United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Lucine Horn
July 15, 1994
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PREFACE

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LUCINE HORN
July 15, 1994

Q: The way that I'd like you to begin is for you to tell me your full name and when and where you were born --

A: Give you the background plus the family name --

Q: -- and background of the family --

A: -- and the town I lived in.

Q: Exactly.

A: We found that before.

Q: Oh sure.

A: Well, my name is, my real name is Estella Rubinlicht and I was born in Poland in a town called Lublin, the town that became very infamous because of the concentration camp that we had next door my --------. I was born to a nice Jewish family, traditional, observant. Both of my parents were professional people which was a little unusual for the circumstances of Jews living in Poland at that time. My mother was a dentist who put herself through school, while my father was a court-appointed interpreter in three languages, and I also had a little brother, who was seven years younger than I was. The town of Lublin had about 140,000 to 150,000 inhabitants. We had a very famous yeshiva, and also I would say that about 60,000 out of the population have been Jews. Before the war, I was little but we kind of enjoyed normal life for Jews. We were allowed to practically do everything, except Jews couldn't hold any government jobs, and also going into the university was very complicated being a Jew -- there was a special quota for Jews. But I happened to attend private schools, both primary school and high school both private, because simply there was a better education my parents could afford. Public school was compulsory but high school was not available to all the population. I had a very happy childhood, very close-knit family, lots of love, two sets of grandparents, not too big of a family, we were not a very large family; but kind of well-to-do, not extravagant, and very happy. I had a happy childhood until when I was twelve years old the war broke out. The rumor started in 1939 in the summer when we as teenagers were going to the swimming pool and doing all kinds of summer things, and the rumor started that there was going to be a war. My father at dinnertime -- we always had dinner together, that was the family thing to do -- told us that we had to be prepared ---------- -- and maybe we should accumulate some more food, because for a certain time things are going to be going on that are going to be bad. Nobody ever expected what is going to happen. People thought that maybe there would be a war that would blow over, and that's about it. I mean, in the history of the world never anything like that happened. So the Jews were quite sedate. They kind of thought, you know, that whatever happens, just happens.

And it wasn't until suddenly on the first of September, 1939, that we woke up to severe bombing and not being prepared and of knowing what it is really, we all went down to the basement and stayed there while the raid was over. When we came out, there was a realization that we had war and that Germany has attacked Poland. Well, there was panic, we didn't know what to do, and people were completely at the stage of panic, they didn't know what to expect. Well, this state of affairs did not take too long, because after four days the Polish government went away from Poland and the next day on the fifth day of this disarray, the Germans came in. Now, all I saw was these mad Germans running around the city and running into homes and just grabbing everything they could. So into our home a group of Germans came in, tore the watch and everything they could off my mother's hands, grabbed all the things we had, took whatever they wanted to, broke china, beat us up, and went out. That was my first encounter with what the Germans are really like. Then they were running around the streets and they decided that they want men, so they gave an order that so-and-so many men have to come to a certain place and of course we were very worried. A lot of people at that time, as I recall, were running away to Russia, east, and we even had an opportunity, our family to go. There was a bus that our neighbor owned and he wanted all of us to go to Russia. But you know, my mother was a homemaker, she had her livelihood there, they just couldn't part with things, they didn't know how to go to the unknown. And so, placidly, most of the Jewish population stayed. Some of them did go east, but my family decided to stay. Well, the next -- it was 1939, of course schools were closed, the Germans were riding around, there was a curfew after seven and we were right away given yellow our stars saying "Jude," that means Jew, we had to wear one on the left shoulder in front and one in the back so they could see us from the back and front. And we were living under curfew with very little food, not knowing what's going to happen next. Now, what happened in the period between 1939 and 1942 was the fact that the Jewish population was getting smaller and smaller and smaller because through different actions of taking people away to concentration camps the Germans would round up a certain area of the city, take out the Jews, beat them up, and ship them some place off. We did not know what happened to these people, what happened to the families, because we had no contact with newspapers, radios, everything was taken away from us. So we merely existed, not in our own homes any more. As the Jewish population was getting smaller and smaller, the Germans have been giving the Jews smaller quarters to live, and because they wanted them all together, they were forming what wasn't even a ghetto yet but an area that was dedicated for the Jews. And they would put, like, four or five families in one apartment so that when they need to take them out, it would be easier for them to have them all together. Well, we lived through many of those actions, and fortunately both of my parents were working -- working so that the Germans needed them; therefore, we were spared at the beginning, because my mother as a dentist was working in a hospital and the Germans needed care. Now, my father also had a job, in the administration of the ghetto, so they also needed him. But as I was already 14 years old, I needed a job on my own in order to be spared. So I got a little job in the bank helping out. And that's how through all these actions we were able to somehow survive. Food was scarce. My mother was getting a little bit of food from peasants who were coming still to her for medical advice, and so we survived until April 1942. By April 1942 was one of those big actions where they took away a lot of Jewish

people, and out of 60,000 only 4,000 survived. We were given special passes, special Reich documents like passports, and these were the 4,000 Jews that actually were working for the Germans and that the Germans decided to keep for a little bit longer. We still did not know where all the people went. Well, the state of living was just terrible, you know -- Germans were coming in, cutting off the beards of the Jewish people, they were beating them up, they were taking them out haphazardly, they were demanding things, soldiers were running around and taking advantage of women, they plundered. There was practically nothing any more because we had lived in a little tiny village outside of Lublin where they put these 4,000 people to live; very inhumanly, in little shacks, in little homes where very poor peasants lived -- they had to be evacuated and they were given apartment in the city that the Jews lived in. You could see a horse and a cow on the third floor balcony because these people took all their belongings with them; we were put in that little village where these people lived before. There they put a barbed wire and called it a ghetto. This was a ghetto but not in the idea of a ghetto like in Warsaw, this was a ghetto, this was a settlement of Jews which were surrounded by barbed wire and constantly watched so there was no way out. The people that watched, the soldiers that watched the ghetto were mostly Lithuanians and Ukrainians. They were helping the Germans to keep order because the Germans could not be bothered with these little things like watching the Jews, they wanted them when they needed them. And in that little village they were coming in like four in the morning wearing white gloves, dressed to kill as clean as they always were, and beat up the Jews and taking them out again. That state of affairs lasted from April '42 until November '42. I was still with my parents and I was still with my brother. In that little place we still managed to go out a little bit because we were young, and that's when I met my present husband.

Q: Now, to back up a little bit, were there many children like your brother, your little brother, or how did you manage to keep him hidden with you? You had to work --

A: OK. At the times I just described, I was still with my parents, so we were still together, and we still had some means to buy some food on the black market. So my brother was my responsibility, because up until that moment I was still home and my parents cared for me. I even managed to go out for ice cream, not late in the evening, but we had a little garden next to the little house where we lived and the Germans made sure that the Jews tilled the soil and grew some flowers because they had to show to the International Red Cross how nice the Jews had it in those ghettos. And every morning at six o'clock we would be taken out through a gate to work and taken to work in the city on buses and trucks. And every day at six o'clock, they would bring us back, and then there was curfew. So that was the life that summer. Now, not far away from this little village was the concentration camp, --------[name of camp] and we saw the inmates of the concentration camp working on the roads wearing these uniforms, and that's all we saw. We knew that there is a camp there, and we saw the people, emaciated in these striped uniforms, showing us -- like this -- that they are hungry. But we were always in groups watched by the Germans and we were not allowed to have any contact with these people, they were digging roads. And we knew that something is going on there, something very, very bad, because the concentration camp was not far away. In fact, our little town was called -------- and the big concentration was called --------

