

INTERVIEW WITH RENEE CARASSO
MAY 13, 1992
RANDALLSTOWN, MARYLAND

The date is May 13, 1992. We're speaking with Mrs. Rena Carasso in Baltimore or rather Randallstown, Maryland. Mrs. Carasso, could you please tell me your name?

My name is Renee Carasso.

What were you called during the war, your name?

Rena.

And your family name?

My family is Gani.

How do you spell that?

G-A-N-I.

Your date of birth?

August 15, 1919.

And your place of birth?

It was Preveza, it is an hour from Janina [Ioannina].

In Greece?

Greece.

Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about your life, your childhood, and your life before the war, your family, anything that you can remember?

The only thing I remember, I was a happy child, I had a very good life. My father was not too rich but wealthy and I had everything what I needed.

What was your father's occupation?

He had a store, a textile store.

And where did you go to school?

My first elementary school was in Janina. As I said it was a city with 30,000 people an hour from Preveza and I was in a French school, Alliance Israelite Universelle. And afterwards when I finished that I came back to Preveza and I continued high school.

The elementary school, so then it was an all Jewish school?

Yes, yes.

Did you study Jewish subjects there also?

I studied French, Greek, and Hebrew.

And history and all the other subjects as well?

That's right.

Was there a Zionist orientation from this school?

I don't think so, I don't know. But the only thing is that all the children in this school, they are very good educated in Hebrew language. We don't speak, but we read-we learn everything about the holidays and we kept we had a good_____17.

Well, was this a large Jewish community? What do you remember about the Jewish community?

From my city or Janina?

From your city.

My city, it was a very small community, about 300 people. But Janina has 3000. And that where I stay my elementary school, and after that I came back to Preveza and I continued in high school but it was not Jewish.

Well what was your home life like? Could you tell me about your brothers and sister?

Normal family life. No excitement. I said, small city and you can't do crazy things there but it was very... it was very normal, easy life, easy life really.

Did you live in a house or an apartment?

In a house.

What was your house like? Was it large?

Five children, can you imagine if it was large?

Well, either all five children lived in one room ..your bedrooms.

No, not that.

Is there anything you can describe to me, about what did it look like? I assume it was very beautiful there. Greece is a beautiful country.

It is a beautiful country. But I said, the Jewish community in my city, it was very small. But still we kept the holidays. We don't go every Saturday shul like we do here but we used to go Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashona, Pesach, and Sukkoth. The most important holidays we were there.

And the Sabbath, you kept the Sabbath?

We kept the Sabbath not in shul, though, in the house. My mother 31 cook supper. _____32. She would prepare everything from Friday. That's why, I still do that. Friday is the cooking and cleaning day. But Saturday is nothing. This we kept the day of rest.

So your father didn't work on Saturday?

Oh yes. In the beginning, no. In the beginning, no. But after a couple years because life was harder, everybody started to open the stores Saturday, so my father did too. But, in the house it was no work at all.

Could you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters?

Yes.

And their ages?

Their ages?

Well, what approximate year they were born?

I told you, my oldest was born in 1913.

Yeah, it was 1913.

The other one...

What was his name?

Albert. Albert Amalbert(ph)41. _____41 three years later. Then it's me.

The first one then was Moise.

Moise, Moise(ph)42. Then Albert, then third it's me, my sister...

What is her name?

Rachel, Rachel.

And then my youngest brother, Joseph.

And did you all have the same schooling? Did they all attend the

Alliance school?

No, not in Greece because they are too young to go there.
46 then it was in Italy, the oldest one.

The oldest one went to study in Italy?

Italy, yes. He left nine years old, he went in Italy.

Oh so he spent all his high school...

When he came back, he didn't need to go to school here in my hometown.

Was he in Naples, then?

Yes, Naples.

In a Jewish school there?

No. Convito Nazionale Vittorio Emmanuele

So, a public institution?

Yes. But, he would sleep over there. My grandmother was living in Italy at this time in Naples. But she goes to visit him every week, every Saturday or Sunday, I don't know, but he stayed there.

But he ultimately came back to Greece?

Yes, when he finished school he came back to Greece.

And what did he do then?

He was working as a--not secretary, what can I say--he kept the books from one electric company. Account.

And how about Albert? He was working also?

He was working with my father in the store, Albert.

And Rachel, was she still in school?

Yes.

Now, could you tell me, did you have any hobbies or interests as a child that you liked to do?

Like what?

Oh I don't know--artistic things or music, did you play--?

I used to play my little mandolin(ph) 59 but when the war came, I forgot

about everything else. I would only read a lot, knit and crochet, sewing...these things I used to do and because this is things I can do in the house. My father didn't believe the girls to go work outside.

Oh really?

Yeah, they have to stay in the house, so these things I used to do.

What about getting together with friends, did you do that?

Yes, a lot, a lot with friends, almost every day.

Oh, really?

We used to go to their house, they used to come to my home, we used to go walks outside. That's all, but not in parties and things like that like here.

No?

No, no, not like that.

Was this boys and girls or just girls?

Mixed.

Mixed.

We were mixed with friends of my brothers.

Did you have friends who weren't Jewish?

Yes, I say that because there were not a lot of Jewish people there.

Right, so...?

Two. Two Jewish girls and the others were gentiles.

What was that like? Did you experience any anti-semitism as a child?

No, no, none at all. They were very friendly and very helpful and everything. No I didn't, that's true. I don't know the Greeks they didn't show anti-semitism before the war. This happened after. This happened after the war.

So you said you liked to play the mandolin (ph) 73 and you liked to read. What types of things, was it European literature in translation into Greek or was it Greek?

Greek, Greek books. We had no library there.

Classical Greek authors?

That's right. Only Greek, nothing else because I didn't speak fluent any other language and I'm not interested to read something I wouldn't understand.

But it wasn't like a famous author translated into Greek?

No, we don't have any libraries over there to find the books we needed.

So, it was a very small town.

That's right.

Did you, at that time did you travel in any other places in Greece, had you been to other cities or anything?

Only Janina and one time in Athens. I told you my father, he was very strict, what can I say, he didn't believe that the girls had to go far away from home. They had to stay home until they get married. But after the war, I went everywhere you can imagine here. Being in this country, I had more freedom. I went to California, Hawaii, Israel, east and west Europe, even Birkenau and Auschwitz.

What about your mother, you haven't talked much about, what was your mother like?

My mother comes from a big family, eight children, four boys and four girls, and she was the oldest. So, she used to help my grandmother work at home. She was a real housewife woman more than anything else.

Was she educated?

Not too much. You know those years, the woman they never had higher education. If they finished elementary school, it was a big thing.

