

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Lili Brody-Carmosino
October 15, 2009
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Lili Brody-Carmosino, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on October 15, 2009 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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LILI BRODY-CARMOSINO

October 15, 2009

Question: This is an interview with **Lili Brody-Carmosino** conducted by **Ina Navazelskis** on Thursday, October 15th, 2009 in **Washington, D.C.** First of all, thank you very, very much, **Lili**, for agreeing to talk to us.

Answer: My pleasure.

Q: We know that this is not about the easiest of topics, and we're very grateful that you've agreed to share your story with us.

A: It's fine, thank you.

Q: You're welcome. Let's start li – where we always start, and where they say in the fairy tales, too, let's start at the beginning.

A: Okay.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about who you are as a child: when you were born, the date you were born, the family you were born into, and we'll take it from there.

A: Okay. I was born in 1938, June 2nd, 1938, in **Iași, Romania**. And we all lived in a courtyard, the whole family, cousins. I have a brother, his name is **Morris**, and my mom and dad. And my dad was a tailor, but he was a designer, and we were quite comfortably well off in **Iași**. And I believe at the time that war broke out, which was, I think I was four years old, and there was a lot of commotion out in the backyard; meaning actually the front part of this courtyard where about four of our family, different families lived; which grandparents usually just buy a house and

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continue to build so the family can stay together. And this commotion started, and my grandma –

Q: Can I stop right there? We're still gonna talk about family at this moment, before the war breaking out.

A: Okay.

Q: I'd like a few more details.

A: Okay.

Q: Is the – was this courtyard in the building where your family lived, was it in in the middle of a town, li – in **Iași**, or was it over to the side, was it a suburban area? How would you describe that?

A: I would – the little bit of memory I have of it is, it was more on the side, it definitely wasn't in the main city. **Iași** is a very small shtetl, which is like a little town, and it was definitely in the farmer part, very rural. And my cousins, my grandmother – my grandfather wasn't alive when I was born, and my grandmother lived in one of the houses, and I'm not sure if one of the cousins lived with her. Then there were other cousins. And I – my memory serves me, we – there had to be about four or five families. My –

Q: All related to you?

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A: All related. And we lived in this courtyard that apparently, before my time, I guess my grandparents built this, and just kept on expanding as people got married.

Q: But it wasn't farming country, it wasn't –

A: It wasn't farming country.

Q: – farming country.

A: On the side there were farms, but we weren't into farming. I believe my grandfather, who I never had a chance to meet, was a fisherman. Very well-to-do and very well acknowledged in the community, which my mother always told me he had a great big monument that was dedicated to him. I never had the pleasure of meeting him. We, I remember, lived in the front part, whether we were the last family, or my mother was yul – the youngest to get married, and I think she was, that's where we lived, and my father, being a tailor, worked out of the house.

Q: So it sounds like – it sounds like you lived in either a small town or a village, but in – inside the village, rather than i-in the ac – in a really rural are – areas. When you're a tailor –

A: Oh, I would say inside, yes –

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

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Q: When you're a tailor, then you have clients that come on the main street, or a side street, and they come with their – their – their –

A: But he wasn't just a tailor my father, he really – some people use patterns, he made his own pattern, and that's – that's another part of later on in the story. And he actually designed women's coats. So it was, you know, out of the house, and he had a couple people working for him.

Q: So it's like a dressmakers' shop.

A: Exactly, not so much female – both, but mostly coats. Coats, jackets. And I remember as young as I was, which I had to be about four years old, that's when my memory serves me, is I remember my grandmother took care of both my brother and myself. My brother **Morris** is two years older than I am. And –

Q: That was one of my questions.

A: Yes, and my grandmother, who was well in her, I would say 80's, who was more like a mother, she really brought us up, because my mother worked with my dad, and there were other workers; so they obviously were well off enough, cause there was help. But we were taken care of by my grandmother.

Q: Do you remember your father in the shop at all, or do –

A: Oh, absolutely, I could –

Q: What kind of me – what kind of memories come to your mind?

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A: About my father?

Q: About your parents, their working in the shop.

A: My mother was slim, pretty, fortunately did not, and later on in the story I'll explain, did not look Jewish, which is what saved us. My dad – I resemble my dad more than my mom – was just – I – in my eyes just a wonderful, kind, very gentle with us. And he – he – they were busy, but my dad was never too busy to pay attention, to myself especially, being the girl.

Q: Well, you were the little girl, yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And the cousins I remember as young – going way back in my memory, my favorite place at the time, from what I'm told, and I do remember is the play – the house must have been up on stilts or something, because the kids played underneath, in the dirt. And my cousins and I, that's what I remember wa – we're going way back, and my mother and my dad and my brother reminded me that that's where we loved to play, in the mud underneath. And my cousins loved to throw stones, and a couple of times actually cracked my head, and –

Q: And boy, did they get into trouble.

A: – being that Romanians are Gypsies, my mother had her theories about certain, I guess holistic, or whatever. If you have a wound on your head, you get bread and

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vinegar and put it on the wound. And those things I remember being told to me because that's how it affected my brain.

Q: Well, did you – do you remember having a – you know, th-the bump on your head , do you –

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: And I reconnected this way back with my cousins who are the only ones who survived in **Israel**, and reminded me that that's what he did, and very happy about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: But that's about where it – it stops, til war.

Q: And do – was this then your world, the world of the courtyard, your family –

A: Absol –

Q: – your mother and father, nobody outside. Or did you have a sense of neighbors, or –

A: Yes, there –

Q: – Gentiles, or –

A: – there were – it's funny you said, next door there were Gentiles, and now – how I happened to know, and I don't want to go ahead with the Holocaust, or the beginning, or the bombing, is my mom, who used to wear a babushka on her head,

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and my dad was always busy with – the measuring tape was always around him, and he always had a scissor in his hand – my neighbor – our neighbors were of – not of the Jewish faith, because when things started, my mother – I don't know if you want me to go into that now, that's – that's the next part I remember is suddenly there was a lot of commotion, and I don't remember exactly how it happened, but I know we had to put on – my grandma told me we have to put on this yellow band with the Jewish star. And the neighbors next door, that part I remember, were just looking at us. And I was young, and my – my mother didn't look Jewish, and my father was taken out with a lot of other men, and there were guns and things, and thi – all I remember th – my grandmother taking my head, and hiding it in –

Q: In her stomach.

A: – her apron. And I remember my mother saying, and I remember hating her that, don't kill him, don't shoot the Jew. I'll take care of the Jew in my own way. The neighbors knew she was Jewish, but thank God they didn't –

Q: Say anything.

A: – say anything. And this is one memory I really don't want to remember, but the next thing was, all of a sudden I peeked out from my grandmother, and there was this woman yelling don't, please don't. And I remember she had a fat belly. And they shot, something came out of her belly, and I remember a – it was a – a fetus.

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Q: It was a baby.

A: And I remember her just yelling, I couldn't understand this – I'm sorry –

Q: That's okay.

A: – she said, just – just kill me, you've already killed me, just kill me. And I thought well, it's a matter of time where they're gonna get my mother, they're gonna get my brother, they're gonna get my grandmother. That's all that I remember, really, right there, that to me –

Q: Did you know the lady?

