United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Regina Spiegel
May 11, 1999
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audiotaped interview Regina Spiegel, conducted by Margaret Garrett on May 11, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Silver Spring, Maryland and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's volunteer collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

REGINA SPIEGEL
May 11, 1999

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Regina Spiegel**, conducted by **Margaret Garrett** on May 11, 1999 in **Silver Spring, Maryland.** This is a follow up interview that will focus on **Regina Spiegel's** post-Holocaust experiences. In preparation for this interview, I watched the videotape of the interview you conducted with the Holocaust eyewitness project of **Washington, D.C.** in 1989, and listened to part of the audiotape interview you conducted with the Jewish Community Council of Greater **Washington** on March 5th, 1985. I will not ask you to repeat everything you said in those interviews. Instead, I will use this interview as an opportunity to follow up on those interviews and focus on your post-Holocaust experiences. This is tape number one, side **A.** What was your name at birth?

Answer: At birth, **Regina – Regina Gutman.**

Q: And your place of birth?

A: **Radom, Poland.**

Q: And the date of your birth?

A: It's – it was May 12th, 1926.

Q: Let's start with your liberation. Could you talk about –

A: Yes.

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Q: – how that happened?

A: Yeah, okay. In – as I spoke previously, from the other tape you probably heard that on the last part of our journey, so to speak, we found ourselves in – closed up in cattle trains. They were shipping us, to where we don't exactly know, but supposedly, from what we've heard after the war, that our journey was taking us to **Dachau.**

Q: And you had been where?

A: In **Elsnig** by **Torgau.**

Q: Okay.

A: It was our last camp –

Q: Okay.

A: – that we were in.

Q: And we is who?

A: The group, you know, the whole – you know, we were like about 3,000 women.

Q: Okay.

A: So the group, when I speak we, I refer to the – to the whole camp, so to speak.

Q: Okay.

A: They put us on these cattle trains and we were traveling. And in **Germany**, all of a sudden we had to stop. And why did we have to stop? Because in **Germany** the

railroad tracks were bombed. This was already 1945, you see, most of the time, to tell you the truth, didn't know exactly when, what time it was. But later we found out that the war was getting – was almost of the brink of being finished, except we didn't realize. But when we stopped at our – in our train because the railroad tracks were bombed, we couldn't go – excuse me – much farther. So what had happened, while we were waiting there for repairs, the **SS** had this speech to us, he said hey, you ought to be very happy, because this is April 20th, 1945, it's **Hitler's** birthday. And we, we were thinking why in the hell should we be happy that it's **Hitler's** birthday? But of course he said we will give you an extra piece of bread to celebrate it. And no sooner did he finish as the whole sky became black and we were actually bombed. Our trains were hit by the allies. Not direct, but next to it. And actually, we were like about 3,000 women, probab – **[coughs]** excuse me – probab –

Q: You want a cough drop?

A: No, I – I am using a –

Q: Okay.

A: Probably a thousand of us got killed by the bombs, and the rest of us, when this train split open, and we saw like an opening, the ones who were able to, we just ran into the woods. We hid out. We couldn't stay there too long, because after all, they didn't give us that extra piece of bread, so we couldn't do a – hide out too much,

and we finally came out and we spotted this Russian – he was like a – probably like a colonel in the army. And we ran over to him and he said, don't worry, you are free. And that's how we actually were liberated, which was already like not exactly April 20th, because it took us like two days longer. But apparently, the Russians were already there. I always say, had the Germans left us in that camp, we probably would have been liberated by the Americans, because I think where we were liberated was almost very near where the Americans and the Russians met, near the **Elbe** river.

Q: Excuse me, that makes a sound.

A: Oh yes?

Q: Yeah.

A: Okay. So anyhow, that was mine liberation. So what do you do after you were liberated? You know, we had thru – in a way, we had a chance, because we could have – and the Russians were encouraging us to go on a rampage, you know. The Germans killed us, you go out, you have a chance now, kill the Germans. But you know what? We decided this wasn't our way.

Q: Wh-When they were telling you to do this, how did they –

A: The Russians?

Q: Yeah, did you have weapons to –

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A: No, we didn't have weapons, but we could have gotten – they would have been delighted to give us a – one of their guns.

Q: The Russians would have?

A: Yeah, they would have, but –

Q: So they would have helped you?

A: Definitely. But we decided ourselves that's no way to go, and we just figured because we didn't like what they were doing to us, we would turn around doing the same thing to them. After all, the German that I would have picked up, I probably would have never – had never seen him before. It would have been just picking up a German because he was German. And it – this wasn't our way. And the next thing what we started doing is let's go home. Let's try to get home.

Q: N-Now when you say we, were – who – where – did you have special friends that you were with?

A: We kind of got – when we were liberated, because we were so used to always being in groups, like I didn't know how to be by myself.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I-It – so like about 15 girls, we got together and we like di – did things together. If we wanted to get some bread – because we didn't have like what the Americans did on the American zone, a displaced persons camp where they fed you. With the

Russians you didn't have anything like this. The only thing what they did for you, we would go to them and say take – let's go to a German bakery with us. And they would go with us and they would requisition from the baker, bread for us. So we – and we, our type of eating was very crude. Bread and water, that's all we needed, you know, to keep us alive. So that's what we got, we got mostly bread and water. Because even when we got into a German house, even if we saw some food there, you know, because what was happening after the war, a lot of German households became empty. Why? Because the Germans were afraid of the Russians and they were running towards the American zone. So they left a lot of their homes with no one there. So when we would go in, we would find maybe some food over there. I remember in one place, they had to spe – these beautiful, you know, like fruits, apples and cherries put in in jars, like we put away sometimes fruits. We were afraid to eat them because we thought that maybe they poisoned it. So we wouldn't even touch this. But we would have the bread from the baker and the water and that's how we continued going towards **Poland**.

Q: Now, you would ask a Russian to requisition bread for you?

A: Yeah, a Russian soldier.

Q: Yeah. Were all the Russian soldiers helpful to you, or –

A: Mos-Most of the time yes. You see, they didn't have this type o-of gan – organization like they had with the – the Americans had. You know, what the Americans did, they found the survivors, they put them in into a camp and they supplied food and you had a place where to put down your head. With the Russians you had nothing like that.

Q: But some Russians in some places were abusive to –

A: To women.

Q: To women, and –

A: Definitely.

Q: – did you encounter any of that?

A: A – well, we learned to – to kind of counteract that. Let's put it this way. During the day, ess – you know, I told you, we were 15 girls of us. As a matter of fact, we took out from one of these homes, a horse and one of those – it was like a coach – not a co – you know, a horse and buggy?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But it's not a b – it wasn't a buggy, it was like the most beautiful si – here at the **Smithsonian** I walked in one time, in front was sitting this coach, you know, it was the most gorgeous thing if I would have kept it and would – wouldn't have to had to worry about any finances because it probably was worth at – a fortune. But we were

traveling in this horse and buggy a little bit. During the day, let's say where we – if we were in a certain town during the day, we would split up a little bit and go into different places to sleep. Like we would sleep where the horses would sleep in – in some kind of – what do they call them, the barns, like. Or the pigs, or some others, because we were actually very much afraid of – of raping, because during the war, you see, i-in **Germany**, I never worried about being raped by a German, because this was something that they were not allowed to do. If – if a German got caught raping a Jewish girl, he was in trouble. So they usually stayed away from us. They probably were raping more German women.

Q: What – what was that about, that they were not allowed to rape Jewish women?

A: Oh, that's was the – what they called the **rassenschande**. **Rassen**, the race, **schande** is the – a – you know, shame.

Q: Shame.

A: The – the – the race shame, you know, otherwise you – you like committed the worst sin. I mean, you commit a sin when you rape anybody, but this, th – it wasn't the raping that they were worried. So after the war we did have to – the women, and I don't – we got away – we got away kind of lucky, but a lot of women weren't that lucky.

Q: It sounds as though you also were careful.

A: Very, very, as I say. You see, when I was liberated in ’45, I was already almost like 19 years old. You know, through the war years, you became very adept, let’s put it this way, and like self preservation.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So most of us were really looking out for these things. When we notice in a town that there were Russian soldiers, too many Russian soldiers, that they might go out on – you know, at night, looking for women, we didn't stay in that town. We would march on. We – like I said, we had this horse and buggy, so we could move on a little bit more. And also, we met some Italian guys who must have been working in **Germany**. You know, they came to **Germany** to work. And they were also like trying to get back. So sometimes, you see, the Russians, if they saw you with a – with another man, they would just stay away from you.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So we, during the day, we would like, if we were visible, we would go with them.

Q: The Italian guys.

A: Mm-hm. And then we just lost them. Came to another town, we looked around what was bat – we were very much aware, and I’m really surprised – you probably heard from other people because you the first one ever asking me really, that

question, how – because we were – were a lot afraid of being raped by the Russian soldiers.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So anyhow, after – to tell you the truth, how long it took us to get to the Polish border, I really don't know, but I figure that it must have taken us like about three weeks. First of all, when we were liberated, there was one friend that was very – from the bombs, she was a little bit more in – and sh-she – you know, like she lost a couple fingers and she was more troubled than most of us. You know, like I had a little bit of a i-injury, you know, like a shrapnel? A piece of shrapnel got into my hand, but it wasn't – you know, I never felt it. You know, it wasn't dangerous for me. But with her, we had to put her in in a hospital. So she actually stayed in the hospital. We couldn't, you see, we couldn't keep on staying in the same town for too long because we were actually afraid of this. So we actually had to leave her in the hospital, but there was another friend that she met that stayed with her. So she was like more or less taken care of. But we kept on going and probably took us probably like about three weeks til we got to the Polish border. And when I got there – and you know, as you were walking – you see, when we were liberated, would you believe that most of us didn't realize that most of our families were murdered? We still were hoping that maybe somebody's gonna be alive because I

will tell you, in a way maybe that was good, because that's what kept us through all the other times, kept us going, because if not we probably at one time or another, we would have given up. But that was, in a way, kept us – hey, you stay alive because you promised that we're gonna meet at home. You know, like my boyfriend told me, you know, on the last, when they were separate – when they separated us in **Auschwitz** he said to me, if we stay alive, just remember, meet me in mine hometown. But also, he didn't know that my mother told me this, when we were, you know, it was just practically in the beginning of the war when she got us all together and she said, just remember, if God forbid we should get separated – you see, never thinking that what's going to happen, that it's going to be this mass killing, but just separated. If we go, maybe I was someplace else or something, she says, remember, after the war, we'll meet in our place, you know, in our home. So naturally, the first thing what I wanted to do is get back home. So I did. That's how – and most of us –

Q: Back to **Radom**?

