United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Marianne Windholm
November 18, 2005
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PREFACE

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MARIANNE WINDHOLM
November 18, 2005

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm, conducted by Amy Rubin on November 18, 2005, in Manhattan, New York. This is tape number one, side A. Could you begin by telling me your full name?

Answer: My full name is Marianne Windholm.

Q: And can you tell me when and where you were born?

A: December 10, 1910, in Savanesa, Austria.

Q: And where was that, or where is that location?

A: That is -- it was [indecipherable]. Through Austria there was -- Hungary belong to Austria, Yugoslav belong to Austria. There was a -- we had the king and the queen at that time, we did -- was not a public -- so it was -- what the heck should -- could I tell you?

Q: Well, I -- I was asking specifically about the place where you were born? Is that close to Vienna? Where -- where is that?

A: I can't tell you that, because I was born there because my mother wanted to be with her mother when I was born.

Q: So where did you -- where did you grow up?

A: In Vienna.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood where you grew up?

A: Well, it was a good neighborhood. What should I tell you?

Q: Do you remember any details, you know, was it a mostly middle class neighborhood, was it mostly Jewish?

A: It was -- it -- no, it was not mostly Jewish, but it was a very good neighborhood. It was across a park, the Augarten, like here the Central Park. Was beautiful, our balcony was to the park, yeah.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, their names and maybe a little bit about their personalities?

A: My -- my father's name was Max. He died very early. And my mother's name was Regina, and she was killed in Auschwitz, yeah.

Q: When you were a child, what are your memories of them at home? What kind of personalities did your parents have?

A: Well, my father was a businessman, and my mother was home with us three children. I had the older brother, and a younger sister. Older brother Paul, a younger sister, Ernestina. We had the big apartment, beautiful apartment, yeah.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about your home? How many rooms, where --

A: How many rooms we had? It was a big apartment. We had -- we had my parent's bedroom, then the bedroom for my sister and myself. A smaller bedroom for my brother. Behind the kitchen was the room for the housekeeper, small room. Was a big apartment, with a beautiful balcony.

Q: And can you describe to me a little bit about your family life in that home? Did you have a lot of meals together? Tell me some of your memories.

A: We had all meals together. We ate lunch, that was the big meal, the -- everybody has to be home for lunch time, because everything was closed for two hours. So that was the big meal, like dinner here. And in the evening we had a smaller meal.

Q: Were your parents strict?

A: Strictly kosher, yeah.

Q: Well, how did they treat you as the children? Wha -- did they run a strict household with you as the children?

A: Well, I only know that they loved us and we loved them.

Q: Did you get along with your sister and your brother?

A: Very well, yeah. My sister passed away last year. My brother is dead a long time.

Q: So tell me a little bit about Jewish holidays in your home.

A: We kept every holiday. We have separate dishes for Passover, which came down, which were beautiful. I think our Passover dishes were nicer than our regular, yeah. Yeah, we kept every holiday.

Q: And did you go to synagogue?

A: Well, we children did not go. I don't remember that I went to synagogue. We went to visit my mother. She spent the high holiday in synagogue. Saturday they went to the synagogue. But I don't think we went. I don't remember that.

Q: So would you consider your family religious?

A: Yeah, I would say yes, yeah. We kept all holidays.

Q: Do you have certain special memories of family vacations, or things you did with your family outside of the home?

A: Well, the summer months we were in the country. Rented a house there, and of course we had a beautiful time. We went there with -- we used to say, with king and kagel. We took everything with us, even the bird. And we spent there the whole summer.

Q: And where exactly was that?

A: Was in Austria, too.

Q: So tell me about your schooling. When -- did you go to public school, and religious school as well?

A: I went -- no, I went to public school, and then I went to high school, and then I went to business school, because then my father already was dead, and our situation changed. There was not so much money, so my mother, after the Shiva was over, she took us together and she said, the only person who will be studying will be Paul, my brother. And you, Marianne, you will go to business school, and you will be a secretary. And my sister was too little. So that's how it was, and that's what we did.

Q: Okay, let's -- let's continue. So you were telling me about you getting into work as a secretary. Tell me a little more about that.

A: Well, at that time, there was a -- a pa -- in the paper, a ad, as the telephone became -- just at that time, they started to get automated telephone. And there was a ad in the time that they looked for somebody, so my mother took me for the interview. I remember his name, Mr. Isleve, yeah. So he interviewed me, and I got the job. I was with them for a very long time, yeah.

Q: How old were you when you started to work?

A: I must have been 17, maybe 17 and a half, maybe 17.

Q: Did you enjoy work?

A: Oh, I loved it.

Q: Why?

A: I loved every -- every job I had. My last job was 19 and a half years, Society for the Advancement of Education. We publish [indecipherable] educational magazine in the United States. Was there 19 and a half years.

Q: So can we go back a little, and can you tell me what happened to your father?

A: Well, I -- it is something, what I think about it, it -- I can't tell you. O-Or, he was sick and died, or he had a stroke and died. He was here today and gone tomorrow.

Q: When did this happen and how old was he?

A: He was a young man, yeah. And that was very negative, you know, that he left us.

Q: Do you know how old you were -- you were when it happened?

A: I was very young. I think I -- I wasn't 14, maybe. He -- he died in May. I was 13 and a half.

Q: And what changed for your family after that?

A: Well, a lot. We had to give up that big apartment. I remember after we sat -- sat Shiva, my mother talked to us children, and explained our situation to us. And she said there are only few possibilities. We have to give up that apartment, we have to take a small apartment, or we go to Palestine, which we didn't want, or if you don't like that, I'll -- if you are not good, I'll sell everything and we'll go to America, and we all three started crying.

Q: Why is that? Did you want to stay in Austria?

A: Sure. I didn't want to -- I did not know what is America. I know it is far away. I wanted to stay home.

Q: Did you like Vienna?

A: I loved it.

Q: Tell me more. Why did you love it?

A: It was my home. I've did grow up there, I went to school there, had my friends there. I was happy there.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about school? Did you have mostly Jewish friends, or also not Jewish friends?

A: No, I have only Jewish friends. I still could tell you, we were five friends, I know still their name.

Q: Were the other students, the non-Jewish students, were they ever mean to you?

A: Well, one time, yeah. One girl went after us, and she said s -- behind us [indecipherable] and we passed a church and [indecipherable] door in the front was opened down to the basement, and I took her and I threw her down, and she fell into the church. And then her mother came to my mother to tell her what I did. So my mother said to her, I'll tell you something. We are not friends, but if we meet, we say hello to each other. These children, tomorrow they will have forgotten, and we will be strangers, and we will not like each other. Let it be. And that what happened.

Q: Can you explain a little more about that, I'm not sure I understood. What did the s -- what did the girl say to you first?

A: Judeleh, which mean Jew [indecipherable] you know, she spit it. She's just -- I-I couldn't tell you that. She made fun of Jewish people.

Q: And you pushed her in response?

A: I -- I threw her into the church.

Q: But you didn't get in trouble?

A: No, my mother didn't. She told to her mother that the children will play together tomorrow and we will be -- not look at each other, let it be. That is between the children, yeah.

Q: Were there other incidents like that? Did you feel a lot of anti-Semitism?

A: No, no, no. No. I did later on, sure. When I came back from skiing, Hitler was there. Then we had to wear the Star of David, you know that?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Jews with the -- it was Jew, it was yellow, we had to wear that on our clothes. I came back from skiing on the 13th of March, 1938, and Hitler was there. And I looked of my mother, when I left her hair was light blonde, and she had white streaks in her hair, yeah.

Q: So you're referring to the anschluss in Austria?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were not in Vienna at the time?

A: I just came back from skiing.

Q: And what did you know about what had happened?

A: Well, I couldn't really understand it. I knew about Germany, but I had a German -- a girlfriend, she studied medicine in Vienna, and she said, you know, we German, we don't really like that. She did not know what the Germans could do. [indecipherable]

Q: So were you afraid when -- when this happened?

A: Yeah.

Q: When the anschluss happened?

A: Yeah. We all were afraid for the Kristallnacht. They burned all our Bibles, all the Jew's stores. That -- they broke the windows. Do you know about the Kristallnacht?

Q: Yes, but tell me what your memories are of it.

A: I told you. They burned all the Bibles on the street, for the synagogue. All the stores, the windows were broken. I remember, oh yeah.

Q: Did you see this in person afterwards?

A: Yeah, I saw it, of course.

Q: What about the synagogue where your parents went, was that affected?

A: Couldn't tell you.

Q: Well, tell me a little bit what you're thinking through all of this, what are you imagining?

A: I was afraid.

Q: Did you think about trying to leave the country?

A: I was supposed to. I was supposed to go to Venezuela. But my brother said to me, you are a girl, you will get married. Give me the chance. For me it's much harder. So I let him go. And he left there.

Q: How did -- how did your brother wind up going to Venezuela?

A: He went to Paris, and from Paris, you know, he continued.

Q: I mean, was there somebody there to --

A: Yeah, we had [indecipherable] family there.

Q: Now, when the anschluss happened, what are some of the other ways that you saw an escalating anti-Semitism. Were you very aware of things every day?

A: What happened is my sister si -- had a girlfriend, she was not Jewish, and they were like that. And she was always in our house. She slept over. Every holiday she was in my bed. And when the anschluss came, my sister met her on the street, and she said to her, lifting her arm, heil Hitler. My sister spit in her face. My mother came running to me, they arrested my sister. I went to the gaolighter Gruber, and I explain it to him, and he said to me, I give her eight days to leave Vienna. Otherwise, she goes. So we did find a man, there were [indecipherable] there were men that took people over the border. We did find somebody who did help her, and we paid -- was a lo -- expensive, 250 schilling. He took her to the border, yeah.

Q: Were you worried about your sister leaving?

A: Well, I was sorry, but when she got the escort, you know that she was saved.

Q: Did you communicate with her while she was away?

A: Oh sure. We wrote to each other. She was high in the mountains, someplace in Yugoslavia. I sent her shoes, and I s -- heavy shoes, you know, and I didn't send a pair, I made two packages. Only one shoe in one, shouldn't be stolen, and the other shoe in the other package, yeah.

Q: And when did this happen? When did your sister leave Austria?

A: Must have been 1930 [indecipherable] '38? After the anschluss, very soon.

Q: Now, before the anschluss, did you have any awareness of what might be happening, what might come?

A: No. No. I came back from skiing, I couldn't believe it.

Q: And you hadn't heard anything about possibly Germany would take over?

A: No. No.

Q: Had you been hearing any news about the Nazis in Germany before the anschluss?

A: Oh yeah, we knew about it, yeah. And I expected to leave Vienna, you know? I had relatives in Venezuela who wanted me to come.

Q: So you knew things were getting harder for Jews in Germany.

A: Oh, oh yeah, we knew that, yeah. I met one German lady, and she told me she wakes up in the morning, and she thinks about killing herself, while going shopping. I remember that. I didn't find it very funny. Then she says, well, I kill myself, or I go shopping. So I go shopping.

Q: So I know that you got married at some point. Can you tell me when, and how did you meet your husband?

A: I di -- yeah. I bought some shoes, and I went home, an-and sh -- and there was a [indecipherable] there was an open coffee shop, tables with chairs, and there was my sister sitting with a group of people. And I went to sit with them, and there was -- there a few men. And there was one man, I met him there. And he [indecipherable] and he was my first husband.

Q: Did you meet him before the anschluss?

A: Yeah, it was before the anschluss.

Q: And were you married before the anschluss?

A: Yeah. My mother was very happy. She said, I am very happy. Now I have two sons. My later brother, her daughter.

Q: So before the anschluss, you had moved out of your mother's home. And where did you live with your husband?

A: Little apartment in Vienna.

Q: And was your mother -- did you stay in close touch with your family?

A: Of course. We didn't live far from each other. She was living in a -- I can't explain that to you, two streets away.

