United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Flory Jagoda
January 12, 2004
RG-50.549.02*0073

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Flory Jagoda, conducted by Nina Ellis on January 12, 2004 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Alexandria, Virginia and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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.

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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: Okay, this is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Flory Jagoda, conducted by Nina Ellis on January 12th, 2004, in Alexandria, Virginia. This interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's post-Holocaust interview project, and it's a follow up to an interview -- to a USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Flory Jagoda in 1995. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. I want to go back to your wedding in Italy in 1945. And you said in your interview at that time that you were very eager to come to the United States, that --

Answer: I was what?

Q: You were very eager to come to --

A: Eager, sure.

Q: -- come to the U.S..

A: Sure.

Q: And I would like to know what did the United States represent to you at that time, and why were -- were you eager to come for reasons other than just accompanying your husband?

A: Well, the main -- one word that can cover it all is just freedom. That would be all it is, freedom. The rest is, yes I came here with somebody I fell in love with. I was too young to calculate, is this gonna be better for me, let me get away from here. I still loved Europe, and my parents were there, so it was very hard to leave my parents. But coming here, it's freedom. Freedom to think and freedom just to walk, and not to be afraid.

Q: And when you came to the U.S., where did you live?

A: With my mother-in-law.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: A very, very charming little woman we called -- everybody called her Bubby, and definitely she spoke only Yiddish to me. I mean, I was from Europe, I was Jewish, I spoke Yiddish, and that was it. There was no way that anybody could tell her, well no, she does not speak Yiddish. She see a Jewish little girl, she speaks Yiddish.

Q: Oh. And where was this, in what city?

A: That's in Youngstown, Ohio.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: And -- and was your husband going out every day going to work and you were at home with her?

A: Oh yes. I had many interests I brought with me, and I will never probably lose them, that was one was my accordion, and two I did paint. So I went -- I went to a local museum, and I join a class. That is how I spend my -- the beginning of my life in America. And definitely playing the accordion.

Q: Publicly?

A: Well, the moment people knew I play, I was invited to play.

Q: Hm.

A: I didn't sing, I just play.

Q: Hm. And what was your life like the first few years you were here?

A: Youngstown, Ohio? Very primitive, very closed -- closed in, with not too many friendships. Nothing really going, but we were in Youngstown only a year, then we moved to Dayton, Ohio. From Dayton, Ohio, we were invited to see the capital of the United States, Washington, D.C. -- that was a friend of my h-husband. And I fell in love with that city, I said this is where I want to live. And my husband was very understanding and said, sure, that’s where we going to live. We came here, started from scratch.

Q: Was he still in the service?

A: No, no, he was out of the service, trying all kind of jobs, as all the service people, when they c-come out of the army, til he settled down and started building business. Th-This was his family's trade, construction and building.

Q: And when you were in Youngstown and then in Dayton, did you attend synagogue there?

A: Ye-ye -- not too much. I did go with Bubby on holidays. She was very religious at home. So I more or less realized that even if they speak Yiddish, they're still a Jewish family. So that made me feel better.

Q: Mm-hm. And did you -- did you talk to other people, maybe other -- other survivors, or did people know your story?

A: There were no survivors, no, there were nobody -- there was really nobody from Europe in Youngstown, Ohio when I came. I was the only one and sort of was a little -- sort of a city story, this little girl came from Italy, a survivor and Holocaust and all that stuff.

Q: And did you feel isolated --

A: Yes.

Q: -- or lonely?

A: Yes, yes --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- very. Very much, and I was expecting my parents, that was the biggest pain, because I was promised that -- that they would come, and mic -- I could bring them, and it was very slow, so that was kind of tough, to wait.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Beside that I had -- I have Betty and that was already Washington, D.C., and I had Betty and the life started the other way around.

Q: She was the first?

A: She was the first, mm-hm.

Q: Uh-huh. What year --

A: And then -- wa -- once I came to Washington, D.C., it was a different change. Even the first neighbor I had, she had -- she loved music, and so -- and I played music for her. See, my whole life, it will be in your paper, all connected by music.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I mean all -- all -- always looked for somebody who plays or sings, so we have something in common, because it started with my Nonna, you know.

Q: Mm-hm. And -- and were you playing the old songs from -- from Europe?

A: I was playing pop songs from Italy, honestly.

Q: Huh.

A: Or folk songs from Yugoslavia. But I lived in Italy three years, so that's where I picked up a -- a lot of pop music, from Italy.

Q: Hm, hm. And this -- wh -- what -- what year, more or less, did you come to the States?

A: Oh, we're talking about, let's see --

Q: I mean, did you come to Washington?

A: Wash -- Washington, let's see, Betty was -- oh, it's 50 -- Betty is 55. So we got to 55.

Q: Mm-hm. And this was in the early -- see, if she's 55, this was 1949 - '50.

A: Yeah, because I -- I got married '45 in Italy, '46 I came here -- '47 almost. Then it was Youngstown a year, Dayton couple years. Something like that, but [indecipherable] little less than 55.

Q: In -- in those small places in the Midwest, were there other Jews, and -- or did you experience --

A: You're talking Youngstown, Ohio?

Q: And Dayton, yeah.

A: Oh, they have three synagogues.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were mostly p -- Polish Russian -- mostly eastern Europe.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: The majority of them were eastern Europe, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: All of them spoke Yiddish. And some never even -- I mean, the majority didn't even know what Sephardic is. They had no idea what Sephardic is. And I lived with that very uncomfortably.

Q: Why?

A: Well, that's what made me sort of feel very nostalgic for what I left, that I considered the -- to be Jewish. See, I came from the complete different community where I really spoke Spanish. That was their Jewish language.

Q: Mm-hm. Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And all of a sudden here you are hearing a German sound, and I can hurt, just a German word would drive me crazy.

Q: Really?

A: And it was all around me, all the company that came to visit, all the -- all the friendships, was all Yiddish.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So my big plus was that I spoke German in school, you see, in Zagreb where I went to school, you spoke German. I mean, you studied German. That was the language that is really a daily lesson.

Q: Mm-hm. So you could speak it, but you didn't want to hear it.

A: The sound was scary. The sound was frightening.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Then later, I mean, I saw then I -- I came April nine, the Pesach, Passover was the -- the end of the month. My God, I saw the customs were the same, but the melodies were different. That again I was very nostalgic ab -- for the -- for the melodies.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: See, of -- of prayers.