A: Back to **Radom**, but by the time when I hit the Polish border, it was the city **Poznań**. That was like on germ – Polish German border. I don't know whether – you know, I think it's not any more **Poznań**, I think they call it now **Wroclaw,** because this became part of **Germany**, you know, ne – I think so they call it

Wroclaw, I'm almost sure. Or maybe it's still there, I haven't looked at the map. Maybe after I finish this interview I will take a look at the map.

Q: Okay.

A: But we got to this town **Poznań,** and when I got to **Poznań**, the trains in **Poland** were running already. Because you see, **Poland** was actually liberated in '44, towards the end of '44, th – it – the beginning of '45. So their trains were already running. They weren't maybe bombed as much, because they weren't bombed by the allies, the allies **[indecipherable]** had lots of bombs. And I dropped – I will never forget this, I drove – I – I didn't drive, how do you call it? I brought this horse and buggy on the station and left it there just like that because actually, we were 15 girls, no one wanted to go near the horse. I said to them, you went through such a war. You're afraid of a little horse? I mean, he was that – he probably w-wa – I wish all through the war I would have had the dealing with the horse and – other than with the people. I said, and you're afraid? So they were afraid to go near the horse, so I was the one that fed the horse, I was the one that took him in – now I probably wouldn't know how to deal with it, but at the time, you know, when your life is at stake, or whatever it is that you have, I came to the conclusion that human nature, you would do what you have to do for survival.

Q: And had you had any experience with a horse before?

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A: Never, never.

Q: So you didn't know anything about –

A: I was a – I wa – I was a city girl.

Q: – handle – so you didn't know anything about handling a horse?

A: Never. Never in my life –

Q: But you learned fast.

A: – did – did I go close to a horse, but I didn't know – you see, now I know a horse can kick you or something. I didn't even know a horse can do that to you. But I knew that it was the only way that if we wanted to get back to **Poland**, rather than walking step by step. And that was also a lit – a little bit in our way, that we had this mobility a little bit, that when we realized that this town isn't so safe for us. I mean, not with our lives, but with our – you know, virginity.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So we figured we better keep on using it. And that's what I did, so I left in **Poznań,** somebody had a very good deal on me, left in **Poznan** this gorgeous, gorgeous thing, with the horse. And of course, then we start – got on that train, no tickets. I don't know where **[indecipherable]** going **[indecipherable]** going to the trains, you know, on the outside, because we had no money.

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Q: Did they require that you had ticket – have a ticket if you were a returning refugee?

A: They might have. You want to know something but – there were so many people in the trains that probably the conductor could never manage to get them that – to go and ask him for anything because you just got on the train and you hopped off wherever it stopped. And then how we stopped in one place, and somebody passes me by, and he actually had walked away already and came running back. He said **Reginka**(ph) to me. He recognized me, we were in one of the camps together in **Pionki**, you know, that was – we were the only camp where men and women worked together, but I was. And he says hey, you know that your boyfriend is alive? That's when I found out that **Sam** was alive. So I already felt a little bit better because I felt I – it's true, I'm going back into my city and I'm going to look for my family, but at least my boyfriend is alive. Because by the time we were getting to **Poland,** the closer we were getting, we realize more and more that our families were dead, but we still couldn't accept it.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In a way it reminds me a lots of times when God forbid, you have a very si – terrible sick spouse, and you know he's gonna die, or she's gonna die, i – you just don't want to accept it. And I think that was with us, you know, now that I'm – I

never thought of it then, but hi-i – but now that I'm older, I put – I can think a little bit differently than I did in those years. And I think most of us didn't want to accept the idea that everybody was dead. So you clung to it. But at least, as I say in my case, at least I knew my boyfriend, if he behaves himself and if he is waiting for me, and if he thinks of me as much as I think of him, maybe we'll be able to get together. So finally I got to my city, **Radom.** To tell you the truth, when I got there, I don't know exactly, but – have you ever been to **Europe**?

Q: Yes. Not to **Poland**, but other parts.

A: Yeah, but you know like other, like bel –

Q: **Czechoslovakia, Hungary.**

A: **–** bel – it would be the same thing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know how before you walk in into the places where you actually lived, you walk into a big gate?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah, and then you go into the courtyard. Well, I did that. I came to my place where I used to live, it was called **Jerome Skakel**(ph) 21. This street was **Jerome Skakel**(ph), he was a Polish writer, the name of the street, was actually the main street of the city and the number of the building was 21, and a – I walked in. And no

sooner did I go in, I haven't even – because we lived a little bit farther into the place, and I had this idea that I was going to walk in into my place, knock on the door, because by then I really knew already that most of our – my family was dead. And I – but I figured I will knock at the door and just ask it. Tell them who I am. Maybe if somebody else from my family comes and ask – tell him that the sister is alive. And I was also going to ask him, you know what? I lost all my pictures in **Auschwitz**, and it always bothered me that here I lived through it and I don't even have a picture to look at it. You know, it's – it seems so funny, because when you have access to it, i-it really isn't that important, but I hear more and more people when their homes are on fire or something they run back. For what do they run back? For their pictures. And the same thing I thought maybe when we left for the ghetto. My mother couldn't take everything. I'm sure she took some pictures, but she prob – maybe she left some pictures and maybe these people would have those pictures. That wouldn't mean anything. But no sooner did I walk in into that place, you know, walked through this back gate, somebody caught me and said **Reginka**(ph). **Reginka**(ph), by the way, is a name for – like **Regina**. It's – in Polish you use it like a diminutive, yeah. Say hey**, Reginka**(ph), what are you doing here? They just shot **Gudsztat**(ph), otherwise a neighbor of ours, came back. He came back maybe a month before. They used to have a jewelry store before the war, and

he took back the jewelry store. I mean, the Russians weren't yet in **Poland** like later on they came in. As it was, later on it didn't make any difference because the Russians took away from it. But he took back the jewelry store that belonged to his family. Somebody came, knocked at the door, that same time that I came in into our city, and killed him. And this girl grabbed me, she says, let – g – run. And she and me started running. And where do we run? There's no place where to run. We run into where the ghetto used to be in **Radom.** They had – they made like out of a warehouse, they made like almost like a – a – what they call a – a community center, you know, so when – because so many people were coming back into the city and they had no place where to go. So at least you should be able to put down your head and what we used to do, in a place like this, we would – they would have like sheets of paper on the walls, and you would put in your name. So at least I felt like – so I put down my name, and – **Regina Gutman**, am – you know, so maybe if somebody will look through, they will find me or if they know **[indecipherable]** of course, nobody found me except my boyfriend by then already heard that I got back to **Radom** and I –

Q: He – your boyfriend heard –

A: Y-Yeah.

Q: – that you had gotten back?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: You know true, I always say it's amazing. We didn't have telephones, we didn't – but through the way – through the grapevine, you know. People were walking. The people were walking, i-it was like the march of the masses. People were walking from **Radom** to **Germany**. People were coming from **Germany** into **Radom.** So as you were walking, you met some people, and we had a way to identify ourselves, to – to ask you, let's say if I pass by somebody that I thought that looked a little bit familiar but I wasn't too sure, I would just address him as **amho**(ph). You know, just go by **amho**(ph). And this was almost like our password. It's a Hebrew word for – like folks. You know, a country –

Q: Folks?

A: Yes. A – maybe I'll ask **Sam** a – a better definition of, because he speaks Hebrew much better, but **amho**(ph). So if – if he heard the word **amho**(ph), he realize that I'm Jewish too. Do you know – of course, we were plenty identifiable in the beginning anyhow. I – all right, I didn't wear any more mine suit what I had what – when I was liberated, my striped suit, because this I got rid of at the first thing. The minute I got in into a German house – I told you I wouldn't touch the food, but I looked around in their clothing and whatever the clothing was, I got rid

of that because I just couldn't seem myself walking through in this striped suit. Because if you saw somebody in that striped suit, you knew, more or less that they were Jewish. But this what we had, you know, in order to identify ourselves. So people, you started and the minute you knew that he was Jewish too, you stopped it. Where you coming from? I am from here. Did you see anybody? And that's how we got a little bit, you know, like information. Like this, and **Sam** probably found out through this way that also that I was alive. And as a matter of fact, I didn't even stay, that same night I was going to spend the night in that center, but I found a cousin of mines who actually was already there. She just came down to see who else was coming, because she actually was able to take back her apartment. She came back with a stepmother and she, when she saw me, she said, don't stay here, you can come and stay with us in our apartment. So I went with her in the apartment. Was a little bit – much more comfortable to stay there, and that's what it was. And then of course, **Sam** and – **Sam** found out that I was alive, he sent for me. He got somebody with a horse and a buggy, because that's what it wa-was basically the mode of transportation, you can still see it over there. And I went to **Kozienice**.

Q: Now how far was that from **Radom**?

A: It probably was maybe, at the most I would say like maybe 30 - 40 kilometers.

Q: Okay.

A: Which isn't really that much. If – if we had to we could have almost walked there, but we didn't. But we did have to walk a little bit because if the horse needed go up on a hill, we had to go down and push the hor – push the whole thing because – help the horse along.

Q: So what was that like for you to be in the horse and buggy on your way to meet **Sam**?