[both names]. So there was a little bit interconnected this whole area. There was an incident where friend of my present husband had a sandwich, and so this Jew asked him for food and asked the guard -- whoever he was, I don't know if it was a German or Lithuanian -- if he may give him the sandwich, the guard said "yes" and as soon as he gave him the sandwich he shot him, he shot this friend of my husband. So there was the situation. I still was with my parents, I'm stretching it all the time because it really was the last time I was with my parents in that little ghetto. And having a very sheltered life and having a good home life, I really never thought was life is all about and how to go about managing it on my own. We didn't grow up as fast over there as children grow up today, and being 14, 15, really meant to be under the care of your parents all the time, especially when there were no schools -- I was completely cut off from school for three years already. It wasn't until November 1942 that the tragedy happened. One early morning -- (she takes deep breath) I have to admit and I have to tell you there was no way to escape at that time. Even if we would like to stay outside of the ghetto, there was no way to do anything, there was no people that would take us in. They were hunting Jews all over. We had no papers, we could not get a job, we could not get a place to live, we really couldn't go out and stay on the other side of the ghetto. It was impossible. They would find you sooner or later. It wouldn't be the Germans, it would be the Poles that were the Nazis. But that was happening all the time. So it was on the morning in 1942 in November -- I don't know if it was the 6th or the 7th of November that we were woken up at three in the morning that we were told that everybody has to come to this big square because we cannot stay home any more. And we kind of had a feeling that this is the end of this little settlement of the Jews, because we heard rumors that Jewish villages and settlements had stopped existing all around in Poland. So we knew that if we come to this square, they will take us away forever. What happened was that my father arranged for my mother to go to the hospital and stay there, thinking that maybe the Germans will honor the doctors still there, like they did before. Some people had little hidings in their homes but we didn't have any, but my husband's parents had a little hiding spot in their little home, which was really a double wall where you could stand like lined up in a queue if it were necessary, but not for too long. Well, my present husband, who was at that time just a friend, came over running to our little place and he said, "Why don't they take her," meaning me, "to my hiding place? Because she doesn't really have such good papers and they probably will take her away. And we have this little hiding place, so me and my family are going in there." And we didn't even have time to think, I didn't have time to say goodbye to my parents. My father said, "Go, Honey, it's the best thing for you to go." And I just went with him, and he said, "I am going to try to take care of my brother and see what we can do." And there was a -- I never saw my parents again. And so we went in to the hiding with my present husband, and we stayed in this little wall hiding place probably between six in the morning up until maybe two in the afternoon. We tried not to cough, we tried not to move. And then at two o'clock somebody knocked and said, "You might as well come out, this is the end of the ghetto. You will not survive here, there is no food, there going to come and raze all those buildings. There are proclamations all over on the walls, this is the end of this little ghetto and that all the Jews have to come to a certain barrack to go to Majdanek Concentration Camp, because this is the liquidation of the ghetto." Well, my first thought was to go back to my house and see if anybody is there but we weren't

allowed to move any more, we could only allowed to go to this barrack, that's all. There were Germans in this ------- and they were showing you how to get to this barrack and there was no other choice but to go there. My husband's parents said, "You are so young" -- he also had a sister -- "it's too bad, maybe you try to run away through the barbed wire and maybe you can squeeze, at least the two of you to survive." So we tried, it was bright daylight and we tried to -------- at one point, the barbed wires, and to run. Well, I have to tell you that around the ghetto there was nothing, which is plain fields, for miles and miles to a house and it wasn't like you could run into a building or something, there was nothing there. Well, we ran for about a little mile to a ------ and there was shooting but they didn't hurt us, but then finally one of those guards ran after us, beat my husband up -- he still has a permanent scar in his eye, no vision, and called us all kinds of names and told us "back to the ghetto you go." So that was not successful. When we came back to the ghetto I could not see my mother any more because my mother was already taken. The hospital, the doctors, the staff, and all the people that were in there, I mean the patients, they were all taken to the concentration camp, so my mother was already in Majdanek, poor thing. I saw my father, who was still around, and I saw my brother. And my husband's parents were still with us and we were thinking -- we had three days to go to this barrack to go to the concentration camp. Well, we were making quick decisions, we didn't know what to do. We could not go back home for any money or clothes or anything. My husband's parents, unfortunately, decided that they will go to this barrack, and so did his sister. She really did not want to live any more. We were so broken up, we had no will to survive. We went through three years of dehumanization, deprivation, hunger and everything, and you know what ---------- maybe. Moreover, ---------going on like that. But my father said to us, I "really want somebody to provide for the family." I was thirteen and a half at this point. "We're going to try in the middle of the night when it's dark for young to get through the barbed wire. And maybe you can survive." So we passively said OK and we tried a couple of nights and we couldn't do it. But then on the third night my father got some gold coins and some watches and some -------- together and said, "I will try to bribe some guard, maybe he will let you go." And on the third morning, about four o'clock -- it was in November, it was very dark, there was snow on the ground -- my father arranged for the guards to look away, gave them all this stuff and said, "I want you to look the other way. I want my family to get out." And so, myself, my present husband, who was just a friend, and my little brother, who was nine years old, were practically pushed by my father through the barbed wire to go and survive. I wanted my father to come with. He said, "Oh no, I have to go to my ----- to the concentration camp and I have to help your mother. I cannot go with you." He said, "Go, and see what you can do for yourself." And so we did. We had to walk quite a long while because there was nobody around. And they were shooting. But then we saw a peasant, because the city was very far, maybe ten kilometers away. We saw a peasant and we asked him if he would give us a ride. He might have known who we are but he pretended maybe that he didn't. We thought he's either going to kill us all or he's going to take us to the city, but he didn't. He took us into the city and in the city it was really bedlam because everybody knew that the ---------- and everybody knew the Jews were running away and everybody was looking for Jews. And if you found a Jew and showed him to a German, you would get ten pounds of sugar or five pounds of flour, something like that, they were posted all over

looking for the Jews that are running way from the ghetto. So it was impossible in a small town to really hide overnight. But fortunately my husband knew somebody that worked for my father and we walked in and said, "May we just stay overnight some place" and of course they were scared because you know they would find Jews by them, they would shoot them too. So it wasn't only the point that they didn't want to help, because we knew some very fine people that were patients of my mother, and my mother told me she gave them stuff to hide like candelabra and linens and fur coats; in case we ever needed them they would be outside the ghetto. But when we came to these people they said, "Yes, you need somebody to help you out but we cannot let you overnight." The only person that let us overnight was this worker that used to work for my husband's father, and they put us in the basement full of coal and potatoes and everything that people put down there, and we stayed overnight, the three of us. A very unusual trio. My husband was then 22, I was 16, and a nine-year-old boy. And we ----------. We stayed overnight and we knew we had to get out. So we had no way to stay in the house, but in the morning I heard that the Germans came in and shot my father, because my father still was in the ghetto, he was one of the last left ones. And as he tried to get out I understood that he was shot ----------ghetto. So I was able to find that out, and of course my husband's father, mother and sister all went to the ghetto: the ghetto was no more. And we somehow scraped together enough to buy tickets on the train to go to Warsaw because Warsaw was a big town where nobody knew us and we were dreaming and hoping that maybe we could establish our existence as Aryans in the Warsaw outside of the ghetto. Well, that wasn't so simple because before we took the train I went into a lady whom my mother gave things to to keep for us. This lady was supposed to be a friend of my mother's and she also lived in the same building that we did. In the meantime she told me to come back at a different hour and there were two Gestapo people waiting for me, so she wasn't friendly to me. I almost lost my life at that point because they were walking with me and trying to take me to the Gestapo, and then they were calling for some other people -- it's impossible to describe the situation but I ran into a bombed-out building where there was a little door and in this little door was a shoemaker living and the shoemaker knew my husband, and that lady decided to hide me in that little room of hers. She really was the one that saved my life, because I knew that I cannot hide there, there was nothing there, just one little room and a curtain. She said, "You stand behind the curtain." My shoes were showing. I said, "I can't jeopardize everybody else." And my brother and my husband were was sitting there in that little room but they didn't know my family, they just knew me. And somehow she opened the door real wide and we played the housing scene. As the Germans came up there to look for me, she didn't even let wait until they came in. She came out, dusting off a little rug, and they said to her, "Did you see a Jewish woman running around here?" She said, "No." She was an older, simple lady. She said, "No, I didn't see anybody here. This is all empty, there are no people walking through here." She said, "Well, there was a Jewish lady that we just lost sight of and she's somewhere here. No, you're welcome to come in, there is nobody here." The Gestapo people walked away. And as they walked to the end of the street, I ran to the other side of the street around the corner. So that was one of my very close encounters. From there we took the train to Warsaw. It was a long ride ---------. I think my father put a little money in my pocket and that was just about all that we had but I had a very good pair of shoes, because every Jew believes that no