Q: So, after the anschluss happened, how did things change for your mother, and for you and your husband in terms of your living conditions?

A: Well, my mother lost -- excuse me -- for her apartment. She kept two sma -- smaller rooms, the Sudaten -- they came from Sudetenland, the Germans, you know, and took all the apartments. So she lost her apartment, except two small rooms. One for my sister, one for her.

Q: Was she very upset and very worried about what would happen?

A: Oh yeah. She was very worried. And then she went [indecipherable] oh God, I even don't want to remember.

Q: What were you going to say?

A: I was already in hiding, and I came to my mother with the bags of strawberries. And I put the key and -- to open the elevator, and the superintendent said, where are you going? And I'm going to my mother. They picked her up yesterday. She was in Theresienstadt a long time.

Q: You're talking about your mother being deported?

A: Yeah.

Q: When did that happen?

A: Very soon. Can't tell you exactly, though. It's so long ago. I have to [indecipherable]. You have to excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom.

Q: Continue?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Great. So I heard a little bit about a -- a story I wanted you to tell me more about. I think it's about your first job in Vienna.

A: Yeah. My mother had a girlfriend, and she had butcher shops. She had one kosher, and one non-kosher. And she had a operation, so she asked my mother if I could come to the shop in the morning when the orders come in for the hospital, for the n-nursing home, for the orphanage, for kosher food, kosher meat. But I have to be there at six o'clock in the morning. Six o'clock there was no bus, no nothing. I had to go by foot. And it was bitter, bitter cold. When I went there, there's -- the physicians came home from their job. They said to me, miss, where are you going? So I told them, I'm going to work. So early in the morning? So I went there, and then they came. I was sitting there, one came, so and so much beef, so and so much veal. And I put on the orders. And I didn't stay there. And when everything was done, I went home again, went back to bed, yeah. That was my first job. And Saturday they had the other job. They had me at everything, not kosher. Saturday I went to that other shop. And there, from there I came home with a bag like that, full with goodies. Frankfurters, cold cuts, everything for whole week, yeah. That was my first job. [indecipherable] money.

Q: Is that before the anschluss?

A: For sure.

Q: And what kind of -- were you able to do any work after the anschluss?

A: After ’38? I came home from skiing [indecipherable] 1938 to city, I came home from the skiing tour.

Q: And were you able to work any more?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What kind of work?

A: I did. Well, I wish I would remember.

Q: But it sounds like you still could work for awhile, you weren’t forced --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to stop working.

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Q: And what about your husband, was he working?

A: Was I married then [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, you said that you got married before the anschluss.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, I didn’t work. I didn’t work when I was married.

Q: Okay, after you got married, you -- you stopped working?

A: I stopped working, yeah.

Q: And what about your husband, was he working?

A: Yeah, he was -- he was German [indecipherable], yeah.

Q: And did he encounter problems after the anschluss?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: What -- what happens?

A: He had problems. Well, I don't remember. He had problems. We were underground together, yeah. He -- we came together to Auschwitz, yeah.

Q: Before you went underground into hiding, were you experiencing a lot of financial difficulties?

A: Did we had a lot of things in -- if I would remember -- we had a lot of things in storage. Some money. But we sold, you know. We sold first the big things, like carpets, Oriental carpets. Then we sold service [indecipherable]. We started to sell, you know, to have money, to be able to take care of us, yeah.

Q: Who did you sell these items to?

A: There were somebody, she did it for us.

Q: So you were able to manage financially?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Now, when your mother was taken away, did you stay in contact with her? Were you able to communicate with her?

A: There was somebody I knew in a different district, and we sent packages to her, to Theresienstadt, and she received the packages. We knew that. Every two weeks, we made a big box. We sent -- we mailed -- whatever is not perishable, we mailed it to her, and she received it, because one day, the -- she was [indecipherable] she was superintendent, she got the note back from Theresienstadt this my mother is --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview Marianne Windholm. This is tape number one, side B. I just want to go back a little bit and talk about your childhood, about your first day at school.

A: Yeah, my father took me to school. He opened the door, there were all girls. I said, I'm not going in there. He said why? They are all girls. I was used to boys. I had four cousins, my brother, and all his friends. And there were all girls, I didn't want to go in it. But I have a very good -- the teacher was very intelligent. She said, you know, you don't have to sit with them, you sit with me. She was a little [indecipherable] so I was sitting next to her desk on the floor. You sit with me, you don't have to sit with the girls. So, it was all right. Very soon I had five friends.

Q: And how old were you?

A: I was six. We -- school starts first grade. I wasn't six, because the school starts in September and I-I had to make -- I had to go for examination that they should expect me -- accept me, because I was born in -- in December, so I wasn't six years old then.

Q: What about religious school? Did you go to any as you grew up?

A: The Hebrew school was obligatory.

Q: Did you enjoy that?

A: No. I hated him.

Q: You hated the teacher, or you hated studying?

A: The teacher, Dr. Spitz, had a little beard. And when he asked our names, and I told him my name, he said, oh why did God punish me with you? No, he ask me, you have a brother there? Yes. You have cousins there? Yes. There? Yes. Oh why does God punish me with your family?

Q: Why would he say that?

A: Because we were very bad, the boys were very bad.

Q: And that's the reason you didn't like the teacher?

A: I didn't like him

Q: Did you speak other languages at home with your family?

A: No. Wa -- German, yeah.

Q: But you didn't -- did you speak Yiddish at home?

A: No. My mother spoke with her sisters, sometimes I heard them. They spoke, sometimes Yiddish, yeah. I think it was Yiddish. Oh yeah.

Q: Now, you were telling me about your mother being taken away, and I was wondering, at that time, what did you know, what had you heard about Theresienstadt or Auschwitz?

A: We knew -- we knew everything, because we did listen to the English in the radio, which was forbidden, you know? We knew everything.

Q: You knew that there were --

A: Crematorium. We knew everything, because the British, the English [indecipherable] you know, told. But it was very dangerous to listen to it, yeah. We listen in the middle of the night.

Q: Did you somehow remain hopeful that your mother might make it out of there alive?

A: Of course.

Q: Did you have a lot of hope from day to day in general? Optimism?

A: I -- I was -- my whole life I was a big optimist.

Q: Why do you think that's the case? Why were you an optimist?

A: That's my nature.

Q: So even as things got worse around you --

A: I always had hope.

Q: Now, what happens before -- what happened to cause your husband and you to decide to go into hiding? Tell me about that -- that phase.

A: Well, at that time, there came -- we were notified to come with a suitcase not heavier than so and so much kilogram, and with white ink, name written on the top, there and there, for relocation. So we knew already what happened, and we were eni -- we were denying it. We did have a place already, we knew already where to go.

Q: When did you make arrangements for such a place?

A: My husband made it.

Q: And did that -- did he do that pretty early on after the anschluss?

A: Aft -- no, after we heard that people were deported.

Q: And --

A: It was a laundry.

Q: This is where you went into hiding?

A: Into hiding, yeah. It was a laundry in the 13th district, in [indecipherable]. And there were went.

Q: And how did you or your husband know these people?

A: Can't tell you. I don't remember.

Q: And who were they? What are their names, and who were they?

A: Their name was Pukas. She was not married, and they were hand laundries, you know. Yeah. I don't know how we met them, yeah.

Q: So tell me about when you first moved into this hiding place, the transition from leaving your home, and what did you bring with you?

A: We went every day, we took a little bit out, you know, from the apartment. Clothes first, like I would go to the cleaners, and then we started to take other things out, like silver, and so forth.

Q: I'm going to take a quick break. Okay, we were starting to talk about you beginning to go into hiding, and I wanted to make sure I understood approximately when was this? How long after the anschluss? Was it a year or two after, or -- or sooner than that? Do you -- did you go into hiding in 1938, or was it later?

A: Later, later.

Q: Think it may have been closer to 1941, does that seem right?

A: I thinks that would be 1941, yeah.

Q: So, from 1938 to 1941, were things getting more and more difficult all the time?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And are there any examples that come to mind? What -- what sorts of things were happening?

A: Life became very complicated for us, you know? Everybody know when you went to the street, you are a Jew, you know? And it was -- and we lost all our apartments, I told you that already. We pushed together in small rooms. It was complicated, yeah.

Q: Were you actively trying to leave the country?

A: Oh yeah. I was supposed to go to Venezuela, I told you that.

Q: But after that didn't work out, did you try other things?

A: Then you couldn't go. We waited for papers who never came. You could leave if you have the papers, but it never came.

Q: And then at some point you started looking into the option of going into hiding.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your husband was mostly in charge of looking for those arrangements?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Now, you already told me a little bit about receiving some kind of order, a relocation order. What did that say? What was the relocation order that you received?

A: I didn't receive it. They started to -- people started to receive it. [indecipherable] my mother too, I told you, to come with so and so much for relocation, and they went to Theresienstadt. From there they came later to Auschwitz.

Q: I thought you said you and your husband also received a relocation order.

A: Then we went in hiding.

Q: So when you received your -- the relocation order, what did it say? How long did it give you in order to relocate? Was it very short period of time?

A: I don't remember.

Q: I guess what I'm curious to know is, did you have to go into hiding very quickly?

A: I think so. But we already knew, and we were prepared to do it.

Q: So does that mean you moved out of your apartment entirely?

A: Yeah. We left, yeah.

Q: So the first place you went into hiding in 1941, can you give a physical sort of description, whatever your memory can recall.

A: There's something. Wait a second. Yeah, Debbie's little brother, was his 13th birthday. Debbie?

A2: Yes? One second.

A: Your little brother, what was his name? Ignatz.

Q: Oh, I think --

A2: Who, Ignatz?

Q: I think yeah, you mean --

A2: Ignatz.

Q: -- her mother's brother. Well, actually -- so I want to -- I want to just --

A: No, not her mother's brother. Debbie's little brother. Debbie?

A2: Yes?

A: You had a little brother.

A2: I have a -- my brother is Howard.

Q: Ah yeah, that's right. Her mother's brother, yeah. I-Ignatz. He was 13, and I said on that day, you know, family should be together, so the grandparents they were in hiding already, and we arranged they should come late in the evening while everybody goes home, and we will have a little celebration. And they never came, because they were arrested in the morning.

Q: I think actually we -- we haven't talked about this yet during the interview. Maybe you can explain wh-who are these family members, or who are these friends you are referring to. Can you tell me a little bit about your friends Ann and Ignatz?

A: My friend Ann?

Q: How did you meet them, or how long did you know them?

A: Well, when I saw her first, she was 13 -- Ann Green? You speak about her?

Q: Yes, because you started to talk about her brother, so I just wanted you to give a little introduction to both of them.

A: So when I saw her the first time, she was 13, and her father was what we call a person -- they came from a small town to Vienna, they were relocated, and he could do everything. You want to sell, he knew who buys. You want to buy, he knew who will sell. So what we needed was money, and he knew somebody who would borrow money for a lot of interest. We couldn't get

our money from some reason or the other. And there I met Annie the first time, Ann Green. And his -- her little brother, yeah.

Q: So when you first went into hiding with your husband, were you also in hiding with Ann and her brother?

A: No. When I went to hiding -- I wonder if her brother went with us, I wish I could remember.

Q: It's okay. Can you --

A: The 19th of May.

Q: What was the 19th of May?

A: Was his -- her brother's birthday.

Q: And what happened on that day?

A: I wanted a -- we should be all together, but her parents never came because they were arrested in the morning.

Q: And did you know that? Did everybody know that?

A: No, no, we did not know. They didn't show up. So later in the evening, somebody called, and said they are arrested.

Q: And how did you deal with this news?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: How did you cope? How did you deal with this news?

A: Well, was very hard. Her brother started to yell, and to cry. And I said, please be quiet, somebody would -- could hear us. And Annie went to -- Ann Green, she went to calm him down. Was very bad. It was very bad.