A: N-No, no, but that went on, and those are the memories that – that's one of my worst remembrance, and from there on, things just – I – I remember thinking, how can my mother say she would – she will kill him herself, how could she do that? And that's about where it stopped. The only memory I have after that, we were fairly well off, and I think there were even people who helped my mom clean the house, and obviously my dad must have been doing all right, is suddenly, two **[indecipherable]** we were si – all sleeping in our house, ourselves, my mother and my father, and –

Q: Can I bri – I'm sorry I interrupt, but I want to bring back to – to what you had said earlier. Your – if we – you se – you remember your neighbors just looking out the window or looking in the street –

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A: No, no, they were out –

Q: – on the street –

A: – in their yard looking. There was like a fence, like a picket fence, and they were looking at us, and my grandmother and my brother and I were like in a corner. My mom was like right next to these – they were Germans. And she wasn't wearing the band, and I couldn't understand why we were wearing the yellow band. And my father was there and they took all the men, and it looked like some of them were – they – they were fucking them with the gun. And I thought they're gonna kill my father. And I couldn't understand how we were doing that, we were wearing the band and all, and she wasn't. And then she said what she did. From there on, I don't – I can – I can't remember just exactly what happened except this horrible, horrible – this woman being shot, and yelled whe – I don't even remember, I remember my grandmother just took and put our heads in the apron so that we couldn't hear anything, she covered our ears, and I – it's like everything blacked out from there. There could never be a worse enemy or a worse thing I could ever see in my life other than what I just saw there. That was the ugliest thing I've ever seen in my life, what happened to the woman. I do –

Q: At age four –

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A: – I don't even ha – remember – my father was spared, obviously, and – because we went back in the house and I didn't – I re – I remember not seeing anything, because my grandmother just totally –

Q: Do you have a feeling, when you looked at the neighbors on the – on the other side of the picket fence, were they – did you have any sense of how they were looking? Was it curiosity, was it horror, was it grief?

A: I – I –

Q: Were these people you knew well and liked, or were they distant?

A: I – I don't really remember. All I do remember is they didn't tell, because they knew my mother was Jewish, and I think they were in awe, and I think it was a combination of everything you just said. They were in shock, they were petrified. They had to be. And knowing my mother was Jewish and denied it, and she wasn't wearing – fortunately they didn't say anything, and obviously they were fond of her, and I – I – I think they were just frozen in space. From there on, as I say, my gram – the only thing – I remember my grandmother, but yet I don't, but I remember she covered both our heads, and I – we cou – I couldn't even breathe, I remember, and I didn't want to.

Q: You were four years old.

A: I didn't want to see. I was four years old –

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Q: Four years old.

A: – but that's something I will never forget – I'll never forget. That was the worst thing I've even seen in my life. I couldn't believe a human being could do something like that to another human being. But that was the beginning of many horrors that I saw that I never should have seen, which is why I'm here. It – it never should have happened, that people can do this to people. And that –

Q: Did you – were – the age difference, was there an age difference between your parents? Your father and your mother, was he older than she was?

A: Yeah, he was just – my – my father was born, I believe, 1911, and my mother in 1913.

Q: Oh, so very – they're the same – almost the same age.

A: Yeah, they were –

Q: – the same generation.

A: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, and –

Q: Did he look Jewish?

A: I don't know what looking Jewish is –

Q: Yeah.

A: – because I don't think you do, and I don't.

Q: Yeah.

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A: But he was of fair skin, and she wasn't really dark, but she did not. And she –

Q: So she did – she definitely did not.

A: – she played a good part, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: My mother played a good part, and the understanding goes that when – after the Holocaust, and what have you, a lot of things happened to her that – I don't know, apparently she was pregnant and thrown down the street, or downstairs. I didn't see any of that. I don't –

Q: Okay, we'll come to those moments –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – where – where you can tell us what you do remember and what you were told, and –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and so on.

A: But from there on it was like a blank, it's like, to this day I didn't want to re-remember that – that **[indecipherable]**. And then the journey started, and –

Q: So, after this, do you have like a blank? I – do you remember going back in the house, do you remember –

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A: I do remember going back in the house, but I don't remember what was said. There was a lot of mumbling among my mother and my – my – my grandmother, who apparently – I don't know if – I can't even tell you if grandma was killed when the bombs came, because shortly after that, I remember we were sleeping, and there was like a – a – a – like a rubber thing li-like – like an earthquake. And I remember – it still – it was a joke in the family that my mother said, what's happening? My father said, it's **tun(ph) pasheening(ph)**. In Romanian that means it's a tank on rubber wheels. And she said, no, no, it doesn't sound like that, it sounds like, you know – then we looked out and all of a sudden it was like Fourth of July, and it was just – it wa – like firecrackers were going off. And I remember they tried to grab, and it just happened so quick. They – my mother grabbed my brother and my father, myself and we ran. And as we ran, it was in the courtyard, and like, the courtyard was gone. It was just – bombs were – were falling all over, and I don't know if – in **Europe** the – the Russians wear these fur **skwerta(ph)**, th-the fur coats. Somehow or other she had that. Well, she – all I remember, we were running a – out of the courtyard, and as we're running, I guess the force of the bombs lifted me up because I was th – to the point they had to drag me down and somehow or other we managed to go against this, I don't know if it was a – a wood wall or a stone wall, and I remember thinking, we're gonna be hit, I don't – these things, there's fire, the whole

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courtyard, and our house was blown up, there was nothing to – the clothes on our bodies is all we had, and –

Q: So you made it out in the nick of time?

A: Apparently. All I remember is we stayed there, and as we ran there were bodies, bodies all over the place. We just ran and ran and we stayed next to this wall. And the bombs were going up. My mother kept on saying, pray to Grandma. So apparently Grandma must have – I don't know if she was alive or dead. And we ran, and in running, my parents were saying don't look, don't look, but there were just bodies all over the place. And we ran, and I do remember this, we ran to a hospital, that's the only other part I remember. And at that time, I don't know I – if it was Russians or what, but we – we were sitting on these benches type of thing against the wall and wa – I – I – all I remember is my father stood up to, I think it was a Russian, they wanted the watches and the jewelry, and they're women. And my father was very upset. I remember I never saw him this upset, I remember I never saw him this upset and this frightened. I can't – I blacked out what happened after that, but the part I do know, from that hospital, how we got out of there, I don't know. But after getting out of there we must have run all the way to **Bucharest, Romania.**

Q: So, ha – **Iași** –

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A: I d – I don't know how that – that –

Q: Yeah, do you – do – have you looked on a map where **Iași** –

A: Yes.

Q: – and where **Bucharest** –

A: Yes.

Q: – and are they far apart?

A: **Bucharest** is the capital, I believe.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I – how far – I – I – I did when I went to the school, but I – I – how far, it was

like one of the small – **Iași** is one of the small st – rural **[indecipherable]**

Bucharest. And we stayed there, and that was quieter for some reason, and my father, apparently they rented, I don't know exactly what it was because I think one of my cousins somehow or other was there. Whether this was a family that lived there, I can't remember the connection.

Q: So – can I interrupt for a minute now? **Iași**, was it near **Moldova**?

A: Yes.

Q: Was – okay.

A: Yes.

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Q: So, in other words, it wasn't Germans who came in where all this was happening, it was Russians who came in?

A: Germans were bombing us, the Russians were robbing us. I remember the Russians were robbing us, but it was the Germans that were bombing –

Q: Bombing, yeah.

A: – **Iași**.

Q: And who shot the woman?

A: It wa – they were German. They were German because the word I'll never forget, **du bist Juden**.

Q: Ah, yeah. That's German.

A: **Du bist Jude** –

Q: **Du bist eine – eine Juden**.

A: – **eine Juden**. I'll never – **du bist eine Juden**, and we had to wear that. There were parts, I'll be honest, I was so young, that whether in ya – in **Bucharest** or what – I remember hiding, hiding in attics, hiding under the floor, but –

Q: I want to stop for a moment before we get to **Bucharest**, just clarify as much as we can. I know that you were a child, and I know that – that – that these memories are – they're not sequential, they come, and you know, you remember one thing and another.

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A: Yeah.

Q: But I – until this moment, I didn't realize that it was also – that you first had like – your first exposure was a German.

A: Yes.

Q: And this – and this bombing and the shooting, but that also you had experienced something, must have been that later the territory came under Russian control.

A: Right.

Q: And – and the – and the robbing came. Is that what – is that what –

A: Well, how the Russians got into it, all I know is I wore the yellow star, and the – this woman and my father was taken out **du bist Juden**, I remember that.