But she could read?

Oh, yes. Even my grandmother, she used to read. Though she had cataract in her eyes she used to read the small little romance books, something like that, to pass the time.

So your family comes from the Sephardic tradition?

Oh yes. [WE HAVE DISCOVERED SINCE THE INTERVIEW THAT
THIS IS NOT SO]

Is there anything specific that you would like to tell me about that type of a life, were there observances that you did?

Well everything what they should do for holidays, Rosh Hashonah, Yom

Kippur, Pesach, everything we did much better than here I can tell you.

You did have a synagogue in your town?

Yes, I did. One, but it was enough for the people there really. Janina had more synagogues because there were more people. But the holidays they kept very good. When Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur came you feel the holiday, you felt that. Here you don't feel the Rosh Hashonah coming because nobody around shows. Only when I go to synagogue, then I know is holiday. Even Shabbot now. I feel only when I go to shul. I realize that. Here, I don't see nothing.

Yeah, it's different.

But still, after my husband passed away, almost every Saturday I am there.

Well, it's important. Were there any Jewish youth organizations in Greece?

Janina they had because there were more people over there but in Preveza, no.

So you weren't involved in any of that?

There were not too many people.

Did you ever help your father in the store?

Well, yeah, once in a while but only if they need extra help, that's why I went, but not too much because there were two. My second brother and him, they manage very good. I told you there was not big city and the business is not so big so they didn't need extra help, but sometimes.

Was this town, is it near the water?

Yeah.

It is?

Yes, swimming.

So you went to the seashore all the time.

Swimming all the time.

In the Aegean Sea, which sea is this?

Ionian Sea. No, I don't--it's Sagul (c.) 107 is a gulf, Amuzakikos Gulf, is a gulf it's not sea.

Okay.

Is the Ionian Sea outside. But, this is a small gulf, Amozakikos Gulf.

Is that walking distance then to your house?

Oh yes. All over the city is walking distance because it is so small. But it was a very nice walk all through the city, you know.

Was it mountainous in this area?

No, not too much. Janina has mountains. Janina has a lot of mountains. Snow and cold in the wintertime.

Oh really?

Oh yes. But Preveza, it has humidity rather than cold, and a lot of rain.

Sort of a Mediterranean climate?

Yeah.

What did the buildings look like? Did they have red clay roofs?

How can I say these things? they put one on top of the other ones and till...

Shingles?

No, not shingles. I don't know how to call them in English.

The clay, the red clay...

Yeah, like clay, one the top of the other they put like that.

And were the buildings white usually?

Most of them, most of them. You don't see dark like here. No, no, all paint.

What about your house?

My house, white.

White house. Did you have any pets?

One dog.

You did. What was your dog's name?

Matzil.

Maztil? Hebrew?

I don't know how we got this name, Matzil, but he was over there when the Germans came to pick us up.

So, you left him.

Couldn't take him with me, who can do that?

Matzil in Hebrew means to save, lahateel(ph)125.

Really?

Yeah, matzil is the word they use for a lifeguard in Hebrew.

I didn't know that.

So, maybe it had something to do with that.

I don't know. My father and my mother, they call him Mathile (ph)127, I didn't ask where they got this name.

Okay. Now maybe, is there anything else you can remember about your childhood that you could tell me, about your schooling? What about your high school?

My high school was in my hometown, in Preveza. That is where I finished the high school, there.

So, it was an academic program like a regular high school? It wasn't a technical school?

No, no, it's a regular normal high school.

Like a public high school?

Yes, but I think the public schools over there and the high schools especially were higher than here. They had more subjects and subjects like they have in first and second year of college.

Yeah, it's more intensive. Definitely. It was like a gymnasium, kind of?

Yeah, it was called a gymnasium over there. There, they don't call it high school.

Right, so it was a gymnasium.

Yeah, but the last two classes, seventh and eighth, they had so hard subject. Like I said, first or second year of college.

Like physics...?

Physics, and mathematics, algebra, geometry, and everything else. But here I see nothing of that kind, no, only when you go to college.

Right, they like to play in high school.

That's alright, that's all right.

Carefree. So, before the Nazis came did you have any knowledge or had you heard about the Nazis or anything that was going on in...

Well, I thought they would be stuck over there in Germany and I didn't know they were going to start dispersing all over Europe little by little. We heard about Polish people but they used to say that Polish people they are a little harder to them. They didn't go along good. And the Polish they hate the Germans. So I said we are far away we don't have nothing to do with them. But we didn't realize that one day they were going to come to us; they planned to come to Greece too. We didn't realize that. And in the meantime, we didn't hear anything what happened over there. Everybody used to say, if they will take us to Germany, they are going to put us to work until the end of the war and then we will come back. I said alright, we'll go to work, fine, I don't care.

So that's what they told you?

Yes.

So, do you remember when the Germans invaded Greece and came to your town?

Sure I remember that, my God!

Could you tell me what it was like?

How can I explain when I saw the first soldier or the first officer with this dress? We're scared to death because we know what happened to Poland and the other countries after that. I thought something would happen to us too but it's nothing we could do. In the meantime they obliged us, all the Jewish people, to go every day, every morning, in the police and give our presence to say we are here...to be ready to pick us up any time they wanted. You understand? So we didn't have any choice and we couldn't escape in the mountains because small mountains were close to the city. But we had all the people in the house, my grandmother, my father was not so well, and we couldn't leave them and go the mountains. And they couldn't follow us over either. For myself I could have a job in the mountains and teach Greek to the village girls but how could leave my family and go there? You understand? It was terrible situation for us and for my parents too because they couldn't move so easy. And ____ 175 my father says what

happens will happen to all of us. So we accept our fate, all of us. Just to be together, so we could help each other.

When was this?

This was '43.

What month? Was it in the winter?

No. I think it was the same time, March, something like that. And one year later exactly, they pick us up.

So they had been occupying for a year?

Yes.

Were your businesses open?

Yes.

They were and we were allowed to work.

Until the last moment, the last day.

Did they beat you in the streets or anything like that?

No, no. I forgot to tell you. Six months before we had...six months before we had the Italian occupation. You remember we had the Italian war then. When the Italians left, right away the Germans came. And they started restrictions. No Jews allowed to go out at nighttime and we had to wear the star of David in our arm. We don't have the right to go to movies. We don't have the right to go outside nighttime, everything like that. So I thought it was temporary. I said until we will be free and they go we have to accept this life, we couldn't do nothing else. In the meantime you couldn't talk to them, they had such a wild language nobody knew German to this time and you couldn't talk to them. But really they were mean, very mean. I remember, the worst part, they brought prostitutes in my home.

Really?

