ZOA. We had a group, then we moved to, this was many years later, to Pelham Parkway. I got involved there. I was President of the _____, it's a Chapter from the ZOA. District 20. And we made like a Ladies Auxiliary, it's a chapter of it and I was President for ten years. I worked very hard, of course no pay. And we raised money for Israel. Our lives was quite normal. I still did not talk about what I went through to the kids. Until my grandchildren started to grow up and understand what means, they start to learn in school and ask questions, then I started to talk about it. But our life here was pretty good, I can't complain really. I never complained and my husband worked very hard. I never worked. To me the kids were my first priority. And I took care of the kids, I didn't trust any babysitters. For five years I never saw a movie in this country. Any place I went there were the kids and the kids and the kids. Later on, when they got a little older, I put my emphasis on education. I tried my best to push my kids through schools. If they were weak, to, never had a babysitter in their lives. To, how you call it, someone to help my kids with education because I wasn't knowledgeable enough in this country to learn English. I never went to school here. Whatever I learned, whatever I know in writing or reading, is only from reading. I read a lot in those years, an awful lot. And this is what I tried to push on my kids. Send them to Hebrew school, send them to, I led a pretty normal, Jewish life. Going to _____ even when they, when my husband went to work I took both kids, schlepped them to school. Of course, the holidays, I was very close with his family. He had a, then two or two-and-a-half years later, after we came to this country, I think two-and-a-half or three-and-a-half years, we brought his mother, his sister with her family, a husband and two kids, to this country. And I considered myself extremely blessed and very lucky to be into a family. Because I didn't have anybody from my mother's side or my, I had my father's two sisters and some cousins here, but they were very good, but survivors? I was the only one. There was another sister of my mother with five kids. They all got killed in Lack-ma (ph). In my town where I was born, the name of it is Lack-ma (ph). They all got killed. So I considered myself very blessed and very fortunate to

go into a full family. They all came from Russia. My husband lost his father right when the Germans came into their town, they killed him immediately. No, they didn't. They took him into a camp and they burned him, to Belzec. And he got burned, they burned him. But the two brothers and the sister and the mother are very, very close. All these years, they were in business together, we lived in the same area together, more or less. I lived in _____, the Parkway, they lived on the Concourse and then they moved to _____ Parkway, and then we all moved to Pelham Parkway. And that's where we lived for eight years until I moved in here and I considered myself very lucky to be in a family like this and my life here was quite normal. My husband tried to be in business all their lives, on his life. He worked himself up. Thank God he made a good living, always. Money was no problem. When I had the supermarkets, food, I always had galore. And we went into real estate little by little. And thank God financially we did pretty well for ourselves.

Q: What sort of things became important to you based on you're experiences during the war? You said food, for one.

A: My family. My children. To raise my children, maybe in a liberal way, maybe too much liberal. Maybe too much of liberal. To raise my kids, to give it to them, they shouldn't be hateful. They should love all kinds of people. They should be good people. They should have professions. They should have a profession and God forbid a war comes over or whatever, they should have something to fall on. Because my father, if not this profession where he was a barber, we would never have survived. See, I wanted my kids to have some kind of a profession. Of course, I didn't want them to be a tailor or a carpenter because this is not the Jewish mother's thing for children. What does a Jewish mother want, is her husband? Her children should be a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, at least a teacher. So I was pushing for teaching for my kids. So both of my kids actually, originally they became teachers. My son was a special education teacher and my daughter, she wanted to be a veterinarian when she was a little girl, but she was raised in the 1960's. She was not really a full fledged hippie, but kind of on the very liberal side. She went to Binghamton, to school, _____ was _____. And what I said, I was pushing for teaching. Now she became an Anthropology teacher, she's a very bright girl. And she was teaching anthropology for a full year and then she came home and said, "Ma, I don't like this profession. I don't want to be an anthropologist." I said, "What do you want to be?" "I want to be a doctor." I said, "You're crazy. Now, after so many years, so much work you put in being a teacher, now you want to be a . . ." "I want to be a veterinarian." Well, she's very bright. I was against it. The truth is she took crash courses in Italian. She was short in Bio, she was short in Chemistry, and she went to Italy and she became a doctor veterinarian. And she's practicing now. And she's doing very well. She has her