Q: And this is when -- his birthday, Ignatz's birthday, May 19, that's -- at that time you were all in hiding together?

A: Not yet, no.

Q: Were you already in hiding with your husband?

A: Yeah, yeah. We knew already. We were in hiding and Bushie was with us. Ignatz was -- was with us. Annie came later. Mrs. Green, she was someplace else, she came later.

Q: Tell me about the conditions of this hiding place. Did you have a lot of space, or a very little bit of space? What were the conditions like?

A: It's -- was a [indecipherable] laundry, and they had a wooden, little house. Was small, but it has electricity. It was a outhouse, you know, no toilet in the house. But it was all right, we managed. We were hiding it. We did feel a little bit secure, you know?

Q: How many of you were in that outhouse?

A: Outhouse, no, not outhouse.

Q: In -- in the outhouse, you said.

A: Outhouse was the toilet.

Q: Sorry, in this little building, right?

A: In the building. So who was there? My husband, I, and [indecipherable] then Annie came, we were four.

Q: Were you all sleeping in one room?

A: I don't think so. Could be, I don't remember.

Q: And where did you go to the bathroom, it was close by?

A: It was outside in the garden. We had to go outside.

Q: And you said there was an outhouse, or you just went outside and went to the bathroom outdoors.

A: That was the outhouse. The toilet was outside, a little shed where you had to go.

Q: And what did you do for food back there?

A: For food, well you had to get it. And we bought it. We had to take -- we knew somebody, she could get everything. But if you needed sugar, you had to take some chickens, otherwise she didn't give it to you. She was very funny. She always said, I'm very good to you, am I? But she never woulds give us anything, [indecipherable] anything if you wouldn't have taken something else what you did not need. But she could get everything from the market.

Q: And was this woman Jewish, or not Jewish?

A: No, not Jewish.

Q: So she was helping you, she knew that you were in hiding?

A: Yeah, yeah, she knew.

Q: Were there a number of non-Jewish people helping you?

A: Yeah, there were two girls, they had -- they had some land and they grow vegetable, th -- everything. We got everything from them. And they knew. They didn't say it, but they knew.

Q: They knew that you were in hiding?

A: Yeah, I know. One of this -- one name was -- I remember one name, Fishbach. The second name I don't remember. They knew, because they did give us everything. Before they go to -- went with their vegetable to the market to sell, we got it.

Q: So, you were able to get food. Do you remember being hungry while you were in hiding, or you had enough food?

A: No, no, enough food.

Q: And did you have a kitchen, did you cook?

A: No, I didn't cook. Pukas, she cooked.

Q: And tell me a little bit about her, the person who was keeping you in hiding.

A: Yeah, well, she had a boyfriend who was a carpenter. And he started -- and sh-she must have told him, because he started to ask money. He -- he started to stick -- tell my husband that he needs money to buy wood, you know? Yeah, he started to ask money for th -- us.

Q: So what did you do?

A: Well, we did give it to him, but he never stopped, and it was a lot of money, you know, for Jewish people. He got the money for us if he will denounce us. And somehow he -- he must have done it.

Q: He must have done what?

A: To denounce us. To tell that we are there.

Q: You think he's the reason you were found?

A: Yeah. I think so.

Q: But the -- but the woman was very good to you?

A: Yeah, we were -- but he did -- we had to from time to time to other place, which we did, you know? And then she -- they called us back, and we came back, let's see, around five o'clock, when everybody was in the street going home from work. Was five o'clock in the evening. Four o'clock in the morning the Gestapo came, and we were arrested.

Q: Now, before I ask you about -- about that time, I just want to try to capture more details while you were actually still in hiding. Why -- why did you leave -- is her name Pukas -- Pukas? Why did you leave, from time to time, from her hiding place?

A: We had to, yeah. That was the arrangement.

Q: She told you you would need to leave?

A: That was the arrangement from the beginning.

Q: So where else did you go when you would leave?

A: To somebody -- people -- this was a couple, they were living in a completely different district, we didn't know them. He was a tiny little man, [indecipherable] was his name, married to a Jewish lady, and they took us in. We went to them.

Q: Did you go to other hiding places as well?

A: No, only those two.

Q: Only those two, so this -- this one couple, or the woman who --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- had the laundry --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- business. So you spent most of the time at the woman's place, or with the couple?

A: Yeah -- no, no, at the woman place.

Q: Did you do any work while you were staying with her?

A: Yeah, ironing. Oh yeah.

Q: Now, tell me how you were feeling? Every day were you worried and afraid, or what was your feeling at the time?

A: We were always worried, but we had the children and we had school. They didn't know anything. They couldn't read, they couldn't write, they had no schooling at all. Every afternoon -- no, every evening -- in the afternoon we ironed, and in the evening we had school. They learned to write, to read, whatever we could ba -- husband was very highly educated, and he is -- whatever we could, you know? We taught them, of course.

Q: You're talking about the two children who were with you.

A: Yeah, yeah. About Mrs. Green, and her little brother, yeah.

Q: And how old were they? Well, he was 13 you said, and she was --

A: And she was -- she is 15 years, she was born 1925. She was 15 years younger than I.

Q: So every night you became a teacher?

A: Yeah.

Q: So do you feel like during this time in hiding, were there also times where things were not as, you know, heavy and worrisome? Did you have any lighter moments?

A: No. We were worried all the time. You know, you -- you are not worried all the time, that's impossible. You forget yourself. But w-we were not really peaceful, no. We were hopeful. That's different. And we always made it, you know.

Q: Were there any humorous stories while you were in hiding?

A: Oh yeah. Two, yeah, yeah.

Q: Can you tell me about those?

A: Well, you know, when she wanted something, Pukas, we have to give it to her. She did not stop. So it was a holy day and she wanted a goose. And finally we got the goose, but we had to pick it up by the [indecipherable] station. There was a stand for papers and cigarettes, and she had the goose. And we had to go there, was very dangerous. Debbie's mother and I, we went there, a-and there was the goose, I had the canvas bag, and the goose went in that canvas bag, and there were Gestapo and gendarmes, but we finally made it, and we left. And there was a dog [indecipherable] after that, he smelled the blood in that canvas bag, and we were running to the streetcar, and we finally made it. You know, we were so afraid of that dog, that somebody will notice it. That was very funny. When we came home, and Annie got undressed, she had a blue sweater. Her skin was all blue. Was not -- at that time, nothing was colorfast, like today.

Q: At the time now you're -- you're laughing about it, but were you very worried at that time?

A: Sure, I was worried.

Q: You thought you might actually get caught that night.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And it was just the two of you women? Or she was a girl and you were a young woman.

A: Yeah, yeah, she was a girl, yeah.

Q: Just the two of you out on the streets?

A: Yeah.

Q: How often did you go out like that?

A: Oh, we went out when we had to do, yeah.

Q: Were you worried -- were you wearing the Jewish Star of David at that time?

A: No. Oh God.

Q: So you were trying to pass as non-Jewish?

A: Sure.

Q: Did anyone ever talk to you and say anything to you, and indicate that they thought you were Jewish?

A: No. I knew that -- that one for the -- for the two girls, Fishbach, who -- who hads the -- that garden that he had all that vegetable, and so she knew. She never said anything, but I am sure she knew.

Q: Was there anything about your appearance that made it easier for you to pass in the streets as non-Jewish?

A: Yeah, I-I didn't look like Jewish. I was blonde, I have -- my hair was golden blonde, it was very light. No, I didn't look like Jewish, no.

Q: And what about your friend, Ann?

A: She didn't look Jewish either.

Q: So do you think this was very helpful in allowing you to go in the streets?

A: Yeah.

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two Side A

Q: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm, conducted by Amy Rubin on November 18, 2005, in Manhattan, New York. This is tape number two, side A. Okay, I'm going to continue asking you a little more about your time in hiding. And I'm wondering, during this entire time, I have the impression that you first went into hiding in 1941?

A: Yeah.

Q: And -- and you were s -- you stayed in hiding until 1944. So a lot was happening during this time, and I'm wondering what did you know about the war, and what was going on.

A: We knew everything. We listened to the British sender at night, I told you. We do -- we knew that attentat which, you know, there was supposed to be attentat of Hitler? You know that?

Q: Say that again? There was supposed to be?

A: Yeah, attentat? He was supposed to be killed.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that -- somehow we knew that will happen, but it did not.

Q: So while -- I -- I knew that you were listening to the radio before you went into hiding, but even while you were in hiding, you still listened?

A: Yeah.

Q: And was that -- you listened right in that little building?

A: Yeah. We had the radio, yeah.

Q: So what were your conversations mostly about while you were in hiding? Did you talk primarily about the war?

A: That I should remember. Of course. We spoke about the war, we spoke about what happened, how we did live. We spoke about what will happen. Then we had the children, who didn't learn anything, so we had school every day.

Q: Did you feel like you were becoming a -- a sort of mother to these children? You were taking care of them.

A: Well, I f -- I did feel very near to them. They boy was very young, you know, of course, and Annie was 15 years younger than I, so -- so Annie, I were more a friend than a mother. But to her little brother, I did feel like a mother, yeah.

Q: Did you ever talk about sort of strategies about how you were trying to survive this entire time? You know, walking out on the streets, did you have strategies where you would go, how you would walk?

A: I only noticed one thing. When I was liberated by the Russians, you know that -- you know I was liberated by the Russians?

Q: Right.

A: That I c -- noticed that I was afraid to go on the walk part. I was going on the street, til I said to myself, are you crazy, you're free. You know?

Q: Are you saying you didn't want to walk on the sidewalk?

A: Yeah, I was afraid, like I'm not allowed to.

Q: Because that's how it was in Vienna?

A: That how I did feel.

Q: So as you walked around Vienna, when you would come out of hiding from time to time, how did the city feel to you? What were the differences? How did it change?

A: I didn't feel -- I wasn't tired of being in Vienna. I was in Kraków, in Poland.

Q: No, I'm talking about while you were in hiding. Weren't you s -- in Vienna the entire time?

A: Yeah, I was in -- always inside [indecipherable]

Q: So how did the city change during those war years? Did it feel like a different city to you?

A: No. In later years, when I was living in Italy, and I came back to Vienna, everything looked to me so dirty, so broken down. That was later on.

Q: Well, what about air raids during the war? Did you experience those in Vienna?

A: When the air raid we -- well, when we were hiding by those people [indecipherable] when the air raid came, everybody had to go to the basement. And their apartment was in the fifth floor, and we went up to the attic to hide. And there, Bushie, he was afraid of the little mice. Oh God, he -- yeah, we did hid in the attic til the air raid was over.

Q: And you're saying there were mice in the attic?

A: Yeah, there were mice, yeah. And Bushie was so afraid of them, terrible.

Q: Were you afraid too?

A: No. Of little mice? I don't want them in my apartment.

Q: Now, I think I heard another story, and I'm not sure exactly the details, but something about a man and the bathtub, the water in the bathtub. Is that a story that you remember while you were in hiding? I think it was a man who drank the water.

A: That's not me.

Q: Okay, I -- I guess I misunderstood something I think Deborah was telling me, but maybe I just got it wrong. So that doesn't sound familiar to you?

A: Absolutely not.

Q: Did you have any other people who came and joined you during hiding, or was only the four of you at all times?

A: Only the four of us.

Q: And did you feel like you always trusted this woman who was keeping you in hiding?

A: Yeah. Only her boyfriend, he needed money, he started to ask money. We were afraid of him. And that what -- how it happened.

Q: So while you were working in this laundry, did you have to make sure that nobody else would see you? How difficult was that? People in the neighborhood, were you worried about that?

A: There were next to us, thi -- there were -- this was a cottage, you know, and there were private houses. And there were people we knew. I don't know if they had the -- maybe they had some idea, but there was no danger.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your training to become a nurse, I believe.