Yes. And my father and mother were so scared. Myself and my sister went to a friend's house, a gentile, to sleep this night because they didn't want us to be in the house.

You mean the Germans were sleeping in your homes?

They came in our homes yes, but this time...

And then they brought prostitutes.

That's right, they did sleep nighttimes but in my home they brought the prostitutes for a night. But another house, they kept the whole house. They throw the people out and they stay in the house. Don't say what happened then.

So you then couldn't imagine that they were going to deport you?

No! The only thing bothers me why we were obliged every day to go to the police office and say that we are here. They know that we are not going anyplace, they knew that. See, the girls in this time and this city they are not so free to do whatever they wanted to do. Their lives were very closed. You had to go certain time and certain place. not too late, you know. With them, too different.

When was it that they deported you?

25th of March. I can't forget the day. 25th of March, 1944.

That was late in the war really.

Late in the war? I think we were the last country occupied from the Germans. _____ 213 We had so dark, we didn't know nothing what happened outside from our home. It's unbelievable, that. I remember we had a cousin in Athens who was more in touch with the situation that used to write to us. "Our cousin is very sick, we pretend ____ 216 that the situation is so good. We have to try to take him somewhere to get well." These people in Athens they escape in the mountains, they hide with our friends and they were saved. But we couldn't do that because in my hometown there were so few Greek, or Jewish people and the people... (the city) was so small, everybody knew us. Wherever we go, they would recognize right away. But in Athens which was bigger city you could hide. Nobody know if you are Jewish or Gentile. In my hometown it was difficult to do that, that's why you couldn't hide. But for me it was so easy to go to a small village and teach Greek. So be busy over there and go far away from home. But I couldn't do that, I couldn't leave my family.

Can you tell me then what happened...when you were deported and where you were taken and what happened then?

Yes. I told you two, three o'clock in the morning, 1944, 25th of March, they knock on our door. Right away, I said to myself, "Oh, the Germans". And I realized that because I heard the walking in the streets, you know, the boots. I said to myself, the Germans. And in the meantime, no lights in the house. The lights went out. The Germans start to scream to get ready and pick up whatever you can, and go. No, we were so nervous. Can you imagine, from the sleep, sleep, wake like that. What can I take in the dark, no lights or nothing. So we took whatever we could. The only thing my father and my brothers, they took some money in case we need wherever we go. So, we went, they took us right away downtown near the city, port. They had already the

cars over there already. One by one they put in the car. That's all. And who couldn't get in the car because of his age, they had to push him. So, they took us to____240 another city. We passed all the cities _____241 to go to Athens. In every place we stop they pick up the Jews from there and they put in the cars.____ 243 they concentrate all the Jews from these small cities and from Athens too, and from there they deport us to Birkenau.

In trains?

In trains, in _____ trains, not passenger trains.

So you were all taken to Birkenau?

Yes. Were you together with your family at this time?

Oh, all of us.

And how many days did it take to get to...

It was eight, nine days, I think.

Did you have food?

Food. They put us raisins, I remember. But we had some food with us. I don't know how, what. We kept_____ 250 know nothing. And sleep it is out of question. One on the top of the other one. I was so happy when I arrive to Birkenau because I thought that at least we go someplace to wash ourselves, to take a little fresh air. Boy, what a disappointment when we arrive over there. Just down in the pavement where the train stopped, there were German officers. And they start, " Left, right, left, right, left, right". We don't know what this meant. We find out later what this means, "left, right". One is for concentration camp, and the other is for crematorium. We didn't know that. When we arrived over there, we find some Jews from Greece, from Salonica(ph)259, who went to Birkenau a year before us.

Oh, really?

Yeah. My husband was a year before me there. So, we ask them, what happened to our parents, where they are? Oh, yes they say, they were so calm--forget about your parents, you look for yourself now. I couldn't believe that. I couldn't believe but he said to me, you will believe, when you will see the crematorium. One hour later, the flames from the crematorium are already up.

What happened to your brothers at this time. Were they selected to work?

Yes, they put them to work, all three. They were young, they didn't keep people over 45 and under thirteen or something like that. All of them under and over went to the crematorium but my brothers were

young and healthy and they could work. Look over here, this way. This one was eighteen, seventeen, I don't know how much he was. He was very strong boy and the other ones too, so they put them to work. But they had lousy job, that's why they went so fast. All of them, they worked in the crematorium. They put them there. And you know what the job was in the crematorium.

To unload the bodies?

No. To put them in the flames, in the oven.

Oh, they went to the crematorium?

That's right, they worked over there and the whole job is to put the people in the oven, put in the oven. After they kill them with the Zyklon B. They take the bodies and put over there. They had another commando, I can't remember the name, who took the gold teeth, who cut the hair and things like that, and then they put them in the oven. It was a terrible job to do that's why they couldn't stand a lot on the job, it was depressing. And my oldest brother, we used to have correspondence once in a while when he find people who work in Birkenau they used to send us sometimes packages from there and letters. And they used to say we have everything here but the job we are doing is terrible. Here are nice people that he knew from Greece and he had to put them in the oven.

What did you do? What was your job?

I was ____ 286. I change a hundred jobs, not only one. The first one was dig ditches, make something like that. And I didn't know. I didn't know how to touch the shower. And all my hands were bruised 289 the German soldiers, they used to laugh because I didn't know to do the job. After that they changed me, they put me to work in other things, but not things that I can do as woman. Men's jobs. I worked almost until November. I got the job from March until November. After that we transfer to Ravensbruck and Malhoff____295.

Oh, you went to Ravensbruck?

Ravensbruck and Malhoff ____ 296. Two more, the last two months. Over there, they put me work nighttime. Make caps for pistols.

Oh really?

And it was terrible job too because I couldn't keep my eyes open the whole night. I was so terrified to hold that gun and things like that. And for what? to kill our people. That's it. That's..

When you were going through all these camps and everything, were you with other Greek Jews at the time?

Girls. Yes, there was a bunch of girls with me, yes.

How did you communicate with the other prisoners or did you communicate with them at all? Because I assume--you knew French, right?

Yeah, but I didn't see any French people there. The only thing, you're not going to believe. I met over there in Birkenau, one girl from Poland who didn't speak Greek, who didn't speak French, who didn't speak nothing else besides Jewish and Polish which I don't know. First time in my life I heard Jewish language over there. In Greece nobody speak Jewish. Even the rabbi doesn't speak Jewish.
[Yiddish]

Right. It's an Ashkenazic language.

That's right. We didn't know that. But this girl, we attached because we had bought the shovel and not come into _____, (c.315), not at all, got friendly. I mean, to--a little bit together, that's all. When I came back all of a sudden, I saw her here in Whitelock (c.316) Street with a child in her hands.