own place and she is a very good veterinarian. My son became a special education teacher. And after a while he didn't like teaching either. He didn't want to be a teacher. And he got hooked up with a friend and somebody else, I guess, and they went into Nutra System Diet Centers. And thank God, God was good to them. He did very well. Very well. He makes a good living. Now the Nutra System is not so well, the Diet Centers, but he makes a living, thank God. He does pretty good. She's also a teacher, his wife. A lovely, lovely Jewish girl, very nice. An angel of a child. And they gave me three beautiful grandchildren. And this is my whole life, I live for them. I lived for them. And I still do. I still do live for the children. This is my whole life. Nothing else matters to me.

Q: And you were talking about discussing the stories from the war with you're kids. I mean, did you discuss, did you talk about it with you're husband? Did you talk about it with other people?

A: With my husband, we talked, yeah. I talked to my husband, also not too much. Also not too much. He never talked at all. But also not too much. I was going on with my daily routines of life. Getting up in the morning, cleaning, see that the kids should go out for fresh air, taking them to schools, baking, being with his family, being with my family. And this was more or less my life, was wrapped around this here. Not too much talking. I started to really open up more when my grandchildren started to ask questions because it was, when my kids went to school they didn't talk too much about the Holocaust. They really didn't. Not in schools. But at home, I couldn't talk. I didn't want to put this pain on them. But only when my grandchildren in Junior High School, I think, started to talk about it. And then they kept on asking questions and I really started to open up to them. And I was sitting with them, they were writing and telling what I told them and I told them what I went through. They do know. I don't know if they know every, little detail, but most of it. They do, they know what I went through, yes, they do know.

Q: How did you talk to your own kids? I mean, you're son was born in one of the DP camps.

A: _____. He knew that I am a survivor and I went through Hitler and I lost my mother, my sister, my brother. I survived. And that's how I met his father. He knew that he was born in this DP camp in Fohrenwald, he knew about all those things. Which is not, it's painful and as a child they cannot realize what this means and how much pain his mother went through. And even, I don't know if they know even the loss, if they could feel what I lost. If they could feel my loss and my mother. I was raised without a mother practically. When I needed her the most she wasn't there anymore. And I had to take care of other people all my life, in order to survive. This was in the partisans, even after the war, when my father married my stepmother. She wasn't a good woman and I had to prove myself, to be good and

to be, and to do things. I always took care of somebody, all my life I, nobody, except I happen to take care of me, but I always did for people that my life should be easier or to be good or to impress people. They shouldn't hurt me, they shouldn't leave me. The fear of leaving was in me a lot, a lot. Like especially fear with my father of leaving. It was really kind of a, painful to me. Very painful. Even here, being in this country, and he didn't live here. This feeling went away when he died. It's like it was wiped away, like I was relieved. And up until then, until the day he died, just either I was holding on to him _____. When he died, I was sure that, you know, God took him away and I cannot even explain. I cannot explain the feeling of it. The fear that I'm going to be left alone. But when he died, its like something, a clock in me says well, this is, if he left you and he will never come back and you have to take care of yourself and you're family. This is you're family. You're father is gone, you cannot lay on him anymore. You cannot depend on him anymore. He cannot save you anymore. These fears for some reason, it was, it was a terrible, frightening thing. Maybe if it was just me, maybe other people didn't have this, I don't know. But I had this pain, I had this terrible pain.

Q: Before you're father died, what was you're relationship with him? After the war, did you talk to him about that?