Q: During those years in the Midwest, before you came to Washington, even though there were Jewish communities in both Youngstown and Dayton, did you experience any anti-Semitism there?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, I did not, because I didn't -- I didn't have a contact with outside people from family, and family friends. I didn't make these kind of friendships.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So there was -- no, I didn't.

Q: And what -- what year then did your mother and father come -- stepfather.

A: Well, we went to -- t-to Washington, we lived in Washington, Betty was born 1947. I guess around '49 - '50 they arrived to Washington, D.C..

Q: Had they been in Italy that whole time?

A: Yes, yes, they were in Italy, in fact, they were going to stay in Italy. They -- they felt at home, they learned the language already and my father started a little necktie business, and she was sewing for people, and they were -- they were very comfortable in Italy. Italians are nice people. They're great people, they helped us a lot.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: A lot. So Italian people, I mean, when I think home, I m -- actually, I really think Italy more then Yugoslavia because that's where the problems started, so it left bad feeling, see? Bad memories.

Q: Mm-hm. And what was the adjustment like for them coming here? They must have been in their 50's or so by that time. It must have been harder for them.

A: Yes, they were 50's, the adjustment was very tough, it was all me, me. It was me and my children, that was their whole life. They didn't speak the language, there were no other -- there were about four or five families in Baltimore. And we used to drive them there on weekends, and then they had a good time. But it was lonely, just me and my children, that's all they had.

Q: Mm.

A: Children. At the beginning just the one baby --

Q: Right.

A: -- when they came.

Q: And did your father work?

A: Well, they were -- th-th-they were very independent, very proud, and my mother started sewing. We lived in an apartment building in Arlington, and all my neighbors knew my family arrived. They went to -- right away to the immigration school, to English school. They take the bus to town, study English, learn English, broken English. My father found a job, Mayflower Hotel in the kitchen. And she end up with a job with Pearl Kirsner of Connecticut Avenue, sewing, alterations. And they got themselves an apartment, N Street, Washington, D.C., very proud and happy, and old [indecipherable] place. And had a life of their own, which they wanted, they were very proud. [indecipherable]

Q: That's quite an accomplishment to come at that age and start over.

A: Oh yeah, very proud. Well, survivor. That word means a lot, a survivor. A survivor has that touch to continue to survive. So it was in them, it was in me, and then -- then -- this is how it is. Most of the -- I don't know how many you meet, but maybe you hear that kind of a story. A survivor learns how to fight to go on. Fight for anything to continue. My music as -- as my story is, or continue go to school beca -- continue be a doctor, which is a hard school to go through, I know.

Q: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. In -- in the 50's there was what they were -- were calling the red scare, here in the U.S..

A: What kind of scare?

Q: The red scare.

A: Yeah.

Q: And the hearings in the -- in the Senate about a -- you know, the anticommunism hearings, and lots of concern about communism infiltrating the U.S.. What kinds of conversations did you all have about your former homeland, where communism had taken root in some form?

A: A lot of our dear family went the communist way, the partisans --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- went to -- to the mountains, fought. For that time a -- that time in life, in their life, that's the only thing they could do. Again we go back to survival.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's not always that the idea is born in you. It becomes part of you because of the circumstances around you.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So that's what I remember. In fact, when we were interned in the Korcula, an island not far from Split, all my friends went to the mountains to be partisans. All of them.

Q: Yeah. And you yourself had made that decision --

A: The only thing I did [indecipherable] back is because my father went to Split to exchange my little accordion for the big accordion, and I couldn't leave my mother alone. And she screamed don't leave, don't leave and they just left, all of them, the whole -- the whole bunch of young people. It was all around you, it's not what you are, it's what you become.

Q: And after -- in the 50's, were -- did you hear from any family members or people back there, were you in correspondence with people that you knew?

A: No. [indecipherable]

Q: No, nobody.

A: No, there was no connection with anybody. 42 of them in Vlasenica, in that little city, a mountain village.

Q: Yeah.

A: And later on, as you know the story what -- I found what happened to them.

Q: Mm-hm. What about anybody in Zagreb, or anybody -- friends?

A: Zagreb, yes I knew some families that were in Barre, where most all of them escaped and ran away to Barre. Not really personal contact, no. It was mostly Americans.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Especially after I had my second child, when Betty was already, I think two and a half, I wanted to be American in the worst way. I wanted to cook American, I

named my children -- Betty Lou, she hates that name. But -- she hates that name. But that's what sounded good in America to me, hm. So I sort of didn't -- didn't even try to keep in touch with my people, as much as I wanted to be American mother. PTAs, you name it, I was right in it.

Q: Mm-hm. And --

A: I mean, that was -- would be the beginning of your interview, how we adjust. We're just really loving this country, want to be part of this country, didn't want to be a foreigner. And beside that, you just wanted to turn the page and start a new book. And you'd never go back, just go ahead and be an American mother, an American grandmother. They still call me Nonna, but I'm still an American, American Nonna.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. In the 60's in this country, did you have any response to civil rights efforts here, and the segregation and -- di-did any of those struggles resonate with you in any way? The minority struggles in this country that black Americans were having?

A: Yes, yes, definitely. I had a heart for any immigrant in cun -- this country, because I've gone through it.

Q: Yeah.

A: The black, as you're asking, that was new to me. We didn't have black people. It was very new to me and I had to adjust to that. I didn't know how to handle this

whole situation. So I didn't go into it too much, I'm not -- as much as I said survivor fights, but no, in that case, I stay away from anything I didn't know about enough.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Did your children get a chance to know your mother very well?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: How -- how long did she live?

A: Yes. My mother -- well, they came 50's, Betty was just a baby. They were with my children a good 15 - 20 years.

Q: Oh.

A: An -- and it was a Nonna who spoke of -- no, no, we -- I didn't want them to call her Nonna. She was their grandmother. It had to be everything very American. And with the broken English, you know, accent. They were not ashamed of that like you hear so many stories that they're ashamed of their grandparent's ac- accents, because li -- by then I met lot of people who were survivors and the kids were very, very used to accents from all co -- from all countries. So in fact among us, my parent would speak to me simple Croatian, in one minute they would turn into a Ladino, or another minute in Italian. They lived in ital -- Italy, Ladino was at home, Serbo-Croatian was in school. So it was a mixture of m-made no -- there was no difference to them what language they speak, they would just go from one

to another what fits that sentence, see? So that's how my kids grew up, hearing all these different languages. And naturally, later on Ladino took over musically, because they all sing with me, the three of them sing with me.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And perform and we traveled all over.