A: Yeah. There was a doctor, Dr. Richard Miller. I was already liberated then, and he trained me, because that Roosevelt Hospital in Vienna was not a hospital, it was a orphanlager. There were people living -- children without parents, parents without children, the [indecipherable] was bumped, and he trained me. Dr. Otto Vulcan, he trained me, to become a nurse, yeah.

Q: So this is -- this is much later, this is after the end of the war?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Now, while you're in hiding, what were some of the dreams or hopes? What were you hoping would happen, that you would still leave the country?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: What were you dreaming could happen or would happen, that you could still leave the country?

A: I don't think I wanted to leave the country. I wanted to be free.

Q: So while you were in hiding, were there any other -- did you just think you would stay in hiding the entire time of the war? Was that your strategy and your hope?

A: My hope was yeah, that it will not take a long time.

Q: Now tell me about the day when -- when they came and found you where you were in hiding. What -- what exactly happened?

A: We were away -- you know, I told you, from time to time we had to go away to stay with other people. They called us we should come back. We came back around five o'clock in the evening, when everybody was in the street. At four o'clock in the morning the Gestapo came, and we were arrested.

Q: Do you have any idea about who -- who told the Gestapo that you were there?

A: I think her boyfriend, who always ask for money.

Q: And you think this woman agreed to let him do that?

A: I don't think she knew.

Q: So, as much as you can remember the details, what exactly happened when you got arrested?

A: Well, we went to jail. And there was already a lot of women who waited to be tr-transported to Auschwitz, but they were in quarantine. There was some sickness. So Mrs. Green and I, we were outside, and we did work. We cleaned the floors. Then the -- they did give us bread. We had to distribute that bread between people. And we did work there, and we were living in the open place.

Q: Now where was that?

A: It was [indecipherable] in jail, in Vienna.

Q: But you said you were living in an open place, but you were in jail the whole time?

A: We were in jail, but we were not locked up. We could go out. Not out on the street. You know, the people are locked in, we were not locked in. We could move around on the floor.

Q: And what were you thinking during this time period?

A: Well, I was very unhappy that they caught us.

Q: Did you know what would happen next?

A: Oh yeah. I knew. We knew.

Q: You knew specifically that you would be sent to Auschwitz? Or perhaps to somewhere else?

A: No, we -- to a concentration camp, I did not know Auschwitz. To a concentration camp.

Q: So while you were in jail, you felt there was nothing you could do about it, you just had to wait?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: When were you arrested, do you remember? It's 1944, I think.

A: Yeah. The war was almost over.

Q: So what happened next when you -- when you were then deported? Tell me as many of the details as you can remember.

A: We were a small transport, not a very big one. There was my husband, I, Bushie, Mrs. Green, Olga [indecipherable]. Wait a second. Two, four, six. Let me think again, [indecipherable] Olga [indecipherable], her husband Otto, and I, Annie, Bushie. We were seven people, who were arrested. And we were in jail in Vienna til we went that transport.

Q: What do you remember about the day when you were deported from the jail?

A: Well, it -- there was still -- was a Jewish community, and they did bring us, I remember everybody did get a little bread in the [indecipherable]. They came to the [indecipherable] station, and did give everybody a little bread in the [indecipherable].

Q: As you were leaving on the transport?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it a difficult journey?

A: It was not difficult, it was just frightened.

Q: Did you have any idea what direction you were heading in? Where you were going?

A: No. I know we are going to a concentration camp.

Q: But you got on the train and you didn't know where, exactly.

A: No, no. We went to Birkenau. Auschwitz was for men, and Birkenau was for women.

Q: And when did you know that you were going there? Only when you arrived, or right before?

A: Well, we knew we go to a concentration camp.

Q: So how long did the trip take, the transport?

A: We had to change trains and all that. Did take a very long time. Hours, maybe.

Q: Were you uncomfortable on that ride, or just --

A: Frightened, yeah.

Q: Just frightened. And what were your first impressions upon arriving to Auschwitz?

A: Well, there was Mengele sitting, and then they made selections. My husband went here, I went there. And I said I want to go with my husband, and he said to me, be happy you're not going. And my husband, his color in his face became gray. He knew. And I think I only touched his hand, I don't remember. He knew, yeah.

Q: That's the last time you saw him?

A: Yeah.

Q: And when did you learn what -- what actually happened, or did you not even learn anything about him?

A: I knew. When we were separated, I knew, yeah.

Q: How were you able to -- to go on after that?

A: Well, if you in a concentration camp, you learn everything. You learn to survive. You learn to steal, you know? You tried everything to stay alive. You saw something, and you looked around, there was nobody around you, you took it, yeah. In the morning, six o'clock, I run to the kitchen, maybe I could find some potato peels. There were none, but they took already breakfast for the different -- I was in block 13. So there was always four girls who carried -- we had in the morning, something sweet, farina or so. So they carried that, and have pass by, as [indecipherable] the end, and I -- I took some out. They couldn't help it. I had two breakfasts. Yo-You tried everything. You never knew, should you eat your bread? Should you keep a piece for the morning, they will steal it. And we worked very hard. Look on my hand. That was one SS woman did to me. She did hold her foot, when we went one, two, three, four and I fell, and she stepped on my hand.

Q: What happened, you were trying to reach for some food?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: What happened again? You were trying to reach for some food? What happened with this SS woman? You were trying to get some food?

A: No, we had to march, one, two, three, four, and she put her foot in front of me, and I fell, and broke my nose, and she stepped on my hand. Then I had to go to the [indecipherable]. Was infected terrible.

Q: How was your physical health during that whole time in Auschwitz?

A: Well, I only now, when we were liberated, they called me musselman. Musselman means you are skin and bones. I had 92 pounds when I was liberated.

Q: How long were you in Auschwitz? When did you arrive there?

A: It was eight months.

Q: Can you tell me a little more when you first arrived, what kind of process did they put you, and -- and who else were you still with? Were you with Ann and Ignatz?

A: No. When we arrived we were s-separated. Men went to Auschwitz, women went to Birkenau.

Q: So did you stay with Ann, your friend?

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you remember, did you go through the showers? What -- what sort of process did they put all of you through?

A: Well, first they cut our hair. They didn't shave us. They cut it very short. I had long, blonde hair, they cut it. Then they tattooed us, you know that. And then we went to the shower, took all our clothes, and I had very good shoes, platform shoes. There was a man, one of the prisoners, we have to give everything to him. I said to him, you are from Vienna, I knew him. Let me keep my shoes. And he told me, [indecipherable] you know what means [indecipherable]

Q: No.

A: You say [indecipherable] if somebody dies, but not if a human being dies, you know? If a animal dies, [indecipherable], you aren't a -- you [indecipherable]. Then I knew where I am. I knew him, but when he said that to me, then I know. Oh yeah.

Q: You mean, you knew how difficult things would be there?

A: Oh yeah. Then I knew, yeah.

Q: Because this was someone you knew and he wouldn't even let you keep your shoes?

A: Sure.

Q: And he was -- he was one of the Jewish prisoners, is that right?

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: Did you see a lot of Jewish prisoners being very mean to other Jewish prisoners?

A: I can't tell you that. Everybody tried very hard. Next to us was a Polish block, there were all Polish girls, and I had no shoes. You know what I had? Those wooden clogs, like the Holland. You know wa -- how they are?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So that's -- I couldn't walk in them, I was [indecipherable] like that. One of the Polish girls did bring me a pair of shoes, high up to here, yeah? She saw me, and she got packages from home, they were mostly politish. They were good.

Q: So in your -- in your barracks, was it mostly other Jewish women from Austria, or was it a real combination of different --

A: A combina -- you heard it in the evening. The Italian's sung, mama so dante felice. Mother, I only will be happy if I will be -- if I will be returning to you. The Greeks sung the old song in the evening, which I could not understand. It kept them alive, I suppose.

Q: And they were allowed to sing? Nobody was keeping them from doing that?

A: I suppose not.

Q: So you must have been around a lot of women you couldn't even speak with because of the languages.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Were there other women there who spoke German? You could communicate?

A: I was -- yeah, with Germans, yeah. They called me delonger deutsch, the tall German.

Q: And were you with your friend Ann in the barracks?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you still feel like you were taking care of her, looking out for her?

A: Yeah, yeah. She never wanted to wash, because when we came back from work, you opened, no water, drops. I wake up one night, and there were two girls [indecipherable] from our barrack, which [indecipherable]. So I said, oh God, where are they going? I run after them, and there was so much water in the washrooms, flowing, you know? Then I woke up every night, we went there, and we washed each other's back from top to bottom. We had no towel to dry, I said it doesn't matter. Because if you had the selections, one pimple on your body, you went. We were afraid, you know, of sicknesses. We were a very cheap labor force, didn't cost a penny.

Q: So it sounds like you tried very hard to stay clean all the time.

A: Oh yeah. I knew that if -- if you are clean, you had a chance. I told her that, yeah. She had -- she showed me in the panties she got, there was a -- a -- a louse. I said to her, "Listen Annie, if I will kill your lice, I will not be able to take care of my lice. You will not live if I will not live. So you take care of yours, I of mine, and just do what I tell you, then maybe we have a chance."

Q: Were these the kind of conversations you would have almost every day?

A: No, no, no, no. We tried very hard. We worked very hard.

Q: Was there any part of normal life that was able to continue, or not?

A: Where?

Q: In Auschwitz.

A: We worked s-six and a half days. Sunday afternoon we were free. Sunday afternoon we could take care of ourself.

Q: And what did you do during that time?

A: Well, we washed, we cleaned ourself. We go and look if we find somebody you knew from home. You slept.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

A: Well, first -- that first work I did, stones like that we have to clean, and from one place we did bring it to a other place. And there were the bloodhounds behind us, we have to run with the heavy stones, then we have to take the back. It was just something to make us tired, nothing else. There was n-n-no -- nothing what has any sense. And then I -- then we made [indecipherable] to clean the pavement. And then I did something, I was standing in water, I don't remember what I did.

Q: You mean, some kind of job you had standing in water?

A: Yeah.

Q: And were these jobs --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm. This is tape two, side B. Okay, I think there are a couple stories while you were in Auschwitz that I'd be interested in learning more about. I think there's a story that has something to do with potatoes. Can you tell me more about that?

A: Yeah. What happened is, when we get o -- got our soup in the evening, I said to that person who did give the soup, why don't you give me some soup from the bottom, where there are potatoes, a little vegetable, maybe a piece of meat. And she said to me s-something very bad, and thens give me from top a little water, so I threw it in her face. So next day was the day when you went to work, you got instead one potatoes, two potatoes. So he said, you are not going to work,

I will show you. So I didn't go to work. But somebody has to go to pick up the potatoes. So they did send four girls from our block to go to pick up the potatoes. So we heard potatoes, we went to the ba -- big, beautiful potatoes, we did [indecipherable] I took the potatoes, one there, one there, and here. Four potatoes already. And then we came to my block, and we had to put that down, had two potatoes, put them under my mattress, under the mattress from my neighbor, and then we stood appelle and then [indecipherable] then I have potatoes, and we had so much potatoes, we ate and ate and ate. She said I will not get any, so I got maybe 10.

Q: And that was very unusual, right?

A: Oh God. Oh God.

Q: Now where did you put these potatoes, since we're doing only an audio recording, I know you showed me visually, but where did you keep these potatoes?

A: Two I put in here, two I put in here, inside.

Q: You're talking about under your arms, right?

A: Yeah, inside.

Q: Inside your blouse -- inside your shirt.

A: Yeah, and then the others I put under my mattress.

Q: So were you not as hungry during those days with the potatoes?

A: No, that was a day where I was very happy, yeah. I had potatoes not only for me, for my friends, too. Who could eat so many potatoes?

Q: When you were working, were you working side by side with your friend, Ann?

A: No.

Q: She was somewhere else?

A: She was someplace else.

Q: Now, there's another story, I think, about one of your socks. You had something special in one of your socks?