Q: Yeah.

A: We had to wear that –

Q: The ye-yellow star.

A: – and this was in **Iași**.

Q: Yes.

A: In that courtyard.

Q: But in the hospital, when you were ther –

A: We're – how we got to the hosp – I know it was all by foot. We actually – I don't want to get ahead, but we did run by foot –

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Q: Okay.

A: – from **Bucharest**, from **Iași** to this hospital, which had to be part, or out of **Iași** possibly, could be further out, closer to **Bucharest**, I don't know, but that's where we ran. From there, I have no idea how we got out, into that hospital except for shelter –

Q: Okay.

A: – and there were people. But it turned out the people in there, I remember them, **devie(ph) chesso(ph)** that's in Russian –

Q: That's right, that's give me your watch.

A: – means give me your watch, and then the word for women.

Q: Yeah. **Chingechinna(ph)**

A: And they were – yeah, they were coming on to my mother, and I remember my father stepping in front –

Q: Trying to protect.

A: – and yelling, I've never seen him that upset, and again, blacked out. I have no idea –

Q: Okay. Okay, so bring me back then to **Bucharest**. When you're in **Bucharest**, and you –

A: We're in **Bucharest**.

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Q: – it's a little bit quieter.

A: It's a lot quieter. We were like in an alley, and my father again opened – was working, and he was now making some uniforms for the Germans, which he did not want to do. My mother, I remember saying, well you have to, how else are we gonna survive? And –

Q: Were you still wearing the yellow star?

A: No, the yellow star came off in **Bucharest**.

Q: So that means, were you passing? Wer – do you think the family was trying to pass as non-Jewish? You don't know.

A: Possible. I don't know. I-I mean, I have no – I really cannot say yes or no, I'm not sure, but I know we didn't wear the yellow s – but then, it was put on again.

Q: Can I ask also, when you were in **Bucharest**, was it just the four of you, your mother, father, brother and yourself, or was it part of the extended family, too?

A: There was a cousin there, and his name was **Pompa**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I don't – either they were there and we joined them, cause they couldn't have been in the courtyard.

Q: Okay.

A: There was nothing in that courtyard left, that I remember.

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Q: So the – some of the bodies could have been of your relatives.

A: Could have been. All I know is we ran on foot, and as young as I was, and it – there was total blank. Everything – my other cousins – and it turned out they – some did survive.

Q: Do you remember what time of year it was when all of that happened in the courtyard?

A: It – it wasn't – it had to be closer – November. October, November, December, because it was cold, it was cold.

Q: Okay.

A: And by the time we got to **Bucharest**, it was warm. It was warm. So we ran –

Q: So it was several months?

A: Oh, we ran, yeah. We – we hid in forests and I – I – all I – the part after the bombing and the – the hospital is – I remember that. After that, I remember, it's like waking up and being in **Bucharest**. I know was warm because I remember all I had was like a slip, and so it had to be warm. I just remember slight pictures. And I remember my dad was working, he had a factory and he was working making coats and stuff. My mom worked with him. We were basically on our own, my brother and myself, but that's the way you were brought up, and we stayed within the courtyard. And I remember my father saying he couldn't do this. He's making

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coats for people who are killing and killed our relatives, and the other picture that I do remember in **Bucharest** is my brother – my brother and I were going somewhere, I don't know where it was, a movie, or I don't even know. He was to take care of me, that was his responsibility.

Q: For a little boy.

A: No matter for – yeah, he was two years older, so whether I'm six now, I don't know. But I remember some street, and I know this was **Bucharest**, there was this man who was like stretched out with a stick in his stomach and he was opened up, and it said, this is what happens to Jews. And there were flies all over him. And my brother took my face like don't look, don't look, and I remember thinking, I saw something like this. [aside: No, no. Somebody wants to see?] I saw something like this with the woman, and here was this ugly picture. That's all I remember. That – and somehow or other, back came the yellow bands, and from then on, all I remember is running. War broke out, running. And my next memory is, we're somehow or other ca – we're like in trenches, in – in these trenches, my mother and my father and my brother. Somehow or other we got caught. Exactly how we got, I don't know, but then we were put, and we were well off and all, we were put in this cattle type of **boxcart**, and they were – it seemed like a hundred people just – we couldn't breathe. It was dirty, it was th – and everybody was like – I don't know,

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like in shock. And I – I – as young as I was, I couldn't understand why are we on here with these people? We don't belong here. And people were crying, there were babies crying, people were defecating and i – we were just mobbed together. And we figured, you know, a lot of people were crying, saying we're gonna be killed, we're gonna be killed. Everybody had the yellow star on their arms. And then, all of a sudden the boxcar must have dis-attached, because we were moving fast, like the train were just move – real fast. And suddenly, everything stood still, and we – you couldn't see out because there was a bok – there were no windows.

Q: So you were locked in this dark space –

A: We were locked in this dark space, and we had no idea what was in there except a lot of people crying, yelling, what have you. My m – again, now I'm, my mother, my brother, my father, and I don't even remember where, it was just fear. And in my mind I thought we were just going to go on a trip, but why all these people? Cause I was so young. But then when it got dis-attached, when the boxcar became dis-attached, everybody stopped, and you know, they couldn't open the door, and the men, somehow or other managed to open the door, and we saw the rest of the boxcar, with probably more people, go on, and I was le – we were left on the track. So the men, some ar – I gathered the men, the people in there opened it up, and everyone just scattered out. Families just ran every which way. And I remember we

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never left my mother and my father, we weren't allowed to, we just had to stick like glue. And we ran and we ran and we got into – and this was cute, I was telling my husband, we crossed – what they used to do is they used to take a wad of money and wrap it around an explosive. When you've picked up the money the explosive goes off, but being at the age that I was, we ran over – this I remember definitely – this little bridge, and I saw there was a wad of money. And I went for it, and my mother's going no, no, no, no, no. She really thought I was gonna explode any minute. Well it turned out it really was –

Q: A wad of money.

A: – a wad of money. And that wad of money crossed us – we were no – we ran by foot, or from this boxcar, wherever we were – it took us. I remember it was in **Budapest**. And we stayed in this very – it – it looked like a great big – I remember it had a white picket fence, and it was like a colonial type of beautiful house. And this is gonna sound very strange, it's like in – I've been there before. And we were in the cellar, and what you do is – these were, I think Jewish people who crossed you over the border. They took your rings if you had no money. They took money, well I had the money, and my mother had rings, or I guess she had jewelry she had hidden, I have no idea. But I remember we were to leave, and my mother told my brother and

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I that I was a rotten kid, because I decided I'd been here before and I – I'm gonna go upstairs –

Q: Investigate.

A: – because I haven't seen the daylight. And I wandered out, and I knew exactly. And I – how I remember this is my parents a – even told me. I knew exactly. If there's such a thing as **déjà vu**, this was – I knew exactly where I was. And I walked around the block and I knew where I was, no one can tell me otherwise. I knew where I was. And the man who was supposed to cross us over, not borders, to another place, into the woods, and in the woods somebody else would meet us. And if you have more money, you give them and take you to another destination, that I remember. Well, they – my mother and father didn't want to leave because I was gone. Fortunately, I found – I knew where I was, I found my way back, got a heck of a whack on my rear end, and we ran. And I was just telling my husband that the woods were so thick, that now I – I – I'm amazed why there were no animals, but that's where we stayed, what – there was no food, we weren't given food. You pay the money to the person who takes you to that part of the woods and you hide there, and from there someone, at dusk or nighttime, I can't even remember that part, takes us and leads us to another destination, and you hide in that wood, and – in the woods. And the woods was, you couldn't see. How – I remember being so young,

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thinking how are they gonna find us? I can't – it's all dark in the woods. But apparently we made our way all the way to another place, where somebody reported us.