A: Unfortunately, yeah, we talked, I talked to my father, yeah. I was like his life. I was, I am by nature, I was a strong, self-confident person. My father gave it to me. He was the one who inflicted this on me. You are beautiful. You are the smartest. You know how to do this and he gave me the confidence in him, in me. He made me, whatever I am now, he made me. But unfortunately, circumstances after the war ripped us apart. He went to Israel. I went to this country. Then he couldn't come here. And he went to Canada. As soon as he got to Canada, he was, from Israel he traveled to Argentina, he had a sister there. And from there he couldn't come to straight here, but to Canada, through Italy, so he was in Italy. And I was always of course in touch with him, close in touch with him. But really, being together he should see me grow as a woman, grow as a mother, grow as a wife. Having a family that, he never saw it because he wasn't with me. That's bothered me a lot, it still does. _____, but when it came to _____, for some reason it didn't work out. So then he lived in Canada, in Montreal. And I use to go there constantly, he use to come to me. He was _____ when my son was born. It's not like you could hold his _____ for my child. It was just the circumstances didn't happen, it just didn't happen. I use to go a lot to Montreal, I open him a barbershop, I didn't have too much money then but I did my best. I opened him up a barbershop to make him happy. They wanted to be there. And then, unfortunately, he got sick. He got sick. He got sick and I use to schlep him here, schlep him to doctors here. Schlep him for surgery here. He had eleven surgeries,

he had cancer in his testicles. And he was sick for about six or seven years. Now, he would have been saved because medicine is so progressed now that prostate cancer is now much easier to help and to cure within those years. I mean, he died six months _____. Six months.

Q: Did you look back on the war together though? Did those things you talked about, were they about the war?

A: Yeah, we talked to each other, yeah. With him I talked a lot, yeah. But he was also one of those people who couldn't see me suffer. So he would start to talk, and he said, take her around it, around it, don't talk. Don't aggravate yourself. You're here. You have a good husband, you have a beautiful family. Don't go back. No. Before he died, he called in me and my Uncle and my Aunt, and he said, "Look to the High my kin", he said. "You went through a lot. This is you're first _____. I'm dying. I'm not going to make it, but I want you to have a _____ the way. The way, _____, the way you want it. That's you're first symbol in you're life. Make a big bar mitzvah, make a nice bar mitzvah". He thought that I was rich because I use to help him a lot and give him a lot. I had enough. Never complained on money. And he said, "Don't worry. I'll be with you. I'm going to be there every minute of you're step, watching you. _____, enjoy it." And that's what I did. I made him a big bar mitzvah, I had to give him _____, I'll have the music and I had _____ because he didn't trust me. I had an extremely close relationship with him, close. Because this is all I had, you know? And I saw where other fathers left their children, he didn't. He was really watching over me. He use to wake up in the middle of the night, touching to see if I'm there. If not, God forbid, some soldiers grabbed me someplace, to rape me or something. He was so overprotecting me. He did. He protected me. There's no end to it. It's just, it was a time period in my life, in this country, that I had good times. I raised my kids. I was involved in the ZOA. I had the _____ club, raised money. And I was kind of a very, very happy person. Now, it comes with age. I think more than ever. Why me? Why did I not take my sister? Why didn't I schlep my mother with me? Maybe they would have survived. It's like conscious. I'm not blaming me, but actually my mother saved my life. She pushed me out of the second ghetto. But maybe my sister would have survived if I had grabbed her hand and take her to the other ghetto. Why didn't I do that? It's, I have more time on my hands now and many times you don't sleep at night, you think. And I cry a lot. I do cry. And if I'm by myself, I say, why didn't I do this? Why didn't I do that? Maybe things would have been different. But I guess I'm not the only one. I read a lot about it. I read the book about the children, survivor's children. I think everybody feels this way. I'm not the only one. I have a girlfriend, _____, she's going for therapy. I mean, fifty years later. And she just started to go for therapy because she can't cope with it, she can't live with it. After fifty years. This is one of the girls, she lives