In America?

Yeah.

Really?

Yeah. I didn't recognize in the beginning. First of all after so many years, everybody changed from 1945 'til '51, everybody changed. What is _____? (c.319). I thought my God, this girl I know but I couldn't find where I remember, from where. So I went to her and I said, excuse me do I know you? Were you in Birkenau? (c.322) Do you work in haus commando camp? She says to me yes. I didn't know her name. I don't even that. She says to me and I saw the number. It was much different than mine because she was in camp from '39. She had the good life, very early (c.325). So she said, yes I remember that. Did you work over there, yeah. Did you do this, yeah. Did you do that? Do you remember the Greek girl who couldn't talk? She says, no I don't. That's all right. But since then, we're friends here.

Oh, good.

We see each other very often, really. She has two boys, the same age with my girls.

Very nice.

But we were--how we could communicate all this time together? nothing.

That's what I was wondering because I know this was a problem and it was also a problem for a lot of the Italian Jews because they didn't know any other language.

I didn't, I get in touch with Italians over there. It's so hard to communicate. You're not in the mood to communicate, nobody there. Just the Greeks who knew you and who go through the same way that you do now. But the only thing is, we didn't have any touch with other girls, nothing.

Were there any incidents or episodes that happened while you were in camp that stand out in your mind?

Yeah, yeah. Something I never can forget. I told you my brothers were working in the crematorium. And it was just across from my block where I lived, was the block of the ladies but the men were on other side. So my brothers, I knew they work over there and I wanted to go see them one time. So they told me, you can do that something. Sunday, the blockova can help you to go one day when you don't work outside here. You are free, you can go see them. So I went to the blockova who was a Polish Jew. So I told her, listen, I said, I don't remember even the name. I heard my brothers are there. I would like to give me permission on Sunday; it's a day that we have rest, right, have rest. On Sunday, leave me one hour to go and see them. You know, what she did? She slapped my face because I asked her that. Since then, I hate the Polish people myself because they are so bad. She could do something, she could help me, right? But she didn't.

She was a Jew?

She was a Jew, Polish Jew. But she was really bad. She wanted to be good with the Germans and she slapped my face. I was so mad, I was crying. I said, what can I do. I know my brothers are just across and I can go and see them.

How did you ask her? Did you ask her in German, or---?

I didn't know German. Nothing, just the way, you know. With the hands whatever I could do. Because I have somebody else from the camp, another Greek girl. She saw her husband, was working with my brothers. I said, if she can go, why not me? I don't take off from the job today, I have to work. But Sunday is my day of rest. I could go over there and visit my brothers. She says no.

Is there any other thing like that stand out that you had either witnessed or happened to you?

The revolution that happened at the crematorium?

In Auschwitz?

Birkenau.

Birkenau? You were there during the revolution?

Sure, it was a day that we had to go to work. This happened the two last days of Succoth. The Germans--every time they wanted to do some

selections or bad thing, they find the holidays. So it was the last days of Succoth and I know that because the Hungarian girls were very religious people. I don't know how they went through, they passed books over at the crematorium, in the camp. They used to read and pray with the shovel in their hands. One had the shovel, the other had the book. Every time they saw the Germans, they hide the book. You are free and they took the book out and they read again. But this group was very religious and every holiday, the camp, they show--they tell us that this is Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur, something--holiday, you know. So we know that this was Succoth, the last days of Succoth where we go to work again the same way like every day. Six o'clock to five o'clock waiting outside for the appel, couple of hours rain or shine, cold or snow, never mind. After that, go outside from the camp with the music. It was seven o'clock, eight o'clock when outside at work, outside we hear bullets going here and there, here and there. We didn't know what happened. We thought the Americans or the Russians came to liberate us. All of a sudden we heard this blochkova said, schnell (ph) (c.388), schnell in the block, schnell, schnell in the houses, to go back again we come. We didn't know what happened. They rush us inside the block, they close the doors. Too quiet. In the meantime, the bullets were going left and right, left and right. I see the soldiers going around here and screaming but we didn't know what happened. Finally when they stopped we find what happened. The boys in the crematorium cause a cross-fires. They find out that they supposed to be killed because the Germans, they knew, they did after five, six months when the people work in the crematorium, they were sick and tired, you know, and disgusted. They can't do the job straight the way they want. So they decide every five, six months, change them. Kill them and replace with new ones. The Germans used to replace the people who worked in the Sunderkommando after five or six months with new ones. So they knew that so they decide to do as much damage as they could because they knew they were dead anyway. The organization that they used to make over there that guard munitions, with guns, whatever they could do to damage. So when the time come and they call them to go over there, they jumped on these guards that they disarmed them and they took their arms. In the meantime, the Germans called for help.

I'm just ----- papers. (c.411)

The Germans called for a--help. Four, five hundred people came again, Germans, to give help with them. So it was impossible for the Greeks to win. They knew that. So said at least they're going to die last time free. They kill as much as they could but in the meantime the crematorium was down and all the people who were over there--that's where my brothers were with it.

At the crematorium at the time? So were they part of the uprising, do you know?

Yeah. Sure, they're there. But what a use. It was two, three hundred people who working over there in the crematorium. All of them

went at the same time.

Which brothers were these?

All three.

All three?

All three were there.

So you know that they were all working at the crematorium?

I knew because I told you, I find out... It was across the street, the crematorium, across from my block. In the afternoon, we used to eat outside. I used to see some one of them walking but it was not allowed to come close because of those electric wires. It wasn't allowed.

,

What were your food conditions in Birkenau?

Forget about that! Who thought of food? To get the soup in the morning, you had to fight and wait hours.

Can we stop for a minute, would that be okay?

Yeah, we can stop it. This is better.

Mrs. Carasso is going to read a written account that she wrote telling about the story in the crematorium.

In the crematorium worked a group which was called sonderkommando where just after _____ (c.439) the people died in the gas chamber, to cut their hair, extract the gold teeth and put them in the oven. Terrible work but obliged to do it. Every five or six months, they killed them and replace with a new group with the same luck. ____ (c.444) September, last days of Succoth, we got up as usual at 4 a.m. and waiting outside in line until 6 a.m. until it gets light and go to work. I forgot to mention that every day, going and coming back from work, we had music playing for us. Also playing from prisoners.

What kind of music?

Music--whole band, violin, cello, the whole band. Jewish people playing.

Was it classical music?