matter what happens with you, you have to have very good pair of leather shoes in case you have to walk. I also had a coat with a little fur underneath so in case I get stuck some place I should be warm; that's what I had. And of course my brother was with us, this little boy. And in the train they made ------- all the time that we were Jews, smugglers and Jews, and again Jews. I don't know how we ever made it to Warsaw. We got into Warsaw at four o'clock in the morning and they have these rickshaws that used to take to the city, like either horse and buggy to take a rickshaw, and as we came into Warsaw they recognized us right away -- the Poles, not the Jews. See, the Germans per se would not recognize a Jew, they did not know, they were not aware of the characteristics of the Jews -- whether you had a long nose or whether your Polish is not proper or whether you speak with a Jewish accent; they did not know this but the Poles were absolutely acute to this, they were really experts. So they somehow saw -- they were waiting for people to get off the train, they knew that the Jews are running -- and they saw my husband was given by one of his friends a fancy coat with a fancy hat and that is no ----- with us, they really didn't ------ to kill us---------- and right away when we took the rickshaw and tried to go into town where I thought maybe I could find -- I had an address -- some people who would help us out with false papers, or anything. They right away took us in their rickshaw and they were going and going and going. And I said, "Well, we wanted to go to this-and-that street." He said, "Oh no, that's not where you're going." I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "You're going to the Gestapo." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Because you are Soviet Jews and we know you that you're hiding. And because you are Jews, you can't survive, we are taking you straight to the Gestapo." And they were Poles, young Poles, who were riding this rickshaw and we said to them, "Stop! Why would you do that?" He said, "----------, you should get back to the Gestapo." "What do you care whether we live or not?" "No, you have to go." Well, whatever we had on we gave it to them. We stopped in a little shack in a little corner of ---------- building and I told them, "Whatever I have you can take. I still have a little money. You can take my rings, you can take my watch, whatever I have, but please leave us here on the street, don't take us." So that's what happened. They stripped us of everything we had and left us in the corner of that street by the door of some building. So here we are, about twelve o'clock in the afternoon with nowhere to go, with nowhere to sleep, with no money. Soon enough we had no choice but to try to find a way to get into the ghetto. And we knew that this is suicidal. We realized it but there was no other way for us -- we couldn't practically sleep on the street. Talking about homeless people today, you know, we were really homeless. There was just nobody I knew, nobody that I could talk to, but we knew one thing: we knew how to get into the ghetto. It also wasn't easy. You just don't take a bus intended for the ghetto and say, "I want to go in there." We decided, we knew, that the Jews come out from the ghetto to work every day morning and they go back at night. We knew that they go to work at the certain depot, coal depot, where they unload wagons of coal for the Germans. And we knew that if we go there and when we talk to the supervisor, who was Jewish, and if he has ------ people going back to the ghetto, he will probably do us a favor and take us on. So that's what we did. I think it was November 9th or 10th. We just went to this place ----- bus, and we found this group of Jews working there. We talked to the fellow. We said, "Look: We are three people, we cannot stay on the Aryan side, we have nothing, we want to go to the ghetto. And I had an uncle in the ghetto who was my father's brother

and I was hoping that at least I could go get a meal there and somebody to talk to. Because we were so tired from running and at this point we wanted to die as Jews. Which later reversed itself, you see. But we were so tired of running, we see the best that all the other Jews in the ghetto, because we have no parents any more and nobody to take care of us, we're just alone, and whatever happens, happens. So that night we got into the ghetto. I remember that my brother had a little coat and on the coat there was a fur collar. We had to tear off his collar and throw it out the window of the train because Jews were not allowed to have any fur on them. And whatever else we had, like a little suitcase, that had to all be taken away, thrown out, because we were going back to the ghetto as workers. And that's how we got into the ghetto. And that ghetto was really not what I remembered from my home, whether was barbed wire, it was summer, we had little flowers in the garden, and there was my mother and father and somebody to protect me. That was a twelve-foot wall, with people in there who were emaciated. It was almost the end thing of the Warsaw ghetto. It was the "small ghetto" what they call where people were laying on the ground, dead, covered up with newspapers; where there was absolutely no food. On the black market they were selling horsemeat. It was absolutely a tragic picture. And that's what we got into. Unfortunately, we didn't get much help from the family. My family was not responsive to my needs. The only thing they did when we got there, they meant us to ----- marriage. They said, "Are there two of you?" I said, "Yes, we are friends, we knew each other briefly. It just so happens that we care for each other but I just lost my parents, he just lost his parents, I'm 16 years old, just to think of getting married is the last thing in my mind. We want to survive." "Well," my uncle said, "You know that's not right. If you are going to be together you have to get married." I said, "Well, if you want to do it, then arrange for it. Fine with us." Well, my uncle found a rabbi, the rabbi didn't want to marry me, I was too young, but finally there was a rabbi who on a Saturday afternoon, December 13, married us in his little room, wherever he lived there in the ghetto. They got me some dress -- from a neighbor, I guess, because I didn't have anything, -- and we were married. We were married, then we were given a ------, you know, the Jewish certificate of marriage, which, incidentally later, was flushed down the toilet because when we became "Aryans," we couldn't have it, there was no document of marriage. And as we got married, my uncle said -- first of all he told us we can't stay with him; he still had a nice apartment and quite a bit of money and he said, "No, you can't stay here." So we had to find ourselves a place. And fortunately I met some people who were from my home town and knew my parents. As a matter of fact, one lady gave me her ring, her wedding band, to get married with, before the wedding, that we got married with. They told us that they lived ----------, which at that time was not the headquarters of the uprising yet, and that they all have one apartment that that lady ---- 10 or 12 families, but they will be willing to designate a quarter for us so that we can go to the open-air market and get a sack with straw, fill it, put it there, and live there for a while. That was end of December, beginning of January, in the Warsaw ghetto. We did that and unfortunately my uncle did not want to keep my brother either, so I had to bring my brother into this settlement of people in there. And we just existed, simply. My husband was going every morning with a group of the people. He was unloading coal, and as a reward he could take on his back a sack of coal as much as he could carry, four/for kilometers and on the train going back to the ghetto. And because we didn't want to use the coal to heat our

apartment because we couldn't afford it, we would go and knock on the doors of the people that still had a little money, and they would buy this coal from us. And for that money we would go to the black market and buy a little bit of flour, whatever we could. And that's how we lived for three long months. We both were very ill, as you know, from disease and all kinds of indigestion and gastritis and typhoid fever; it was very prevalent, people lived under very inhuman circumstances. There was no proper food. My brother was nine years old, it was very difficult for me because he was in the growing stage and he did not understand all the things that are happening to us -- that we have to hide and we have to be beaten up. On January I believe 7th or 8th, the Germans surrounded the ghetto again and they took ---------- I don't know. At that time there were still about 200,000 people in the ghetto -- I might be wrong with my numbers -- and then they took another 25,000 at that time and we had to hide in a room that we closed off. So it was just extremely difficult, it was just like the ----.