in New Jersey, that we survived together. Her father actually saved my life up in _____. He gave me this piece of fish and she is a very educated girl. She came here single, she went to school, she was a teacher at Stiverson High School, and she just, now, _____, she's not old, I mean, she just can't, why did she do this and why didn't she do it and why her sister got killed, her mother got killed? Three kids got killed. Maybe she is blaming herself a lot. It's kind of like she went back to Lock-ma (ph). She went back to Lock-ma (ph). She's, her fear just in this age, she lives with this fear. I lost the fear. I don't have this fear. Oh, when I hear something happens to Israel, I get panicky. I'm, you know, I get scared. But the fear of bombing and running, it's gone. This is gone. You know? But we are, I think each and every one of the survivors, is, how could you say it? Very, very unhappy people. With all the happiness, with all the money they made for all those years, with the children and the grandchildren and the homes, financially okay, I have this home, I have a home in Florida. But deep in you, there is certain pain that is unbelievable. And each and every one of us, whoever I talk to, it just, I think it will go to grave or take it with us. This kind of thing that we've been through. It's not just sometimes a person is being killed. To blame yourself, you blame your father, you blame your mother, you blame the world. It's just, _____ at least you're alive and none of us is going to die young, but our whole life was kind of a, in pain. We lived in pain. With the money, with the homes. There was like a cancer in you that ate you up. This is life. This is our, even the times that we blacked out, we didn't want to think about it, we didn't want to talk about it, this guilt. Guilt of dancing, guilt of drinking, guilt, we are guilty to have a good time. Why me? Why not my sister? Why not my brother? She was eight years old, that little girl. An old lady of 85, my grandma. Had to get undressed? In front of so many people and shooting, blowing her brains? Why? Just because she was born a Jewish woman? So, as I say, with all those richness that our _____ have now, survivors. With all the good times, and we do have good times, we go, we dance, we sing, we have wonderful times. But there's something that is eating you up inside. Eating you up inside, like a cancer. And it just, I think, it's me, I think. The older I get the worse it gets. Overprotective of my grandchildren. Or if my son is flying. My granddaughter is flying. My grandson is flying, he's going by car, he's going to come. It's just, what I went through, my son, my only son I guess, I have a son and a daughter. It was in the 1960's and he wasn't a good student and I was afraid by 18 they'll take him to Vietnam. Well, this was the last thing I would have done. I would have, but I went to, not to in order for him, he shouldn't go.

End of Tape 2.

Tape 3

A: I just couldn't see, God forbid, they will take him to Vietnam, to another war, he could get killed. And I couldn't. I just, I went from doctor to doctor, trying to make him sick. I tried to, he shouldn't go to the, not to the _____ army, but I forgot how you call it. I pushed him into a school in Louisiana. He was such a bad student. I mean, later on he picked up and he really is a great guy, a very successful businessman. And he, we pushed him into a school in Louisiana and he was there and he was doing bad and I was afraid, if he's going to drop out, they are going to grab him into the Army. He had to stay in school. I went, at that time he developed some boils from nerves. He was never away from me too, he was like a mother's little boy, you know? I was always protective, the Jewish mother. I went to doctors, to skin doctors, this is like I'm saying it here, off the record. I almost took him out for \$10,000.00 in those years. I cried my eyes out. I told him my story, I said, I cannot afford to lose him. I almost say yes, I almost paid somebody off for \$10,000.00. I was going to get him out. Because I couldn't afford, otherwise if I wouldn't be able to do this I would grab him and take him to countries or off to Canada or someplace. He would have never went into the Army, never, never. And I was running from place to place to place, telling my story, why I cannot send him to the Army. Why it's not fair. I lost so much, why should I lose another child now, this is all I have. And, but luckily, I mean, luckily all of it was very fixed, I'm not sure, but the numbers came out. I don't know if you know this story, in the 1960's, they drew lottery numbers. And his number was the first one to be out. Then I was safe with him. Then I was safe with him. I never gave my kids swimming lessons. Now my grandchildren have everything because they don't listen to me. They swim, the big ones swim too, but I was protective. I was very, very, very protective.

Q: Do you think you created, I mean, is it, can you create something of an ordinary life like everyone around you who didn't go through the experiences of the war? I mean, what other things sort of color you're experiences, as you're creating you're family?

A: You mean an effect on my children?

Q: The effect on the family that you built?