Different things, different things. But Jewish people playing, that's what's important, not Germans. That was an irony. Only that we needed, the music. We went to work as usually, out of the camp. We went and suddenly at 9 or 10 a.m., we heard bullets whizzing right and left and not too far from us. Soldiers running here and there with

their dogs and guns, screaming and cursing. We didn't know what happened. We start to laugh and cry and hope that the Allies were close and that was the reason of this turmoil. They called us to go back right away to the camp and they locked up in our block. We were ordered to be quiet. In the meantime, the bullets kept going left and right. This turmoil continued for couple more hours. We stuck our nose with anxiety, in the window, and we were waiting with anger (?) (c.480) and impatience to see some foreign soldiers, American or Russian to come there and open our doors to freedom. But that we dreamed day and night. But what disappointment. No Americans, no Russians showed up. Instead we had, it was a revolution in the crematorium, The prisoners, sunderkommando, killed themselves but also they killed all of the German soldiers who happened to be there this time by blowing up the building. They were there six months. They knew they would be killed in this place so they decide to take revenge and kill as many Germans as they could. And on this sunderkommando were working my three brothers and this was their end. That's it.

Thank you for reading that. So this was in 1944, still? In Succoth, 1944?

That's right.

What happened after that? Now you were taken to Ravensbruck after that?

Yeah. November, they took us to. November. I don't know. They emptied the camp but they took us into the Ravensbruck. Over there I had another job nighttime.

That's when you were filling the ----?

Pistols, pistols, yeah.

Now in Auschwitz then, what did you do--?

My husband was in Auschwitz, not me. I was Birkenau.

Birkenau, I'm sorry. That's right. What other job, you said you had a job digging out in the ---?

Yeah, digging was in Birkenau.

The whole time, you were digging?

The whole time, digging. Different kinds, not only digging. They used to make just a bit hard--take piece of stones--move from one place to another. Or pieces of the grass, move from one place to another. Just to be busy, you know. That's the worst part of every job. But the only thing we did and schnell, and schnell and schnell all the time. Fast, fast, fast. We had so much strength this time to do fast job like that but we had to, no choice. Not only--to Ravensbruck, they

put us to nighttime.

And in the day?

No, nighttime.

You only worked at night?

Nighttime. Did you sleep in the day?

No, how we could sleep? They don't leave you quiet to sleep over there, my God. To catch a little sleep, we're praying to leave us alone. But it was really a very hard job and we were very disappointed because Germans were really cruel to the Jewish people. You thought that they had something personal with us. I told you my brother that used to send me packages when I was in Birkenau only when transports came from the other cities when they came to Auschwitz, they brought stuff with them, colognes, dress things, food like we brought. So all of these they gave to these people who working in the crematorium. The people, they distribute between them--who had someone where to send in the camps, they did, but who didn't have it, did nothing. So my brothers they found a way to send one package sometimes. This was a big holiday for us because we knew my brothers were alive. But after this happened from the crematorium, that's it. After the revolution in the camp, no packages, no news, nothing from them.

Is there anything else from your time in the concentration camps that you can tell me?

About the revolution--the crematorium, I told you. What else?

Then you were in Ravensbruck? and you were in one more?

Malhov, Malhov. Yes.

Is that a work camp?

It was a rest camp for sleeping the whole day. We didn't do nothing there. All day we were in bed, believe it or not.

Did you get sick at any of these times? Did you catch anything, typhus or anything?

Yes, yes. No, no. Just temporary. What are those, I don't know. One day, it's unbelievable but you're going to laugh, I was in Ravensbruck. My feet were swollen from the sun. My eyes were swollen here too. They told me it's because I don't have enough vitamins. I said where am I going to get vitamins here? So they put me to the hospital for that. They didn't do nothing, they just let me lay in bed. I stay over there four days in the hospital. No special care, just relax at least. The last day, I'm supposed to return to my block, I dreamed of my mother, believe it or not. This never happened before.

She said to me, don't worry, everything will be all right, I'm with you. Don't worry, you'll be all right. Next day--I feel chills myself, one thing--because I never dream my mother over that, never. But this last day, she said don't worry, you'll be all right, you'll be all right. I'm with you. Next day they let me go to the camp again with the other girls. We stay over there till the day--to this day, 1944, we're supposed to transfer again. To Berlin, I don't know or where I don't know. So we got ready, we start to walk again, day and night time. May, but it was real cold over there, believe it or not, and we walking for two days. We stopped just for a while to get a rest and walk again. Food, forget what had. All of a sudden, after two days walking, the guards disappeared. We start to talk about how the Greeks were together, the only bit of--. Where we going now, where we going, don't know nothing, where to go here? Nobody, nobody to tell us what to do. So we just got a group of a couple of girls together. We start to see where the other people go, we go too. Because it was the only way. So we went to--.

Can I stop you, I want to flip the tape?

Yeah. No language, no thing. We're walking to find out where all the people go, we go too. So in the meantime I met some cousins from Janina. We got all together then--some boys not only girls. We decide together to go here or there until we find a place. Finally one agent came and tried to concentrate all the Greeks in one place and we went with him. They put us in hotel--in a school, not hotel--in a school for one month. It was--I think it was this one--they put us in a school. And we have regular food over there and freedom to do or to go, wherever we want to go. I had a real terrific time then.

This is after the liberation then?

Yeah, after.

Who--what month were you liberated?

May, 1945. In the street, I told you. We're walking.

Oh, you're just walking? I'm sorry, okay.

We're walking and the guards left us. That's why I didn't know what to do.

I see, okay, okay.

So when we met our--these people from Greece, men and more girls, we got all together, make a group and then decide to go all together to one place. So they concentrate us in this school over there all together. We stayed till they collect all the people around, it was almost five, six months, we stay there. In the meantime we had freedom to do everything we wanted to do. We went out nighttime. We went daytime, we're free!

How did you get money or anything? You were there--were there societies, aid societies, Joint?

Not yet. Nobody reach us yet. But we managed somehow, I don't know how we managed. The boys were more capable _____(c.631)

Where did the food come from then if it wasn't---?

In school they give us food, in school.

So you were at this school and they just took care of you? I see.

Right, in school they gave us everything. Then the UNRRA, you heard the UNRRA?, they contact us. The doctors examine us and they gave us vitamins because everybody was short of vitamins. I didn't have my period all this time myself because the Germans they used to put something in the soup.

Oh, really?

Yeah, we don't have any period. I didn't have any...

The whole time in the concentration camp?

Yes. No, no. That's why they tried to treat us. But everybody was anxious to go home this time. Nobody want to stay there. No matter, if we didn't find nothing with house. So we stay in this school and after six months, September, they put us in a plane and send us back to Greece. Another disappointment, we're going back to Greece. No one, no one from the Joint was in port to wait for us. Nobody was over there. First night, be in Greece, myself, I slept on the pavements of the high school.