Q: In **Hungary** now.

A: In **Hungary**. And there, we're put in jail. And for the first time – one minute – first time my mother and I, and my brother and my father were separated. The men had to go in one, it's like a courtyard. I remember it had like a fountain in front, and there were women and the women had babies, and they were trying to feed the babies. People would – the women were defecating, and I never s – I would never see my father or my brother again, so we figured this is it. We were caught. We got this far, we'll never survive again. But again luck was on our side, somehow or other. The door – I don't know if we were there a day, definitely overnight – they pushed water and stale bread on – under the door. And if you got to it, you got to eat, if you didn't, fine. But somehow or other the door was left open, this one, was it night or dusk, I don't remember. I do remember my mother grabbing my hand, and we ran, along with the other people. And we hid out, was like a farm, and there were – I don't know what you call, but they were like a stable, and there was hay. And I don't even – I can't remember how, but I remember they put tape on our mouth, and we were told don't a – don't breathe. So, some –

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Q: Your mother's mouth too, or just children's?

A: The kids, the kids, and we were not to sneeze, cough, nothing. And the part that I remember, which is almost comical, and I was thinking – and I didn't know my father and my brother were also let out. Somebody left the door open, I think it was done deliberately. What happened is we were in hay, covered with hay, and I remember my mother saying, not a word, don't move. Whispering, don't move, don't cough, don't breathe, nothing. Well, all I can remember thinking is, I looked down and I saw these gorgeous blue eyes. It was a German. It was a German man. Blonde hair, these piercing blue eyes, and he had a pitchfork. And I'm thinking to myself, if he's going to take that and push it in, how is my mother gonna know that I'm gonna be killed and I'm hurting. And I'm – I couldn't imagine, how do I let her know, how do I let my mother know that he's gonna do that. He saw me. We made eye contact, there's no question about that. And I thought, this is it, he's gonna do that, my mother won't know. The blood will – these crazy things –

Q: Well, they're normal, they're logical for a child. You've been told not to breathe, not to talk, and this –

A: Well, and I remember somebody yelled **du Juden**? Are there Jews there? And he said, **nein, nein, nostu(ph) kein Juden**. But he was looking right at me. And I

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thought, oh God, God, maybe he won't do it. After that, I remember they took the tape off and the running started. Now we ran from –

Q: We – I – wa – was your father and brother also in that hay?

A: Yeah, but we didn't know that. We –

Q: So when you –

A: – my mother and I just ran and then she must have realized that I didn't know, but I saw, and we had no time to acknowledge or hug, we all ran. And somehow or other there was four of us. There probably were a lot more, but everybody ran. The only thing I remember after that, and we were very lucky, I have no complaints, is we again hid. There were nobody to cross the borders, whether we got – I think we ran by foot, that becomes blank. I remember cold. All we had was – bathing, there was no such thing. Food, I don't know how and what my mother gave me, or even if we ate. That wasn't even important. Survival was the only important thing. And again hiding, and being quiet. It was like I'll never talk again. I'll never see my family again. It – it was just, this is my way of life, this is how I have to – we have to live. And my brother wouldn't even talk to me, he – there was no talking, it was just surviving. Save your strength, survive. And we hid out, I believe, in fields. We got, somehow or other my next memory is ot – in **Salzburg, Austria**. And we were like, hiding in a field, but I remember seeing this – I assume it was a German –

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Austrian lady, was in her garden, and I remember she was pulling up carrots or some – and she deliberately took them and threw them like behind her, like here they are; here Jew, eat; which was wonderful. So we had – and my – my next memory was in **Beth Bialik**, that's the displaced persons camp. How we got there, I don't know.

Q: But you were still together as a family?

A: We were still together, we – we ran together everywhere.

Q: It's a miracle.

A: It was a miracle, and we are very lucky, because we should have been – we were going to either **Auschwitz** or **Dachau**, or – half of the people that didn't survive.

Only I think two people sur –

Q: Well, I don't mean to s – to suggest it was easy, I'm just saying it was –

A: Oh no, no, no –

Q: – it was simply that, oh my gosh, that the –

A: We survived.

Q: – that mother and father were there –

A: Yeah, but we never – we were never – actually, when we got to **Beth Bialik**, was the name of the d – displaced persons camp.

Q: Was it in **Austria**?

A: It was in **Austria**.

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Q: Okay.

A: It was in **Austria**. How we got there –

Q: And so now the war is over?

A: We didn't know if it was over, because now the quota was open. We couldn't go to **Isra** – we stayed back up – we were in this displaced people's camp, and there were people from **Russia**, people from ru – each one was a group. The Romanians, we were like in – I would say the size of this room. There was like a great big, I don't know what you call them, like cabins, long –

Q: Barracks.

A: Barracks, exactly. And each family had like a bed, and if you had two or three kids, the kids slept in one bed, and the mother and father slept in – but could have been five, six, eight, 10 families in these bar – one on one side, hi – and a curtain on one side, a m-material curtain blocking at night and another. My father, for it's – how, I don't know, because he wasn't a violent man, but he came that – became that, is he was in charge of the Romanians, another man was in charge of the Polish, another one the Lithuanians and Russians. And somehow or other I remember always sleeping with my brother. I do remember having lice in my hair from the sweating, what have you. But I remember the one thing which was always awful, is if anyone in that camp was caught stealing, or doing anything against the other one,

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they would be punished. My father, the – my gentle father was the head of the Russians, and I do remember this and to this day I will not sleep with my back to a door, is I happened to peek out and I saw this man walking on the ledge up a – and I was the only one, I saw his face, but we never – anyway, they caught him. My father had to punish him to show the rest. Children, everybody had to watch. And I thought, he can't do this. I remember he took the man's hand and put it in the door and crushed his fingers. And that was so unlike him, he was not a es – he was not a bad man, but I thought, my father, look what it's done to him. He actually hurt this man, and the – the – the screaming that he broke his fingers.

Q: Was he there to steal, was that what they was doing?

A: He was watch – walking along the ledge, and, like there, and looking to where – and I guess he stole some stuff. To this day I ne – I would – I – I saw his face, he – he must have seen me, and I put the blanket over my head, that's just another memory of mine. And I – I – he – he was found out, I don't know how, they found the stuff on him. But I remember thinking I could never love my father like I used to. How could he do this to another human being? So I was convinced this – it did change my father, it did change my mother. And from there on, the quota – oh I, we almost – the quota opened up, we couldn't go to **Israel** because the British wouldn't allow us in, and he was just a tailor. They took the doctors, the lawyers to the **U.S.**

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And they had dozens of tailors, that was the – the most common profession. Even though he was a designer, it didn't matter, that was his trade. And ironically enough, I – somehow or other, we were playing spin – I don't know, I sat on the bottom of a bottle, and I still got the scar. And my parents were horrified because there was a chance we could go and – not to the **U.S.**, but **Canada**. And there were – there was no penicillin and if it was infected, and I remember my mother trying to hide, cause it was in the bone, it was right in the knee. How we found out, my brother says, why is the grass around you red? And then when I stood up, my whole leg on my left knee was cut. And instead of – I didn't understand what was happening to my parents, instead of, oh my God, are you all right, it was, we'll never get out of here now. Our chances of getting out of here – and I thought, oh my God, I – they – they're not gonna allow my parents to get out of there because of me and I – what do I do? And somehow or other she camouflaged it, I don't know how. And we did, and my next memory is, I guess there were an **X** amount of people, some went. If you had family in the **U.S.** and they were willing to take you in, and you were clean, at – as my pictures show, and you had to make sure that you were healthy, and they were petrified that they're gonna find that I have this cut on – bad cut on my knee. And we were allowed to go –

Q: To the **U.S.**

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A: – to – no, to **Toronto, Canada** was the only one. We had family in **New York**, but sadly enough, the one in **New York** didn't – I don't – somehow or other didn't want to help, or whatever. We ended up in **Toronto, Canada**. That wasn't pretty –

Q: Did you have family there?