A: I'm sure it did. I'm sure. There's a lot of books now written, especially my daughter I think. She's a rebel. She married one non-Jewish guy for no reason at all. Then she divorced this one after ten years and she married another non-Jewish guy. Though I have a good relationship with her, she loves us very much. She is a very bright, very pretty child. But maybe she picked up here and there about what Jewish people go through and she married these non-Jewish people. Maybe that's a reason to it. And my son now almost always says, _____

_____, they're sick in the head. All _____ children. But I think you are normal, you are okay. It didn't effect you. He said, but luckily you didn't talk about it. Because I have a niece here who, she's not crazy, she's very bright. She has her problems I think and she blames that her mother talked too much. She heard that her mother talked about the, what she went through, that she wasn't _____. I was not in a concentration camp or Dachau or Auschwitz. Her mother was a Russian and she blames, she was married, she was divorced. She is not stable. Very bright girl, very bright. She blames her parents of talking too much about the Holocaust. That's why she's screwed up. She does. And there are a lot of books written about this kind of a thing, the children of survivors. That they do have problems. So, I don't know. I don't think, I don't think so of my kids, that they really have problems because of that. I really don't think so. My daughter, maybe she's a little rebel, she married one non-Jewish guy on top of another non-Jewish guy. Maybe this has anything to do with that. But I don't see my son or my grandchildren, any effect of the war. Maybe they don't talk about it and tell me, but I don't think so. I really don't because I didn't show. I didn't show, I didn't talk, I didn't act. I was always vivacious, outgoing person. Always.

Q: Did the war change you're views on you're connection to Judaism and later to Israel and even to religion and God?

A: Yes. Yes. I cannot be partial to non-Jewish people. I don't trust them. I don't believe in them. I just, for Israel, I would give my life of course. I worked non-profitable organizations only to raise money and to send to Israel. When it comes to non-Jewish people, I don't have any confidence in them. I don't trust them. I don't. Because we lived next door to non-Jewish people. The same non-Jewish people who robbed my house. Grabbed my brother's violin. Killed my brother. And I saw what they did. How could I have confidence in them? How could I trust them? They use to come into my father's barbershop, eat and drink, and into my house where we lived. My father's best friend. And then when I came to them to ask for a piece of bread, they throw me out of the house. On top of that, they were the worse killers in the ghetto. The worse killers. How could I have confidence? How could I trust them? None of them. None of them, unfortunately, I don't trust a non-Jewish person in relation to Judaism. I don't. I'm a good Jew. I'm not religious. I'm not saying religious Orthodox religious. Deep in me I have a conviction, you know? I'm Jewish. Tradition. I love the Jewish tradition. And I gave my kids a Jewish tradition. Not religious maybe, I should have and maybe this wouldn't have happened with my daughter, I don't know. But I'm not a young, Israel person. I'm not. I am a, I wouldn't say a liberal. I try to teach my kids liberal. Liberalism. I tried. They, maybe not to hate each other. Because it's wrong. It's so wrong. That one race should hate the other like that. It's so wrong. It doesn't bring any, even now, when I see what's going on in Bosnia, I can't understand.

Why? Why can't everybody, you're Jewish, be Jewish. You're Moslem, be a Moslem. Don't hit me, I wouldn't hit you. You do your own thing. I'm going to do my own thing. I can't understand this. Why hate each other like that? For what reason? I have a right to pray for my prayer, but as long as I'm not hurting you. I don't care if next door to me lives a _____, but don't hit me, don't hurt me, I shouldn't be afraid of you. Be my neighbor. Be a good person to come into my house, we'll have a cup of coffee, we'll talk about business, about the children. Why hate me only because I'm Jewish or you are black? God created us like that so why hate each other like this? For what reason? I can't understand this. And I taught, I was teaching my kids the same way. But still, I didn't trust them. Because for all the 2,000 years we are being, we are the one, now we have in Bosnia, it's _____, it's different religions, but those, way back, you didn't have those things. They always, every religion hated the Jews. Every religion hated the Jews. From 2,000 years ago. Why? If you believe in God, God made it this way. Jesus is not the God, God made Jesus, yeah? Jesus made himself as a, Jesus was Jewish too. So why hate each other? We work hard. We came to this country. We were never on relief. Never on footsteps. I had neighbors, nice people. So my husband went to work, he scrubbed herring. Came home, he was smelling of herring. Never saw his children go to bed and get up in the morning. We worked hard for my _____, for our money, very hard. Why can't other people do this? Why hate the Jews, because they are hard working people? The truth is, I have the highest respect for the Oriental people. I love them. They are good people. They don't bother me. We have them in my building. They go, they work, they work seven days a week just like my husband worked. The families are the back of the room. They eat whatever is left over, whatever my husband had left over in the supermarket, he brought it home, I made a meal out of it. They do the same thing. They are beautiful people. They have a right to live like anybody else. They work for their money. They are family orientated people. And that's what I tried to instill in my kids, this kind of a liberal way of life. But it doesn't work. It still doesn't work. One bad thing about the Jews, and boom, everybody's on the Jews. Everybody's on the Jews. A plane's going to explode, they are going to blame the Jews. That's why I would love to change the world. They should be one race. If there's a lot of races, to teach them how to get along together. How to live together. How to compromise. But I guess, I don't know how. I'm not, I'm too old and maybe if I had been born here maybe I would have some kind of knowledge. But I, so I guess I am in a way a liberal. That I don't trust in non-Jewish people against the Jews, you can't blame me for that. What I went through. What I saw with my own eyes. Though, some Christians are very nice to me, very nice. They gave me food. Gave me a haircut. Gave me shelter. So, but the majority in this world is against the Jews. The majority of people are against the Jews. I can't straighten this out.