A: Yeah, I g -- we got once a month different clothes. We went to [indecipherable] we got different clothes. And I have two pair of socks. The hurt -- one sock hurt me terribly, but I couldn't help it, I had to wear it til Sunday, til I'm off, Sunday afternoon. Then I open it, and there was a golden cross with a golden chain. And it says, Luigi and the name, Italian name, August the 26th. Now I have to find somebody where I could exchange that golden cross for food. Finally I did find, was far away, I had to run there, I got 20 soups, 20 days I could go for soup. But it was very far. Had to run like crazy to make the curfew.

Q: What was the curfew, what time? Was it early, pretty early?

A: Yeah, it was early, yeah.

Q: But you would not have gotten in trouble for being out before the curfew and running over there, to the other area?

A: No. The curfew have to be inside.

Q: And how did you get these 20 soups? You would go back to somewhere in ke -- you got soups every day?

A: Yeah, every day I run there for soup.

Q: It sounds like you were pretty resourceful during this difficult time. Do you feel that you were?

A: Well, I tried. We all tried to survive.

Q: Do you think being resourceful like that you were able to eat more and stay stronger?

A: To eat more?

Q: It sounds like you were able to get more food at certain times, and maybe that kept you stronger.

A: Well, I only know when I was liberated, I had 90 pounds.

Q: And how much did you usually weigh?

A: At that time, 135 - 136.

Q: So you were extremely weak?

A: Oh, I was very weak. And they called me musselman, that's people [indecipherable] and bones, bones and skin.

Q: Now did you -- did you observe any -- any sort of religious observances during this time in Auschwitz, privately, or did you pray at all?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Did you regard yourself as a religious person?

A: Well, if you -- you could feel religious without praying, I suppose. Don't you think so?

Q: Yes, I think so. Did you feel that you had a belief in God during this time?

A: I don't think that I said God will help. Help yourself.

Q: Did you ever let your emotions really get to you during this time in Auschwitz, or did you just try to stay so strong emotionally?

A: That's what I tried, yeah. It was Yom Kippur, and they said, now you have the holiday, you don't have -- you don't need any food today, it's your fast day. Didn't give us anything to eat, Yom Kippur.

Q: But you didn't have to work that day, or did they make you work?

A: Why not? Is nothing to -- they only didn't give us any food, because is our fast day.

Q: But you still had to work?

A: Sure.

Q: Did you have any nightmares during this time? Was it just every night, how did you sleep?

A: I can't tell you that. I was so tired, I suppose I slept.

Q: And when they did the appelle, the roll call, what was that like?

A: To stay in appelle.

Q: Were you scared about being selected and taken away?

A: Well, that was something else. This was not the roll call, this was the selection. You were afraid to have a pimple on your body, because they were afraid of sicknesses. So if you had a pimple on your body, then you are dead already.

Q: Did you see a lot of people being selected?

A: I can't remember that.

Q: Did you ever witness anything very violent, any -- any killings while you were there?

A: Yeah, one Belgian girl escaped, and they did find her, and she was hanged. And we had all to stay and watch how she was hanged.

Q: Did you think a lot about the possibility of death during this time, or did you try to avoid those thoughts?

A: I beg your pardon?

Q: Did you try to avoid thoughts about death, or did you think about death?

A: No. I tried to survive. I didn't think about death, no. Only that water you know, when we came from work, they said not to drink, dysentery of the water, you know, in the washrooms. So I said to myself, I will die anyway, why should I die hungry? I will have -- at least I will have something to drink. I drank the water, nothing happened to me, I didn't get dysentery, nothing. So I came from work and I drank.

Q: Did others do that as well, or were you one of the only ones?

A: I can't tell you that. I know I did it.

Q: Did you ever get seriously ill during this time?

A: Ill?

Q: Any kind of sickness?

A: I had a infection in my right leg, but that was already [indecipherable] related. Must have been. I was in the revere. I was in the revere area, and there was rain. I was thinking it is raining, and I opened my eyes, and there is o -- the Russian. There was a Russian soldier holding me, and the rain were the tears from the -- his eyes. He was crying. And he did give me some vodka, whatever. He tried to bring me back to life. And he cried so terribly.

Q: That's at liberation?

A: We were liberated. They run away, you know.

Q: Well, before liberation, while you were still in Auschwitz, did you witness or at all participate in any resistance activities?

A: No.

Q: Were you aware of them going on?

A: No.

Q: What about something like there was this Sonderkommando uprising in October of '44, did you know about that at the time?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you know about that?

A: We knew there was attentat of Hitler. And I got a note from Bushie, from Debbie's uncle. He wrote to me on a piece of paper, I will see you again at the [indecipherable] where my apartment was. We knew about it, yeah.

Q: Ye -- are you talking about Ann's brother, Ignatz?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what happened to him?

A: Well, he didn't make it.

Q: Were you with Ann the entire time while you were at Auschwitz?

A: No, in the end, Ann went on -- they send her to a other camp.

Q: While you were at Auschwitz, how much were you able to learn or hear about the war going on?

A: In the end, we heard the bombs fall, and the sirens go, then we knew something is going on.

Q: But other than that, you really didn't have any more news?

A: No.

Q: Did you make other friends while you were in Auschwitz?

A: You have to have a friend, otherwise you get crazy. I had a friend, and we exchanged our ideas, whatever we knew, poetry, whatever we read, you know? Otherwise you lose your mind.

Q: So even in the midst of everything going on, you are able to read things like poetry sometimes?

A: Not to read. Only -- I had a friend, whatever we knew, we s -- told each other.

Q: Did that help you to feel more human again, you think?

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: And how often were you able to do things like that?

A: Whenever I was with her. When we were off.

Q: And which friend is this? Her name?

A: She was -- I forgot her name. She came from Czechoslovakia.

Q: Now, were you also talking about hopes for the future, perhaps even finding family members during your time at Auschwitz?

A: What was that?

Q: While you were there, were you talking to your friends, to others, about your hopes for the future? Were you able to try to think about the future at all?

A: Yeah, of cor -- this was my only hope.

Q: Can you tell me what happened with your sister during the war?

A: Is --

Q: Your brother went to Venezuela, right?

A: Yeah. My sister, I told you, she had the girlfriend, and she was arrested, because the girlfriend said heil Hitler to her, she spit in her face.

Q: But after -- after all of that, during the whole war, the rest of the war, what -- what happened with your sister?

A: Oh, when she was in Yugoslavia, she got married. And somebody told me after the war, when I came back to Vienna, I had to go to the [indecipherable] to tell them I am alive. And there I met somebody, and she said to me, I di -- no, there was a -- a girl, and she said to me, you have a sister. I said yeah. Well, I know, Ernesta Cohen. I know I've -- my si -- my sister's name is not Ernesta Cohen. "Well, she must be," she said. "She looks exactly like you." And it happened that my sister got married to a Yugoslav by the name of Cohen, and her name was Cohen, yeah.

Q: So she avoided going to -- to concentration camps?

A: Yeah, yeah. She was in that detention camp in Ferramonti. That is in Italy, all the way down on the tip of the toe. And she married there somebody by name of Jacoba Cohen. And I had no idea, of course.

A2: Tell them how you met the Pope.

A: What? When we were liberated, I had a friend in the concentration camp, and she had a daughter, and she was very ill. And her daughter came to me and said, my mother wants to speak with you. And she was laying on the floor, and she s -- was dying. And she said to me, promise me that you take care of Ilse, of her daughter, a young girl, she was maybe 12 years old, and her name was Freedbig. She died, and I closed her eyes. I promised I'd take her with me. So she was crying all the time. I couldn't help myself. There was a little church, and I said to her, "Ilse, I take you to the church." She was Catholic. She never knew she's Jewish. So I took her there, and there was a little priest -- a little -- a young priest, and s -- he consoled her, and he prayed with her. He did give her a piece of sugar, and me a piece of sugar, and said thank you for bringing her. And that was the Pope, later.

Q: Well when was this? When did you go there?

A: After I was liberated out of [indecipherable]. She was crying all the time, and I did not know what to do with her. She never was Jewish. She was born Catholic.

A2: [indecipherable] her father.

A: And her father, yeah, she didn't want her father. Her fa -- wherever I went, I left a note. There were [indecipherable] all over. I have Ilse Freedbig, I take her with me to Vienna. One day her father came, and she didn't want him. He had a short leg. I don't want him. He was in the camp, too. But something happened to one of his legs. She didn't go over to her father. I said to her, you know, don't worry. I bring her home.

Q: Now, I have just a couple more questions about your time in Auschwitz. Often I've heard that -- that survivors remember certain smells or noises that for the rest of their lives, there are certain things that are very vivid in this way, and I was wondering, have there ever been any certain noises or smells that remind you?

A: No.

Q: So you -- you didn't experience it that way?

A: No.

Q: And what about the -- the crematorium? Were you able to see this on a regular basis?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: It was close by to where you were?

A: Yeah. Flame came out on the top, yeah.

Q: And you always knew what was happening there?

A: Oh we knew, oh yeah.

Q: And was there a terrible smell?

A: Yeah.

Q: So --

A: There was.

Q: Now, did you know at the time that that was Mengele or did you learn later?

A: Can't tell you that. We called him the angel of death.

Q: Did you continue to encounter him while you were at Auschwitz, or only that one time?

A: Only that one time.

Q: So now, the day of liberation, can you tell me exactly what happened, and were you expecting anything like this? Did you know what was about to happen?

A: No. We knew something happened, because we had -- had the bomb -- bombardment and the sirens, yeah. Woke up from running, the gates were open, oh yeah.

Q: So what happened that day? Exactly wh-what was it like for you?

A: I was very sick. I was in the revere. I had some inflammation my left -- my right leg. I had very high temperature. But I know there was a girl standing on a bicycle looking in. And one of our liberated girls came out, threw her off the bike, took the bike and run. Took her bike, yeah.

Q: This is liberation in -- in January, right, of 1945.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And who -- who liberated --

A: The Russians.

Q: And how old are you at this point? I guess you were born in 1910.

A: Yeah.

Q: So maybe 34, something --

A: Something, yeah.

Q: How did the -- how did the Russians treat you?

A: The Russians? Well, they had nothing to eat, only potatoes and kraut. And that one doctor was a Jew, he spoke Jewish. And I told him, how could you give us kraut? Potatoes all right, but we can't eat sauerkraut. He said, we have a saying, whoever is strong will live, and who is weak will die. And then they came and wanted to take us to Russia. And then took -- there were three sisters, they told me, we are going away, because we are afraid of being taken to Russia. You come with us? I said yes. They spoke Polish, and German, and maybe Russian, I don't know. And we left. We went over the Carpath -- over the mountains, oh God.

Q: Was that a difficult journey?

A: Yeah.

Q: Why?

A: It was still winter. Was snow all over, was cold.

Q: You were in a train?

A: Later we are.

Q: Well, before you left Auschwitz, what was it like when -- when they first liberated the camp? Do you remember what happened to the -- to the guards, the commanders, the purp --

A: They ran away.

Q: Did you see this happening?

A: N-No. The gates were opened, and nobody was there from the Nazis, nobody.

Q: This concludes part one of the interview with Marianne Windholm. Part two begins on the next tape, tape three, side A.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is part two of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm, conducted by Amy Rubin on December third, 2005, in Manhattan, New York. This is tape number three, side A. Okay, so we're going to continue with the interview, and I'd just like to ask you a few es -- about a few specific stories, a few anecdotes, and I have a little list here, so I'm just going to ask you a few, and then you can tell me what you remember about these stories.

A: Okay.

Q: One of them is something to do with your father coming home from the war, and I'm presuming that's World War I, right?

A: That was World War I, yeah. We didn't let him in.

Q: Well, tell me about that.