Q: Why was your uncle ----------?

A: Because my uncle was not a nice person. Very simple.

Q: Who lived with him?

A: His wife and a child. My uncle was an extremely intelligent, egoistic, self-centered person, who didn't get married until later in his life. He spoke English in Poland, in Warsaw. He worked for the Joint Distribution Committee, he had a high position, but during the War when Warsaw was already the ghetto and we in Lublin still had a lot of food from the peasants, my father would send -- we were allowed to send packages every week to Warsaw, a certain amount of food, and my father ------- supported him maybe a year. But -- I don't want to talk bad about my relatives but he just didn't do anything for us. He figured he wouldn't have enough money to survive for himself and he just practically threw us out into the street. It was winter, it was a very heavy winter. We didn't have proper clothes, we didn't have proper heat, we just sat in a corner with all these other people from our home town. And one week when the Germans surrounded the ghetto and we locked off a room to try to hide -- we were maybe 30 people in that one room and we were just eating raw cabbage and radishes, and whatever we could put into this room -- we had no bathroom, just a little pail. It was practically inhuman but otherwise the Germans would have found us. So we blocked off one room and put the furniture in front of it so the Germans would not know when they come into the house that we are there. That's how we survived the deportation on January 7 in Warsaw, because we had no papers that we are working there. And then while we existed in this ghetto we were hearing rumors -- it was already 1943 -- that something is cooking there, that there might be an uprising. The Jews are buying the munitions from the Poles said something might happen, that maybe really Germans are going to liquidate the whole ghetto. And there were rumors that this ghetto is not going to exist any more because it was practically one of the last ghettos that the Germans kept. So what was happening is that a lot of Jews who still had some means, they were building bunkers. Those bunkers were not the bunkers that were built by the Underground but they were bunkers that they

built to survive. They thought that maybe if they built these very excessive bunkers and put water here and cooking facilities, that maybe they can survive in the bunkers if the ghetto gets destroyed for reason, either through the Jewish uprising or for any other reason. And people who could contribute to go into those bunkers were partaking in this whole idea. Now, we didn't know anybody, we were absolutely orphans, we didn't know anybody there and we absolutely had no chance to ever think that we would be allowed to be taken into those bunkers. I was very sick, and after living in the ghetto over three months all of a sudden I just felt an urge of getting out. It was just the opposite of what I thought three months ago -- three months before, I was outside of the ghetto and I couldn't find a place for myself and I said, "Let me die like all the other Jews. You get shot and it's all over with." We still didn't know about concentration camps and gas chambers. But at that point -- it was spring, it was in February or March and I just felt an urge to be shut outside of the ghetto, not in this ghetto. I just felt like I want some light and fresh air, and maybe I want to see normal living people for a while, and then if I go, it's different. I just felt it. And maybe for the sake of my brother. We just wanted to get out. First of all, you have to have the will, and then you have the opportunity, you know -- one without the other just doesn't work. And most of the Jews, and also us -- we had no will any more and that's why we came to this point. But at this point we somehow got our strength together to get the will to maybe want to get out. But getting out of the ghetto -- I don't even have an example of the impossibility to this idea. There just isn't such a thing, you know. There's no such a thing that you can go to a 12-foot wall, who surrounded by Germans, there's no such a thing that you get out and not be caught, because the whole area of the ghetto was always patrolled by Poles who only waited for somebody to run away. So it was impossible. We had no connections but we had an idea and we started to think that maybe we should pursue this idea: It just so happened that my husband was still working at the depot. One day while he was there he saw saw a familiar face, the face of a man who was wearing a railroad uniform, and he was convinced that he knows this fellow and that he's a friend of his from Lublin and that he's a Jew. Slowly they started to look at each other and they recognized each other, and from a distance they said, [speaking in whisper] "Are you so-and-so" and he said, "Yes." And he said, "I don't believe -- what are you doing here?" My husband said, "I'm in the ghetto, with my wife and her brother. What are YOU doing here?" He said, "Well, I'm pretending I'm a Polish railroad worker and I have a lot of connections, I live outside of the ghetto, and I have a lot of connections with Polish people who hide Jews for money. But big money. And my whole family is being hidden in the ghetto inside of Warsaw." It just so happened that I knew the whole family and I also knew the friend of my husband, and he said, "Do you have any money? I can arrange for you to find a place." This doesn't mean -- his whole family was killed by the Poles. And that doesn't mean that he himself survived, because he didn't, but he helped us. Because if you were hiding in 1943, that doesn't mean that you're going to make it for a year and a half. So, my husband said to him, "I have no money but we would like to get out of the ghetto." He said, "I know of a treasure that was buried in the ghetto by my father. I don't know exactly what treasure it was, you know, what was in it, but it was just a lot of things buried there. My father was instrumental in putting a crate together and putting it into a place in the earth area. I would be willing to show somebody where this is, even go with them." It was so dangerous to go back to my home town. This fellow said, "No

problem, we have Polish uniforms, we have Polish papers. I'm going to talk to my Polish friends and see if they would be willing to go and get this treasure out and get you out of the ghetto." So that was just the beginning of the dream, because he came back in a few more days and my husband saw him and he said, "Well, they would be willing. There's a whole group of people that would be willing to take you back to Lublin and see if the treasure is really there." But my husband said to him, "You know, the way things look here, something is going to happen any day and I might just come back with all that money and treasure and my wife and her brother might be killed by then. If I am taken out to go for this treasure, I would like them to come with me at least out of the ghetto and wait some place outside of the ghetto until this all materializes." And that's exactly what happened, that miracle happened. That one day he came back to the depot and he said, "Dead on that date, at six in the morning, you come out with a group of workers and I will have two Polish people standing outside and pretending, when you just walk through the gate and you walk and walk and then you walk away from the group, I'm going to have these people pretend that they grab you. They're going to grab you and they will take you on a streetcar to a place we are staying." And that's exactly what happened. The three of us went out in the morning, we went through this gate and these two young people came up to us and grabbed us and took us to a place. And there was the miracle. I think we left the ghetto about two weeks before the uprising. Because while I was on the Aryan side already, I saw the ghetto burning and I heard all the remarks that the Polish people said because of the ghetto burning. They were kind of happy, some were. Of course the people that helped us, I must say, we had a lot of help from certain Polish people and we were taken to a family of an engineer who was from the Underground and who kept me and my brother until my husband and the whole group -- they arranged a whole group to go to Lublin. They were prepared for all the adversities and they would arrange to take for this treasure, they gave him a uniform, a ----- uniform, and while they were gone I was waiting with my brother. There were some other Jewish people that this engineer, this Polish Underground person, kept in his house temporarily until these people were found quarters where they could hide. Well, they came back, and what happened was: First they came back when the ground was frozen, so they couldn't dig. Then they went back ten days later and they were digging under very unusual circumstances -- the shaft that it was buried in was going under the street, they had to pretend that they measure the street and do all kinds of repairs and things. And to make the story short, they found the case was empty. And that really saved our life, because otherwise these people would think that we were lying, that it was simply a trick to get out of the ghetto, but this whole case with all the things was buried was there. It was broken up and empty.