A: I-It was – I would tell yo – you know what? It was so natural, you know, like I didn't even think about it that it was a – I was just hoping, because I hadn't seen him yet, that he hadn't lost the – the love for me, so to speak. But i-it was like adventurous in a way, you know.

Q: Because you didn't know what he would be like, and what –

A: Exactly.

Q: – it would be like.

A: And I – it was – e – e – I met him in 1942, in – in that camp, and this was already 1945, so you know, three years you haven't seen each other. Of course, you know, you didn't grow too much in camps, you know, because they didn't – so I was about the same size, you know, what I was. I mean the height I was about the same size. I was still pretty skinny, but it's amazing. I – you know, when I survived, I weighed 69 pounds.

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Q: And how tall are you?

A: Well, now I'm probably five three or five two.

Q: And then, at the **[indecipherable]**

A: I was – when I came to the **United States,** the papers, on my papers, they said that I was five four, but I don't think I was ever five four, it probab –

Q: And you weighed 69 pounds?

A: 69 pounds. I was always a pretty tall girl for – you know, for Europeans. Y-Y – most Polish people aren't very tall, so I was always considered a pretty **[indecipherable]** and I was pretty skinny, but it's – was amazing how even just on that diet of bread and water and of course once I got to **Radom** I had already some soup too because they had a soup kitchen – you know, how fast your body fills up. It's amazing.

Q: We have to turn over the tape –

A: Oh sure.

Q: k – we're at the end.

A: Sure.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

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Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Regina Spiegel**, tape number one, side **B.** Will you repeat what you just told me?

A: Yeah – yes. I-It's a lots of times when my husband and I, we would talk to one another, e-even with other survivors, we just can't figure out how we even managed to survive even after the war, because we had no money. You know, we lived like homeless people. Really, when you – when you think – except our brain worked pretty good, that was the only thing. But really, how we managed to get through day after day with nothing, really, til of course when I finally caught up with **Sam**, he ordered the head – we were like a little business in **Poland**.

Q: You and **Sam?**

A: Yeah. Not me, he did, because when I came, he already had it. He put a – but he will probably tell you, he put a mill that belonged to a friend of theirs, a flour mill into working. And he started using that mill as making flour. And the Polish people would bring in the – the wheat to make flour from it and all of a sudden when I came there to **Kozienice**, I didn't have to go to requisition bread because all of a sudden I had money to go out and buy a bread. But really til then, I can't figure out, because it took us at least, by the time I caught up with him, it was like, I would say, almost like towards the end of May. For a month to six weeks, we lived from

day to day, whatever came along. It was like an – struggling from day to day. But then we decided one day that we couldn't stay in **Poland**, because it was really very dangerous, you know. I don't know whether you Jewish or not, you know, I never ask people, but it's very hard for me to even tell this, because I-I feel almost ashamed. And mind you, what I went through, believe me there were plenty times where they tried to make me to be ashamed of being Jewish, or whatnot. But I almost feel ashamed that I lived in a culture where coming back after such a horrible, horrible war, that our neighbors truly didn't want us. Not only didn't they want us, they were really willing to almost go out and kill us. So my boyfriend and I decided one day, what the heck, w-we can't stay here, they gonna kill us. We have to get out. And we – he – we got up one morning, like maybe five o'clock in the morning, he went – he knew this man in **Kozienice** that gave you like almost by then you had to have really a piece of paper to get on the train. And we were supposedly going to the settle in the western part, or the eastern part of **Germany**, which the Poles were hoping to sort of settle with Polish people, that in case if there ever was a question, whether they should have it, if they should have a vote, which they used to call the **plebicid**(ph), they should have Polish citizens. So we s-sen – went and gave them a piece of paper, the man in the magistrate, and they – and they – you know, like – like –

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Q: Sit –

A: – the mayor. The city –

Q: Like city hall.

A: City hall, okay.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Which is the same thing. I-In ti – in city hall, gave us a piece of paper that sh – we should be able to get on the train. And when we got from this train to take us off – out of **Poland**, the train stopped and we didn't even know where we were going, we just knew we had to get out of there. And when the train stopped and there was another train next to us, and it was still summertime, so the windows were open, I hear somebody is talking and I turned around to **Sam**, I said **Sam,** you know what? The other train, people speak, it sounds like Polish, but it isn't Polish. Maybe we're in **Czechoslovakia**. And you know what we did? We didn't think too much. We had this little, little suitcase, we took this little suitcase, we got out from this train, climbed underneath the trucks, through the other train, walked in and into the other train, sat down. The train – the next time the train stopped, we were in – in **Prague, Czechoslovakia**. So we were breathing already a little bit lighter. As a matter of fact, I loved **Czechoslovakia**. I wanted to stay there in.

Q: Wa – why did you love it?

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A: You know what? When we were there, their president came back from **Russia**. Apparently during the war he escape to **Russia**, and he came back. And I watched, for the first time in my life, I watched the people of **Prague**, the way they were greeting their president. They were hanging out from their windows and they were – with such love and I figured, if people can have so much love for their president, that's how much I knew about – you know, it somehow – I always say, with g – all going through all that war, I still, when I was liberated I was still this **Pollyanna**, what they used to call me when I was a kid, that I could never see any bad in other people. So here, I looked here at these people greeting the president and I turned around to say, they must be wonderful people. I never knew about **Czechoslovakia** except what I learned in the history books. I mean, after all, when the war broke out, I was 13 years old, how much did I learn about other countries, you know? But I always was – loved, you know, geography and history. So I knew a little bit about them, but I didn't know about them, but I didn't know about nature of people. But when I saw them greet like this, I said you know, we should stay here. But you know why we didn't? We probably wouldn't mind. Because we heard that you had to be born there in order to become a citizen – to be a citizen. Otherwise, if you weren't born there, you never become a citizen. So we were worried. What if it comes in something changes, we're the first ones to be shipped out like they did in

Germany, to a lot of Jews in **Germany**, because if they weren't from **Germany**, they shipped them out. And by then, little by little we found out that the Americans were there. And also they – we got co – some people contacted us. You know, they picked us up, we were wondering how do they recognize, but it was easy to recognize us.

Q: Well, who were the people who picked you out?

A: It was people that worked for the Jewish Distribution Committee, which is called the **Joint.** And a lot of them were working also for what was then **Palestine**, and they were trying to get together the refugees, you know. And then they took us actually on a – on a bus, it was an American bus, a transport – er, later on – what I've heard lately, that because people were coming back and they gave – you know, like to **Truman**, you know, when **Truman** became president, that they gave him news that for the Jews in **Poland** it's so bad that s-something has to be done, that they should be able to get out of there. So I – I understand that he actually saw to it that some of the borders were opened. You know here, right, we thought that we did such a act that we were able to smuggle ourselves into the other country so easy, but it – apparently this was maybe already as a fact. And we were taken from there, we were taken on a bus into **Germany**.

Q: From **Prague** into **Germany**?

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A: From – no, we were already by then in **Pilzen**.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: **Pilzen**, which was not too far from **Prague.** They took us from **Pilzen** to **Germany**, which was near mun –

Q: Now this was the **Joint** that took you to **Germany**?

A: The **Joint** that was working with the American army because –

Q: Okay.

A: – because we were on an American bus. We didn't ask any questions. You took it – you take us – we can't – we're getting out, we don't care. They said they're taking us to **Germany**, we're going to **Germany**, no matter where, because we were hoping that maybe from there we will be able to go to **Palestine**, because that's was our idea that whatever do – we do, we don't want to stay in any other country, except go to **Palestine**, because we already had being in other countries. So that's what we wanted to do, and the next thing we knew, we came into this, like what they called it later, displaced persons camp. It was called **Foehrenwald**, which was near **Wolfratshausen.** It was like about 15 kilometers from **Munich**. And it's very interesting because later on I found out that **Dachau** was near **Munich** and actually my last transport they were taking us – we were supposed to get to **Dachau**. So I said, here I came on my free will, practically – not to **Dachau** but

almost, but I came differently. So we spent that time in **Foehrenwald. Sam** actually got a job, he was working in the office. It was run by the **UNRRA**. Have you ever heard of **UNRRA**?

Q: Oh yes.

A: You probably did.

Q: Sure.

A: Yeah, okay. So he was working in the office, I got a job doing something and we got a house to – where we stayed, and whoever came to that camp that was – that we knew, or was with – from my family or **Sam's** family, they all came and they – we all stayed together in that house. So we wind up that my former brother-in-law came with his brother, and they –

Q: This is your sister's husband?

A: Yeah, my mun –

Q: Your sister the dentist?

A: Yeah, the one got – was killed. He survived and he came there, and he – he had a younger brother that survived also, and he came and stayed with us, and then **Sam** had three, actually two cousins and then a young woman that was, I think she was his cousin, but stayed all – we stayed all together in this house, and we cooked and we – we did things, you know, together. So this wasn't already too bad, because we

were able to have enough food – as a matter of fact, we were already getting too much food, that you started worrying you might be getting too fat, because basically the food – and a lot of the food we weren't used to it, that – but like they gave us tuna fish, we never knew what tuna fish was, we'd – when – we've never seen it. They gave us powdered milk, we never saw it. But later on, it's amazing how you learn. I found out that if you mix the powdered milk, you – you know, the powder with water, it becomes like milk. So we made cheeses out of it. It's amazing. We used to make delicious cheese. I wish I could get it now.

Q: In your other interviews, you said that you were raised in an Orthodox religious home.

A: Yeah, mm-hm

Q: And before the war, could you say something about what your religion was for you and what about after the war –

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: – like when you were in this house with all these other people.

A: Mm-hm. Well, I will tell you, I was actually – I was actually – I was raised in a fairly religious home. Everybody was almost Orthodox in my city, but I was probably the most Orthodox in my family. I wouldn't go to s – when I went to sleep I would leave in the f – in front of my bed a – a – a little pan with a – with water,

because when I got up the first thing in the morning when my eyes opened, I would wash my hands and say a prayer thanking God for making me get up tha – to be able to be alive. So –

Q: Did your parents encourage that?