A: Well, at that time, you know, in the morning, everybody run to get some food, or coal, because you couldn't get anything. So we children were by ourself at home, and we were not allowed to open the door to anybody. But we had a little window, with a little [indecipherable] and somebody was ringing the bell, so we went up, opened it to look out, there was a man. He looked like a forester. And he said, "Marianne, open the door, I am your father." And I looked at him, I said, "I don't know you." But I am your father, don't you know? Then I said to my b- brother Paul, he is the -- he was the oldest, "There's a man, he says he's our father." He went up, he looked at him, we don't know you. Open the door. We didn't open the door. We didn't let him in. Then finally my mother came, and then of course, there were only happiness. They were dancing and kissing outside, yeah. He'd come home from the war, yeah. Dif --

Q: How old -- how old were you?

A: Oh, I must have been maybe six, maybe five.

Q: And did you not recognize your father?

A: No, no. I didn't see him for years. I didn't recognize him. But my brother recognized him because he laughed and he had the golden tooth. And my brother saw that golden tooth. And he said to me, "It's our father." How do you know? He has a golden tooth. But he didn't let him in, because Mother did forbid it.

Q: Now there's another little anecdote I wanted to ask you about, and it --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- something to do with the theater.

A: With what?

Q: With the theater -- with the theater.

A: Theater?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah? Well, there was a [indecipherable] coming in from -- I don't know from where. It was a Jewish theater, and my parents went and saw it. The Golem was the name. And they decided that we children are big enough to see it. So -- not my sister, my little sister, no. My brother who was older than I, and myself and two cousins of us. And they took a loge for us children and our maid did bring us there. And we were sitting there, and then it started and somebody came out and said, in Jewish, which were -- we were not used to, we never spoke it. He said -- I'll have to translate it, so y-you don't know Jewish, yeah?

Q: Well, why don't you say it first in Yiddish, and then you can translate it.

A: Yeah. [speaks Yiddish here] So that means, big Jewish king, we are coming to tell you and to let you know -- and when they started to tell you and to let you know, we started to laugh

terribly. So next moment they took us out one after the other, and we had to stay outside, and wait til our maid came to pick us up. When the the -- theater was over, they just threw us out.

Q: They threw you out of the theater?

A: Of the theater, yeah. One after the other. Took us under their arm, out.

Q: But why, why did they do that?

A: Because we started laughing.

Q: So these are some of the fond memories you have from Vienna?

A: Yeah. Not only, you know, from childhood I have other memories, too. Yeah, yeah.

Q: What about the anecdote about Mother's day?

A: Oh poor Mother, we didn't let her go out of bed. How do you know about it?

Q: Well these are some of the stories that Mazie encouraged me to ask you.

A: Uh-huh. Yeah, well it was Mother's day, so we ha -- didn't have money, we were children, but in the -- before Mother's day, my sister and I, we did [indecipherable] and my brother picked from the tree, flowers. Lilac. And s -- then was Mother's day and we made breakfast, and we didn't let her go out of bed. And she had to go out so urgent, which is normal, but we didn't let her. She had to stay in bed and have breakfast which we made, in bed. That was the Mother's day story.

Q: Did she enjoy it?

A: I don't think so, she had to go pee. Very urgent. We didn't let her.

Q: Well, it sounds like you had a lot of good fun and good memories in your home.

A: Oh yeah. Yeah, well, I really do, yeah. It was a fo -- but I was a orphan at a very young age, you know.

Q: There's another story, I believe about your mother, a humorous story, something about don't give her away?

A: Uh-huh, uh-huh. My father passed away, you know, and I was in the street. And I was walking, and I saw a man from the back. He was dressed exactly like my father. Blue jacket up to here with the fur collar, funny little hat. And I started to run, and then I remember that he is dead. And I stopped and started to cry terribly. And a lady came, and said to me, "Child, why are you crying so much?" And I said, "My father is dead, my father is dead," and started terrible crying. So she said, "Okay, where do you live? Come on, I'll take you home." She took me home and sh -- then she told my mother she wants me to come to Italy, she was a Italian. She has two little boys and they will be very happy to have a little sister. And my mother could take with me there to see if she likes it. If she doesn't like it, it's all right. We have horses, she will learn to ride. My boys will be -- adore her. And m-my brother and my sister started to yell, "Mother, please, don't give her away, don't give her away." So that's the story from Italy.

Q: Were you interested in going?

A: I can't tell you that. If I would have gone, or if I was interested. I wouldn't even remember. But I remember the sto -- like they started to yell that they shouldn't give me -- my mother shouldn't give me away. Don't give her away.

Q: Now, what about another anecdote about when your mother was sick, and you had to cook?

A: Oh God. My mother became ill, and had to lay down. She has a gall bladder attack. And she said to me, Marianne, you have to finish -- we ate lunch, the big meal, you know? Then the water cooks, then you put the -- I forgot her -- the -- in English, whatever it is in the boiling water. So then I took a spoon with water, and I came into her bedroom and ask her if that water is cooking. I never knew because I never cooked. I never knew how it looks when water cooks.

Q: How old were you? Were you very young?

A: I must have been very young, and I can't remember where -- where our maid was, yeah.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your maid, were you close to her?

A: Very close. We adored her, we were fa -- we were not afraid of our parents, oh no, we were afraid of her. She was -- oh God. When we came in and our shoes were not clean, we got it. She had a [indecipherable] she just went over our legs, oh yeah. And we adored her. And we were afraid of her, yeah, but we loved her yeah, yeah.

Q: What was her name?

A: Marie.

Q: And she stayed with you for a long time?

A: Oh, a very long time. My mother got her when she got married. She stayed with us for a very long time, and then she met somebody someplace, a landowner, very, very wealthy, and they got married. And we spend the summer with her, because she c-came and asked my mother, please send the children. And we sp -- did spend the whole summer with them, yeah.

Q: So your family was pretty well off financially, to have a maid?

A: Yeah, in the beginning, sure. As long as my father was alive, yeah.

Q: Now, I believe there's another story here. Maybe you already told me the one about boiling the water, but what about baking the chicken?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Baking the chicken. Mazie said there was a story you wanted to share about baking chicken, no?

A: Baking chicken?

Q: I think when you had to cook for your mother? You don't remember?

A: No.

Q: Okay. And what about another -- this is the final anecdote I wanted to ask you about. Your first doll, and your brother did something with it.

A: Yeah, they opened her head. I had had a beautiful doll. When you pushed her belly button, she said Mama, and when you laid her down she closes her eyes. And it was a big doll like that. And my brother and my cousins couldn't understand why she closes her eyes, so they opened her head, yeah. And that poor doll, she had to go to the hospital. Yeah, she was very sick. It was terrible.

Q: You took her to the doll hospital?

A: Not me. Not me, no, my parents, my mother and my father, whoever did take her to a place to be repaired. They cut the head open.

Q: Were you very upset, as a child?

A: I cou -- oh [indecipherable] I cried. Of course I was upset. It was a beautiful doll, she would s-say Mama. She spoke, yeah. At that time, you know, I got it for -- my father did bring it from I don't know where. It was a beautiful, beautiful doll. Had hair, everything, yeah.

Q: And it was probably unusual to have a doll that spoke at that time.

A: Yeah sure. She only said Mama, but she said Mama. But you have to push her belly button.

Q: Well, thank you for sharing those stories. Now, I want to ask you some more questions that I had here, prepared. And I wanted to make sure because I -- I don't remember from our first session together, can you just make sure to tell me your husband's name?

A: Seno.

Q: Ah well, I know you were married twice --

A: That's my [indecipherable]

Q: -- but your first husband.

A: Yeah, my first husband was Otto Brower.

Q: And so that became your last name for awhile as well?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Now, I wanted to return where we left off in our interview. We were talk -- we were starting to talk about the time of liberation at Auschwitz.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I wanted to make sure that I had a -- some information even before we got to that point. I don't know if you know this by heart, or if we could somehow put this in the interview, but do you know the -- the registration number, the tattoo number that they gave to you?

A: Well, you know, I -- I know 60 - 65 - 85 A -- I think so.

Q: Okay, it looks like A7 -- it's hard to read, but maybe another two.

A: 75 -- 72?

Q: I think it's 72, and then maybe a 25.

A: 72 - 25.

Q: Does that sound --

A: That sounds --

Q: -- familiar?

A: Yeah.

Q: So it looks like A7225.

A: I forgot it, I tell you.

Q: Is that a good thing, to forget the number?

A: Yeah, I forgot it completely.

Q: Well, thank you for showing me. Now, when you were in Auschwitz, did you and others around you, did you ever have any kind of religious observance? Did you try in any way to -- to observe --

A: No, no. Only to Yom Kippur, they didn't give us any food. They said that this here the day where you fast anyways, you don't -- so you don't need any food.

Q: And that must have been very difficult in the conditions you were in. Now -- now tell me more about liberation. If you can sort of walk me through that time period, what you remember, and sort of set up the scene for me, what -- what exactly happened?

A: I was sick. I was very sick. I had a mer -- an infection in my right leg, and I have very high temperature, and it was very dangerous to go to the revere. That revere was the s-s-sick station, where sick people went, because they made selections there, you know, and killed people. But I had no other choice. I was very, very ill. And it happened that I was absent mind, I know that. And then, I remember only that it was raining and I did feel the drops from the rain on my face. And I opened the eyes, and there I saw a man with the sickle and the hammer, was a Russian soldier. He held me in his arms, and it wasn't raining, he was crying terribly. That when we -- I was -- when we were liberated. And the gates were open, people went out, you know.

Q: What was the next thing that you did?

A: Next thing? I was there for a long time. I actually couldn't go. Then finally I became well enough. And there were three sisters. They spoke German and Polish and Russian. And they saids to that -- no, there came a rus -- Russian man, and they said they will take us to Russia to -- to get well again. And there were three sisters, they told me, we are not going with them. You want to come with us? We are going home. They were from Seidenbergen, well a -- this a tar -- part of Europe. And so I went with them, and we went over the mountains, oh it was terrible. It

was March, was snowing, cold, but we went, oh yeah. Took us days and days, til we came someplace, and that was dangerous. We slept on the street, like where the -- you know, the -- where the bus station is, there was little houses where I could stay and wait for the bus. And there a man did find us, and he said, "Are you crazy? They are looking for Jewish people. If they find you, they kill you." And he took us to a place where we were safe, yeah.

Q: How did you travel over those snowy areas, the mountains?

A: By foot. Later on by coal [indecipherable] the tickets, were train with coal, so we were sitting on the coal, and went with the train. You could go wherever you want. You didn't need any passport, any nothing at that time.

Q: First of all, at the time of liberation, what was your feeling, what were your emotions? Was it hard to believe that this was happening?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Was it hard to believe that liberation was really happening when it happened? What were your emotions at the time?

A: Well, I was relieved, I would say. I was happy. And I couldn't wait to come home, but it took a long time, because the war was still going on. We were already liberated, but the war was still going on. There was a time, finally when I came home. Oh God, took a long time.

Q: Tell me about the rest of the journey, how you got back home.

A: Well, you could take a train, you didn't have to pay, you know, I told you that. I was sitting for days on the train with coal, that I remember. It was bitter cold, yeah. It was very, very cold. And finally, finally, I came home. And when I came home, it was night, and I was on the train, and they took us right away, whoever was in the train, they took us to a place that was a cellar in a building. And there they did give us some to eat or drink. I wasn't by myself, there were maybe

with me, 12 or 14 other people. And they did give us some tea, not made from tea, from something else. And in the morning the curfew was over, and you c -- you could go out. And I went out and I did noc -- I did not know where I am, where I was. The buildings were bombed. I had no idea in which district I am. It was terrible. But then I went to this Jewish community, and there -- everybody has to go there to say, I'm alive. So I went there, and there was a letter from somebody who said, whoever knows Anna Vietner, that's the name, should come to that and that address. 15 district [indecipherable], I remember like today. I knew her, so I went there. And her maid was still there, and they had the beautiful apartment taken from the Nazis. They run away, you know? They left everything. So she had a beautiful apartment, and I was home, thanks God, I was home. Had a place to stay, and very soon, I got the job, I start working, yeah. A displaced person camp, the hospital, start working in the hospital. I met a doctor in the street, which I knew, after the liberation. He said to me, "What are you doing?" I said, "I am doing nothing." There is nothing. There is nothing. Like nothing, that doesn't exist. You come tomorrow morning to the [indecipherable] hospital. But that wasn't a hospital, was a displaced person camp. There were parents without children, children without parents, and they waited to go someplace. I div -- I start to work with him in the [indecipherable] room, yeah.