Q: You say that you're Jewish culturally, but maybe not religiously?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you raised religiously?

A: Not really, my father was a liberal. He couldn't care less that he's a, we had a kosher home. We had a grandma in the house, in those years, we had the kosher home. My father went to Shula (ph) every Saturday, but not really Orthodox. I never had non-kosher food in my house. My mother came from a more religious home than my father. They came from two different backgrounds. My father came from working people. As a matter of fact, my father's also a musician, was a musician. There were ten children in his family. There were four boys and six girls. And my grandpa was a musician. As a matter of fact, they took everything away from me, I would have shown it to you. I have a picture and one of the books which was crated by Bashevitz Singer (ph) and he has my grandfather there playing this fiddle, that I gave the men. He was playing the fiddle, what I gave to this Museum now. But they have everything. They still didn't send it back to me. I should really be after them. So they were all four brothers, they were musicians, all of them. My father played all the instruments, you just name it, piano, just natural, naturally came to them. I don't think that, none of them knew how to play by notes, they all played just from their heads. I was trying to bring something up, but I forgot what I was going to say.

Q: Oh, we were just talking, I guess I was wondering whether you're experiences during the war changed you're feelings on being a Jew in this country and other places?

A: Well I was a child yet. I really didn't know much about any religious, religions of the world. I had a kosher home, as I said. And my mother use to bake bread. It was a small town and holly and _____ we ate together, Friday night we ate together. And _____. We were not like a young Israel, I wouldn't say young Israel people. More tradition with a kosher home. Jewish traditionally established people. But not _____, no. We were not _____. And I still am the same way. Same way.

Q: Have you gone back to Poland or have you had any desires?

A: Yeah, I do have a desire. I do have a tremendous desire. I would like to be in this grave. I was in this grave right after the war and I saw the big grave. Through all those year, whoever survived in Israel, they really worked on it and they made the _____, now there's no more Communism, but when it was the Communism even, there was a nice group of Jewish, if I would have been in Israel, I would have been over there many times, in Lackenbach. But in here,

unfortunately there's not too many people in America. There was one girl who lost her husband and one woman, what I was telling you, that she has some problems, mental problems and she still, now she's going through group therapy, she's going to a psychiatrist, like the whole thing came back to her, you know? It was like, she can't live with it, it's just tormenting her. The past is tormenting her. And I don't have anybody to go with. But from Israel they go constantly. They put up a gorgeous monument, gorgeous. Even for the Russians, yet. A big monument with all the parades and all the, whatever has to be done, and all the names. Whoever is laying in this grave, my mother, my sister, my brother, my Aunts, my grandmas, everything is written down. A big, big, beautiful monument. And many times, they go like every year, when it was fiftieth, they are there since 1942. So they had like a memorial there and everybody from Israel went. I had to go from America. I have a back problem and I have this anxiety attacks, up until now, but in different ways. And from this, I had nobody to go with. Last year I wanted to go, my younger grandson wanted to go with me, and for some reason it didn't work out. I have also a stomach problem, I have a terrible case of colitis. So I get nervous. I sit on the bathroom more than I'm outside. And my husband says, well, you're going to go by yourself. How are you going to travel? You have to either go to Israel, go with them to Israel or you have to go to, meet them in Warsaw. He didn't want to go, he's not a well person. He had two open-heart surgeries already. So he said, I cannot go with you. And my family said, Babba, why are you going to go? You have plenty of aggravation, you still talk about it, sleep with it, why? Don't go. But I'm dying to go. I am dying to go. I want to go. But I don't know how to work it out. Maybe to go to Israel and go with them to Israel. From there to go. But from Israel, they are going constantly. Every December there is a big, big, beautiful monument. They take very well care of it. And maybe someday, if I leave, I'll go. I will.