A: Well they – they must have because they sent me to a – a religious type of school.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I myself, I was very, very much into the religion. First of all, I had a teacher that was a – I was absolutely crazy about her and she happened to be from that school. So I would like follow her. She influenced me a lot. But of course, during the war a – you know, we're keeping, you know, with Jews you keep **kashrut**, you know, it's very important. And I will never forget the first time when I came to live with my sister, and my sister knew how religious I was, she wanted to get me used to – a little bit to a – not to be so picky, you know, like it's alright to eat something else if you don't have everything that it's kosher.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And she tried to give me a piece of salami, which I'm to this day a salami freak. I don't eat it because I'm afraid of my cholesterol, but I could live on salami. And when I ate it, and all of a sudden I asked her, I said, how did – how did you get it?

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Did – I thought because in the city where she lived, I knew she couldn't get it. I said, did you get it from home? Did my parents send it to you? Because she used to always get somebody to get in touch with my parents and she was able to manage to do this. And she said – I could see the minute she started explaining to me, because she figured it's time to get me used to it, when she saw how much I enjoyed it. She says, well, in – nota – the minute she – she didn't even –

Q: Did you know what it was when she gave it to you?

A: No.

Q: You didn't.

A: I didn't, because at that time I probably would have still would refuse to have it. But she wanted to show me that you can stay alive even if you eat it. I used to think if you eat something non-kosher that you die. So the minute she says we-ell, I said oh-oh. And no sooner did she say it, like everything came out of me, you know, I started throwing up. But of course, little by little I got used to what they fed me, believe me. That didn't make any difference. So – but one thing I must say, I am, even to this day, I am not as religious as I used to be. I believe in God. I believe I am – I like to go to shul, we work for the synagogue, you know, I believe very much in Jewish education for the children and you know, for everybody. I worked at **[indecipherable]** for – I was instrumental in raising quite a bit of money for the

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Jewish Theological Seminary of **America** in **New York**, because I was always interested in Jewish education. However, I am not as religious or adherent to the **kashrut,** to being kosher as much as I was then. Because I found out that you can live and it doesn't have to be everything exactly kosher. And – and besides, I myself – had maybe my parents lived through, I would have kept it on for them, because somehow older people stick much more to it. Even the survivors, the older survivors. But a lot of people like me that went through the war, are not as – they believe in God, but they don't believe that the – the meat has to be slaughtered a certain way in order to be a good Jew or something like this. So no, this they definitely changed me this way. But as far, they couldn't kill the spark for Judaism and I don't know why it's whether because I was so young that it really – like it, like went above me. I-It didn't touch me as much. I always say, when you were a young kid, you don't have the – the bonds with your family are not yet so complete that you can cope with – with these thing a little bit better than let's say, older people. I always say that had my sister survived, let's say you know, my sister actually had a choice, you know, she didn't have to go with her baby. They actually wanted her to say that this baby isn't mine. Because you see, they needed her in the – in the camp. They liked to staff the camp with the doctor, a dentist. By then, when they were taking my sister out, they had killed off most of the doctors and the

dentists and whatnot. So they had to go look for somebody. So they actually didn't want her to leave. They actually encouraged her to say no, this is not my baby. But of course she wouldn't do it. And you can imagine, if she would survive a-and she had to live with something like this. I mean, you can't do that. So as far as I was concerned, it's true I was raised very, you know, in a way you would have been Orthodox, but not to the point where, like I have some Orthodox neighbors here. You know, they walk around with their hats, and their – you know, th-they call them the **payos** in – in Jewish, I don't know –

Q: Dreadlocks?

A: What are they?

Q: Dreadlocks?

A: I don't know whether it is the dreadlocks, but th-the kids, you know and their garment has these little things outside. And my father never wore anything like this, and – he used to wear a hat, but nothing identifying him as a – as being a Jew, because he could have wear only a hat, like anybody else, you know. **Poland** was pretty cold, so most of the time you had to wear a hat. But – and my mother didn't shave her head, she had her own hair. So we weren't that strictly Orthodox, we were a fairly Orthodox. Like here, you would have considered us Orthodox.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But now – but I was Orthodox, but I will tell you, that's – as I say, the only thing they killed in me, about the **kashrut**, but the rest of me, being Jewish and loving Judaism, this they couldn't kill.

Q: Tell me about loving Judaism.

A: Tell you. You know what? I often think that if I had a choice, if they would have approached me – of course, I shouldn't say this because it's my thinking, you know, because I was never approached, but had I been approached to – that somebody would want to take me out and that's all I had to do is take over another religion, I don't think I would have done it. Now, I don't say – I couldn't swear to it, because I was never asked. But I always felt very strong about being Jewish. Even while I was in camp. You know, we had a incident in ones of the camps. It was right after **Auschwitz**, I was in this camp, **Bomlitz,** maybe you find –

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Now see, you know more about me than I do. I-In **Bomlitz** that – we were under – not under the **SS,** we were under the **Wehrmacht,** which is the military. And one day – and believe me, we didn't know what holiday it was, but the same thing, they had this speech to us. We know that you have a big holiday today. It was Yom Kippur, where you fast, you don't eat. And guess what he told us? In the morning we used to get a portion of bread, he would say to us, you don't have – if any of you

want to fast, you don't have to take the piece of bread now. We will give it to you in the evening. And we figured, you know we never trusted them. We figured that they'll probably never give us the bread. But you want to know something? It was amazing, I would say that 95 percent of the inmates in that camp chose not to take that piece of bread, once we knew that it was Yom Kippur. If they had given it to us, we didn't know that it was Yom Kippur, but once we knew it – so you see, I think it wasn't only me. I think most of us had this spirit. And I don't know whether it was our – like self preservation or we felt like, you think so great, look what you doing to us. What am I gonna become, like you? I don't want to be like you. So ee – I – ee – ing – I n – I would never, during the war, I never gave it through without much thought, you know, I never thought of it, because I w – you know what I say? That only free people have the luxury of thinking. People that are enslaved the way we were actually enslaved, I don't think sit around thinking about these things. Mostly what you thought is about food. Give me some food, you know, to fill my stomach. So this is another thing. So I don't know whether I answered what you wanted to –

Q: Mm-hm, yes, you did.

A: – to know or something.

Q: Are – we're skipping around here, but are most of your friends survivors?

A: I would say probably a large core of them, but I also have s – non-survivor friends.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Because first of all it, I think a lots of times has to do with where you lived. We came to the **United States** and we came almost right away to **Washington.** **Washington** in those years, would you believe it, they wouldn't let too many survivors even come then here.

Q: To **Washington?**

A: Yeah, because – as a matter of fact, my husband has this wonderful story. When we were in **New York,** they took him in – took us in and they were trying to talk to us. Why don't you go to the south?

Q: No, who was this that took – took you in?

A: Yo – we came – th-the **Joint.** The **HIAS**?

Q: Yeah.

A: **HIAS** and **Joint.**

Q: Okay.

A: There were, you know –

Q: So they brought – helped you get from **Foehrenwald** to –

A: Well, we – w-we actually –

Q: – **New York**?

A: – yes. We – they helped us, but we actually had papers to come to this country.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Because – let me –

Q: From **Sam's** uncle, or –

A: No, mine.

Q: Your uncle.

A: What had happened, when I came to **Foehrenwald**, you know, all through the war, I never got sick, whether for whatever reason, I was never sick and I always do attribute my survival because I was such a healthy kid. But guess what? When I stopped running and when we came back to **Foehrenwald** to that displaced persons camp, I became very sick. Yeah, I don't know, I had something like a blood disorder. Something – as a matter of fact, the only thing I remember is begging them, cut off my arms, because my arms were just like burning up. They gave me some kind of medicine that must have had some kind of reaction. And this doctor came, too, who was in this – actually he was with the American army and the **C.I.A.** and – but he was a – a doctor from **Germany**. You know, he was – his – his birth was from **Germany**. So he was going around to hospitals, he was a very fine man and di – to visit the patients. So he came – when he came near my bed, he

handed me a – a candy bar. I said no. He said you don't want? Can I do anything for you, he asked me in German. I said yes, you could, you could find me – I have an uncle that lives in **New York,** which I called **Nev York**, in ma-my – I remember my mother used to always talk about her brother who lived in **New York.** So I said, if you could find him for me, that would be great. So he got the name and would you believe that this guy put an ad in the **Forwards,** in the Jewish paper and looking – telling that a niece is looking for a Mr. Sa -- **Zeismann**(ph) **Kreps**(ph). Well, my uncle never read the **Forwards**, because he read the **"Wall Street Journal."** But there was somebody here in **Washington** that knew my mother, she was also from **Radom**, that came here before the war. She knew ma-my mother and she knew my uncle and she called him to **New York** to say, did you see a niece is looking for you? And he was the one that send me papers to come, and my papers were made out not only for me, they were made out whoever is with me, because my uncle figured that if I survived, maybe there was somebody else that survived. But of course, nobody else survived, so I – I always tell him, you know, when I talk to the kids, they get a bang out of this, I tell them, you know, I turned around to my boyfriend, I said, if you marry me, you know you have a ticket to the **United States** and never – nobody ever refuses that. And they think that's very funny, but that wasn't it, but you know, I had the papers and I was able to bring **Sam** with me. So

we c-came, actually, from the papers that my uncle sent, but the **HIAS** really took care of us. They saw to it that we got in line to get to the ship, you know, because it was very terrible that time, you know, they only allowed a certain amount of people. The – the immigration laws were very, very strict in this country. You had to go through – I mean, like your health and everything. If you were running a little bit, a grade over, one grade over a fever, one point over what they thought it's supposed to be, you were sent back. And nobody wanted to stay in **Germany**. I was sitting in **Germany** just waiting and – and the little suitcase what I had, just didn't want to even unpack. I – I was just ready to go because I started telling you, we were hoping to go to **Palestine**, but in those years – you still have time?

Q: Yes.