Q: The uprising happened -- let's go back to the time of the uprising, which is also the time that your husband was going back to Lublin, or he went back first and the ground was frozen. Then he came back, and then he went back again. Tell me how the uprising fit into all of this and where he learned where he was.

A: Well, actually I personally have no experience of the uprising because we were fortunate enough to leave the ghetto maybe two weeks prior to the uprising. What we knew was there was great preparations. Everything was very secretive and we knew they were preparing

bunkers; we knew that they were buying a lot of ammunition outside, from the Poles, because that was the sources that the Jews were buying ammunition. We knew that things were going to happen, we knew that there's preparations, but because we got out about ten days before, I really have no knowledge of actually what happened, except from what I was reading I only can tell you that when we were outside of the ghetto and we stayed not far away -- of course the burning ghetto could be seen from miles and miles away and when the ghetto started it was just one glob of fire, you could see that all this area was burning and a lot of streets outside of the ghetto were cordoned off. There was police, and there was German police and Polish police and you could not even streetcars and everything got stuck at a certain point because you could not get through because of the flame and because of the shooting and because of what was going on. So the life in Warsaw per se was completely disrupted and I can be witness to this because I lived outside of the ghetto as an Aryan and I was moving, I wasn't hiding. At any time I was out, moving, so I unfortunately heard remarks from people that was very favorable to what was happening there. And of course I pretend no reaction but I was very hurt about that.

Q: With what?

A: Like things that the Jews are burning. "Now we're going to get rid of all the bedbugs," you know. Things that weren't very pleasant to me to hear. And yet there were Poles who helped me and kept me, right now, waiting for me to get my way through with arranging my life on the outside of the ghetto. But what was happening in there, I absolutely -- I mean I have an idea but I was not witness to it. Because we stayed in the Warsaw ghetto from November 11 through maybe end of March or beginning of April; that was the extent of our life. We witnessed the last days of the ghetto per se but we were not part of it all. I can not give information on that from what I --

Q: When the ghetto was burning and there was a lot of gunfire, were you afraid, living as a gentile or in hiding?

A: Well, I was always afraid living as a gentile in hiding. Every day and every minute I was always very vulnerable. My living as a gentile consisted of having a piece of paper which I somehow secured or was secured for me and I had to pretend to be that person. But I have to digress back to the fact that when my husband came back and I was still with these people that kept me for about two weeks, and when he came back and when it turned out that there's no money in there, he was able to bring a little, a few things like, I think, two fur coats that his parents left with some gentile people in Lublin, and we planned to sell maybe two suitcases with clothes, -- everything on the black market was of value, and we planned to sell this. And at that time, these people that we stayed with, who were part of the Polish underground, told us that even so now there is no money to find us a secure place outside of the ghetto, they would not advise us or they don't want us to go back to the ghetto at this point. Because they know things are going to happen there very soon and if we go back there it will be the end. So they would be willing to help us somehow establish ourselves on the Aryan side: meaning that we have no money to go into somebody's home, pay for being

kept but that somehow I will have to find my way, maybe with their help, to establish my existence on the Aryan side; meaning that they helped me obtain a false identity. There were priests in churches that were selling birth certificates of somebody more or less the same age as I was of people that died and maybe their death wasn't registered properly. I could obtain a birth certificate of that person and therefore I would assume the identity of that person, and if I would have a real birth certificate from a church, I could go to a German office which issues -- there was a camp called the -------, it was like a passport and everybody had to have that -- and I can obtain, if I have enough guts I can obtain which I would need to show them that I'm an Aryan. Which really I did. This what happened: they were helping me to try to maintain my identity as an Aryan, and I went to this office and I got my paper. So I became this Lieutenant Viyeska (ph) who actually was three or four years older than I was but I had to assume her birth date; I was her. I had to completely unlearn, psychologically, of what happened of who I was. I had to be learning prayers, I had to be going to church, I had to mingle with Polish people, but my problem was that I had my family with me and I have to find a way for them to survive too. What happened was that --

Q: And you were successful because you didn't look Jewish.

A: Because I didn't look Jewish, because I didn't speak -- at my home we spoke Polish. My Polish was very proper -- there's all kinds of Polish and they can detect and recognize you right away, the Poles -- my language was proper. I was a girl, they could not recognize me where my husband -- only Jewish males were circumcised in Europe, and immediately anybody, whether it was a little Pole that's 16 years old and wants your watch, or whether it's a German, if they take in the corner, you're being recognized immediately. And that's why men were so handicapped in hiding; it was much easier for women. Now, my brother was also circumcised. Although he was very blond, with blue eyes, and he absolutely had no Semitic features but he was circumcised, and he could not play outside with little children because he had a very sad look on his face. He knew that he doesn't have a mother and father and it was very difficult for him. Therefore, he had to be hiding, together with my husband, in order to play safe with them. So I had to be able to secure a place for me to live and a way to bring groceries for more people than just myself without being detected. And between 1943 April until October '44 there was a lot of different circumstances and a lot of things were going on on the Aryan side. By then of course they cleaned up the ghetto and the ghetto was over with but it took a long time but the ghetto was burning, Warsaw was completely surrounded -- you know, it was cut off from the ghetto side. But I had a multitude of problems, because first of all I had to find a place to live. I wasn't even thinking of going to work at that time, because work was scarce, and I was really scared, I mean, I still was myself, with my past, and with all my sensitivities and everything that I -- you can't just switch yourself off, I wasn't a -----, I was a vulnerable young girl who all of a sudden had all these problems to take care of and all these burdens. Well, at the beginning this engineer who was very, very nice helped me secure a tiny little apartment and there was another lady who also wanted to live with me and we both rented a tiny apartment. In this apartment we built a hiding place for her husband, my husband and my brother. There was a big building. The neighbors were never supposed to know that there's more than two people

living there, me and her, and we were supposed to go to work in the morning and come back at night. So these people had to be so quiet -- not flushing the toilet, not walking, because we were on the third floor and there was, you know, people living on the bottom and on top of us. And it was very, very difficult, it was touch and go all the time, and every day you hear that they found some Jews here and they found some Jews there, and there were Jews in the neighborhood that didn't be discovered. There was very difficult. We managed for a little while. I had to go shopping to different stores so that I wouldn't bring too much food, you know. But that only was for a little while. After about six or seven months, the janitor -- they were always attuned to what was going on -- kind of went after me one day when I was shopping and he kind of understood that I'm buying more food than I should, and he denounced me. But we had certain things figured out at that time and my husband built with his bare fingers a hiding place which was a bombed-out part of the building where the bathroom was on the part of the ruins. So what they did is they put some boards there so from the outside it looked like ruins but from the inside it connected to our little apartment. And there was the side of the bathroom where they could sit there all day long. And the entrance to the hiding place was very cleverly disguised: it was an entrance from the -- actually where the toilet is there was a wall and the wall had wooden blocks. Now, one of those big wooden panels would slide up and there would be the entrance. So at night they would come out and sleep with us, but during the way they would go in there and from the bathroom you couldn't see anything because these panels were all the same all around. Anyway, they also figured out that in case I go some place and I get it trouble and they make me come back to my apartment, they would have a way -- I would have a certain knock or talk very loud and they would have a way to break through the outside wall of that bathroom which went out on the ruins and they would all run and they would tell me where they go -- we had a place where I could find them. And the inevitable happened. One morning I went to the store and the janitor came up to me with two policemen, Polish policemen, and they said, "Well, we heard that you are hiding Jews" -- the other lady was not home then -- "we know that there are Jews here and we know that you are hiding Jews and this is not right, we have to go in and take a look of what is going on there." I told them that there is nobody there and I told them that I lost my key, I couldn't find it -- because I didn't want to open up with the key, I really want to give them the signal, this knock where they would know to run. I told them that I don't have the key. They were going to bring a locksmith to break in the door and they did break in the door. By the time they broke in the door there was nobody there, they were gone; I mean they didn't even find the hiding place. They just looked around the apartment and there was just nobody there. And we always kept it nice and tidy, just like two beds, just the two of us. But they were just very upset because they didn't find anything and they told me that they're going to come back at four o'clock because they have to investigate and blah blah blah whatever they wanted to do. Well, they took my papers and that was the problem, because right away they ask you who you are, and when you give them the papers then if they don't give them back to you, then you're dead, you have no papers, that's terrible. Well, in the meantime I went to the place where they were and I told them what happened, and I said, "Look" -- it was only a temporary place for the day or two -- and I said, "Look, I don't know what to do now -- should I go back and face the music and get the papers back?" And I felt strong enough that