Really?

Yeah. Nobody was there.

Was anyone with you? All the people that were with you left and went back to try and find their families?

Everybody had somebody who come to pick them up from the plane. I had nobody because I was not from Athens myself. I was only with my sister, that's all.

Then you--when did you find your sister, _____?(c.645)

After the liberation, we were separated for a short time but we got together soon.

Oh, so she went through the camp? I didn't realize that, okay

Yeah. Going from Birkenau to Ravensbruck, they put us in plain--in small cars, small cars. Not cars like this, cars with the wheels with no cover.

Cold, like the things--it was outdoors?

Yeah, no cover, no nothing. Just the cars. We stay over there. So we're going front myself in a car and my sister was going in another car, in the back. So we didn't pay attention. Her car fell in a ditch and I didn't see it. We continue ourselves, continue, continue. All of a sudden, I remember, where is my sister? where is my sister? I said. Nobody know because she stuck over there. I find my sister three months later--another surprise. All this time, I was crying, I was all the time with my sister and now the last time we're free, I lost her. I couldn't really say anything about that. So one day we were a group outside to eat. All of a sudden one of the women come to me. I didn't even know her. She came to me, says to me, she was from another camp, from a village, a little farther from the barracks where we stationed ourselves. She says to me, do you have a sister? I start to cry. I say I know I have a sister but I don't know where she is. She says to me, I know who she is. I didn't know this woman, never saw her in my life. I said, how do you know she is my sister? She says to me, you look alike. Believe it or not, we don't look alike, with my sister. I don't know then but now we don't look alike. She says to me, you look alike. I tell you where she is. She told me. I ask again. How do you know it's my sister? Your sister is in the next village here. How can I go myself? Do I know. So when we came to this camp over there, were some people from Yugoslavia, Jewish people, took care of the camp, Yugoslavian people. He took care of us, food, something to get dressed, things like that. This--his name was Melumed, Melumed (ph) (c.670). I said, Melumed said--you're not going to believe that. Somebody told me--he know the story that I lost my sister this way--somebody told me that my sister is in this village. How can I get there? He says to me, I just came from there, he says to me. How should I know? I didn't know them. So how can we go? how can do that? He says to me, don't worry. I'll try to find a way. He was the head of the camp. Next day, all of us saw him come with my sister. You don't believe how it felt when I saw her, at least I had somebody.

So the two of you came back to this camp?

Yeah, came back together. Went to Amsterdam over there. We stayed in the school. I don't remember some still there. It's a city near Berlin. I don't remember that really. I have this story all written and I don't remember anything. Anyway, we got together with my sister since then and we came back to Greece together in 1945.

Did you find any relatives?

I didn't find the most important, my family. Always, I hoped that some one of my brothers escaped. Because they said someone escaped to

Russia. I said, maybe, it's one of my brothers, maybe. I was going downtown and I was looking and looking here and there to see if I could find one at least from my brothers or a familiar face. Maybe I'll find some one of my family--nothing, nobody.

Terrible.

To tell me.

Then you stayed in Athens for a while? Is that how you met your husband?

Yeah. _____ (c.687). I need somebody to take care of me. Who's going to feed me? I don't have house, I don't have nothing nowadays. So I start to work in the Joint Distribution Committee. Over there, I met my husband because he came three months later to work there too.

I see. Do you want--we could--if you have a picture of your husband from around the war period, we can include him in this project also. If you can tell me about his life.

My husband was not from Janina or Preveza. He was from Salonika. Would you know anything about what his childhood was like or anything?

The only thing I have is his picture when he was in the army, if we can find this picture. It was too old picture for him--he was in the army then. Charles, his brother, was very active in sports; very active in sports and my husband was a pharmacist.

Did he work in America as a pharmacist?

No, he had to go to school and have the American degree. In the meantime, I had the small child, three years old and I was pregnant. He says to me, how can I go to school? Who's going to take care of you? So better start to work. So he starts to work here.

What was his occupation here?

He was working--you know how I did--at a doctor's hospital in Charles Street. He was a pharmacist with no language. Every time the nurse used to go to the pharmacy and ask for medicine, my husband would say write, write. Because he didn't--couldn't understand what she talked. She used to write the name of the medicine and give to him. But after one year, he quit because the pay was not good. He had family to feed. And I couldn't work either myself because I had one child and pregnant, how can go to work? So after that, he quit, after a year. He start to work at Read's Drugstore, two shifts a day to make the money he needed. He didn't have nobody but the Joint really, he helped us in the beginning. When he saw that the salary went up, they gave less, you know. They used to give certain amount every week for the expenses. Rent, I have to pay rent here. I have to pay for everything, right? So they give us certain amount. Every time he saw

it went up, they reduce the amount till he got free. He got only what he needed. Finally he decided to make--to start a job, his own. He's not going to work for somebody else. He succeeded really. He did very good job.

He opened his own pharmacy?

No, how? He had to go to school to have the degree.

So what did he--?

Ship chandler. He worked with ships, with the Greek ships. He opened the store. He got merchandise for the ships and the people from the ships, they used to come in Baltimore. They used to go to the store and buy things and send back to Greece. He got this job and forgot the pharmacy.

I see.

What for four years in college again to have the American degree? He didn't know English either but somehow he managed his way. He did very good but then everything has an end. That right?

I suppose so. Is there anything else right now about your story that for the sake of our tape and our interview that you haven't mentioned, that you would like to mention? That you can think of?

I don't remember. I don't think I have anything else.

Any details that you left out, that you would like to---? Anything specific again that stands out in your mind of a particular--either from your childhood or anything that happened during the war?

I told you my childhood.

Right. So nothing stands out, aside from the things that you've already told me about?

I don't recall anything that I left out. I think I said everything. That's why I told you to read this one because here when I wrote this one, I have more quiet, you know. I express myself much better when I am quiet. But I thought I mentioned everything.

Could we go on and talk a little bit about your brothers here that you have pictures of?

Yeah.

Which brother is this on the left?

This, Josef.

Joseph? What Jani?

The younger, the younger, was still in school.

What can you tell me about his personality? What was he like?

Oy. He was full of life and so amusing, this boy, it's unbelievable. He was full of life. He made everybody in the house laugh with his jokes.

So he had a good sense of humor?

A lot. A lot more than everyone of us.

Did he do that in school also?

Yes. And a thousand friends.

Yeah, a lot of friends.

Yeah. My house, when the kids were home, my house was full of kids, one going and coming, going and coming.

What kind of--he went to the Alliance School or not?

No, no. Alliance was in Janina; was not in Preveza.

He just went to a public school in Preveza?