A: In those years you couldn't go into **Palestine** because they had the – the British put up a blockade so you couldn't bring in the refugees, the only ones they had to smuggle them through. So once I got married, they figured we are already taken care of, you know, the – the – the people from **Palestine** that were taking care, they tried to take in the kids that had nobody, that they were single. So to give them a life. So – and since we were married and of course by then we had already the papers to come to the **United States**, so they let us alone and they said no, we can't

go, so we figured we'll come to the **United States**. Anything to get out from – from **Germany**.

Q: Let's um –

A: Yeah.

Q: – stop here.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Regina Spiegel**, tape two, side **A.** When did you and **Sam** get married?

A: We got married actually in May 21st, 1946.

Q: And when did you come to the **United States**?

A: We came in – to the **United States** in November of 1947.

Q: So you'd been married a year and a half.

A: Mm-hm, yeah.

Q: Now previously you said that you and **Sam** wanted to go to **Palestine.** How did you feel that it was working out more easily and practically that you come to the **United States**?

A: Because, you know, you learn to compromise. We really wanted to come to – to go to **Palestine**, because like I told you before, we figured we've had enough of different countries where i-if they decide they don't like us, they can say go. So we figured we'll go to **Palestine**, but since it became very difficult for us to go, they absolutely told us no way that we will be able to go because first of all, we were getting already, little by little, as time went on, we were getting older. We'd gotten

marry – we were married. We – they tried to take care of people more that were single. Single people, most of the time, unless you had family maybe, and if –

Q: So they were not making it so easy for you, but how did you feel not to get to **Palestine**?

A: I-In the beginning we felt very badly. We – in the beginning. But once, I will tell you, once we knew that we're coming here, as long as we were leaving **Germany**, that was our way to say we're **[indecipherable].** And once we came to this country and I-I will tell you, I fell in love with this country. From the first minute I stepped off, I take my foot off the boat, th – it – most people were very kind, and we came to **Washington** almost right away.

Q: Now, did **HIAS** encourage you to come to **Washington** and help you arrange that?

A: No, because originally, I start to tell you –

Q: Yeah.

A: – originally no, they didn't want to, but my uncle suggested that we should go to **Washington.** And besides, you see, I had a brother that I – lived in **Washington.**

Q: When did you first learn that you had a brother in **Washington?**

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A: It – we'll, when – when we were started to work – after, when we got back to **Germany**, in the end of 1945. See, my brother was in the ar – in the American army, and –

Q: Oh, he had come over a long time before.

A: He came – he smuggled himself into this country in 1939. And when the **United States** declared war, he became – he fought in the American army. So after the war, they shipped him back to the **United States**. But he found out that one of his sisters was alive, he didn't know which one, and he came back. He had e-enlisted back into the army as a translator because by – he spoke German and by then he already knew English. So they shipped him back to **Germany**, and that's when he came back. We actually would have gotten married a little bit before, but when I heard that he was coming back to **Germany**, I said I wanted to have my brother at my wedding. And we actually have a picture of my brother at our wedding. But he has passed away since then. He passed away about 10 years ago. He was my oldest brother. So I did find out, and he lived at **[indecipherable]** in – in the **Washington** area. So when – it was actually the **Joint** and the **HIAS** wanted to send us south, and when they informed **Sam** that they sending us south, he said, I'm not going south. I came to live in the **America**, I'm not going south. He thought it was **South America** or something like this. So we just, on our own, we left th-the **HIAS [indecipherable]**

tell us to go there, but we decided – he picked himself up, he came to **Washington**, got in touch with somebody, also through the **Joint** here, di – like Jewish Social Services, and they took him someplace. He got a job right away, came back, picked me up, and we came to **Washington** and he already was – had a job, working. He – we came in – w-we weren't here three days, he had a job already, was making 40 dollars a week, so we were – were in good shape.

Q: So, did he speak English when you came?

A: No, no. He got a job with somebody that was from the Italian German border, and the guy spoke a little bit German, so they were able to understand each other.

Q: And did you speak English?

A: No.

Q: So what was that like for you, a young bride –

A: In the beginning we started going to Americanization school. In the beginning was very hard, but I will tell you that you always used to find either some people that they spoke Jewish, you speak Yiddish, so the – and –

Q: You speak Yiddish?

A: Yeah, mm-hm, and so does my husband. And he speaks – actually he speaks a little bit Hebrew, much better than I. And di – I don't speak Hebrew, I know how to read Hebrew because I was taught Hebrew like for a – for praying. But we came

here and we got even a room with a German family, a Jewish German family. So right away we were able to converse with them in German. So – because at that time we still spoke a little bit German, now our – my German is very rusty. I still speak a little bit, but in those years we were still much better at it. So we were able to converse with her and she would tell us where to go to the grocery to shop or something like this. So we manage and little by little you – you know what? What happens to you when you – when you – when you have to. I think almost within three months, I started speaking English, so to make myself understood. I mean, I didn't speak like I speak now, but I was able to make myself understand, and so did **Sam**.

Q: What language do you and **Sam** speak together now?

A: Together, English.

Q: English?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: When did you make that switch?

A: I don't know, it came so naturally. It came because when we started going to school – you see, and that's what I started telling you before when you ask me whether most of my friends are survivors a-and – you see, it all depends where you live. If you lived in na – an area like **New York**, where there were a lot of

survivors, you didn't have to learn to speak English, because you could get along on Yiddish – on Jewish, because mo-most of the people that had the little businesses or whatever, you got a job, they were speaking Jewish. And the survivors that you met together, you – they were speaking Jewish or Polish. So we really didn't – they didn't need it. But here in **Washington,** because we had very few survivors in this area that's came from – spoke Polish, you know, so we di – really, we're like forced to – to – y-you have to learn or – or sink. And we did. A-And we didn't like – I bet you it didn't take us less than six months that we were able to make ourselves understood. And most people, that's why I always say that the American people are so wonderful, you know, especially in those years. I will tell you i-i – later on I was thinking to myself how – you know, my English was so bad and yet they tried so hard. They wouldn't **[indecipherable]** from me or anything like that, a-and they tried so hard to like stop and listen to me what I had to tell them or something, you know. So i-it – it really was a pretty – as far as I was concerned, a very pleasant experience. You see, you have to realize, it's one thing when you come to a country when you leave your family at home. You miss them, let's face it. If I would have had my whole family in powl – **Poland**, and I would have come here, I was a young woman and so was my husband, I would have found it, very probably, disturbing. But coming from where we came, with nobody, I had nothing to look back to.

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Q: Did you think a lot about what you had come from?

A: All the time. And you want to know something – but it was interesting to hear once my kids telling me the same thing, what I always thought it's – you know, the minute the war was over, I almost became back like this little girl, except minus the **kashrut**, this little girl that left home – that was taken from home, that I was forced out of from home. I-It was always, whatever I did, it was always as if my parents, especially my mother, as if she was standing in the back of me and like guiding me. And saying no, you – you shouldn't do that, or yes, you could do that. And it was interesting, so help me, I'm not making this up, but my daughter, I have three girls and my middle one was always like a little bit of a rebel. And she had gone to **Israel** for – you know, like for a summer package deal for five weeks. And she came back and you know, I started asking her question, what did you do or something, but she says, Mother, you don't have to worry, it was always – while I was in **Israel**, it was always as if you were standing right in the back of me, so help me. And I said to my – you know, I don't know, is that's how life goes on, the cycle? I said, you know what? That's how I was thinking when I was without my parents. I was thinking that they were in the back of me.

Q: So what kinds of things was your mother telling you?

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A: It wasn't a question what she was telling me, It was a question what you were learning from – from them, what they were doing. You always knew that you shouldn't harm anybody, that you – you should be kind to other people. You always knew that cert – certain things you just didn't do. She didn't have to spell it out to me. I mean, I knew what was expected of me. She didn't just sit me down on my – on my – which, I used to sit on her lap a lot because I was the youngest one in my family, so – a-and she used to like how a – I was 13 years old, I remember she used to keep me – when she hold me on her lap like – like I do sometimes with my grandson who is three or five years old. One five, and one three. I'm just saying. But she kept me like – almost like a baby, you know. But I always remember my mother as being the kindest person that ever lived. And you want kn-kn-know something? If I should have any legacy, even to my children, I always think of it, my children should remember me the way I remember my mother. But of course I lived much longer, so they probably might not, you know, because – you know, as a child you – I mean, how much harm could I do? But I-I had certain values that I knew that I mustn't overstep. A – in – like a – a living with a – with a boyfriend, I knew that was wrong and you just don't do it.

Q: So, was that hard for you when you only had **Sam** and you didn't have anyone else?

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A: Well, event – eventually we did get – you know, even before we got legally married, we did get – like, because we were together, we did get – I – finally I admitted it to my children, you know, because we did get together, but you see, when we were in his hometown, **Kozienice**, there was no rabbi, there were only a couple Jewish families. We took them together and we told it to them that we are getting like married in our own way, not with any ceremonies or anything like that, but they knew that we –

Q: So you had witnesses?

A: Yes, okay, witnesses.

Q: You had witnesses for your commitment.

A: Exactly, exactly, that's what **[indecipherable]** thank you. Next time when I'm asked this question, I'll be able to say that, because I could never figure out what I should call that. But they – as a matter of fact, one of his cousins who later on went to **Belgium** was one of them, you know, she and her husband. That was – and – and there was another couple. And, you know, with the Jews you need to have at least 10 people, you know, but we didn't have. So we, like you said, they were our witnesses for a two hour commitment. And then –

Q: Did you have any kind of prayer associated with meeting with them?