Q: Mm-hm. Did your -- then your kids always knew your story, and --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They knew my story way back -- the first time that I wanted to go back, Laurie, my younger one was almost 16 and I decided to go back the first time with my second son and the younger daughter, the three of us. So on our way to -- to -- to the airport, my son Andy, who is a physician now in New York says well, wa -- your name is Cabilio, but then what is this Pappo? A-And a -- what is Vlasenica? Oh, he was all confused, too many things. Barre, Italy, Korcula, the island. Too many things, so I started explaining to them the whole thing of the mother being rebellious, living in the mountain village, and you know the story.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that's what they sort of found out, the very different parts in this little book. [indecipherable] story.

Q: This was on the way there? On the way there you told them the story?

A: On my way to the airport. I -- I didn't want them to get shocked because they were going to see many things, and go to many different places. So I wanted to sort of prepare them for it. And when we came to Sarajevo, the first thing we did, went to the house where I was born. That was a sha -- shabby looking place. And then we went to the Cornelius Center, started looking for the names. And my son Andy found the name of my father Pappo [indecipherable] Pappo. My mother married a Cabilio. It was a mixture of -- in a child's mind.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: To o -- to take all that.

Q: What year was this?

A: What year was what, when we went back?

Q: When you went.

A: We went back -- Laurie, let's see, Laurie is 44, and she was 16. That's a good 20 more, that --

Q: Let's see, she's 44 --

A: That was the first trip back.

Q: -- she was 16 -- '76.

A: Yeah, that was the first trip back, then later on I did -- but this time I went back and I did not want to speak Serbo-Croatian to anybody.

Q: You didn't --

A: I came in as an American, and that was my goal. With American children, speaking English. That was my goal. But I had a cousin Berta, who I brought here now, she lives here in America. She lives now -- she works at the Holocaust Museum.

Q: Huh.

A: As a volunteer.

Q: Huh. You mentioned in your interview that when you went back, that first time with your kids and you were -- you wanted so badly to -- people to know you as an American, a mother.

A: Oh yeah, dressed up in slacks.

Q: And that you wore pants. You kept talking -- kept saying that. Talk about why that's si-significant.

A: What?

Q: That you wore slacks.

A: Because you wouldn't wear -- women didn't wear slacks that time. Besides, half of Vlasenica [indecipherable] was Moslem. They all wore dymia you know, th-the -- the -- the balloon pants?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And com -- a woman in slacks, wow, you look at her right away. Who is she? But that's all I wore, slacks.

Q: And your daughters too -- and your daughter too.

A: Oh, they're s -- lived in it, you know, these were teenagers. O-Only one, the younger one [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's the first time she had a serenade under her window. [indecipherable]

Q: Somebody serenaded her?

A: Over there, yes. So romantic. Really so romantic.

Q: Mm-hm. And what was it like for you to see this through their eyes?

A: See it through their eyes? Once upon a time long time ago my -- my grandmother lived here. Just the realistic mentality of a child of 16 - 15 - 18. Andy was ready for college, so it -- he was about 18. Laurie was 15. Nothing crucial, heavy crying.

Q: No.

A: I never did that in front of the children. In fact, they didn't even know. They didn't know the bad things. They just didn't.

Q: Even when you went to Vlasenica?

A: I can -- told them very lightly what happened, but all in all, I really made up my mind when I came to this country I'm going to have an American life, and I'm not going to burden everybody with sadness. I had a very happy house [indecipherable] our household, full of music. We just played music, we had lot of

folk dancing. We had group folk dance -- folk dancers come to my house every month and we had -- had a good time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I-I -- I think maybe subconsciously I want to ma -- make up for everything. Have good time.

Q: Mm-hm. Did -- but being there with you in that town, didn't it cause them to ask more questions, and did they --

A: Actually they didn't. Actually they didn't. We walked town and they didn't.

Q: It was a lot to take in, just being there, I would think. Yeah.

A: One day one of them should talk, maybe there was something that they kept in. But no, and people make fuss over them, Americans, the Americans, the American lady with American children, and hospitality and you know.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Dinners, and they had a good time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I did go to the house of my grandfather, but we are going back to the other story --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- I don't think you were here for that.

Q: Yeah. Did you go with them to Zagreb, too?

A: Yes, we went to Zagreb, we went to the [indecipherable] to see where I lived. Took pictures of that. Again, it was sightseeing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I-I -- I don't think I ever sat and cried, and poor me, this is what I went through. Never. This is why I think the children have very happy upbringing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: There was no pain and -- and -- and dolore, as we say in Ladino.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: There wasn't.

Q: Mm-hm. And -- and did you say that you did do some singing while you were there?

A: I always sang, anywhere I went.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Do you know this song? Hey, do you want to hear this song? I have this song, do you have these lyrics? I have these lyrics. Show it to me, write it down, tape record it. That was always with me.

Q: Mm-hm. And Laurie and Andy, were they singing with you by that time?

A: No, they were not. They were not into singing. I mean, Andy was a medical student, so he -- he's one out of four that did not sing. The other three started

performing with me. My first records came out ’82. They had performed before as children, I taught them songs, they did.

Q: Mm-hm. And did you perform while you were on that trip with them?

A: Not with them.

Q: No.

A: No, it’s just -- just looking for songs.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Just collecting -- mostly Ladino songs I was interested then. That already started, it came back to life. My mother was one of the four singers with her mother. And after what happened, after what she heard, what happened to that whole family, if you’d ask her sing, she says, my harmony died, I can’t. [phone ringing]

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Flory Jagoda. This is tape number one, side B. You were, in 1976, in --

A: Don’t put me down exactly every date --

Q: Okay.

A: -- or -- or otherwise we’ll have to go through books.

Q: Okay.

A: I have all the dates --

Q: So it was the mid-70's

A: I'm telling you --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- you know, I -- I go with the children's ages.

Q: Right. Okay.

A: Then I know where we are.

Q: So this was the mid-70's --

A: Okay.

Q: -- we are -- you're in --

A: Exactly.

Q: -- taking your children back to the places that you knew. Did you also go to Korcula with them?