Q: Is this in Vienna as well?

A: That was in Vienna. There I was home already, yeah. I was home already, yeah.

Q: So that was your m -- that was your goal after the war, was to return to Vienna, right?

A: I had nothi -- no -- nowhere else to go.

Q: And did you spend -- after you were liberated from Auschwitz, did you spend from January til the end of the war traveling around?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you scared during that time period?

A: I can't remember that. I only know I wanted to go home. And of course, you know, you come home and you -- there is nobody. There is nothing. You are home, but it's not home any more. And then my sister did find me, we had relatives. One of our cousins was married to Catholic girl that the [indecipherable] relatives were living in Vienna, and my sister was in Italy. And she did write to her, and so she did find out that I am alive. And it wasn't easy to go over the border. There were no passports, there were nothing, and the border was closed like that. And every night I went there, oh God [indecipherable] snow up to here. Never could cross to Italy. And finally, one day, it's happened that I met somebody, a man to whom I did give a pair of shoes, when we had some, there was -- had also [indecipherable] from the concentration camp. And he was, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I am waiting s -- to go to Italy." So he said to me, "Don't go, I will send you somebody. Don't be afraid, you just try to enjoy, and to get well again." And he did give me money. At that time I was smoking a lot of [indecipherable] cigarettes. And he said, "Somebody will come to pick you up." And one day I came home, and there was a British soldier waiting for me, and he was very rude. Where were you? I said, "What is your business, who are you?" Break in my room, waiting for me. He told me, "I come to pick you up." And I was dressed like a British soldier lady. I had the [indecipherable] like that, and I -- he had papers that I belong to a troop of people who -- who went to entertain the troops in Italy. That's how I crossed the border. And then I called my sister, and then everything was all right again. I was home.

Q: So you stayed in Italy?

A: The stay in Italy, yeah, and then I went home. I -- I went to Vienna.

Q: So you were just there for -- for a short time, for a short visit, in Italy.

A: Well, I was in Italy for a long time. Later I was living in Rome, I was with the American Joint Distribution Committee. Do you know the organization?

Q: Sure, what were you doing?

Q: Well, I was there, I -- I had the job there. I went to the -- there were the kibbutzims. You know what is a kibbutz?

Q: Yes.

A: So I went from one kibbutz to the other, to teach them hygiene. But you know, there were mothers, 14 year old mothers. But mother instinct [indecipherable] anybody [indecipherable] clean, and so the whole vehicle was [indecipherable] So I came home. It's a good job, yeah, I liked it. And I loved Rome. I loved Rome. And then he started, my brother. Everybody is already here in the United States, and come and come and come and come. And I had the rheumatic fever. And the American Joint has to give them 30,000 dollars that I, when I arrive here, that I will not get on welfare. Did you hear that?

Q: Yeah. That's a lot.

A: It was a lot of money, yeah.

Q: Before -- before we go to the time when you came to the U.S., tell me a little more. When you first returned to Vienna, what was it like to talk with or interact with Austrians?

A: Well, of course, I had not my apartment, but I was living with friends, I told you that. With -- where [indecipherable] was, and I went there to live with them. And then I -- I had nothing to wear. And then I remember that I had the woolen coat that was in storage someplace. I went there and he was very happy to see me [indecipherable] young [indecipherable] and he had my coat, so I had the coat to wear. Well, it wasn't easy. And then I didn't do anything til I met the doctor, Otto Vulcan, whom I knew after the war, still in Poland. And he said, what are you

doing? I said nothing. There no such thing as nothing. You come to the [indecipherable] room, and I went every day to work with him.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm. This is tape number three, side B. What I wanted to ask you about is, every day Austrians, people in the streets, people you would meet, people who were not Jewish, did you -- was it difficult to interact with them after the war? Did you feel resentment?

A: Me, I can -- I can tell you only one thing, I wasn't very happy being home. When I come home, our superintendent said to me, "Oh, you are still alive?" Like he would be not surprised, like he would be not very happy about it. And somebody else had our apartment, so I did cr -- I did leave it to other people. But I had a job, I was happy, yeah. I was quite satisfied. I wi -- I had the job, I had money, which it was important. I remember when I got my first [indecipherable] you had to have stamps to get material, was very complicated. And I was with the American Joint, and we got rations. And under the rations was a big piece of chocolate, thick chocolate. I went with the chocolate to the butcher, I said, "Do you want chocolate?" He says yes. "Will you give me meat?" That's how I -- you know, that I get food. Wasn't so easy. See, had everything, but you have to have money, money, which I didn't have.

Q: What about the people who kept you in hiding before you were sent to Auschwitz? Did you get in contact with any of them?

A: Yeah, sure. I was there.

Q: When you -- when you returned to Vienna after the war --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did you contact them?

A: Yeah, I contact them, yeah.

Q: What was that like?

A: Well, she was very surprised to see me, and I don't know, we were denounced from somebody. Because we were there for a long, long time, and we used -- we have to go away from time to time to stay someplace else for a week, then we came back. But somebody denounced us, and we were arrested there. We came back at five o'clock in -- in the afternoon, at four o'clock in the morning the Gestapo came and arrested us. And then we came to Auschwitz, and then we were selected. My husband went here, I here. I said, "I want to go with my husband." Mengele was sitting there, and he said, "Be glad you are not going." And I never will forget the color of my husband's face, gray. He knew. And I knew where he is going, yeah.

Q: How did you emotionally deal with that at the time?

A: I never will be able to tell you, because I knew what will happen to him, yeah.

Q: Now, after the war, when you came back to Vienna --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- was it -- was it nice to see the woman who hid you, what was that like to see her again?

A: Well, I can't remember, I tell you. I went with other people to [indecipherable] because the Israeli [indecipherable] there was a letter from Anna Vietner, whom I know. It said, whoever knows Anna Vietner should go there and there. And when I came there, they were hidden al -- th-through the whole war. She, her mother. Her maid must have hidden them, yeah, opened the door for me, and she started yelling when she saw me, and I was home. Was with people who knew me, who loved me, and I did feel good, yeah.

Q: Who i -- who is Anna Vietner?

A: Well, she was a lady I knew, and much older than I.

Q: Was she Jewish, or not?

A: Jewish, yeah.

Q: And she was --

A: But she looked like a Nazi. She didn't look Jewish at all, and she was dressed like one even. And she went -- wherever she went, her name was Vietner, wherever she went, she said, heil Vietner, which sounded like heil Hitler.

Q: And that helped her get through the war?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So she helped you when you got back to Vienna?

A: Yeah.

Q: And did you search for other relative -- for relatives of yours?

A: I had very little relatives. My mother had two sisters. One was dead already, one was deported a long time [indecipherable] there, and I had very little relatives, to think about it. I had relatives, but not in Vienna.

Q: And what about your mom -- your mother, did you already know what had happened?

A: She was in Theresienstadt, you know about Theresienstadt?

Q: Yeah, I'm just wondering when did you learn about -- about what happened with your mother?

A: Well, when I came -- I -- I went to my mother from time to time -- not from time to time, but at least twice a week when I -- I was hidden, and I -- I remember it was late in the spring and I had a little box with strawberries. And I had to clean my hand to open the elevator. And the super come out and said, "Where are you going?" I am going up to see Mother. She was picked

up last evening. And she was in Theresienstadt. And I knew the superintendent in other district, and I spoke with her and we did make packages and mail them to Theresienstadt. And she received it, I know that, because one day, maybe after one and a half years, was a long time she was there, maybe a year or so, a red letter came back that she was relocated. Then I knew that she went to Auschwitz.

Q: Did you ever try to find her at Auschwitz?

A: How could I?

Q: Was that while you were still there, or after?

A: No, I knew that she is not alive. Children and old people they gassed right away. We knew that. We did listen to the British sender. We knew exactly what's going on.

Q: When did it become clear to you -- was it already after the war, how massive the Holocaust really was?

A: How what?

Q: How -- how massive the Holocaust really was, how many Jews, how many people were really victimized.

A: I -- I knew it. I knew it from Auschwitz. We had selections, when you had one pimple on your body -- you know, they were so afraid of scabies, because we were a labor force which didn't cost any money. We worked very hard. So if they -- you had one pimple on your body, you went, yeah. Were selections very often, I would say at least once a week. We washed at night. When we came back from work, we worked very hard, cleaning stones and everything. When we came back, in the washrooms, that water was dripping, no water. We couldn't even clean ourself. And one night I woke up, I saw two from our block that was where we were staying, block 13, go out -- everybody has a towel. I run after them and they went into the

washrooms and that water was flowing. There was water and water [indecipherable] then I woke up Annie, we went every night, we washed from top to bottom with ice cold water, but we keeped ourselves clean, yeah.

Q: You never had hot water?

A: No. Hot water? Oh God. We were glad we had cold water to wash.

Q: So, back to Vienna after the war, it sounds like you spent a considerable amount of time in Italy, and then you had returned to Vienna on the weekends, and about how long did -- did this go on for?

A: Every weekend for a long time, I went back to Vienna.

Q: And how long did you stay in Italy?

A: Italy I was a long time. One year in Milan, and two years in Rome.

Q: And were you happier living in Italy than Vienna?

A: Oh, I was happy in Italy, oh God. I loved Italy so much. Wonderful country, wonderful people.

Q: Were you still thinking you might return to live in Vienna someday?

A: No.

Q: Why would you --

A: I --

Q: -- why did you know you didn't want to live there any more?

A: Well, I wouldn't want to go there. I -- I told you I went there [indecipherable] I wouldn't be there, no. I was there once, after the war, on a trip to Europe. No.

Q: Why? Is it -- was it just not the same?

A: I wouldn't want it any more. I -- first of all, I love a -- America. United States, and I loved Italy. But I hated Austria, oh yeah.

Q: After the war, when did you make contact again with your friend Ann Price -- Ann Green?

A: Well, she was with me all the time, for a long time. But then we were separated. And I, very soon, was liberated, but she still was not liberated where she was. They had a selection, she went on transport, and I did remain. That was the night where they gassed all the Gypsies, yeah. Killed them, all the Gypsies.

Q: Had you known some of them personally?

A: No.

Q: So when did you meet up again with Ann after the war? Was it in Vienna?

A: I suppose so. Was in Vienna, yeah. She's not from Vienna, you know, Ann Green. She's from the little town Noyen Kyrklund. She's not Viennese.

Q: But it seems like at some point you -- you met up with her again, and you became good friends again, right?

A: Yes, we were. She is much younger than I am, you know that. She is 15 years younger than I.

Q: But it sounds like the two of you were very helpful to one another.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Do you think it's largely because of that friendship that you were able to make it through?

A: Yeah, yeah. I told her, when we came to Auschwitz, and she came to me very upset, showing me she had in her panties, in the seams she did find a louse. So I said to her, "Annie, listen to me, if I will take care of your lice, I will not be able to take care of mine. You will not live and I will not live. If you will listen to me and do whatever I tell you, maybe we will make it." And that how it was. We went every night, I woke her up, let's go and wash, because then the water was

flowing. We had never water when we came home from work. But at night we had no towel, nothing. But we were undressed, we washed from top to bottom, yeah, every night.

Q: Were there a lot of people who did not wa-wash so regularly?

A: Oh yeah. Sure, there was no water.