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A: Not – n-not – not at that time, not at that time, but later on, when we decided to do get married in **[indecipherable]** in the displaced persons camp – because you see, while we're struggling around still in **Poland,** it was very hard to do that because we were constantly thinking that we're not going to stay there, definitely, because if not **[indecipherable] Sam** definitely would have gotten killed, because we even heard that somebody was trying to do that. Somebody warned us, and we knew we had to get away from there. And then, when we got to **Germany,** but then heard that my brother was coming, so I told my husband – because I could have gotten – we had plenty witnesses in the – in the **Foehrenwald**, in the displaced persons camp, but I said **Sam**, how can I get married? I-I have only one brother. I have to wait for him. So that's why we waited a little bit longer, but we could have gotten, actually, in a way – I always tell my kids, i-i-it – it took years til I told them that that's what we did, because after all, we were traveling together and we – we didn't get hote – different hotel rooms, you know, so to speak. But yes, I did have my values I took from my family, and all these things that til this day, all the things that we worked for, like Jewish education, because it was very important in our family. Any kind of education, but especially Jewish. And the charity. We were not rich people, but my – I remember my mother always saying, there's always somebody that has less than you, so therefore we have to save something to give it

to them, too. And always was that, always stressed, be – be nice to other people, be kind to other people. Try to do the best with what you've got. And of course I always used to say, I never knew I was poor because nobody ever told me.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's – a matter of fact, i-in school when I went to school, I was one of the kids that used to be dressed very nicely, and you know why? Because we were uni – we were used to wearing uniforms, little like type of – like type of th-things and like an apron, you know. And my mother used to make it for me. She was a wonderful seamstress. So I had really things that were nicer even than maybe some – a lot of rich kids, you know. But I always used to say that a – a – nobody ever told me I was poor, so I never knew it.

Q: Tell me what it was like for you to have children.

A: It was wonderful. It really was wonderful. I – it took me a little while, not because – first of all, I knew I didn't want to have any children in **Germany**, so I waited til I came to the **United States**. And then – by then, I wanted to learn to speak English, to be able to, you know, talk to my kids. So then I – when I had th – I finally had – my oldest daughter was born in – in August of '51.

Q: So you'd been here how long?

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A: I was here almost four years, you know, in August ’51 and I was actually four years here. I wa –

Q: Did you work before your daughter was born?

A: Yes, uh-huh, I wor – or worked as a seamstress. I knew how to sew enough to do work in – not in that camp, not in **Foehrenwald**. Later on, when we left the – the displaced persons camp, after we got married and my br – when my brother was there, he got a girlfriend from **Stuttgart** and it was too hard for him to come – to go to **Stuttgart** and to go to visit me. So he was torn between. So we decided to leave the displaced persons camp and we moved to **Stuttgart**. And while in **Stuttgart** they had the – what it’s called – it’s a very worthwhile organization, it’s called **ORT.** They teach you how to make a living. They teach you how to use skills. It’s really wonderful. It – actually **ORT** is doing this kind of work now all over the world, not just for Jews because now Jews go to colleges and they – they’re what –

Q: So it’s like a trade school.

A: Exactly. And I learned really to sew over there. I mean, I always knew how to sew because I told you, my mother was a seamstress and we always ar – had a machine, a sewing machine at home, and I always say ar – I used to be br – I probably got born with a needle in my hand, because I always liked to sew, and so when I came over to this country and I wanted to get a job, naturally I – as a matter

of fact when I came to **New York** and I met my uncle, and it's interesting, because when my uncle came to pick us up and he was looking around, you know, we were – when we got off the ship and we were in – in this big hall with – there must have been thousands of people, I picked out my uncle. I never saw him alive. The man looked exactly around his eyes like my mother. I said, that must be him. I never even saw a picture of him – I didn't remember. I'm sure I must have seen it, but you know, a kid looks at a picture of some uncle that lives in **New York** that she never saw, didn't pay any attention. But I picked him out. I walked over to him, and sure enough it was my uncle. But my uncle was a tailor, he had a tailor shop in **Manhattan**. Had one of the finest tailor shops in **Manhattan**, he and a partner. They used to make clothing for **J. Edgar Hoover**. I mean, in those years when we came over to this country, my uncle's suits used to cost like about f – between 500 and seven - 800 dollars. I mean, unbelievable. Everything was handmade. So when I came – and of course I found my uncle, he showed me how to use an electric sewing machine, I never used it. So when I came to **Washington,** I already knew how to use an electric sewing machine, so I knew, so I actually got a job right away at that place here, and then I switched to another place and I worked til my daughter was almost born.

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Q: Do you know the book by the daughter of a refugee from a survivor from **Czechoslovakia** and the daughter – it came out a couple of years ago – the daughter wanted to trace her ancestors in **Czechoslovakia** and trace them through her mother's clients.

A: Did – did she just recently write this book, or –

Q: Yes.

A: Is that by **Helen** –

Q: Yes, **Helen** somebody.

A: – **Helen Epstein**?

Q: Yes, that's the one.

A: Okay, okay, I will tell you. I have a little bit an argument with **Helen Epstein**, I should **[indecipherable]**. I mean I – I argue with her in my heart, not in a – when her first book came out, I really felt ve – offended.

Q: I – I – I heard her speak about the book I mention –

A: Lately, lately –

Q: Yeah, what was the ba – I –

A: This other book –

Q: – what was the first book about, I can't – don't remember.

A: The book – the first book what she wrote, she wrote something about how children of survivors are messed up kids.

Q: Oh.

A: You know, they really –

Q: Yeah, I remember.

A: – they have big problems.

Q: Yeah.

A: They – you know, and I was thinking to myself – by then I was already older. My kids, thanks God I have three daughters that weren't messed up. All right, so maybe somebody needs a little bit of a psychiatrist, who doesn't? I – I have friends that were American born and they have problems with children. I mean, you – you can't put that he – I hate when people like put me in a – in a category. I figured I had it already. You know, I went through the category. I was Jewish, I was a woman, I wasn't old enough to go in into – into the camp, I had to have different papers, my – I mean, I – I was already put into so many categories, I didn't like to be. So I wer – resented her. But because I felt like, if you want to write about your own life, it's fine. Maybe you have a problem with your mother, or whatever, you're entitled to it. But don't say that all the survivors' kids – because when you look around, it's just the opposite, to the contrary. I think survivors' kids are very

well adjusted kids. They – they've done wonders. Or okay, maybe we helped them a little bit, but you can't help a kid unless they can help themselves. They all – most of them are professionals, or if they are not, they do something, they're really very worthwhile citizens. And the way she put in that book – but this book that she went on this journey, I think she must have come to terms with her mother or whatever, because she went to find from where she came and she found out that her mother wasn't such a horrible person, and she made that up, that she was, in her mind she assumed that because her mother, you know, maybe didn't do certain things for her, that she figured all the kids of survivors are no good. So I had a little bit of a problem, but no, I – as a matter of fact, I would love to get ahold of that book. They – they had a write-up about this book in one of the – I think maybe **"Newsweek"** magazine or in one of them. And I read it, but there wasn't so much written, but I always wanted to get this book out and read about it, because for the only reason that I wanted to read it, because I wanted to change my mind about this **Helen Epstein**. So this – I had my own little beef with her, that I felt like, don't put all survivors there, just like I'm not going to put that all survivors get a ba – as a matter of fact, I think the survivors' kids tried so much harder.

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: Because they knew like we went through a lot, so they tried to make our life a little bit easier. I mean, I find it so – I – I used to re-resent this kind of thing.

Q: Do you find that a lot, that you are put into a category?

A: Not any more, but we – in a way, we used to be. You know, I never – you see, here again, I think because I lived in **Washington** and because I had different friends, I was exposed to different friends and I – also I will tell you, I have two cousins here. Well, one passed away. But I had two wonderful cousins. My mother, apparently, this brother that lived in **New York**, had another brother who lived in **Washington.** And he passed away, but he left offsprings. So he had two daughters and three boys. It d – the others lived in – one in **Baltimore**, in different places and with the boys I never got that close, only one. But with the two women, the cousins, I became very friendly, we became like a family. As a matter of fact, I have my cousin's daughter, who is my second cousin, is like the best cousin I've ever ha – you know, really, she's just wonderful. And we keep so much, so maybe my family, in a way, were very nice to us. I think some survivors experience a little bit like this, oh you went through what you went through, maybe it was a lot your fault. You know, it – some people looked at it that way –

Q: Mm-hm.

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A: – in the beginning – I'm not saying now, before people found out what had gone – was going on. And – but my family was very nice to us. They accepted us the way we were, with our broken English, and maybe that helped me a little bit look on things with a little bit rosier glasses. And I had wonderful friends. Not only the survivors, the others. I-I had some very intelligent friends. As a matter of fact one just left for **Hungary** and – and she lives in **Austin, Texas** now and she just left for **Czechoslovakia** and **Hungary.** And she called me before she left, she wanted me to know, because she knew that I will enjoy hearing from her, that she is going to visit these two countries that had such also tragedy, you know, with the Jewish people. And some others, very inter – I used to always like oh, I had one friend, she – they live now in **Florida.** And I used to always say, oh **Mildred**, I wish I was intelligent as you are, as educated. She says, **Regina**, you've got more education, in a way, that any of us could ever get. You have life education. You we – I – I listen to you sometimes when you talk. I like to hear and I like to take your **[indecipherable]** advice, because you – we always know that you won't steer us the wrong way. So don't look at it that way. Think of yourself that you are very important. So they always try to build me up, but it wa – so maybe that's why I always had a little bit a – a better outlook on things, because I think when you being, you know, all right, we were kicked around plenty ee – oh – in **Europe,** over there. But when I came

here and I wasn't kept on being kicked around, I kind of like – it was almost like my healing process. So I figured hey, I belong back to the human race, or something like this.

Q: How do you take the situation over in **Yugoslavia** currently?