A: Let me think for a minute. Korcula, did I go with them? No, I didn't. No, I didn't go to Korcula. We rented the car and Andy was driving. So we went to Zagreb, from Zagreb went to Sarajevo. From Sarajevo went down to Budwa to the Delnatsia, where your people come from.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we stayed in Delnatsia, my husband joined us in Dubrovnik, and then we flew back. That was the trip.

Q: Mm-hm. And -- and for them was it --

A: For them it was a seeing a very pretty place with beautiful swimming, beautiful water in Delnatsia. And good food and good music. It was a vacation with mom.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That's all. We didn't -- I didn't go into the tough things, and --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- I just didn't feel that the children need to know early. First of all, they cannot understand it. Even adults sometimes, e -- unless you've gone through something, how in the world are you going to understand it? How?

Q: And you didn't think that there was a --

A: Especially the children.

Q: -- a need for them to know.

A: I wanted them to see where I come from, where does the language come from, where do these songs come from. That's all that was important to me, to share with my children.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Then later on, in school they come -- they want to have mother's story, father's story, they would start asking questions. And they were older enough to read

themselves, to hear about the Holocaust, and they were star -- they started to tie this whole thing together on their own. And there was always an answer to a question at home.

Q: So you weren't hiding it.

A: I was not hiding, there was always an open answer.

Q: Mm-hm. You were just waiting for them to come to it themselves.

A: Yes, to be old enough to be interested in it, and to see what this is all about. And by being there that more or less the questions are, well why did you leave? Well -- what a beautiful place. And the story just falling in love with Daddy was not enough because what about -- why were you in Barre all of a sudden, in Italy? What took you -- the one -- one thing ties to the other, you know? Naturally.

Q: Mm-hm. And did that then -- did they come back then and start reading and --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- was it --

A: Oh yes. One more than the other, you know. I have four, each one of them are different, you know. It's all -- so one more than the other, but yeah, they all on -- they all know. They all know mo -- mo -- especially with all these interviews, and my own film documentary and my songs that I have written, they're mostly about my family.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Holidays, all about my family, every song I wrote. I have written about, I don't know, 19 songs or so.

Q: Huh. Wow.

A: Then my three recordings.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Cause it's only, I mean, you know, one person writes a book, another person writes a poetry. I pour it all into a song. So every song, the one that is Hanukkah, "Ocho Kandelikas", I mean, it's well known all over, even in Sunday schools now. What is it? Children's song, and I remember those days of Hanukkah. And so is with all the other holiday songs, I see my family. My latest so-song, it's not recorded is "Recordisin mi Nonna", Remembrance of My Nonna. [indecipherable] really going through -- through life with her, cause I lived with her as my mother married and went to Sarajevo.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So, it's all connected together.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And everything is music. Everything is a song.

Q: You mentioned that in your -- in your video interview that sometime in the late 70's you were invited to perform at some kind of a --

A: Rockville Jewish Community Center?

Q: Rockville, right.

A: Yeah, that was the first time really, that I felt that maybe my music means something to local Jewish community. But it really didn't. It really didn't. They didn't know anything about it. And the first Pesach performance for one of the Jewish organizations was a shock. And it followed many other shocks, too.

Q: A shock for who?

A: A shock for me to -- to see how much this community does not know about their own brothers and sisters, only because they were born in a different place. That's the only thing. One was born in Poland, the other one was born in -- in [indecipherable] see? So, I was asked to do a Pesach program. And my God, I brought all my songs from pe -- our Pesach. Eight days, there's a lot of singing you know. And I went through song to a s -- to another song and the program chairman comes and she says, do you know any of our songs? I said, this is our songs. And I was heartbroken, because I'd practiced for hours.

Q: What did she mean by our songs?

A: Jewish songs. And boy, those were Jewish songs.

Q: Yeah.

A: But in Ladino, Judeo-Spanish. But that is when I really realized I have to start all over in this country if I want to do Jewish programs. For awhile I gave up

completely and I went into international singing. Italian, Yugoslav. And I was known as international folk singer.

Q: Right after that?

A: Well, even before --

Q: Right after that experience --

A: -- no, I had that feeling even in Youngstown, that what I do is really not Jewish to them. Just not Jewish to them. And I do come from a -- Nonna was very pious, she was very religious. Very religious. So I -- she put into me way deep, and I end up feeling most of the Judaism through music again, through songs, see? So when she said, do you know any of our songs, I said, these are our songs. She says no. And -- didn't know. And then my first -- now, these are my musi -- mu-music experiences in America, is what you're looking for, what a survivor f-felt at th -- I think this is what you wanted. There is an organization, Jewish study group in Washington, D.C., and I gave -- I was asked to do a workshop -- no, this was Jewish Folk Art Society. And they were giving a festival in American university, they asked me if I would do a workshop. So I remember it like yesterday, I introduced myself, come from Bosnia and all this stuff, and I am going to talk about Ladino songs. And I hear a student from way back, in a very student way of talking, what in the hell's that? I mean, we wouldn't put that in a book, but that's just the way it is. What in hell is that. So I explained to him. And after I did a

couple pairs, which are chanting pairs, another student says, well this can't be Jewish, it's -- it can't be Jewish. It's -- it -- it -- it's Catholic, it's Spain. They couldn't connect it. Because they were not taught.

Q: They didn't know.

A: They didn't know.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So that was a tough experience. And from there on I knew, I mean you want to stay and sing and -- and perform? I mean, this is what all of the whole family did for years. You learn Yiddish songs. And I did. And I was singing Yiddish songs. But to pour your heart out, [indecipherable] the soul, you had to sing Ladino, but that's what you were brought up to do.

Q: Mm-hm. You mentioned in your video interview that you had a tough time with your religion when you -- in some of those early years after you came to this country.

A: The religion I meant --

Q: And it sounds like it was all tied in with your music, too.

A: -- I meant the religion after I saw what happened to my family is when I lost my religion.

Q: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

A: Standing in that field, and I think you have that story, and this man telling us, this is where your family is. I said this can't be [indecipherable]. He can't -- there can't be anything there. Cause these were good people. Store downstairs, the wife upstairs and close-knit family and I -- in fact, I have a song Las Tias, the aunts, all about my aunts, because every day, every holiday was a different aunt's house. This is all memories that I put into my songs.