Yeah, the regular school.

What--did he have a bar mitzvah?

We didn't have bar mitzvah over there.

You don't have?

Not this time. In shul, they did something but that's it. Not big like here. Nothing to compare with this country.

I know, I realize that. But he could read Hebrew and

Yeah, he could read in school, Hebrew. Learned in school, I told you.

He went to a Jewish school?

Well, the elementary school they have Hebrew too a little bit. A little bit, not too much. I had a little more in Alliance myself. But in Preveza I had a little bit, not too much.

Was it for only Jewish students or ---?

No.....

He was in a Jewish school or was it a public school?

No, no, no. Alliance was a Jewish school. But this one was a public school. But the rabbi from the shul used to take couple hours every week and just teach them the basics of the Jewish language.

He tried to do there? (c.745)

Because there were very few boys over there.

I see. So that's how they got a Jewish education?

Yeah, just a little bit, not too much. Enough to know that he's Jewish.

Right, right.

But in Alliance, we had regular hours for Hebrew, for French, and Greek.

So it was more rigorous?

Yeah. I was not in Janina at this time. Coming back to Preveza, no Alliance there.

I see. So he grew up in Preveza?

Yeah.

The whole time?

Yeah, yeah.

Did he go to Italy? Was he born yet when you were in Italy?

I think he was born--he was one year old maybe, I don't know. He was very small.

Did he do any sports or anything?

Everywhere. Sports is the boys' thing, you know. Everything.

Which sports in particular?

Baseball.

Like American baseball?

Well, it seems to me it's like the American, yes. Baseball.

Did he play soccer?

Soccer, yes, yes.

So he was friendly and outgoing and humorous?

He was the youngest in the house, you know that.

So when you were deported, then he worked in the crematorium?

Yeah, that's the luck. If he was working somewhere else, maybe he could be saved. But no.

How about--which brother? This is Albert? Or this is Moise?

No, no, this is Moise. Albert is the other one, the small picture I showed you.

Okay, would you want to talk about Maurice for a few minutes?

I told you Maurice I know so little because he left when he was nine years old and he came when he was in school. He was like a stranger to us when he came back because he didn't know even Greek. He forgot his language after so many years. But slowly, we got used to him and he started to talk Greek better.

What was he like? Was he serious? His personality?

Oh, he was very serious, this one. He was the--my father's strong hand over the house but we--he used to do a lot of things, helped anyway.

He lived--all the children lived in the same house?

All together, all together.

So he was--he's the one who worked in the ---?

Electric company.

Right. So like a bookkeeper kind of ---?

Well, like an administrator because he did the whole thing over there. that's right.

None of these brothers were married, is that right?

No, no. This is the reason I thought someone of those--someone, at least one will be back. But nothing..

What about Albert?

Albert, I told. He was finished the school, the elementary school in my hometown. After that he went to help my father in the store because he needed somebody.

So he didn't go to gymnasium?

No. He didn't have any chance, this one.

What was his personality like?

Very serious boy, very serious boy. It's not like modern boys to run here and there. He was very--family boy this one.

Oh, yeah. He liked to stay with the family?

Well, he did.

Was he protective of you and your sister?

All the time, all the time and all of them.

But you said that you had combined friends. Was this the brother that you had the joint friends with, Albert?

These boys had friends their age. So I used to go excursions, daytime, for example. From morning till afternoon. With them and their friends too. My friends, too, together.

So you all went together? That's nice.

Yeah. Alone, we're not allowed to go alone.

That's right. Where would you go?

Some small place we had near my city. Outside, very nice, like you go for a picnic outside.

Did you ride your bicycle there? Or how did you go?

Are you kidding? Bicycle at this time? We're not allowed girls on bicycle.

You weren't allowed to bicycle?

No, no.

Very strict upbringing.

I told you. We're not allowed to go out by ourselves. Every time I wanted to go, just a walk outside--not a ride, to walk a little outside--someone had to be with me. Tell me!

It's another world.

I wanted to go to movies, I have to go shop around. I can't go by myself

and the movies...

Even with your friends, you couldn't just go--?

No, no. We had to have a male companion. They shop around too.

This is all your--did all the girls there have the--look like this for all the girls?

From this hometown, yes.

I told you it was small city, that's why.

In Janina it was a little different. But my hometown, _____ (c.799), I couldn't...

In Athens, it couldn't have been like this?

Oh, no. Are you kidding, not to go by yourself wherever you want to go? No, Athens was not like that. But my hometown, I told you, it was a very small town--Jewish people very low. They live together just like that. You couldn't do anything because if you say something, the whole city would talk next day.

Do you know things about your family, like the--how long they've been in Greece? I mean, they're Sephardic, had they been there since the Spanish expulsion in 1492?

Much before the expulsion. They're born over there and raised in Greece and nothing else. They say...

[PLEASE NOTE: AGAIN - WE HAVE DETERMINED TAT THE GANI FAMILY WERE OF ROMANIOT DESCENT, WHICH IS THE GROUP WHO RESIDED IN GREECE AND THE BALKANS]

Many generations?

Yeah, many. They say we come from Israel. But I don't see anything, I don't know where. My parents they didn't speak no other language except Greek.

Do they know Hebrew?

No, nothing, no. But they kept the holidays.

So--but they were Sephardic, notEskewazyes

Sephardic, 100%.

So they were probably from the Spanish expulsion?

Only my husband's family. My husband's family half Spanish. Because

his family comes from Spain.

Right. _____ (c.818)

My husband's mother didn't know one word Greek, only Spanish.

Really?

Yeah.

Oh, wow. Yeah, I guess in Salonika, they had a lot of , , , ,

A lot. There were a lot of Jews over there and they kept the Spanish language.

Ladino?

Ladino, yeah. Even the gentiles, they're obliged to learn Spanish because they couldn't work in Solanika. Because all the commerce was in Jewish hands. Except for that the Jews didn't work in Salonika on Saturday. The gentiles, they were obliged to stop work too because they couldn't do anything.

I didn't realize that.

It was really--it was Jewish, Jewish, Jewish city. Everywhere. How many shuls they had over there? 10 - 15, I don't know exactly. How many shuls they had in Salonika? a lot. My husband, the first time went over there, he was crying to see how Salonika became ghost-ridden.

So you visited afterwards?