A: Mm-hm, well, it's – for awhile there, you know, I thought oh my goodness, the world just sitting back and doing nothing. But I will tell you, the way I look at it now, I – that the world has learned a little bit from us. It's true that we paid a very, very big price, because let's face it, nobody, nobody gave us a hand or anything. It's a matter of fact, not only didn't they give us a hand, they put stumbling blocks, you know, in our way. No – a – I told you we were – we were rescued by – by railroad tracks that were broken. They could have done that, the same thing in **Auschwitz**. Like we used to sit in **Auschwitz** and think of it when we would see a plane fly by, we would say, why can't they send a plane and just drop a couple bombs? Not on us, we didn't want to get killed, but just on the railroad tracks, to slow them down. Just slow them down. But never happened. So I feel that the world, in a way, has learned a little bit **[indecipherable]**. But it also, as bad as it is, and believe me, no matter what child gets killed, for whatever reason, it doesn't make any different, it's still somebody's child that it's killed and it – no reason. But you know, in – in **Yugoslavia** it was a completely different story. People wanted territory. They wa –

they wanted – but with us they didn't gain that they have – if they killed those people they will gain something. With us, they – they wi – had no gain with us. The only gain they got that maybe they – they stole some pictures or some art or some money or something like this. But basically by – by displacing us, or killing us, they didn't gain anything by it, it was just for the sake of killing. But of course, I don't – you know, I don't like to see what it's going on there.

Q: Just – do you think more about what happened to you during this period? What everything –

A: Well, when I – when I see in the paper I always – I kind of compare how everybody's aware what's going on there, as compared to those years that nobody supposedly knew what was going on except in the high hierarchy, you know. But the ee – ee – I'm always concerned what was go – what's going on in this world. I think it's – it's – i – the minute it affects any human being, it affects me too, to a certain degree. But as far as do I remember more what had happened to me when I see this? No, because I always – they don't have – they don't have to do that mussel – what's his name? The guy –

Q: **Milosevic.**

A: **Milosevic** doesn't have to do it for me to remind me, because I remember what go – went on with us all the time.

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Q: All the time?

A: All the time.

Q: So it's always somewhere in your mind.

A: Oh, there's no question about that. I can be, you know, dancing away and something and all of a sudden my **[indecipherable]** I will think, wouldn't that be wonderful if our parents could be here. Or in, you know –

Q: Wouldn't it be wonderful if what?

A: If our parents could be here.

Q: Oh.

A: You know, just to see, you know, like when we have a – when my kids got wedding – were getting married and when my grandchildren had **Bar** or **Bat Mitzvahs**, you know? Would have been so wonderful but for the grandparent to be able to come to their child's **Bar Mitzvah** or **Bat Mitzvah**. My sister actually – you know when – when she knew that she was pregnant, she made up her mind that is she is going to have a little boy – you know, in those years they didn't know ahead of time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She was not going to circumcise him, because circumcision was in **Poland** was mainly done by Jews. Not – the Polish kids were not circumcised. But you know

what, when the baby was born, she couldn't bring herself to do that. That's when you ask me how did you think, you know. Look my sister and she was older and she might have known that we're into much more trouble than I did. Sh – when I saw what she – she is preparing to have the baby circumcise, I said you said you – if we're gonna – if you're gonna have a little boy that you're not gonna do it. She says, I can't do it. She – it's for – it was my parents' first grandchild. She says, I can't to it. And they couldn't even come to the city because they were already in the ghetto in **Radom** and they couldn't come. But she still couldn't bring herself to do something against my parents' wishes. I don't say look, I-I-I'm not going to say had she known what's going to happen really that she had – wouldn't have done it, but at the time, she knew maybe that it's gonna be dangerous, but she figured she's gotta cope with it.

Q: We have to turn over the tape.

A: Yeah, oh boy.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Regina Spiegel**, tape number two, side **B.** Mrs.

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Spiegel, I changed the subject when you started to talk about your children and what it was like for you to have children and grandchildren.

A: Mm-hm, well to have my children, it was really a wonderful feeling. All of a sudden I realize that what he started out to do, **Hitler**, he wanted to really eliminate the Jews, and here were two survivors, we have three wonderful daughters, they're married and we have eight grandchildren. And this is our really immortal less – like our revenge to **Hitler**. You wanted to do away with us. Look, we're here. And they're all going into – you know, let's put it this way, I'm very proud of my kids. They are going in the footsteps, so to speak, of their forefathers. You know, like they're all very active in organizational work, do a lot of – for their synagogues. My son-in-law and my daughter practically built their synagogue on their own in **Columbia, Maryland**. My daughter in **Tucson, Arizona** is very active with her husband in her synagogue, and a lot of other organizations. So this – regardless what I have done, when I see my kids are doing that, I figure I can take it easy. So in a way, by watching us through the years, they – you know, they picked up our lead and they doing that – this. And I myself, you know, I work at – as a volunteer at the museum and I've been asked lots of times, how – how can you work here? I mean, especially what you have gone through, to sit here? And I said, you know what? This museum was really not built for me, because I carry the museum with

me all the time. It was built, really, for other people to learn what had gone – what had gone on, and hopefully that they gonna learn something from it. And as far as I'm concerned, I always say when they ask me how can you work there, I said, how can I not? To me it's almost my life. I work for the museum, I give money to the museum. I mean, it's very important for me to – the museum should be in existence.

Q: When did you begin working at the museum?

A: I started working for the museum way before the museum was built, when it was still – the offices they had on **Ell**(ph) Street, I used to go whenever they had some people that wanted to learn a little bit more about it and to raise, which in the beginning was really mostly raising money, because how do you put up this building? By raising money because they got the land for the – for the to – the land where to put it on, but to put it on cost a lot of money.

Q: So you were active in raising money?

A: Absolutely. It's a – it's – matter of fact, my little cousin that I told you, she and I had a, in my home, right here, a – a what they called it, a parlor meeting, where you invite a lot of friends and relatives and of course, you ask them for money. And we raised money through this way. My daughter in her place in **Columbia**, she and her friends, she made – gave a parlor meeting for the museum and raised money for the

museum. So we worked for the museum way, way before the museum was even in existence.

Q: And how did you and the museum know about each other before it was in existence so that you got started –

A: You know, it's – it's only work them out. First of all, I'm also active in the Jewish – the Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Friends of Greater **Washington.** We have an organization here and as a matter of fact when the museum was opened, I was president of that organization. Now I'm an officer, but we have a group that we keep up this organization, and th-they – if you're interested and if you know that we can help you out a little bit, you find us. And th-they found us. They – they – they knew about us and they got in touch with us and so we spoke on their behalf. And to this day I still do and that – as you know, my job is with the development department. I still raise money.

Q: Now what do you do now with the development department?

A: Yeah, development department is – I – I am on the for membership and donation. I sit at the desk and hopefully –

Q: This is the desk on the fir – ground floor.

A: On the ground floor next to the – the visitors – you know, where people ask the information.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So i-if you come to the desk what a – you – I try to tell you a little bit about it, to let you know what the museum does. And most of the time if you come to the desk we'll hope that you gonna leave us some money. And we try to – you know, to help you along to understand why you should leave some money, why it's so important for the museum to stay open.

Q: And how often do you work at the desk?

A: Well, you see that – okay, I work at the desk one – one day a week.

Q: A full day or a half day?

A: Yes, a full day.

Q: A full day.

A: I come in 10 o'clock and I li – leave about four. But I also work in – with the communications department, which is the educational department. Let's say –

Q: Is that another day that you go in?

A: Oh, of course. I-I don't particular go in there. Let's say I went to someplace in – in **New Jersey** to a school, who – a teacher who took – was with the museum on this – they have the bulf **-- Balfour** scholarship that they bring teachers, **Balfour** fellow, and the – oh, what's this – I don't want, I can't think of it, of the name right now, but it was actually in **New Jersey** that I went, somebody, one of the teachers

that was at this conference and she called **[indecipherable]** and wanted to have a survivor to come and talk to her class. And I went, as a matter of fact with **John Minnick** about two weeks ago, per – le-left on a Monday, we came back Tuesday. So you see, it's two days. I don't always particular do it in the museum. However, when they have the – these things with the teachers, the **Balfour** and what's the other one? It's – I'm embarrassed I can't think of the m – maybe it will come to me. It's a fellowship, you know, that they get th-the teachers to come to – and they teach them how to teach the Holocaust in other schools. And I speak to them lots of times as a survivor. They like it. As a matter of fact, if we had time I could show you some letters that I have gotten from some of these teachers, how they express how it's – it's – it's so wonderful that what they have learned, and what the museum, how it's wonderful, but however, just listening to a survivor makes it all to them so real that they put a – a very big emphasis on having a survivor. This one tea- teachers' conf – conference did specify that, said that they should use this more often.

Q: So you – is this the – one of the primary things you do with communications, going to the schools and speaking –

A: Y-Yes, we speaking as a –

Q: – to the students.

A: – yeah. Students and also to teachers, yes. All –

Q: So you speak to groups of teachers –

A: Yeah, mm-hm, yes – yeah –

Q: – on how to teach, or –

A: Not so much how to teach –

Q: – or just –

A: – what was going on.

Q: – the same kind of testimony –

A: They sh – yes, they should learn, because I – I am not equipped to tell them how to teach.

Q: Okay. So, it's similar to –

A: – exactly.

Q: – speaking to the students.

A: Exactly, exactly. Yes, yeah, but we – she doesn't tell me here that it's the **Balfour – Balfour** the – what's that, it's such an easy name to remember. No, like this, we were just a – in **New Jersey** and one of the teachers wrote me a wer – you know, send me pictures, you know, I don't like the pictures, but she send them to me.

Q: So you do a l – and have done a lot of speaking?

A: A l – a lot of speaking. I do a lot of speaking and that takes up a lot of my time, too.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I-I go to schools, I go from the museum and I also go from my own, where I – before the mu – museum was even in existence, we used to have, from our organization, a speakers bureau where s –

Q: From the Greater **Washington** Survivors organization?

A: Yes, mm-hm, yes, and they would di – call us and we would go, we would send out some people. We had some particular people that we knew that they are pretty, you know, they are co – they don't mind speaking. Because a lots of times some survivors don't like to talk about it. So we – we – we did that even before, so I have still a lot of schools that do that. They call me back year after year that – to come back to – to this school.

Q: Do students always ask the same questions or do you get some different questions?

A: No, different – different questions all the time, it's a –

Q: What kinds of things do the students ask you?