I really want to go and face up to them, because I really wanted my papers back. And what happened was that I went back to the house -- of course I had everything in there -- and they never came back. So they never came back and I never got my papers back. But the place was no good any more, we could not return to the place. So we had to move out of there. And at this point, this other friend of mine, she had to go her own way and I had to go my own way.

Q: Now, I just want to go back and ask you one question. When you didn't have the money to pay the Polish underground for getting you out of the ghetto or the Polish people, your friends, how come they still helped you?

A: Because in my path of life I found some very nice Polish people who maybe did not adore Jews but who from humane reasons felt compelled to help, who really could not live seeing all these atrocities that are being done and who felt that they maybe have to do a little bit to help the Jews. And I met actually three people like that in my path and they were very important people to me. This one fellow who kept us at the beginning and who said to us, "Don't go back to the ghetto, I have no gain for you going back to the ghetto. I know you didn't lie, and if you can support yourself and establish yourself on the Aryan side, then if I can help you I will help you." He did help me secure this first apartment, you see, he did help me in giving me a little encouragement and showing me maybe how I can do it. So there was the first thing. Then later on, when they took my papers and when I was completely lost and I was at a point where I just didn't know what to do with myself and the war still was nowhere towards the end, I went to visit a friend of mine who was also hiding and there is a story to it, if I have a little time I will tell. While I had this apartment, the gentleman who helped me, he was helping other Jews getting established on the Aryan side, and if he had to bring three or four Jews, he couldn't keep them in his home, he would bring them to my little apartment. Because I opened that -- I couldn't say, "Listen, I can't take them in." So I was helping him at that time, and at some point I could have had seven or eight people in there. And that's where this janitor really got the idea that something's going on. But once this was over with, they all had to go their own way. While I had this little apartment I met a girl from down the street who was from my home town. She said, "I need a big favor of you: I need a place for my husband to sleep for two nights, he's going to the underground and we don't have a place right now, so can he sleep by you for two nights?" I said, "Look, what's the difference if we sleep together on the floor? Let him come." He came to my apartment and he left a winter coat, he forgot his winter coat. A few days letter I get a little letter from her telling me that he needs the coat and if I don't mind to bring the coat to the place where she is at this moment. Well, on one Sunday I decided that I'm going to take the coat to her. That was a heavy winter coat on my arm and a purse and I got into the streetcar. And they stole my purse. So that was on top of not having my papers, they stole my purse with my money and by the time I got to her house with the coat I was in very desperate mood, I was ready to commit suicide. I said, "Now I have nothing. I have a husband that's sitting and waiting for me, I have a brother that is sitting and waiting for me that I have to support, and now I don't even have a paper any more and I don't have any money and I don't know what I'm going to do with myself." And I came in there crying

terribly. And there was a man sitting there and he looked at me -- he was the one who would be instrumental to take this man to a gentleman who would take my friend's husband to the underground -- and he looks at me. He says, "My God, what's the matter with you? You're so young, you can't be so desperate." I said, "Look, right now I have no means of survival and I'm at the wall which I can't cross." And he said to me, "You know you look very well, you look like an Aryan, why don't you want to work a little?" I said, "Work? What can I do?" He said, "I can get a job for you and I can help you out, so don't worry. If you need some money, I'm going to hand you some money and if you want me to go with you to the office where they give the documents" -- because I lost my purse, my purse was stolen -- he said, "I'm going to take you on Monday and I'm going to say that you are my cousin, and I'm going to tell them that they stole your purse on the so-and-so streetcar and they have to give you a duplicate. As simple as that. And then you come to me and I will tell you what you're going to be doing for me." So that was my guardian angel. He actually met me that day, my girl friend ------ took the coat and went to the underground. He met me and he took me to the police station and he told them this story and I got a copy of my original passport. And the next day he gave me an address, he told me where I should go and he told me that he is hiding about 20 Jews in his apartment and that these Jews have no means of supporting themselves. He was a single man. I would say he was in the 40s. He was a past pilot in the Polish air force, he has been wounded many times, was not in the best of health. A great humanitarian, who kept on saying, "I don't like Jews but I have to help you." And these people that were living in his apartment -- I don't know how they got to him but they needed some means of survival and they knew how to manufacture -- I mean this is bizarre -- how to make certain things that could be sold on the black market and they couldn't get out to sell it. They were looking for somebody who could go out and sell this for them so that they can survive. And that person was, he found me in this apartment. And I said, "Well, I have to talk to my husband, I don't think that he would want me to walk around places like open-air markets and flea markets and sell stuff. He would probably be worried, you know, that they recognize me." He said, "You go and talk to him." Well, when I talked to my husband he wasn't very much for it, but we really had no choice, we were three people that had to survive. I went to him every morning and he gave me a little suitcase. What these people were manufacturing was hairnets. There was a great fashion at that time of heavy nets -- I think in the 40s they had them here too -- they were all different colors and you were wearing them like down from your head to cover your hair and they were like brown and gray and all kinds of colors; heavy, knit, made by hand. And these Jews had a factory some place before the War and they knew how to do it manually. And then they were also making elastics, they knew how to make elastics. They would cut the thread from the inner tubes by hand and then they would take some silk, dye the silk different colors and they would make round little elastic. When you buy a piece of round elastic that's what they were doing by hand, putting it on little cardboards and putting a label around it; and of course there was nothing like that because all the factories were closed. And they wanted to sell it and they could manufacture a lot of it. So I got a little suitcase and they told me where to do. The place I went was a flea market, the biggest one in Warsaw, where the worst element of people were selling, I mean the lowest from the lowest, people that would not hesitate to chop you up in pieces if they would know who I was. But somehow, I don't know, I had the

courage because I had to do it. I wasn't a hero, by no means, I did it for my own survival and I did it because I had no choice. And [laughing] I developed a very nice business. I was liked by the people, I got my own clients and own customers, and they were giving me orders, they were selling, they were giving me orders for more. I would put my orders with them and they would fill my orders and that was going on like that. And then one day this engineer said to me, "You know, why don't we teach your husband," who was sitting and doing nothing, "why don't I take him over there and we'll train him and we'll teach him how to do it so he can do it too, rather than sitting at home." And what happened was that he actually learned how to do it, and I was selling our own merchandise and the merchandise of the other people, and that's how we all had a chance to survive. I have to mention that by then I had another apartment. This apartment was not my own but through somebody I found a lady who was willing to share her very small apartment with me but I had to pay her more than more than usual -- this lady needed money, she was a widow, and she tried to survive; she was peddling a little bit merchandise here and there. And then she said that we could have a bed in one of her rooms and that we could -- I would pay her, for instance, if normally she would take 50 or 100 dollars from another Polish person, she took 800 from me. She really did it for the money but she was a person that had a lot of heart and understanding for me but she really needed the money, it meant surviving for her too. She had to pay for the apartment and she had expenses. So at that point we lived with her. Of course my husband was still in hiding and nobody knew that he was there and he also made a little hiding in the an ------- which I'm going to let him tell you about it. And we lived with that lady.