Q: Mm-hm. So -- but -- but up until that time --

A: Up til that di -- time, we were very pious, religious people following my Nonna with candles and the holidays and -- but then -- in fact, in the -- in Zagreb, which we started the modern life all together, I went to synagogue myself, because that was what you do on Saturday morning. Was no question about it. Why? That's what you do. My mother didn't have a kosher home, or she was very up to date with the ladies in Zagreb, they were all Ashkenazi. They all spoke German at home, and she didn't want to speak Ladino, so I went by myself, and I loved it. It was Ashkenazi synagogue, but the sound of Hebrew was peaceful, see? It gave you an inner peace, as you call it here. But once I saw the ma -- that -- that man on -- on -- on -- in the field when he told this is your family, well that was it. Don't just -- don't sell me God, and He's -- protects you and looks over you and -- even in today I have a hard time sitting in that synagogue. I see it mostly as being with people, friendships, being together. This is what I see in the synagogue today. Be

nice to each other, maybe helping w -- another person, performing, sing to them. But He'll protect me? No way.

Q: Did you raise your children in a synagogue?

A: I raised my children what a Jewish mo -- heart -- a Jewish mother should [indecipherable] without even feeling is it right or wrong. I -- we had Friday nights. The father sent them all to syn -- to -- to Hebrew school, even the girls were -- went to Hebrew school. They all know all the prayers, they know all the holidays. They're raising Jewish children. Laurie has three, they're all in yi -- Bat Mitzvahs, Bar Mitzvahs, the whole deal. But we never talked about how I feel inside. That was something of my own.

Q: You never talked with your kids about it after that?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Oh, they know what happened, they've seen pictures.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I didn't sit down and start talking God, they know. Th-They know.

Q: Yeah.

A: But the father did a good job.

Q: How so?

A: The father taught them, the father saw that they have Hebrew education. The father was more -- he still goes to synagogue every Saturday morning, he's 90. And he drives by himself. It's something that Bubby really put into him in many, many years as he was growing up. But I can't see it. I'd love to. I envy people who believe. I really do. I -- I envy people who pray with such, you know, you look at some people and they're praying. How do they feel? They pray. Well. That's a survivor's story, okay?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I think maybe you've heard before the same thing. Or, some go the other way around. Like Sephardim at the Inquisition, they said, we were not good Jews, that's why we're punished. It goes back to religion. So that -- the opposite way of working, see?

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: But it didn't work for my generation any more.

Q: You went back then, ano -- a second time to Vlasenica.

A: I went --

Q: We've heard that whole -- you told that whole story very --

A: -- back for the second time --

Q: -- very articulately.

A: -- with my husband and -- and Berta lived there. My cousin Berta.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She's the last of the family, of [indecipherable] family.

Q: Mm-hm. And was that after the war in Bosnia or before?

A: Yes --

Q: After.

A: -- before.

Q: Before.

A: Not after, before.

Q: Mm-hm. In the 80's. I think it was in the 80's, right?

A: Yes.

Q: That you went, yeah.

A: It was in the 80's and it was aft -- before the war, and we had that horrible day, which I don't think we want to go through all that [indecipherable] take too much time. But that day end up with song. We sang all evening. They knew that I sing, that I like to sing, so my cousin Berta invited a lot of her friends, a lot of them with guitars. And couple sardines, hard boiled egg. It was in a nu -- you know, half-heart, the whole cocktail party was there, alive. A very primitive life, very primitive. And then we sang til three in the morning and it felt good. That was, I think, as I would say, God's blessing. It was some blessing. But that would follow the kind of a day we -- we had.

Q: Mm-hm. And what was it like for you in -- coming back, then? Did you feel more attached to that place than you had been before? Did you --

A: What place?

Q: To Vlasenica. Did you --

A: I didn't want to go back any more.

Q: No, it was over.

A: I just wanted to get away from it and never return. I still feel that way. Never return. I've seen it, I've heard, I've saw. And no way. I don't want to have anything to do with any of these places any more. Just brings memories, bad memories and I'm very happy here. Especially now, I have six grandchildren. We get together and we have the warmth of life, see?

Q: What was it like during the war there, in the early 90's, it -- that news was all around you.

A: The Bosnian war? Bosnian war --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- was very bad.

Q: You couldn't get away from it, I'm sure.

A: It was very bad and I had a cousin Berta living in Vlasenica, and I worked very hard to get her out, through connection here, connection there, nothing really worked. We finally send her a two way ticket in Air France and we said, get in a

plane, we'll do something here, maybe. And she flew to Chicago and we had a lawyer, and we paid. And she came to Chicago, lived there for awhile. She has a niece, Dragana who lives in Chicago. And then we brought her here and she lived with me for about five, six months, went to one of the singles, got a husband. American husband.

Q: How old was she when she came?

A: About 45.

Q: Wow.

A: She married a lovely man. Very happy.

Q: Great.

A: And today she's teaching English -- I mean, her own Serbo -- Bosnian. Today it's very hard, is it Serbian, is it Croatian --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- is it Bosnian, is it Macedonian. But all in all she is really a professor of languages. She went to University of Sarajevo. So teaching is her li -- you know, her job. So she's working for one -- for -- for -- for one -- one of those language schools. I think it's under the State Department. And gets a job here and there, not a full time, but whenever they have somebody going to Yugoslavia -- former Yugoslavia, and wants to learn the language fast, le -- Berta has a job. Now she has

a couple who are going to, I think Zagreb in March, so she has a full time job, teaches half a day him, and half a day the wife.

Q: Wow. You know, in this country, in the 80's and 90's, became a time when a lot of Holocaust survivors decided to speak publicly. And -- and your speaking publicly was singing.

A: No. Singing was mostly ba -- but I added to my singing a little story to every song, which I didn't before. In other word, if I would be singing Las Tias, the aunts, I talked about those aunts. Then I started with slideshows and I showed them Vlasenica, a whole f-family, pictures of each tia and got closer and closer int -- into this whole tradition through my songs, see? And I me -- I think my music has done everything for me, from the accordion that saved my life all the way to -- to today. Now there are some wonderful moments, there's still disappointments. Like the last -- well, this is a good example, the last celebration the Holocaust Museum had. When was it, two months ago, or a month ago.

Q: Mm-hm. When all the survivors came, mm-hm.