A: Well, almost – one thing one of the kids wanted to know whether – after the war, how my thoughts were after the war, whether I otherwise – whether a – I – I was

still thinking as if I was in the camp, or I started thinking like a free person. It's a – it's – it's interesting to listen to them.

Q: How old was that child?

A: That child was already a little bit older, she was 17.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I have had kids tell me – a 13 year old kid told me once that while she was listening to me she was thinking how lucky she was, that her children might not have a chance to listen to a survivor. And when I – when she finished telling me, I said how old are you? And she – when she told me she was 13, I almost flipped. I couldn't believe it that a kid at 13 would have such insight in somebody's – you know, to even think about it. And this she thought about it while I was talking, so –

Q: Do you remember any other experiences with these students?

A: With the students?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: All the time. Like when you ask me about, you know, how I felt when I had the kids, but one school – I was – it – as a matter of fact it was the American university, it was a university. And when I came back – you see, in 1975 my husband and I went with a **UJA** mission to – back to **Auschwitz**. And to, you know, kind of confront it. And when I came back, one – when I was talking, one of the students

ask me – he said, Mrs. **Spiegel**, you were – you were telling us that you had such a – you went through such a terrible period of your life, and now you're telling me you're married and you have three children – at that time I had only my three girls, I didn't have yet grandchildren. He said, how come you brought in children into this world? And I stopped and thought about it and I said, you know what? I never thought about it. I-I-It was a natural – I got married, we wanted to have a family. I-It was like a natural thing to do. But now that you ask me, I will tell you why. I said, what you actual expected me to do is really, I would have given victory to **Hitler**, because that's what he started out to do, and then, after I would have died, we wouldn't have left anybody. So what – you wa – I would be helping him out. I mean, not that I thought about it when I was having children, but now that you ask me, I'm thinking about it. And he said, you know what? I can see your point. I never thought about it. It always bothered me. Because he apparently was from **New York** and he knew a lot of survivors, and he was always wondering why are those people having children. He said, it always bothered me, why would you bring in children into this world. But now he said, thank you for explaining it to me, because you're right, I never thought of it.

Q: What age group is your favorite to speak to?

A: To speak to?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Actually, you know what? Sometimes it's junior high, because they asks questions without stop. But I have one group who is really – fifth graders and – because I usually don't like to speak to such young kids. Of course, I use it a little bit different. I always say, I make life beautiful, you know, like this movie, **"Life is Beautiful?"** I make it a little bit it shouldn't be so hard on the young kids. But this teacher also was taking a course how to s – teach the Holocaust. And I spoke to the teachers and she called me to come to speak to her kids. And I said how – what grade are they in? She says fifth graders. I said fifth graders, I'm sorry. I would rather not speak to them because I think they're too young. Call me when they get into high s – you know, junior high school. She said, I will tell you what, Mrs. **Spiegel**, I'll make a deal with you. You come to me one time and if you won't agree with that these kids are ready, then next time when I call you, you may hang up on me. I – I went to her this last March I went to her, that's already the fifth time. Because she really does. She has learned a lot about the Holocaust – the teacher, and she really prepares those kids so beautifully that they ask questions, I want to tell you that for an hour, she leaves a special hour just for questions and answers. These kids – I can't leave ti – they follow me. I spoke just at this school, a Catholic school, they **[indecipherable]** and they gave me a **[indecipherable]**, excuse me.

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Q: We'll turn off the tape while Mrs. **Spiegel** is looking for something. **[tape break]** – is back talking about – Mrs. **Spiegel** is back talking about what she was looking for.

A: In – except I couldn't find it. Must be in the washing machine – in the – in the – in the dishwasher. A – I went to this Catholic school. I understand that **Caroline Kennedy** went to that school. It – it's a – a beautiful school. These kids, there must have been like about 300 kids. I want to tell you that they asked questions that was unbelievable. When I was leaving, they were following me. I said to them, you know, I feel like the Pied Piper, you know, with the kids following me around, except I was really in a hurry because I had to get to the museum, it was on a Wednesday, so I wanted to get to the museum for work, so I didn't want to spend so much time. I said, you will have to make it another time. But they do ask very good questions, I'm always very pleased. Now I realize I'm not stupid enough to think that I can change everybody's mind, but I realize that it does – it does – if I change even one kid a little bit to think a little bit differently about bigotry and hatred, then I always feel like maybe my work is paying off. In this one – another school was the Good Counsel, the high school. That was also – Our Lady of Good Counsel, that's the one on **Georgia** Avenue. Very – also wonderful class. Some are – as a matter of fact –

A2: **Georgetown Prep**.

A: – I speak for **Georgetown Prep**, that's right. **Georgetown Prep**, for the last like – I think last time when I went there I think he introduced me as coming there eight year, you know, so I do speak a lot.

Q: Now you have a certificate here, Woman of Achievement and you s – told me that you'd received other awards.

A: Yes –

Q: Do you want – can you talk about them?

A: Well, I received an award of – from the United Jewish Appeal, because when we went with this group to the – to the – to **Auschwitz** and they really kind of appreciated what we did for them that – because it's very hard, when you go to these camps to visit, it's very hard, it's very helpful when they have a survivor there. See somebody, that somebody came out alive, because when you go there you think everybody is dead. So that's –

Q: Now, who was on this trip?

A: There were – there were people from all over the **United States**.

Q: So it – y – were you the only – you and **Sam** the only survivors?

A: Yes, uh-huh –

Q: Okay.

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A: – yeah, yeah. So we got from them an achievement award and of course from the Jewish Theological Seminary, because I've worked for them the last 30 years, through the synagogue raised – also raised money. And – I also – my husband and I go on the March of the Living. You know, this is a – we take a – a group of children, especially through the **B'nai B'rith.** It's the – the **B'nai B'rith** Youth Organization. You got – they get the – the young people, between ages 16 and 18 and they take him to **Poland** and then **Israel**. And we've been going on it since 19 – since 1994. We've gone '94 - '96 - '97 - '98 and they called us already for year 2000. And I told them, can't promise for sure. If our health is gonna be okay, we're gonna go up with them. They take like about – altogether there are about six to 7,000 kids. Six to 7,000 kids, but – six to 7,000 kids but we – or not – on – with us – with the **B'nai B'rith** we have between 350 and 400 kids. **Sam** is showing off the – all these goodies that I –

Q: Okay, why don't you sh – give them to **Regina** and she can –

A: Yeah.

Q: – tell the microphone about them.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Because the microphone can't see them.

A: Yeah.

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Q: So **Regina –** let – let **Regina** describe them.

A: Yeah. Oh. This – this was one of the pictures from the March of the Living. This was one –

Q: Can you describe the picture?

A: The picture is – this is a group from my bus, which they are, some of them – this is me and there's – someplace is sa – **Sam** is here, and these are the leaders from the group. They are le – what they call **Madrachim** from the – from the group, from the **B'nai B'rith**. This was the year, I think this was actually '94. The – the four them – thi – was April fourth – 7th, '94 that we went on this – this was our first trip and we had – they were a marvelous experience and the things we get back from the kids – as a matter of fact, just recently I went, during the **Yom HaShoah**, one of the kids from one of these trips attends **Georgetown** University here. And she had prepared a program for commemoration of the Holocaust for **Georgetown** University and she asked me to come be the speaker there, and the kids were just absolutely wonderful. I mean, they are not such kids, they are already college kids, they're probably 19 - 20 years old, but the – I guess they felt so like I was that age almost when I came out. And this is one that I was just also spoke at the **Aberdeen** Proving Grounds, you know, with the soldiers. And I think I told you I happened to be there April 20th, and the soldiers gave me an ovation because it was the day when

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I actually was almost like liberated, that was it. And this was in – in – oh, this is from – for the **United States** Army Material Command to – that I was a speaker on April, 1993. You know, all these things **[indecipherable]**. Here is one that – oh, on the **Woodbridge** campus at the University of **Virginia**, I was just recently a speaker. I go there, it's probably already the fourth of fifth year that I go there. I happen to know this professor that works there and she calls me every year. So I go. So as I say, I do a lot of this kind of work where in the evening lots of times, so that's the on – that's the reason I only do it once a week in the museum, because if I worked long – more time, I wouldn't have any time to do this and I feel like this is also very important to do this and – oh, and this is – this we got from **Miles Lehrman**, an appreciation certificate for, you know, because for our work. And this is also that I was president of the **[indecipherable]** yeah, of the survivors – Holocaust survivors, when I stepped down as president, because after being so many years, you can't keep on being the president counc –

Q: How many years were you the president?

A: Probably – was it like about three or four years? You know, at least three years. But you see, the reason I don't remember exactly, because even when I stepped down, I was doing just as much work, cause –

Q: That can happen.

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A: Yeah, so it didn't make any difference, it just – except we switched the ranks, so to speak because I – basically we have a nucleus of certain people that do the work and we feel like we can't be – somebody else doesn't want to step in, so we feel like, between us, we'll do it. So we take every time somebody else's job so it shouldn't be constantly in the same job.

Q: Well, you've certainly told us a lot. What else would you like to say, or what have I not asked you?

A: No, you have asked me quite a bit. The only thing what I do want to say, that I do – I always like to finish with a – that I am really grateful to this country, that no matter what they did before, they could have done much more, but once it was over that I'm really grateful to this country that they did let us come into this place, because I love the **United States**. I really do. I feel like – I feel like – like I've never been born in **Poland**, except – this is my country. I feel much more towards the **United States** than towards the country that I was born in. And I'm grateful. I have a very good life here and my husband made a very good living and we raised a wonderful family and wonderful kids and we're really very grateful t-to God and to this country for letting us in to – to do the work and we hope to be able to do the work as long as we – we can go on. That's the main thing. And we appreciate you coming and listening to me, too.

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Q: Well thank you very much for doing this. This concludes the unite – did you want to say something?

A: No.

Q: This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Regina Spiegel.**

End of Tape Two, Side B

Conclusion of Interview