Q: And you were able to make enough money to --

A: I was able to make enough money to pay her. I was able to make enough money for us to eat well and I was also able to make enough money to save. Because when the Polish uprising in 1944 happened, of which part my mentor was very much involved with and he was one of the officers in the uprising, I did a saving that I tried to locate somehow. Now, what I didn't mention that I lost my brother in 1942. It's a very painful thing to talk about. In July -- was it 1943? yes, in July he was sitting in that hiding with my husband, this other man, and he really had a very, very poor life because he couldn't play -- you know, it's hard to confine a nine-year-old to a poor little hiding place, also he was wonderful, he was so good. But I knew that this situation can't go on like this, he wasn't eating properly. At that time I didn't work yet, which was in the old apartment, and one day I found out that there is such a thing as a hotel. I don't know how much information there is in the Holocaust Museum about this particular thing that I'm going to talk about but I would like to know because I can tell about it. It was a scheme from the Germans, it was called Hotel Polski that was was an old fancy hotel in Warsaw, and what the Germans did, they spread rumors that they're going to send people to Switzerland and that these Jews were going to be exchanged for German prisoners of war with Russia, and they were looking for Jews to come to this hotel and they will transport these Jews to Switzerland. Actually they took one transport and sent them there. And now the people thought that this is a legitimate thing and everybody that was in hiding -- because you see the Jews that were hiding in Warsaw and paying all this money for

hiding eventually the money goes out, eventually these people get more tired and tired of keeping the Jews, eventually there is more people that is being discovered. It's a very vulnerable situation. These Jews had no assurance that they're going to survive and the matter of fact everybody that we know and the family ----------, everybody is there. Sooner or later somehow from many apartments and from many hiding places these people were found and kept. So, when the rumor was spread that there is such a thing as this hotel, people jumped at it and it was very hard to get in. Matter of fact, the Germans even had a way to take money from these Jews, so that it was really kept up beautiful and the people that was supposed to leave in two weeks were living there already. I met the girl who was from my home town, whom I knew very well and she used to be a neighbor of ours and I went to school with her younger brother. Because when she saw me, she said, "Oh my God, what are you doing here?" And she was dressed beautiful, she was a beautiful woman. I said, "Well, we're in hiding and I can't get into the transports and I don't know what to do." She said, "Oh my God, I'll be happy to help you." It turned out that she was the mistress of the man who was arranging all these transports and she told me, "You know, I can help you. If you want to send your brother with me, I promise you that I'm going to take care of him. I remember my little brother and I remember he was in school with you and if you want to send him with me, I'll take care of him" She said, "Were going to Switzerland, I'm going out tomorrow to buy a wardrobe -- I need some very fancy clothes, and I know all these people here and I know there's a group of students going. And if you want me to, I'll take care of him." She was crying, she says, "I lost my family, I lost my brother, and I promise you that I'm going to take care of him." She did not know the truth of what's going to happen. Now, that was something I couldn't refuse, I came home and we talked about. And I said to my husband, "Look, we can't go, here there's still a long time to the end of the war, who knows what's going to happen? People are paying thousands of dollars in foreign currency to get in. I met people, I talked to people that were actually getting out of hiding, paying in money to go; and they believed in it." Who was I to think that it's not so? I was only sorry that we couldn't go. And we talked it over, I went and I bought a suitcase and I bought some clothes for him. We were supposed to meet on a certain day and I was supposed to take him there. And the morning when the transport was leaving -- incidentally, one of my relatives, my aunt, and her little girl also was there, and also ------ with this transport because she knew somebody who was arranging for it. And that's what it happened, it was in July '43 that I lost him. I took him there in the morning, and I saw her leave with him in a taxi, I said goodbye to him, I said goodbye to her, she promised me she's going to take care of him, she was sincere about it. I saw all the people go in trucks to the ------- wherever they were going to the train station, we said goodbye, he told me he's going to write to me, and that was the end I knew. Later, through the Polish underground paper it was mentioned that they took all the people from this transport and they took them to a concentration camp in Hanover, where they didn't survive. And also, the rest of the people that lived there and waited for the next transport were also taken away. So, my brother would have been now 60 years old. So that's how I lost him, and there were just the two of us from then. So at the time where I found this man who gave me a job, and when I was working and having the money and being able to support myself, there was just the two of us. So that what was going on more or less. I was working, and my husband was making whatever he could, and I was selling, and we

were living quietly because nobody knew about his existence. And I lived with that lady. We had a few close encounters, for instance, her drunken cousin wanted to come and sleep over one night and my husband had to go in hiding and the hiding was an oven, he passed out in there, it was just terrible; I think that maybe he will throw more details on this particular situation. And that's how we lived, quietly, incognito, till about shortly 1944. I have to tell you that this engineer, whose name is Selek -----sky (ph), he has been honored with a gold medal from the Israeli Government and his is the first place in the Valley of the Righteous that these people established, because most of those people survived the Warsaw uprising, not the ghetto uprising, the other uprising, he got them all out ------. And there were rumors that he was killed I read, but then he did survive. He really was honored by the Jews who are living now in Israel and by the State of Israel. He also had a few close encounters. For instance, there was a woman that was in his apartment that was ready to deliver a baby and he did not know about it, she was apparently camouflaging it. And in the last minute when she ----- the baby, he had to call a doctor whom he had to pay dearly and they didn't have the money, so he ran over to our apartment in the morning screaming, "I need 3000 zlotys immediately, this woman is having a baby in my place." So we gave it to him and she did have the baby, and apparently they put it right up to the orphanage; but I understand that she survived and they got the baby back. So I was not in fact with these people after the war but I know that most of them survived and live in Israel. It wasn't until 1944 when he came over one day to us -- he was coming quite often to us because he was lonely; and he was telling us that there's going to be an uprising, a Polish uprising, in October 1944, that the Polish people are beginning an uprising because the Russians are coming closer, and the Russian front is now on the Vistula River which was dividing Warsaw into two parts: there was Warsaw on one side of the Vistula and on the other side of the Vistula, and what was happening that the Russian army was advancing up to the Vistula and there were rumors that they're going to stop. In the meantime the Polish Government in exile in London decided that there's going to be a Polish uprising, that the Polish people will try to save Warsaw from being occupied by the Russians and they're going to liberate Warsaw themselves. So these were these people, who were organized who had munitions, but they were against a German army with planes with all kinds of bombs, and they tried to stake an uprising. And he told us about it. He said, "I want to warn you that there's going to be an uprising and things are going to be tough. I want you to prepare food, and if you have any money, money's going to be no good. So I want you to go and do something with it." I said, "What would I do with the money I have?" He said, "Why don't you go to a store and buy some rings." So here I went to a store and ended up with eleven wedding bands and that was my treasure. So of course the uprising was terrible. We were both severely wounded. The second week of the uprising took about four weeks. 350,000 people in Warsaw were killed. Three-quarters of Warsaw was destroyed; that's why Warsaw is all rebuilt now because three-quarters of it was destroyed by the Germans because of the uprising. They were coming in systematically and bombing all the streets because they knew there's this new cry of underground here; and the Polish underground killed a number of Germans, but still it was no comparison of what the Germans had done and the Germans could do. So it was terrible, it was a very, very terrible time. At night my husband used to go to work and help them save some grain from burning mills because the population was