A: The performers were invited to sing or play. Til almost three, four days before, I did not call because when you call and when you're performer, you're looking for a concert, and that was the last thing I had in mind, a concert, because I've done concerts at Holocaust Museum. This was to light a candle. Just a candle, because I was th -- at the Holocaust the spring, last spring, yeah this years -- last year, it's

already gone -- to sing one song, I flew to Poland, to Auschwitz. And all the songs that I sing the Holocaust came to life because I saw the place where everything really happened. So I came back feeling very, very -- very emotional about the Holocaust survivors from Salonika, Greece, Turkey, Balkans. And I have a prayer, and I wanted to light a candle because the memorial at the Auschwitz was to -- to ma -- to -- in memory of these victims. So I wanted -- so I called a day before, I -- so it's too late, nobody called, nobody wants anything Sephardic, let me do something about it. So I called and I said, I don't want a concert. I had enough of that. I want a prayer and light a candle for these survivors. Two minutes. I had a plain flat no. And that was one of disappointments that -- that even happens today, you see? I mean, i-it -- it will never be that I can say, oh I'm so glad my Sephardic music is part of the Jewish music. It's still not accepted. And it's not that I'm saying well, we died too, and the -- th-the eastern European Jews died, too. [indecipherable]. Many more on that side than here? No. [indecipherable] to light a candle?

Q: Yeah. Do you understand that pushing aside at all? I mean, I -- I --

A: I don't understand. I don't understand --

Q: -- I don't know understand it at all.

A: -- I'm trying to understand, I -- it's not so much understanding as not believing that this is happening. People who were planning something like this were not

really, as much as they really tried to -- they tried to, they cover -- I mean, they have exhibits, Jews from Poland, Jews from Greece. Ja -- there's so many days concerts in honor of a Greek Jew -- Jew -- Jews that's vanished. Whole -- who-whole trainloads were go -- went straight, I don't know if you know the stories, straight to Auschwitz.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we saw the pictures from the train, straight to crematorium. Not even give them a chance to -- to -- to rest. Now, these kind of stories -- now, we talked to survivors who survived the Auschwitz, and I came back with this feeling that I, you know, feel terrible about this whole thing, and this is many years later. Sometimes I say, why go back and even talk about this any more. But I was there, so I saw it. And I couldn't light a candle and make a prayer. I'm not blaming the Holocaust Museum. A person who was planning it did not have the knowledge to understand this.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Maybe because they didn't talk to anybody who just came back cha -- Auschwitz, okay?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So that -- that hurts.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So as much as I say all these wonderful rosy things about this country, there's still little humps here and there that hurt you and I don't know if you can do anything about it.

Q: Yeah. Are there very many Sephardic Jews in this country who speak Ladino like you?

A: Well, we have a lot of

Q: [indecipherable] communities.

A: -- we have a -- oh, we've come a long way. We have a computer daily, Ladinokomunita. They're in touch with each other, or you can talk to people --

Q: On the internet.

A: -- from Australia, some people from Austria, another one is Greece, and the other one is way -- Poland. From all over the world they talk to each other Ladino. Talk, write, you know. And I started a Ladino group here in Washington, D.C.. We started with four people, I think it's about 24 of us now. We get together, we just talk to each other. And with this language that's getting lost all the time, you know. If you don't speak, you lose, you know.

Q: Mm-hm. And where are they -- what is the traditions?

A: We meet in different homes. There's Istanbul and there is Sofia, Bulgaria and there's Salonika. People from all over who just have this hunger to be with somebody who has the same background. A lot of laughing with olds -- old words

that the grandmothers used to speak. A-A very nice atmosphere, we have a good time.

Q: And cooking?

A: Cooking. Whoever remembers to cook something. I cook many of these dishes, and I make them bourekas and we have a good time.

Q: Tell me about some of the dishes that you make, that you [indecipherable]

A: A lot of it is like Greek dishes, dough with feta cheese and spinach inside. Or stuffed cabbage or stuffed grape leaves. Lot of fish dishes, a lot of vegetable dishes. Lot of leek, eggplant. In fact, in prayers, there is dishes that you make a prayer over, like the leek dish and eggplant dish.

Q: And of those things that you -- those things that you cook, what -- are there some that you know go way, way back --

A: Yes.

Q: -- that your grandmother --

A: Yes, yes, yes, bourek.

Q: Like what? Bourek.

A: Yeah

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That goes -- but that is actually adapted probably in a Bosnian way, but that -- I know the bur-bourek, cause they had it from way back Spain.

Q: Mm-hm. And those are?

A: And wherever they settled, let's say the Greece or Turkey or Bulgaria, Bosnia, they, not even knowing they are adopted the rhythms of that country and the ri -- tastes of that country and the cooking [indecipherable]

Q: Say what bourek is -- say -- describe what bourek is.

A: Bourek is dough that you -- it's a little Americanized now, instead of using a real, heavy oil, you use margarine. But it's dough that you can fill with spinach and cheese, you can fill with meat and onions. I -- I think every country has its own traditional dish that is similar to this. Every country. I know South America, when you're -- Russian, they all have dough with something stuffed in the middle.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And your kids make it?

A: Yes, oh Betty entertains only with bourek.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yes, they do, definitely. Not only my kids, my friends, my neighbors.

Q: You taught them. You taught them?

A: Sure. I have to.

Q: Uh-huh, yeah.

A: They call it Flora's dough. Flora's dough, or Flora's bourek.

Q: Yeah. You now -- you're still performing, your children perform with you sometimes.

A: My children perform -- they've performed more. We don't live in the same cities, so to practice, since we're getting better and more fussy with what we do, we need to practice more, okay? So, for them, they have to come from New Jersey, and that is already leaving the job, or the children. They all ha -- it's not as easy any more, but I have local apprentice, we were in the -- this is a very pretty story of mine that I can say in America. I -- I did receive an endowment for the arts last year. I was a master apprenticeship program in Charlottesville and UVA. I've done many things lately. I've been immigrant of the year. That on top is Auschwitz, where I was invited to sing a song. This is all what's happening in my life. E-Every one of these things is a good happening. That's just what I can say, that this America has done a lot for me. It's mostly connected in music.

Q: I'd like to know from your perspective what -- I -- I know when you tell -- when you sing and you tell stories about your relatives and your village and what happened, I me -- I have a sense of what it means to you, but what -- what does it mean to your children when they sing th-th -- these songs?