A: No. That wasn't pretty either. The Jewish Federation helped bring you over. And when we got to **Toronto, Canada**, my mother – well, w-with – the boat was horrible, because I remember everybody – I remember my father was so sick. We were a great – the name of the ship was **Samaria** and the ship has since, I guess, gone under. But I remember we were, the **DP** people who were transported **Toronto, Canada**, we were at the bottom where, you know, they put the coals and all, but we were grateful. We were getting out of **Germany**, and they, you know, when you go to **America** or **Canada** –

Q: **Austria**.

A: – or au – you're gonna live. So it didn't matter if a rat ran over you or what have you, and there was, whatever they didn't eat upstairs they throw downstairs. But it – what I do remember is how green and horrible and sick my mother was. And I really thought she was gonna die, my mother was gonna die, because it was just – it was just inhuman. But we made it, and from there we – it was still not pretty, we got to **Toronto, Canada** and we actually stayed in – on **Kensington** Street. I remember

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how awful that was, because it's the only place that – the Jewish Federation gave us clothing, and I said – I – I found out I – gave us clothing, gave us shelter. We ended up staying th-the – the front of the house was where they – they killed the chickens, kosher chickens and there was blood, and I thought, oh God. And it was a Jewish school, and I remember it – I forgot their names. It was an older lady and a wonderful couple. And all they could offer us was during the day – it was a Hebrew school – we could sleep there at night, but we had to vacate, and all they could offer was the floor. We were grateful, and that I remember, the four of us slept on the floor at this Hebrew school at night, but during the day we had to vacate it. And I remember the smell of the chickens and the blood from the chickens, thinking to myself, we really didn't survive. Those chickens, I – as a child I remember thinking, this is what the Germans were doing, and they're doing this to chickens. Well, from there we moved –

Q: Can – can I stop a little bit here?

A: Sure.

Q: Want to go back to a couple of – couple of things.

A: I'm sorry.

Q: Two question – no, no, no, you're doing fine. I know it's hard. I know it's hard.

You talked about how you saw your parents change.

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you have a sense of yourself as a child, and how you changed?

A: How I changed? My parents changed, because I remember my mother – my father was a designer and we were wealthy. My mother, in a way, was spoiled, because there was always money there. And suddenly – now that you bring that up, the only job they – we had to pay back Jewish Federation, and I remember hearing my mother saying – you know, I know now that all these donations that we give to the Jewish Federation, maybe it's different now, and they worked – they were able to work in the delicatessen store. My father never did cold cuts, ne – my mother never really worked, other than tailoring. And oh how he hated it. It was not his trade. And then it actually became comical, because the little bit they made, half of his salary, say if he got 10 dollars, five had to go back to the Jewish Federation. We know for a fact the clothes were donations. And I'm not putting down the Jewish fe – but every single paycheck, they had to pay back. And we wore hand-me-down clothes. I do remember this wonderful, wonderful teacher, and we moved – we had six moves in one year, til they managed to save some money. And it was made known that whatever we give you, and put you up, you will pay, and they did. But I remember finally going to school – and I knew how to speak eight languages. By

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now I'm eight years old, but you – a child picks eight – I was able to speak

Romanian – fluent Yiddish, Romanian, Yiddish, little bit of German.

Q: Language at home, was it Yiddish?

A: Oh, it was Yiddish – Romanian.

Q: So, what – your earliest –

A: And then it became –

Q: – memories was Romanian?

A: Romanian, only Romanian. Being in **DP** camp, we learned Yiddish, because it was the mutual language, and other dialects. But there were also Polish, so, you know, it became [**speaks foreign language**]. You pick up. And then, a lot of the kids were Russian. They picked up Romanian, I picked up – and the advantage of this is it opened up a lot of doors in my later life, because I was able to go to school and use those languages, so it did – oh –

Q: Well, a child's like a sponge when it comes to language.

A: Yes, yes. And – but, we made our way with Mom and Dad, and we got to school, and when we got to school –

Q: Was this the first school you'd got to?

A: I'd – I'd – I didn't mention one thing which I should have. The other way that way back I survived, my mother put me in parochial school.

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Q: When?

A: That was –

Q: And where?

A: This was way back in **Iași**, I forgot to say that.

Q: Okay.

A: Cause I remember the nuns boc – he – with the f – the – the – the rulers and – and they found lice in my hair too, then. But that – that’s just clicked in, I should have said it earlier.

Q: So you must have been a kindergartner in parochial school. Did you learn any –

A: Oh yes, oh yes, but it didn’t matter. If I was in parochial school I was safe, and I didn’t –

Q: Have to wear the yellow star.

A: My mother, somehow or other – yeah, that just popped into – that’s probably another way I survived, or, you know, and I’m sure my brother did, too. But I do remember that ruler coming down on my knuckles. But, back to present, they couldn’t –

Q: Did you – the question of how did you change.

A: How did I change? I think I became – my brother always took care of me. There were a lot of other things I probably didn’t have, but he – i – he – hi-his

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responsibility – death would have gotten to him unless he to – his job was to take care of me. And he did as best as I could, but I remember getting into fights, which was not my nature. But the kids, I guess, were making fun of – I couldn't – I could speak all these other languages, and the teacher, of course, all loved me. Couldn't be – didn't – didn't know where to place me, because so much school was missed. And somebody called me, I don't know if it was dirty Jew or something, and I-I just jumped on her, oh, I – I wa – i-it wa – just wasn't – the anger came out of me like an animal, and I remember my brother peeling me off of this girl. And I remember going to the principal's office, or somebody. And they – I couldn't speak to them, I couldn't tell them. And, the [indecipherable] came down, and he said, why did you do it? And I remember yelling, I'm Jewish, I'm Jewish. And that's the only part I remember is, I'm Jewish. But the girl didn't do it because I was Jewish, but I couldn't understand why she was picking on me, and making fun and laughing. So the answer, it did, it hardened me. And even though my brother was to look after me, I realized that it's time to look after myself, this is going to happen. And I'll just have to fill my own shoes, because he's two years older, he's now in another grade, and this is life. This is life, and we're very lucky, and you know, I can't be his responsibility and actually it started to take hold, and I made my own friends and learned the language faster then, and skipped two, three grades. Fortunately, I guess

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I had a brain because it start – they didn't know where to put me. They started off with first grade, and then I think the last was third grade. And then fourth – by fourth grade, I remember by then I was speaking English, made my friends, gave my brother a breathing room where he could go with his friends. But it made me bitter. Bitter, not – definitely bitter against the Germans, which, they weren't – it made me very – to this day I have no love, and you can't blame the whole, and I mean, I hate the language. And ironically enough, even as I got a job in public health nursing and put myself through school, I used the German lan – I had to use the German language to be in a clinic, to interpret to German refugees in **Toronto, Canada**, of what to do with their babies. And a couple of times, I literally messed up, and I knew I messed up, and I didn't even, God forgive me, resent it. I really didn't – I didn't feel bad about – not that I told her the wrong thing, I just said to her, in – in German, can't understand, na – na **[German]** fa – you know, mixing Jewish with – and they – it's like I – I guess my best way of inter – I mixed the ger – Jewish with the German deliberately. I wanted them to know I'm a Jew, and I'm helping you speak this language for your baby. What did you do for us? That's where I was wrong. But that's – I – I can actually say from there on, I feel very fortunate.

Q: I want to stop again, I'm sorry to do –

A: Sure.

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Q: But you had mentioned earlier that something had happened to your mother, that she had fallen downstairs. Ge – what's – what was this episode?

A: That must have happened either after I was born – all I know is the Holocaust, or the Germans were paying for the people that went through the Holocaust, and it was making retribution.

Q: Retri – reparations.