Oh, yes. I visited Israel five times. I went by the way in the eastern Europe one time because my husband and I wanted to say a prayer, a kaddish we say, to my parents. We don't have any grave here. So I said to my husband, one time we have to go to Birkenau because I know there they died. So I went over there but believe me, we passed all the eastern European countries. You couldn't talk to them, first of all, because the language is so different. But when I arrived to Cracow in Poland and we're going closer to Birkenau, I start to cry myself because I felt, I felt my parents are dead here and I don't know where. So I went to Birkenau and I took a little sand from that and I brought over here, just one time. Then I went to block where I was sleeping. I saw the bed, I showed my husband the bed where I was. Still the beds are there, still the blocks are there, everything, a little ruined now after so many years, but still they're there. I told my husband, you see this bed. I slept in the second floor, my sister and I and a couple of friends. In one bed were sleeping six girls, like sardines. We couldn't turn from one side to another. And food, forget about that. A piece of bread with margarine and salami what they have. I used to eat half at nighttime, half in the morning. Because we didn't want to work with empty stomach. So many times, they

used to steal at nighttime, the other girls.

Really?

Oh, yes. They were hungry, I don't blame them. But we had nothing more than that. So when I show it to him, my block and where we slept and the life we had over there, he says to me now let's go to Auschwitz and I show my block. So we went after left Birkenau, was a half-hour walking distance. Went to Auschwitz. First of all they show over there the rooms where they have different things from the people who were there. Suitcases, shoes, hair, these cans from Zyklon B and things like that. Or they have different rooms and you visit and you can see them. When finished all of that, then he says, let's go to my place. He took me--this was more distant this place because it was two blocks--two _____ (c.866) blocks. My husband says this was our first floor and this was my sleeping place. But it was like a house. Mine was like a barn, you know. Different. They wanted to show to that crowds and the Red Cross that they treated good, the Jewish. And he was going to sports over there, play baseball and basketball, whatever it is, with the other prisoners. They had more freedom there. We were really prisoners in Birkenau.

I guess it depends, you know, whenever he got there, the state of health that he was in?

No, he was lucky because when they told us, when we were at Birkenau what profession we have. My husband says pharmacist. I didn't say nothing because I didn't have any profession. I was just in the school and then in the house, what profession I have? So just because of that, they put him in the section where they kept the professionals, the doctors and things like that. Going to Auschwitz, they put him over there, to take care of the sick people. How they take care? No medicine, no nothing, just with aspirins and water. But the only thing is, he had a little freedom, more than I did. He was not scared of this selections they used to make once in a while, but always the holidays, Pesach, Succoth, Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur, all the holidays. When we come back from work, they rush us in the block again and the blockaltester came to visit us. What's that, it's going to be a selection. God, everybody tried to hide because even if you are strong, if you have something, small thing in here or in your stomach or somewhere else, crematorium right away. So we were scared to death. They used to wake up us, 11, 12 o'clock from the sleep to visit us. The next day, midnight...

Selection?

They took the numbers of the selected girls and the next day you see this girl disappeared. One day was in the line for work, next day they're not. You didn't know from one day to another what would happen. Today you are alive, you work. Next day, maybe you're not. Depends how lucky you are.

Terrible.

Tell me. When I was liberated, I was 100 pounds, like that. I'm not fat, I never was fat but I never was 100 pounds either. After the liberation, I told you they kept us to this hotel for three months, two months, I don't know how long. You know what we did the whole day. Eating and sleeping, eating and sleeping. We came back to Greece I was just like that fat. I couldn't bend myself and tie my shoes, so fat I was. That's true. But after that, slowly, slowly, I lost a bit. Not because I kept any diet but I didn't eat like that and I move a little around. Over there, I was sleeping because I was so tired; I wanted so much to sleep. At work, I was looking, having my shovel in my hands, I was looking. If nobody was looking, to lay a bit in the grass and sleep, to find just a moment to rest. My friends and my sister used to say oh go in this corner and sleep. I'll take a look. If somebody comes, I'll wake you up. This was something we used to do for them. Go, lay in this corner. I'll take a look. If somebody comes, I will wake you up again. We were so dead for sleeping, so dead. And going to block to relax, you know, in the block were 100 kinds of girls over there. Different nationalities, different education, different background. They start to fight. We want to go to sleep and relax, they start to fight. They fight in their languages. I didn't know what they say, what they did but the only thing fight and scream.

When you came to Athens, what did your sister--? You met your husband then at the Joint? Did you come to America at the same time with your sister?

No, I came six months before my sister.

She got married in Greece also?

No, she married here, after me. I was married in Greece but she was younger, I told you. She married here.

But she managed to come to America too?

Yeah.

Did she live with you then when ---?

No, they send her to Chicago.

Oh.

She lived one year in Chicago. She went to school all this year and after that, the Joint--because the Joint helped her send to school over there--she quit. She came to New York and she start to work over there.

Did she try to come to the same city? You had come to Baltimore?

I didn't know where to go because they asked me if I had relatives here to help me, to go to America. I said, I didn't want to say I had relatives because I didn't want to bother them to help me. I said I'm old enough, I'll go over there. I can work and do my--make my life. I don't like to bother nobody. So I said I have nobody. So they had opening; was open here in Baltimore so they send us here. I said after all, I have some friends in New York but I didn't like to bother anybody. I said New York and Baltimore, they aren't far away. If I have _____ (c.918), I'll go visit them. But I didn't go. I didn't say that I have relatives in New York, I didn't want to say that. So they send me here. I said, fine. Here, I don't care. Stranger keeps you sending you there, it'll be a new place. But I'm glad. My husband, though, all the time, he didn't like Baltimore when he came here.

Why not?

Because we're the first Greek who came to Baltimore, the first one. We don't have nobody. The gentile Greeks lived but far away and different. With somebody in our own religion, you know,... So he says to me all right, let's see what we're going to do. We'll try to go to New York because we have our people. We tried, one year we tried, next year we tried. The other year we tried. In the meantime, we're used to this life now here. Also more people came from Greece here.

There are other Greeks?

Yeah, they came. First they moved around. One moving to California, another one moving Cleveland, another one moving New York so they go here and there. But in the first time, we're completely alone, it was good to have them here. Now, there are two, three families here.

Immediately after the war when you were recuperating at this place when you were sleeping and eating, what was going --?

Where, where?

In Germany. What was going through your mind? Did you think about what happened or did you just not, try not?

I was thinking of going back home and find my family. That's what I hoping, find somebody from my family. I was really disappointed when I didn't see nobody.

Were you able to get any reparations from the ---?

Yes, again we got, after a while, not this time when I need it really. After a while, I made application German consulate and they give us. Every month I get something. But the first time when I need it, they didn't have nothing.

Well, I want to thank you very much. If there's nothing else that you'd

like to add, we can turn off the tape.

Just ask me something. I don't remember if I have any thing written over here. I told you, I told you about... This is my story, you know that. You read that, didn't you?

Yes.

Okay. Of course, this one too.