A: If I'm saying a p -- a sad s --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Flory Jagoda. This is tape number two, side A. What -- what do you think it means to your children when they sing these songs and they perform them? What -- what do you --

A: At the beginning was stage. They're all stage people, to be very honest. Elliot was a rock and roll musician for many years, king of the rock in Georgetown. Betty went -- well, she was Adelphi University, she went into arts, she end up as a art -- the -- the dance therapist. Laurie went to the University in Miami, dance therapist. They all went into the arts, only the youngest one is a doctor. But as the question -- the answer to your question, it was stage [indecipherable], that's it. As doing it, year after year, hearing my story, it seeped in the other way. So Betty into it now is really as cultural. And then all the concert that we have done when we went to Yugoslavia, and one of the most important ones, when we were invited to Spain, see? Ribadavia, Spain. [indecipherable]. That ca -- the whole thing came to head in their minds with a daily experience. Because we were invited by a young club s -- university students, who claims that they have never been taught about -- they never knew there was Inquisition. All right?

Q: In Spain?

A: In Spain. This was Ribadavia, it was Galicia, north. They found out what horrible things happened in all these cities and that Ribadavia is vineyard countries, all wine and grapes. And they claim Jews owned these vineyards. And they have named -- the whole city was -- it had a Judaria, the Jewish quarter. And the whole city, you could see the life of that whole community, that they left as it is. And every year -- now I don't know if this is a tourist's clique, or I don't know if it's a tourism to bring Jewish -- what's the word -- travelers, or really their own intention to teach their young, look, this is what happened. We kicked out thousands of people because they didn't want to convert. And the young feel bad about that, because they're not more -- so [indecipherable] into the -- the religion that they could understand that like their ancestors. So they see this as a wrong thing that happened. But that's 1492, see, a long time back, you know. Many things have happened since. But all in all they do once a year a Jewish wedding, and all the villagers come over. And they do a really typical Jewish wedding. They sang all my songs. And ah, to me that was the highlight of life.

Q: How did you make a connection with them?

A: They heard about me. They heard about me and they have invited, they made a [indecipherable] Sepharadi. A -- a -- a week, Sephardic week. They invited a woman from Israel, a woman from Canada, the three of us, another two countries.

So every night was a different concert from a different country in the world, bringing back this Ladino --

Q: Wow.

A: -- and the public really enjoyed my -- because it's a real broken up Spanish. So they would say, my a -- my grandmother used to say that word, wow, my grandma -- they would say from the audience. Was a lot of fun. I spoke to them this old Ladino, that --

Q: Wow.

A: -- my family, that's all they spoke.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You went to school and you spoke Serbo-Croatian, but you -- and the moment you cross that door --

Q: Right.

A: -- it was that language. They called it Jewish language.

Q: So 500 years later.

A: Five years -- that's -- that -- that's what it is to -- that's what's me today.

Q: Yeah.

A: I -- actually -- I think the last generation, I think. I don't think that it will go on. Once my generation's gone -- and I'm 80, so how much can you go? Even if they're learning a bit Ladino, it's not the same, you have to talk --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and you have to gossip and you buy and sell, and that's what living is. And --

Q: Is there any place in the world where it's spoken as a daily language?

A: No.

Q: Really?

A: I don't think so. Israel has some neighborhood communities where there're old people, see? Atlanta, Georgia. California has a synagogue, you -- you -- right across the street with UCLA, I gave a concert there. New York has a small synagogue, half of them -- very few really speak a good Ladino. This Ladino group I have, some speak very nice, but are the French Jews, and it's gone.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I mean, people who don't want to talk reality, this is, oh well, we'll teach the -- y -- many young are interested. What young? 15 of them maybe, or 20? The same thing with Yiddish, only they're stronger, because it's more of them.

Q: More people, mm-hm.

A: It's more of them because a bunch of them came back, around 18th century or so.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I don't see too much, even if they have this Ladinokomunita that is -- it's a wonderful thing to receive daily. And you talk to somebody from Columbia, somebody from Morocco, and you have a good time.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm, that's a great story. So by now you said that you -- since you went back to Vlasenica, you -- you know that your children know your story.

A: My children know my story, that's right.

Q: They know the whole thing now.

A: They know why I'm doing what I'm doing.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They know it is not stage only. Yes, stage is where you perform, but they know there is more to it since they see and hear my students performing, see? Since this ap-apprenticeship program, one of the apprentices, that's Susan Gaeta, she's already giving concerts in La-Ladino songs.

Q: Hm.

A: Now I -- I am now -- preparing a concert now with Ramon Tasat, who is Argentinean. I'm teaching him my Bosnian songs, we are preparing a concert. He will continue my work. So it will go on only through my students, more than my children.

Q: Why so?

A: Because they are performing, they are preparing all the time, they keeping it fresh. The children, the younger one has two Gold gyms. She -- she owns two gyms. She's there from six in the morning, up and down, with fitness, you know, no time. Music is something that you set to practice. No matter how much feeing you have for it, that can come out only when you're performing. But to perform, y-you have to prepare. And that means have time, and leave everything else and make that a goal. When you have a family you can't do that. You have a business, you can't do that. You have distances to drive, you can't do that. This Ramon Tasat comes from Maryland. He comes tomorrow and day after tomorrow. He loses from nine to one, time. It -- it's -- it's time consuming, everything.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Now with the children, when they were living at home, you say, let's do this song, la, la, la, la, get a guitar. It was all in the room. But once they're married, in another city -- but they know what I am doing and why. They know it is not just stage and being a performer, it's -- there is a role to it, and I've done that.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Through the -- through the four recordings, and that documentary -- I don't think you've seen the documentary, you saw the one at Holocaust. They definitely know what my goal is, teach and spread it. Music. Talking music. But if you doing this music, sooner or later you get interest into the culture of it. You can't help not

to. So all these students I have, they know why I am teaching them. See, it will go on musically, I think. For how long? Who knows? But for me, to get in stage is, you know, no big deal any more y -- unless I can bring in a message. I have a song that is [indecipherable] di Spania, that I have written here in this country, and that's the key -- they key of Spain.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: See the keys all over, peop-people send me keys. It's -- it's all -- written on a legend that when the Sephardim left Spain they took the key with them. The key of the synagogue, the key of the homes. And that key went through generation to generation. It was always in their drawer. So the song is asking, where is the key that used to be in the drawer? And this is from Bosnia. That was already transferred to Bosnia now, left the key in Bosnia. So, the legend -- and this key took over among musicians a lot.