A: Right. And there were paintings and stuff, and what have you, which were either burnt, we had no idea. As I remember, her being interviewed, this is in **Canada**, to go to **New York**, and my father, and to be interviewed so that if you are eligible for this. And I remember she did, and my father did. My father, for some reason they said – and he was beaten up many times, I think, I can't remember, because they said he – he's mentally unbalanced, of what he's saying. My mother got some retribution.

Q: Re-Reparations.

A: Rep – yeah, I keep making [indecipherable]

Q: It's okay.

A: But my father didn't. Whether it's possible he – I don't know. I – I really don't know why, because in all honesty, he suffered more. But I remember she did, and the story went, which I was too young, is she was pregnant and she was thrown

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down the stairs and lost the baby. And of course, the other things that happened to us, with the running, the house was destroyed – excuse me – and she got some kind of, I guess, pension. Not for long, but she is – she was eligible, but I couldn't understand – then, we were told, both my brother and I, that we too. And this is my second marriage. And I did marry a Jewish gentleman who I met my first time, first year out of nursing school, anyway, and was married to a Jewish man for 20 – almost 28 years, had my three beautiful daughters. And at the time I was living in **Connecticut**, and my brother – my mother and father moved to be with me, cause they weren't getting along with my sister-in-law, but it doesn't matter, they wanted to be close. And that was fine, we brought them over. And she was getting some money wa – and I remember my brother said, you know, you gonna go. And my husband said, go. And I says well, I'll give them a call. And I think I spoke to someone on the phone, if I remember correctly. This – we're going back, I would have been married 50 years. And they said, you have to speak German and you have to go through all this. And I said, you know what? There's no money you can give me to bring back these memories, I don't want to go through it, not then. And my brother, to this day, because **Cara**(ph) called him, and das – my husband is – we just went to a **Bar Mitzvah**, and I said, **Morris**, how can you not remember? I'm – he

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and I are the only survivors, my mom and dad passed away. And he says, I don't want to remember it, I don't even want to talk about it. Cause she did call him, and –

Q: And so he's never given his testimony to anybody?

A: No, and he doesn't want to. And he probably remembers more than me, but he – he wants to forget it, he says, I don't want to remember it. And I – I didn't want to push it because I saw him welling up. And I'm not – the reason I'm doing is, I have that gentleman, my husband to thank, cause I had these few pictures, and I do have more at home, and I was treasuring them. And, ironically enough, to end the story, my husband said to me, look, the pictures are gonna just crumble up and they're gonna get lost. Have them, you know, put them in the Holocaust, and you know. So I did, and I'm glad I did, because ironically enough, then a letter came, and I wrote my little story, and my granddaughter, which I'm very proud to say, and that's the reason I'm here, says, Grandma, can I use your paper and talk about your experience in that – the Holocaust? And I said absolutely, and she used that and got an A plus in her – and then I went to speak to 90 – 90 kids, three classes of sixth graders, and my two grandchildren were there, all big-eyed, looking at me, proud as punch, and I thought, there is a reason. And I really thank my husband for this, because the story has to be told, it did happen, and the kids should know. My – my grandson, who lives in **Florida** will be here December – no, April, he was chosen, he's very gifted.

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And when he pushes that button, and sees some of the pictures, the story will go on.

I may not be here, but the story should be told.

Q: I'm very – we're in a – I hope you don't think we're finished, unless you –
because I have –

A: No.

Q: – many more questions.

A: Go right ahead. The hard part I have to get off my chest.

Q: Yeah, yeah, I – yes, and – and thank you for –

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you for doing that.

A: Thank you, yeah.

Q: Thank you for sharing it. I can't imagine what a little girl, has this implode on her
life. You know –

A: Felt good getting it out. It did. Felt good getting it out. **[crying]** I'm sorry.

Q: It's okay, please don't –

A: I don't –

Q: Had you – had you told your daughters?

A: No. I –

Q: Your daughters had never asked you, or you'd never really told them about –

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A: Not really, no, no, I – I sort of stifled it. They know, they read, but I never – no.

It's not that I'm ashamed of it –

Q: Of course not.

A: – it just – so, I think, gruesome. Very gruesome.

Q: Well, you know, if –

A: I told my husband some of that.

Q: But if you were my mom, I would be crying along with you because I would –

A: No.

Q: – be thinking, my mom is a little girl, and she has all this happen to her?

A: I think they know, and I don't think – my – my first husband wasn't too proud that we were foreigners for some reason, I don't know why.

Q: He was an American Jew?

A: He was an American Jew.

Q: Okay.

A: And I guess the story goes, you know, you come to **America**, golden land, but we worked for everything, nobody – my family had nothing to give us.

Q: Yeah.

A: But that's the wonderful part, we made it the hard way, and we're here. As far as telling the kids, they know I was there. And I – I – I can't really say I've – they've

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ever heard all that I just told you. Certain parts, that we were in **DP** camp and what have you, it's like maybe they didn't want to put – it could be they didn't want to put me through telling this. But, when I told them, they were very, very excited that I am telling the story. And as I said to my daughter, when you do go, and you really want to hear, because she's never heard, this is my middle daughter, press the button. Or go see the archives.

Q: Well, we'll give you a copy of the interview, that you'll be able to share with them, if you want to.

A: What happens to this?

Q: Well, what happens to this is that, this is a digital recorder.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And once it's – once we stop, it has a little card in it. The card then gets put into another gizmo – you're gonna hear my technolo – technological knowledge here, it's this thing, gets connected to my computer, or somebody's computer here, gets transferred there. And then there's a process which we've just started, because we con – we were still doing cassette when we did audio, up until maybe a year and a half ago, we were still recording things on cassettes. And now we're trying to digitize all of our collections. So the interview will be digitally transferred to a server, it will be assigned a number and a name. It will be your name.

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: And – and at some point – this takes awhile, even though it du – it's not that long a process because it goes through the, several departments, it takes awhile. And then it gets put in our catalog, and someone can look up, even online when they press archives, **Lili Brody-Carmosino**, and there will be oral history with **Lili Brody-Carmosino**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: They won't be able to, off-base, offsite access the interview as yet. Sometimes on our website you can access parts of them. Sometimes there are interviews that have transcripts connected with them. But – but when you come here, in a number of months, one would be able to ask, at the desk that we pass by, the archives desk, I'd like to have the interview with **Lili Brody-Carmosino**. She'll look it up and see oh, it has our record group number **X,Y,Z**.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And then, at a computer terminal, there it is, you put on the headphones –

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: – and you can here the interview.

A: I know they're coming in April.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And we're planning on it.

Q: So, I think that by then –

A: Hopefully. I'm hoping.

Q: Yeah. That it will be –

A: And that'll be the first time she will hear it.

Q: Oh my, oh my.

A: Well, you know, if –

Q: I have a – I have a few – okay, you want to just say something?

A: Sure, no, go ahead. No, no, I was just going to say is, if you ask, you're told. I've learned one thing, there's just so much you can tell a child.

Q: Yeah.

A: And there's certain things I – I wouldn't – I don't want it to be gruesome. It's part of history, but I've always said to them is Grandma, Grandpa, myself and **Morris** are so lucky, we never got – and I still feel that way, we never got to go to **Dachau**. We have friends that their children were killed, and they did experiments on them. I mean, there were a lot of people who my parents stayed close to, that were horror stories. I says, we're alive, and the four of us were spared, that we have – we're very fortunate. So that's where I let it go. If they ask more, I would have told them more.

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Q: Well, you know, it's – it's a funny thing, because there are contradictory truths, yes? One could say that.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But look at what – but that doesn't mean you didn't suffer. That doesn't mean you didn't –

A: Oh yeah, it's changed me, but it's also made me stronger, where I can actually say Americans, Canadians don't know. It happened.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was a horrible thing, and it does – you can either – it's like life, you either lay down and let it take you over, or you get up, you brush yourself off and you go on, and how – I – I chose to brush myself off. Not just there, after a bad marriage too –

Q: Of course.