Q: So you made a --

A: [indecipherable] the selections, as you know, wi -- you were not -- you were not hundred percent clean, I mean clean your skin, they were afraid of sicknesses, and you were gassed, sure.

Q: So you made a special effort to stay clean?

A: Oh yeah. I knew it's important.

Q: Now it sounds like you and Ann have reminisced, you know, about your experiences together. Do you often talk about your experiences?

A: No. We sometimes laugh about, you know, there were funny things too, who happened. So we speak about it, we laugh. But we normally, no we don't.

Q: Do you think it's too difficult to talk about these things?

A: Sure, it's still too difficult. If you were in Auschwitz, you learn how to steal. You know, everybody likes to survive. So whatever you see you could steal, you steal. You don't have a bad conscious if you do that.

Q: What about your memories, even if you weren't speaking out loud about them, do these memories come to you a lot of -- of these experiences?

A: No. Sometimes I do think about it, but I didn't think about it at all because my life was full, you know, after the war. I had a good life, I was happily married. But now, sometimes I do remember, yeah.

Q: Do you allow yourself to remember more, or do you try to block some of the memories?

A: No, I still like to block them out.

Q: It's just easier that way?

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: Now tell me about your journey coming to the U.S.. How is it that you came to the U.S., and when was that?

A: What happened is, I was in Italy, and there was my brother, who always wrote and said everybody's here, everybody's here. No you -- why don't you come, why don't you come? I was so happy in Italy, but then I went to [indecipherable] and I had rheumatic fever, I told you. They had put 30,000 dollar down for me. And then I went to the United States, and then I went here. It happened my brother even didn't -- excuse me -- live in the United States. He was living in British West India. Yeah, I had nobody here.

Q: When did you arrive?

A: I wish I would remember.

Q: I see here that somebody wrote down 1952.

A: That's could be, yeah. That's could be. Yeah, 1950 fi -- I became a citizen 1955. Must be nine -- 1950. After five years you -- you become a citizen, no?

Q: I believe that's right. I'm not sure, maybe something was different at that time.

A: No.

Q: So, even though your brother wasn't here, you decided to come to the U.S., why?

A: Because he s -- said I should come. And then my disappointment was terrible. He was living in British West India.

Q: So where did you first arrive in the U.S.? Did you take a -- a boat, and where did it -- where did --

A: No, I came with a displaced person, 1300 people on -- on boat with a [indecipherable] SS General Stewart, I think, yeah. We were 1300, everybody was seasick. Oh God, what a trip.

Q: And where did it arrive, where did it dock?

A: Thanksgiving. Came -- we arrive Thanksgiving, and we docked next day, yeah.

Q: Was that in New York?

A: Yeah, New York, yeah.

Q: And what did you do when you first got here, how did you adjust to this new life?

A: I started to think about that -- what I did. I took a job, not in New York City, in Troy, yeah. I took a job in Troy, New York, was by Albany.

Q: Were you on your own, or did you have any family or friends?

A: I had friends, yeah, I had friends. Have no family here. My brother then was living in Venezuela -- no, my brother in British West India, my cousins in Venezuela.

Q: As I se --

A: But I started to make money -- to earn money and I was happy, yeah.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

A: Whatever I could. First of -- I was crocheting, and then came that I had no money left, that week was over, I hardly make money to pay my room. And then I went and look for other job, and I got a job as [indecipherable] a whole -- they put together orders for custom jewelry, whole day on the ladder. And the boss was terrible. I made 30 dollars a week. I paid 10 dollars for my room, and at that time, you know, five dollar, five cent coffee and a roll. I did -- then I washed my hand in the evening, my boss came, and he'd give me my envelope, put his hand in here, and said don't tell my wife, I just give you five dollar more. I called my brother, and I said, "I am not going back any more. But what will happen to me?" He said, "You are in America. Here you

don't have to go back. If he asks you why aren't you coming back, you could tell him, I don't like the color of your hair. There's no explanation. You don't want to, you don't go." And then I took a job outside New York. No, then I took a job at -- I met a doctor -- oh God -- then I met a doctor I knew in Europe, and he was a Sephardic [indecipherable] in Brooklyn, all the way down. He said come and work with us. I took that job.

Q: Did you feel a greater sense of freedom in -- in the U.S.?

A: I did feel absolutely freedom. You know, the first time, after a long time that I have f-felt that I am a free person. I remember when we were liberated, I was in Kraków, that is Poland, you know? And I did see myself walking on the street, like it wasn't allowed to walk on the boardwalk, is -- are you crazy? You're a free person. You could go wherever you want.

Q: When did you marry for the second time?

A: I married here the second time. Fourth of September, forgot [indecipherable] which year it was.

Q: Was it in the 1950's?

A: Yeah.

Q: What -- what was your husband's name, and how did you meet him?

A: I played Bridge with him, in a Bridge club. And whatever I did he criticized. It was terrible. So I said to him, "N-Never again ask me to play in your game." He said, "That's all right, but may I invite you for dinner?" And I said, "I wouldn't go with you." But in the end we all went. Friends of mine, we all went together, and very soon we were married, yeah. Was a Friday holiday, he said he could get downtown, cost two dollars, get married, and then we have four days as a honeymoon, yeah. Was married 22 years, 20 wonderful years, two years terrible when he was so s -- terribly sick, yeah.

Q: What was his name?

A: Seno. S-e-n-o.

Q: And his last name?

A: Windholm.

Q: Go ahead.

A: And now you ask me about the chicken, [indecipherable] reminded me, it's true. You know, my mother told me I should pick up the chickens, they were by the [indecipherable], you know, made them kosher, they k-kills them. So I went to put them -- pick them up, and I had the canvas bag. There were two chickens, that they started, you know, to move. And I was so afraid, I throw them away, with the bag. But ha -- later they did find them. I came home without the chicken. You asked me that, right?

Q: So what happened when you got home?

A: When I get [indecipherable] home, where are the chickens? I said I throw them away. I was afraid they were still alive. So did you know, at that time, nobody took anything. Was different times.

Q: Did you get in trouble?

A: No. I didn't get in trouble. My mother was a wonderful person.

Q: So I have just a few additional questions I think --

A: Okay.

Q: -- I think -- not that many questions left to ask you, but a few. And I'm wondering, was it difficult for you to adjust to normal life after the war, after the Holocaust?

A: Yeah. Was difficult, yeah. Was difficult, yeah.

Q: In what ways?

A: In every way. You know, I told you, I did find myself walking on the street -- I was afraid to go on the boardwalk, you know? And took a long time to come back to a normal life. When I started working, that did help me a lot. I was busy, and you know, I had very little time to think about myself. I was tired, I started to sleep good, yeah.

Q: How do you think -- how do you think your experiences during the Holocaust affected -- affected you afterwards, affected you later, decisions you made in your life --

A: Well, what should I tell you? I tried to live a normal life. I was happily married, I told you that. I lost my husband, I was very unhappy. I had a boyfriend later, I was very happy again. And then, when he passed away, I said, I don't want to cry after men any more in my life. Now I will stay by myself. I lost a lots of people I loved dearly, and that what it is.

Q: Are there certain things about -- about your experiences during the war, during the Holocaust that -- that really directly affected things that you did later -- later in your life? Decisions that you made, life choices? Do you see the Holocaust as having affected those decisions?

A: Well, this is a very complicated question. I tried very hard to start to be an --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm. This is tape number four, side A. If you could just continue with what you were telling me.

A: What did I tell you? Yeah, of course the biggest shock for me was to lose my eyesight. But I am a very lucky in one respect. I have good people around me whom I love, and they are good to me, and I am good to them. So I tried to keep a normal life, that is it. I watch television -- I watch -- I listen to radio, I listen to television, and of course, my life is different than from a normal person, but I have to cope with it. There's nothing what I could do.

Q: Did you ever turn to religion or prayer?

A: No.

Q: Do you observe the holidays?

A: No.

Q: The Jewish holidays?

A: No.

Q: Was that something that you just didn't feel connected to?

A: Well, I did grow up in a house where every holiday was kept. We had separate dishes for Easter, beautiful dishes, and we kept every holiday, of course. But now I don't keep anything.

Q: Do you think the Holocaust had any effect on your thoughts about religion?

A: I don't think so. I still say oh God. You know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Have you ever given thought to the question of -- of God and the Holocaust, if there's -- if there's a God, how could the Holocaust have happened?

A: Well, it's not the first time. There was the Spanish Inquisition, there was a English Inquisition, as far as I remember, I don't know. I am correct, I suppose. And this is not the first time that happened. We are still, after the Chinese, the oldest people on earth. The Chinese are older than we are.

Q: Even though you -- you did not observe the religion, did you stay very connected in your identity, to Judaism?

A: Well, I never say I'm not a Jew. That what I say [indecipherable] now. Some of the [indecipherable] me in the building for Easter and ask me, are that your holidays or ours? So I said, "You want to know if I am Jewish? I am."

Q: Have you ever had any dreams or nightmares that go back to the time period of the war?

A: No. I don't think so.

Q: And when did you start talking more about your experiences during the war? When did you start to do that?

A: I never talked about it. With whom?

Q: Like with Debbie, or with, you know, any of the people you're close to.

A: Normally I only start to tell them what is funny. Funny stories, yes, nothing else.

Q: Do you think it's unusual that -- that you're able to -- to capture those funny moments? Do you think a lot of people would not remember the funny moments?

A: How could I know what other people do? I never speak with them.

Q: But it does seem like the humor is very important to you.

A: To me, yeah. To me, yeah.

Q: And do you think at the time it helped you, those humorous moments?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And how do you think your memories have changed over the years? Do you remember less now, and --

A: No, no, my memory is good. I have a good memory.

Q: So you feel like you remember the same -- same things over the years?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: About -- about the Holocaust, about your experiences?

A: I remember how I -- how I learned to steal, you know? You learn -- you learn everything in the concentration camp. You learn how to steal, oh yeah. I run after breakfast. I always had two breakfasts, when they did bring the milk by in the morning, I waited for them by the [indecipherable] pass by and boom, took some out. Had to drink it and run back to the block to have my second breakfast. When I did something wrong, they didn't send me to work, so I will not get a second potato, but I had to go to pick up the potatoes, somebody has to go. I have so many potatoes, oh God, yeah. It was not easy, yeah. Yeah.

Q: Has it been difficult during this interview for you to remember certain things?

A: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share? Any other memories?

A: I only know one thing. I was happy. And my sister did find me to the Vatican. And when I went to see her, finally came to Italy to be with her. She passed away last year, in August.

Q: Was she here in the United States?

A: Yeah. Last year in August, she passed away.

Q: So you were able to have reunions with both of your siblings, your brother and your sister?

A: Well, my brother was very ill. He got the lung cancer, and I did find him. He [indecipherable] manufacturer f-from plastics, and if you went in there, the fumes were terrible. And when my late husband told him, "You can't go in there without a mask," he said, "[indecipherable] but they are not stupid. If I go in with a mask, tomorrow I have nobody, no workers coming in any more." So he got a lung cancer. I did find him dead, yeah.

Q: Did you ever have children, yourself?

A: No, no.

Q: Was that something you wanted in your life?

A: First I didn't want any, and later I couldn't get any.

Q: But it sounds like you've been surrounded by close friends.

A: Oh yeah. I -- always what I had, very good friends. And I was a good friend myself.

Q: Well, I think I've asked you all the questions I was planning to ask, and I -- I'd welcome any other thoughts, if you'd like to tell me any -- any other memories or thoughts if you want to share. What was the kind of work that you did in the U.S.?

A: I was 19 and a half years the Society for the Advancement of Education. We published the oldest educational magazine in the United States.

Q: And what was your job there?

A: I was office manager, and assistant treasurer.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much for participating and being willing to be interviewed. I really appreciate that.

A: You're welcome.

Q: This -- this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Marianne Windholm.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Conclusion of Interview