Q: You mentioned before that you find yourself thinking about those events more and more?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any sense why? What that's happening? And did you not think about it for a while as you were living your life?

A: I wasn't thinking for a while. There was quite a number of years in between that I really didn't think. I was so involved with the ZOA and raising money for Israel, buying bonds, selling bonds, getting dressed up, playing cards, raising my two children, that I really didn't even think about it. I didn't think about it. I just kind of like blacked out. Sometimes we got together, you know, a bunch of us, survivors, and we talked about it and then when I left I had a normal life. Now it's kind of like more and more on top of me. More and more reminders of it. I think more about it.

I am more in the house by myself, the kids are out of my life, thank God they're doing well. I don't know, but I ask some people, survivors, as a matter of fact I guess I'm not the only one. Because they opened up here on Pierce Blvd. group therapy of survivors. Just survivors. A whole bunch of them. And hundreds of people are going there. And I was thinking maybe I should go there too.

Q: And how does it come back? I mean, do you think about it at night, during the day? Just certain images come back or what comes back into your mind?

A: Images. What I went through. How I went out of this ghetto. It bothers me a lot that my sister, at least my sister, my mother was only, I didn't realize how young they were. My mother was thirty-six years old. I didn't realize that, I'm missing, like I'm missing that side of the family. I think about what I went through in partisans and my father died so young and he really didn't have enough time to have na-has (ph) from me. And we talk now, we get together, our survivors, we talk about it. Do I have maybe less to tell than the concentration camp people, then from Auschwitz, Treblinka, My-don-ick (ph), you know they had it worse. They had it worse than me, as bad as I had it they had it worse. And we talk about it, we do talk about it and it bothers me more, it bothers me more my sister, that my brother didn't survive. You think what you went through, you see on television certain things. You see the misplaced people, it comes back to you. It comes back with and you feel sorry for those people. But now they are being helped from people all over the world. I say, why wasn't we helped? Maybe it would have been different by us if people in the world would realize what's happening to us? Maybe we would have had some help like those, I see the children, it really breaks you, you know? Though they are not Jewish, but it doesn't matter. They are people. They don't deserve this kind of a treatment. They are plain, different, ordinary people, why do they have to get involved in this kind of a way of life? And then you know, your own life comes back, those years, and they say, well now at least they are lucky, everybody's trying to help them and fight for them. Nobody fought for us. Nobody heard about us. Some may think, well maybe they were happy to kill us out once and for all, the Jews, and get rid of them. But they didn't, thank God. So, I don't know. Every chance I have now I run to the kids, my grandson, my whole life, my whole pleasure, I run to the kids. You think I make this punch here for myself? No. For the kids. All for the children. And this is my life, the kids, now. _____ not going to die anymore, I would like to _____ in the house from the kids because they are good kids, thank God. Very protective over me, very protective over me. Babba don't do this and Babba don't do that and very proud of me when we go places, they introduce us. We went to my grandson's college graduation, I didn't stop crying for one minute. I said, this happened to me. I lived to see a grandchild graduating college? It's just unbelievable. It's just like I'm pinching, I'm alive, I'm dead, I got killed in the partisans, I got killed in the ghetto. This is my