A: – but ye – this is life. And that's one of the things I – I will treasure, because I saw it and it added to my life, and I think made me stronger.

Q: I want to go back to your parents.

A: Sure.

Q: We're back in – in **Toronto**, your father's working in – in the delicatessen, which is not his.

A: When we first arrived.

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Q: Yeah, when you first arrived. Did he – what happened with them, and did they ever change back to the parents you originally knew?

A: No, no. My – my father and mother worked in the delicatessen til – they hated it, but it was the only way – the only job. Eventually, he went back to his tailoring, and my mother worked too, and that was one thing that bothered my dad, because she only worked with him, and was able to go back into the tailoring and worked there and made a nice living at it. And after years of slowly, after all these moves, they bought a house –

Q: In **Toronto**.

A: – and – in **Toronto, Canada**, and it was on **Essex** Street, and that's where I became a person. We had a house. We did rent the upstairs, we didn't have a – a penny, but I actually – I went to grammar school during the day, made sure my grades were done. It – it was different in my time, that I told the kids. I had school to do, nobody cared whether I went to school, got **As, Bs** or **Fs**. My job, unlike my brother now, the story reversed, I was to cook, I was to clean. He was a boy, he could do whatever. So I went to elementary school there, **Essex**, and had a job, I think I was 11, and worked with my girlfriend **Marcy's** father's store after school. Went to work there, but before I could do that, I had to clean and do whatever, cook. My mother bought me a little stool and I could mix the soup and what have you.

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And that was my responsibility, so the shoe reversed, my brother had the freedom, but I became the housekeeper. And I kept my grades up, my teachers were wonderful. Learning was a wonderful thing for me, and working made me independent, and bought my own bicycle, made friends and my father and mother stayed in **Canada** and we lived there. Then we upgraded.

Q: Was it a warm family, even though they had changed?

A: No, the marriage, no. They argued a lot, and was mostly money. It was not the same people that I remembered, but I just figured the hardship – there was arguing, arguing and it was mostly money. And we supposedly moved up to **Shepherd Avenue** because of me, so that th – you know, I would meet better people and get married, because at 16 they were convinced I was gonna be an old maid. And as it turned out, at 18, I was married.

Q: Oh my.

A: Yeah, met my husband and at 18 I was married. At the age of 20 I had an ectopic pregnancy, was told I couldn't have kids, but fortunately I did. And then – now I'm in **Connecticut** and had my three beautiful daughters, I don't know if I'm jumping. And my parents came to live with us – with me. Well, not in my house, my – my n – my husband now in **Connecticut**, because we would go home, I would say every

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three, four months, because you're not allowed to re-enter, once you leave **Canada**,

I didn't have dual –

Q: Citizenship.

A: – citizenship. So we would go back, like in six months I could go back, and my parents were having a rough time there, because I was really the –

Q: Support.

A: I was now the keeper.

Q: I see.

A: And I have been since the age of 12.

Q: Wow.

A: You know, a lot of arguing, when you say changed, a lot of arguing. They loved each other deeply, but it was just a turbulence, a lot of turbulence.

Q: It was too much for them.

A: Too much for them, yeah, I think it got caught up, and even though slowly, slowly they made their way into, you know, my mother stopped working, my dad was still working, they weren't happy. Then my brother got married, I was – moved to **Connecticut**. They were unhappy, so finally my husband said, let's bring them here. And we did, and he opened up a little tailoring, cleaning and tailoring, did

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extremely well. And I took care of them. And then, as time went on, my dad started to get **Alzheimer's** and things got – and I – I was the keeper, I –

Q: You kept it together.

A: Every se – oh, yes, yes. My kids say you were the matriarchs, and I – yeah, yeah, I actually can't say that – my girlfriend always says my hands are like 90 year old. But I did the cleaning, the cooking, what have you and I'm – I b – I didn't – she didn't really want to do this, I – I think she was – my mother was a bright woman, who ha – probably never really should have had kids, being that she loved learning, she loved business. And my father was more the caretaker. That's the best way I can describe it. And I was close, he was a wonderful man, I loved him deeply. Ended up with **Alzheimer's** and could never be separated from my mother, he just adored her. And the saddest day, probably almost as sad as the Holocaust, is have to slowly take his license away, and then put him in a home. Only because what was happening is he would wander off. And I – now I'm – I was separated from my husband, things were tough. But my parents were my upkeep, and it got to the point where a wonderful visiting nurse says, you can't keep doing this, cause I had three kids to take care of, and my parents. And the kids were easier to take care of than my parents. But it was difficult, because I think all of this took a toll on him. And the forgetting, but the wandering – wandering off, and we got him the bracelet, the **I.D.**

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bracelet and all. It – it got tough. Put him in the Jewish convalescent home, and Mom had to go there too, because you couldn't separate them. And I watched him deteriorate. That was hard. That was, I think the hard – one of – as hard as the Holocaust.

Q: So you – you know, you still loved him, even though –

A: Oh, I adored my dad.

Q: Yeah.

A: I – I loved my mom, and I took care of my – as my husband knows, we were there two – twice a week, three time – she was also in a Jewish home, and I da – she died holding my hand.

Q: Oh my.

A: Loved music. I can honestly say I took care of the both of them, thank God.

Thank God that –

Q: But what an ex –

A: It made me strong enough that I could do that.

Q: But also, what an example for your girls.

A: Oh, I hope to God they never have to do what I did. I really don't. I've got long term care so that they'll never have to go through what I – you know, that was hard.

Q: It's tough.

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A: That's hard.

Q: It's tough, it's tough.

A: It – it was very tough. But –

Q: What –

A: – again, I –

Q: What years did they pass?

A: My dad was in his 80s, and my mom, God bless her, was 93. 93, and I was able to give her an incredible 90th birthday party – birthday party with [indecipherable] band, and as much money I could [inaudible]. And a – she may na – not have been the greatest mom, but in my heart, I did what you can do, and I –

Q: That's –

A: – would do it all over again. But – and I would not want my children to ever have to do that. It's too much of a responsibility.

Q: Yes, but th-the values are – are the kinds you want your kids to see.

A: Oh, you may – yeah, I loved her. I mean, I'd have liked her – at times I loved them.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And my dad, even though he was tough to live with, he was – he was a sweetheart. He was a sweetheart. There was nothing I couldn't ask my dad, and

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maybe not my mom. I loved my dad. He was tough to live with, but I loved my dad because – I'll add one thing, my mom didn't care what – the grades or what have you, but that was because she – her mother had her at 50. It's a gap, so her mother took care of us. But, when I graduated elementary school, I had to get, those days, like a prom dress. And my mom said, just – my father said, I'll take you. It was probably the ugliest dress in the whole prom, cause I was short and fat. And – but I was just so proud that my dad, not my mom, went with me. So, we were close.

Q: Yeah. Do you ever know what happened to your grandmother, who was –

A: She – she died. I never would – was never explained to me, did she died during the Holocaust. I remember – I don't remember a funeral, I don't remember. So, did she die in the bombing? It was never brought up.

Q: And the family, the con – family compound, was this your mother's family, or your father –

A: Yes.

Q: It was your mother's?

A: No, my mother's, my mother's.

Q: It was family.

A: My father's father was a farmer. Two of the most wonderful people. She was just a tiny little thing. He – my father resembled, he was the gentlest man, the –

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Q: Your grandfather.

A: – I think I've only seen twice, as young as I was. And I know the whole farm was big, and I remember him milking the cow and bringing it to me warm, out of – right out of the cow. But when the war broke out, either they were killed – I know my father's sister, very tragically, there was a movie that was called, the **brievela(ph) de Mama**. You understand what that means? Letter to your mother?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And apparently, some fire broke out, and she was trampled to death. And her name was **Anutsa(ph)**. And my father told me this. It was just before, I guess, war first broke out. And that was tragic. Beyond that, I never really knew. I was too young. What happened to them, I don't know. His sister was alive in **Israel**, made it, but when war broke out, every – everybody just flew in different direction.