Q: The song.

A: So two wee -- two -- a month ago we had a concert, the -- Georgetown University, an interfaith. And they asked me to do [indecipherable] di Spania. And the ambassa -- Spanish ambassador came and kissed my hand. You kissed my hand, I was thinking, you know. Look what happened. Look where we are today. That's why I bring this trip to Spain, that they would invite me back. My songs are about Spain, and all our history is about Spain. And we love that country because

we love it the way it was, see? And that you transfer again through songs. I told you everything you'll get from me is songs and music.

Q: When you went to Spain was that the first time you'd ever been there?

A: Yes. No, no, no, I went once before as an American lady, a tourist.

Q: Uh-huh. But did you have a resonance with it?

A: No.

Q: No? It was a --

A: No.

Q: Okay. Not because you heard stories, or --

A: No, I -- I'll tell you what --

Q: -- images or anything?

A: -- a-as a survivor you become very realistic.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Romantic, yes, when you sing. Emotional. But you get realistic too. When yo- you go over there, there is nothing Jewish. For tourists, yes, they take you to a Jewish street, huh?

Q: But it's not real.

A: That's the big thing, the Jewish street. A Judaria. And a quarter buys [indecipherable] of that.

Q: But it's not real.

A: It's gone.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You talk to some people they don't even know that -- that -- who there is left that lived here. They don't know. The kids are not taught in school about it. Why?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's not the right thing to teach your children. The first time that came out in the open about this whole Inquisition business, it was always covered by the church, see? Was it here at the cathedral two months ago, I don't know if you read about it?

Q: Mm-mm.

A: This whole exhibit came from Madrid that was filmed in Madrid and they showed here in the cathedral.

Q: At the national cathedral?

A: The national cathedral. Was a big happening in our lives that finally came out, the story. Not that you want to do anything about it. It happened five -- five centuries ago.

Q: Yeah.

A: This is couple pages in your book, in your history book. If you read history books, then you know about it. If you don't read those books you don't even know about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And through the songs that I've been doing, my audience know. So I -- I did drill a hole in s -- in -- in -- in ice. And I'm thinking what you want to know more about this country, America. I think we did cover some. I think we got something out of this.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Let me just look at my notes here. Grandchildren now, you have grandchildren. Six.

A: They ask questions. Isn't that something? They ask questions more than the children.

Q: Hm. About what?

A: About Nonna, I mean, all -- all Nonna's stories. Where were you b -- I -- I -- I get usually calls, Nonna, I have to interview you. All right, let's go. Number one, where were you born, and where did you live here? And who -- I mean, questions, you know? But that's their schools.

Q: Yeah.

A: They bring in story, family stories. You have children?

Q: No, no.

A: This is what the kids usually are told in school.

Q: Yeah.

A: Go home and talk to your Nonna, or your -- or your Nonnu, and ask them about their life. And then they -- they learn. This is why they learn, they ask.

Q: So the seed is there.

A: Oh yeah, seed's there and it will go on. It will go on. My daughters do carry some customs that I taught them. I knew a little and I dropped everything. My mother dropped everything, too. She left Vlasenica when she said, there must be something more than this. So I'm told.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But you're going back again, and you have that story.

Q: Yeah.

A: You can't cu -- y-you know, you can't help. It's connected.

Q: It's all connected.

A: You can't help.

Q: Yeah, yeah. You did your interview, your original interview in 1995.

A: Okay.

Q: It's almost 10 years ago.

A: Is it?

Q: And I'm just wondering if there's anything that you have learned about your family, or anything that you've come to understand or realize since you did that interview that you'd like to add?

A: No, it's cut.

Q: Okay.

A: It's cut and gone. No, I didn't find, I didn't learn anything.

Q: Since then.

A: Maybe now this Ladino group, I hear a word that brought back memories, that I said oh my God, I didn't hear that for years. My nonna used to say that. That's about it. Nothing else.

Q: Okay.

A: Nothing.

Q: Whatever happened to your cousin --

A: Cousin Berta?

Q: Lay -- Laisel?

A: Oh Laisel, that's uncle. That's Berta's father.

Q: Oh, her father.

A: Yeah, Berta's father.

Q: What year did he die?

A: That's a -- that's another big story. Y-You -- you opening a complete 'nother five pages. I don't even think you want to start with that.

Q: Okay.

A: Complete new story. I d -- I don't think I added Loy -- Laisell even i-in -- in that interview.

Q: Well, he --

A: Just little.

Q: -- he was there because he had written the letter originally and then when you went back he was there, right? He was there with you when you went back?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, he was not. He was go -- he was gone -- the story that we found out about that family, it's whe -- when I was getting ready to go on the honeymoon in Barre, Italy.

Q: Right. He had written the letter to your mother.

A: That's right.

Q: Right.

A: That's all I know about Uncle Laisel.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But that's Berta's father.

Q: You never saw him after that?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Didn't see anybody. Just Berta is the only one that I could connect, see.

Q: Mm-hm. And when was the first time you met her? The first time you went ba -- back to --

A: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

A: That first trip with the children.

Q: In the 70's.

A: Went to se -- her, she lived in Sarajevo. And she was attending a University of Sarajevo in language department.

Q: Hm.

A: Charming.

Q: Nice to have that little -- little connection.

A: She's charming. She's -- she's made herself a very nice home here, too.

Q: Mm. Good. I think we did good. We added a lot.

A: I think you did mostly th-the -- I told you before it will be all connected music, but that's what I am.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I told you a lit -- most what happened, musically speaking, in this country for me.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: That --

Q: But I think we have some new things that we didn't have before.

A: Exactly.

Q: Yeah. A little bigger picture of this country.

A: Yes, but this, as I said at the beginning, it's a dream country to me. But all these little disappointments, it comes again music stuff. But that's because we're sensitive to stuff like that. It means a lot to us, see. And not to be able to light a candle -- I go back to all the time to this thing, was a shock. A place that I have done quite a bit of concerts already. They sold my stuff and book and -- it was just an over -- overlook, something that was not planned, or was not important.

Q: Mm. Okay. I think that's -- we'll finish.

A: So now what -- now what do you do? You put that toge -- into your own words?

Q: No, let me -- let me just finish this.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Flory Jagoda.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Conclusion of Interview