child? This is my grandson graduating from college? I lived to see it? Yes, I did. Yes I did. It's just sometimes you wake up and you say, no, that's not me. That's not me, that's really not me. My daughter's a doctor? I said, no. I don't deserve it. Why God chose me to have a daughter a doctor? Why did he choose me for that? What did I do right? I didn't do anything right. I didn't _____, now through the years I probably did plenty of wrong things but by then I was twelve years old. How much wrong could I have done? Why did He choose me and not my sister or my brother? So all those things take you back for some reason, it just takes you back. I have one son, my grandson is in Northwestern, such a prestigious school. On the other hand I'm so thrilled that it's a free country, that being Jewish that my kids could do whatever they want to do. I didn't, at least they could do. And they could accomplish and they could go to the best schools and we could afford to pay for them. So I'm blessed, I'm blessed but probably I took away, I took with me the blessings for my family, for my brother. Whatever belonged to them probably, I took it away. I wasn't selfish, it wasn't up to me. See, we are screwed up people. With all the best in our lives. We are still screwed up people and that's it. I mean, six years is a long time to suffer, a long time. I try to be good to people, I give a lot of charities, a lot. I help, try to be helpful to people, doesn't matter. Whoever comes in, they are homeless, I feel sorry for the homeless. I always give them something. For Israel, for ZOA, forget about it. Ha-dassa (ph). Always involved in something. It makes me happy.

Q: Well, thank you very much for talking and sharing your stories.

A: Your welcome. Well, at least this is I guess some of it, I think I'm sure there's more to it. And when you think about it and you sit and say, if I did not tell this, why I tell that? But it was funny, it's vague, it's mental even. I was laying down in front of this building, the building was burning, I was halfway unconscious and here I have my father standing in front of me. I mean, what is it? Fate, somebody was watching over me? Well, he was asking people and they told him that this group is here and this group is there, look here, look here, look there. And he was looking all over. The building was burning and out of ten minutes I would have been on fire. All of a sudden, he's there right in front of me. To schlep me on his back. To save me. And there's other things, who remembers all those things? But I was, from 1939 until really we run out of ghetto, I just, I was a smart child. I didn't want to play with children, that's all I did, is reading, reading, reading, reading. Polish, Hebrew then and Russian, from my parents. I didn't play with children. Even for the two years when the Russians were there, I was also very unhappy. And though, in America I am a happy person. People think I'm a very happy, outgoing person. But certain things I don't remember. I was six months with those peasants, when my father was in the partisans, and I remember nothing. I don't know what I ate there. I don't remember, I just remember sleeping on that oven and burning my

flesh, was burning. But the rest of it, and then when they came to pick me up. I don't even remember when they left me there. I don't remember what I ate, what did I do? They didn't keep me for nothing, I must have been either with the sheep in the fields or helping, doing something with the kids. I must have. Nothing. And chunks like this of my life, like they are just out. I don't know why. Completely out. That's the story of a survivor, my dear. But unfortunately, every week is different funerals. If Hitler would come up, would wake up now, and see that we still, we have a lot of green-na (ph), survivors, who lived a long, long age and lived a beautiful generation, left a beautiful generation of people, lawyers, doctors, politicians, on television, he would drop dead again. And every time, I use to have a speech, I'm good in those things, I have to get it out now. If Hitler would wake up and see what we are doing here and the generation we left. We left, believing beautiful people behind us. A beautiful generation. This is just the first generation, how about the second generation? That will come up also, doctors and lawyers and reporters and involved in politics. A really big, most of our kids are educated people. Ninety-nine percent of our survivor's children are very highly educated. At least a teacher, many more, many are a teacher. So I guess we'll never go. The Jewish faith, the Jewish religion and Jewish people will survive, will survive. They are supposed to be the chosen people, but I don't see it. Why pay such an expensive price, I can't understand either? But Hitler didn't wipe us out. No way. No way. No way. They are going to be alive and free and now we have to work for Israel. Now we'll have to see that our generation and our second generation, third, they should be all Judaism, should be aware, and really stand guard. I don't know how, but they are educated people, like, God should give, Swen-ton Da-Yah-ho (ph) is a young powerful man. God should give him the wisdom and lead us on the right track and Israel should survive. And we are human people and we are people in the world, the people who come up with us, that we are a Nation, we are a People. And we have to survive like anybody, like any other Nation has to survive, who God created. It doesn't matter, black, white, green or red. If God put us here we should survive. And one should not kill the other. We should help each other. So now we'll have see that Israel should survive, that's all. Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you very much.

Conclusion of Interview.