Q: Another question. How did you choose your profession? Where did you –

A: Oh, I had a few.

Q: Yeah, then – you mentioned the nursing.

A: Supposed to go to nursing school, but it didn't work out, because I couldn't stand anything being blood. And I was very good with my hands, and very athletic, as my mother was. She used to call herself a **Maccabee**, which she was in. I – I actually

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had a multitude of, after I got married, would be – before I met my husband I worked for public health nurses. And –

Q: Okay. That would have been in **Canada**.

A: That would have been in **Canada**. And I did volunteer work at a veteran's hospital up to the age that I got married. From about 15, myself and my friends would go every Sunday and cook for the veterans. And I remember writing, they were parachuters, and all that remained of them was just their bodies, they were like in – I don't know what you call those swings, you know, it's just the netting, it's like –

Q: Yeah.

A: And I remember they couldn't write. And I would write letters to their sweethearts, nobody came to visit them. They gave me tremendous – myself and my friends, but I loved that. We – I – I loved doing that.

Q: It was meaning.

A: It was – it – I don't – I can't – I mean, at 16 you don't do things like that. There were five of us, who we just reunited in **Toronto, Canada**, and that's what we did every Sunday. And it's – that – that was very fulfilling. That's the only way I can describe it, very fulfilling, and back to your question as far – then I got married, and when I arrived in **Connecticut** I remembered all I could do – I was an

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excellent typist, so the thing to do was transcribe. And I applied to Manpower or something, and my typing was excellent. And ended up doing typing. And then my languages opened up doors again. My children were born and then I stopped working, and my husband was in the printing business. And because of my languages, a friend called and says, **Lili**, you know how speak Yiddish fluently, and German and a little bit of Russian and Polish. There's a job opening at the Jewish center for the hot lunch program that consists of like 150 people. You have to do programming, it's quite involved. I said, I don't know, because my husband didn't want me to work. Went down, I applied, got the job, was able to take – I was not allowed to work unless I brought – til my kids were in school, home for the kids after school, those were the rules. And that was fine. So I brought my little one, which is my youngest, **Stacey** with me, and I remember loving work, just loving it. Prior to that – oh, after that, I remember – I thought, okay, I did that, she came with me. Now it's time to put her in a daycare and I will put her in a daycare and get myself a job. The other two were in school, and I'll work around the kids. And ironically enough, I went to sign her up, and I was sitting on the floor, reading her a book til I could get the director. And I had three or four kids on my lap, a couple on my back, and I'm reading these books and these kids are all over me, and I think, what the heck? And she says to me, would you – well, what'd you come here for?

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And I says, to sign up my daughter. And she says, well, I've got a better idea. You come work for us. You see? So I ended up having a full time job, my daughter got in free, and I started to work for the daycare. After that, I just loved working, and I end – from there, I went to work for special ed, as an aide. And because of my grades and what have you, I found myself working one on one, and I absolutely loved it. And I would go to different schools, and there was one, you know, some kids were wheelchair bound, couldn't talk, one was sign language. And I would work one on one – one on one with them. That was another job. After that it was a multitude of incredible jobs, I don't know how I got them. Dad had to go, because now the kids were all in school, and I thought, well, it's time to go on. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, I worked for a bank. And that was again up to three o'clock, and be home for the kids. From the bank, I thought, well, let's see what else I can do, I love people. I went to work for, happened to be two Jewish ladies, physical therapy. I was a wer – answered the phone. It's – and I ended up giving physical therapy, which I didn't want to do, but she says, you've got some nursing background. I ended up doing physical therapy, which I shouldn't have done. And then, next thing I know is this friend of theirs wanted to open up this thing, adaptive clothing for the handicapped. And she had – that's when Velcro first came in.

Q: Right.

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A: And she said, what do you think, **Lili**? So the one who owned the physical, she says, I want you to meet this woman who came in, I think it was either **Las Vegas**, or I-I'm not even sure where she lived, **califor** – someplace. She was a wonderful lady, we hit it off immediately. And she says, will you work with me on this, and we'll – somehow or other I got involved with her, and we opened up this thing. But, my husband decided it's – it – that's enough. It was every eat – when I worked for the Jewish Center, I was in the paper, because I was talking to governors and mayors and what have you. Whether that threatened him, I don't know, and I was in the paper, and then when I ope – started with this adaptive clothing for the handicapped, again it was, you know, ribbon cutting, and that did it, it was just – I'm – I'm exposed, and there's just too much. So then, I think there was another job I was applying to, and that was – there were – I loved physical fitness and people, so I applied at, I remember, the **YMCA in Hamden, Connecticut**. And I thought, there's no way I'm gonna get it, I mean, this is director for – and he says, I'm very interested. And I came home to tell my husband that I'm going to possibly – you know, I – I interviewed and there's a good chance, that was the end of my married life, and what have you, and he says, no you're not, you're coming to work at **Brody Printing Company**. If you're so great, you can prove it to me. And that was a bad move, because I found the things – this was not the man I was married to, and

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working for him was not the things to do because the way he talked to people and handled people is the way he hated other people handling him, not to get involved. And the marriage fell apart. And you ready? I was there with well, not three, because my daughter moved out, my oldest daughter, and she went to college, and so did the middle one. And the marriage – we went to **Israel**, my treat. The only way the kids went on vacation is if I paid for it. And this was a wealthy man, who really didn't like kids, but he wasn't a bad father, he just wasn't around, so I was basically a single mom anyway. The reason I'm saying this, and there is where the Holocaust, and my experience is making me what I am, I'm grateful for. What does a woman do with no credit cards, two children, three to take care of, had a beautiful home, went on vacations, now I'm alone, because the silence was deafening, the relationship fell apart, and I kept on saying – you know, I – I – I – I go on vacations, I have a beautiful home, three beautiful children, what's going on, why am I unhappy? There was no conversation, it was – everything fell apart. There was no interaction, and I was going into depression and I ended up div – taking the family, the last hurrah, to **Israel**, where I met the cousin who split my head. And there were, I think, 12 of us at a table, and because my husband was well off at the time – and I treated, with 7,000 dollars for that trip, and the best trip ever. And we got – the kids got to see **Israel**. I met my – the family that was left over. And that – that was it,

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1985, I went on my own. When we came back, the marriage was over, unbeknownst to me, there was somebody else for 15 years.

Q: Oh my.

A: That was – and back in the thing, I had to now, no credit cards, no car. What am I gonna do? Sold the house, which was mine, and went to school, and learned how to be a court reporter. I worked in the court system.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

A: And that was – I became very independent, I made nice money, and thank you Holocaust for making me the strong woman.

Q: Oh my.

A: And here I am. I was able to give a mar – up a marriage of almost 28 years, brush myself off, start bu – all over again, and meet this wonderful man, who may not be the same faith, but has taken over the Judaism and goes with me to synagogue, and that's what comes from going through that.

Q: It made you strong.

A: I become strong. I could never have done it otherwise. Not that I didn't fall down –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – and not that I didn't panic, but I stood up, I made it, and I'm very proud of myself that I made it.

Q: I think you have every reason to be. Every reason to be.

A: **[indecipherable]** I really. Yeah.

Q: Thank you, **Lili**. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you for listening.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this?

A: Only that someday my grandchildren, or gra – their grandchildren will hear this and just know it did happen, and their grandmother, or great-grandmother, or great-great-great grandmother went through it. And it did happen, and I'm very proud to tell the story, and they should be very proud that they're Jewish.

Q: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very, very much. And this concludes our interview

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A: Thank you.

Q: – with **Lily Brody-Carmosino**. Thank you.

Conclusion of Interview