starving and the Germans were having a feast, you know. Some of them were being killed but still they had a hold on the situation. We had to go from one place to another, because the place where I lived with this lady they were bombing every day and at one point we went to the cellar, to the basement, and we saw some other Jews creep out from another apartment there. But at that point we were all in the same boat, the Poles and the Jews, so at that point nobody really had time to care who was sitting in the bunkers, who was sitting in the cellar. And that was going on for two or three weeks until one day our building was destroyed and that's where I was buried in debris completely. My husband just pulled me out by a leg and I sustained permanent injury to my ear, and my husband was also injured at the same time and we had to move to another place still Warsaw, and we waited until in October 1944 the uprising was completely over, it was suppressed, and the Germans decided to evacuate the whole town because the frontier was on the Vistula River. The Russians waited patiently while the Poles and the Germans were killing each other -- they were in no hurry at that point, they knew they've got the situation covered and they can come in any time. So they suspended, you know, the quest for maybe three or four months. They sat on the other part of the River, and mind you, the Jews that were fighting in that part of Warsaw were already liberated and some people were trying on the Vistula, under the bridges, to swim through in order to be liberated; and here we knew that within seven or eight kilometres from where we were these people were already free and we still had the Germans, and God knows what's going to happen to us. So it was really a terrible situation because at that time half of Poland was already taken by the Russians. The provisional government of Poland was established in 1944 in our home town, in Lublin, and we were still heavy under the Germans, dying every day. When the Germans decided to evacuate all Warsaw, we had no choice but to leave, and at that point we didn't know where they're going to take us and what's going to happen to us. We knew that the war is going to end soon because ---------- artillery and we knew it's a matter of months but we were still under the Germans and we had no choice but to go with them whatever they're going to take us. So that's what happened: we were evacuated from Warsaw, everybody had to leave, all the Poles, the city was empty. But there was an aura of thinking that whoever is from Warsaw is somehow connected to the uprising, you see. The Poles all over the Polish territory thought that we were all from the uprising, that we were all from the underground, and especially being wounded and being hurt, they didn't really think there would be some Jews among us, you know. So at that point we somehow managed, and my husband too, to get through with them. Also, at that time we were all taken to a camp which was not a concentration camp, it was called Krushkupf (ph), it was near Warsaw, and that was a gigantic camp and that's where all the population of Warsaw was taken. And from there they were doing selections: the young people that were healthy were taken to Germany to work for factories, the old people we didn't know what they're going to do with them but this was the petrifying moment of my life, because we were never separate, we always managed to be together; you know, like families, and husband and wife, were separated. Up on this point we always managed to be together. Now, at this point we were kind Hof scared because I was afraid that if they take him to work to Germany, we will have to go to a doctor to see if he's healthy and then they're going to find out who he was. So we were really in a limbo. And then we were walking into the camps not knowing really what's going to happen. While we

were walking in the camp, there were nuns there -- I don't know what they were doing, I don't know if they were helping to evacuate the Poles, and one of the nuns walked up to us and said, "Why don't you go the right? It's ----- the wife to go to the right. Go to the right, don't ask any questions, go to the barrack named C." And you know, we didn't know if we should or not, but we did. Once we got to this barrack, it turned out this was barrack of sick people and when we walked in there they told us, "Oh you're not sick enough. We've got some paint, we're going to make you bleed all over, we're going to put bandages on your head, we're going to put bandages on your knee, we're going to make you look real sick." So here we're sitting in this barrack, which was just terrible with a latrine for a bathroom and with gigantic-size lice on the mats. And this was just only a transit camp and we're asking the people, "What's going on here?" There were maybe 400 or 500 people there. Said, "We don't know, this is supposed to be sick barracks, either they're going to send us some place to get better or they're going to take us some place and kill us because they don't need us." So that's where we saw. We sat there overnight, and then in the morning they took us on trains, the whole barracks, and they took us towards western Poland. There was no patrol on the trains, there was no guards on the trains, and we really didn't know, we were very disoriented, it was like cattle train, we were 40, 50 people in a train. But every time they stop, you could really go down; but where we going to go? We were afraid we're going to a little village or a little town and soon enough they're going to find who we were. So we didn't care any more. Some people were getting off the train -- they were all Poles, mind you -- some people were staying in the train. Somehow we decided to go to the end and see what's going to happen to us. We didn't know. And in about, I don't know, a day and a half or so, we arrived at the little town near Krakow and we found out that what they're going to do with all of us is to put us with peasants -- each peasant of t his area will have to take a Warsaw family and keep them there in the fields. So we ended up in a very small little town, with some quite poor peasants who took us in thinking that we are Warsaw underground fighters, and because we really were wounded -- and my husband developed hepatitis here -- they really thought that we are legit and it didn't come to their minds to think that we are Jews. So this is October 1944. We stayed with these peasants. Some of them were kind, some of them weren't, but if they weren't kind it wasn't because they were Jews, they got once kind because they had to share with other people whatever they had but some of them were very kind. It was bitter cold winter, they made me a little fur coat from rabbits hair. They were very poor peasant and we had to work for them and do everything in the kitchen and with the animals and with the pigs and whatever had to be done, you know, with the well, with the water; very primitive. They put up four chairs and a sack for us to sleep at night. In the daytime we needed the room because everything was in one room and a lot of children there. But somehow we managed to get their confidence. I had to go to church every Sunday, and at Christmas it was very difficult because the Polish people had a ceremonial Christmas Eve and we were invited to this [she laughs] to a very important person there, you know, for Christmas dinner and I had to pretend that I am really very sick and cannot make it at the last minute. So it was touch and go, and because there was no school for the children, my husband established a school, for which the peasants were very grateful. And somehow they kept us there and we stayed. It doesn't mean that there wasn't rumors every day when they found a family some place in the woods, hiding, and that they

chopped them up to death. This was just like daily news. But somehow we survived this ordeal too. In the beginning of January, when the frontier was coming closer, we were liberated by the Russians, and that was the greatest that could ever happen to us -- to see the first Russian soldier come into the village was just like seeing Messiah. We still had to pretend that we're not so happy, because the Polish people did not like the idea that the Russians are coming, and the anti-Communists especially, they did not want Russia to take over Poland and we had to kind of be very diplomatic about it and, you know, really keep it cool and now to show it how happy we are that the Russians came in. And as the Russians were coming in, we saw Germans beheaded, we saw a truck full of Germans with no heads, I mean they were really getting it from the Katyusha and from the artillery of the Russians coming in. And we slowly had to convince the Russians that we are Jews, they didn't believe us; because we needed certain permits to go back home, things were very difficult at that time you know -- people could not just move around, the Russians were still advancing, it was still January 1945, the war wasn't over till actually May. But we wanted to go home, we didn't want to stay there. My husband had a very close encounter with a Russian who told him, "I don't think you're a Jew, I think you're a spy, there's no more Jews here, we know that Hitler killed them all." And my husband says to him, "Listen, is there any Russian soldier here that maybe knows Yiddish? I know a little Yiddish." So they found a little guy and this guy came over and says, in Russian -- my husband speaks some Russian -- "You think you're a Jew?" So: tell me a Jewish prayer." And he said, "Geshmah" (ph). And you know what? They started to kiss and embrace. And that's how slowly we told the peasants that we have to go back home -- to Warsaw, we didn't tell them anything else, we want to see what's going on there. And we said goodbye to them. And mostly on foot we started our migration back home to our home town. Of course we didn't find anybody there. Later on we went back to this town and we took some clothes and things for the children, you know. ----------[proper mames] never found out who we were. Now, my husband developed hepatitis and we didn't want him to go to the doctor --

Q: We're really just about to run out --

A: OK.

Q: -- and I think we should put up another roll, maybe a shorter roll. Do you think you can

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

A: Okay, I would like to just mention briefly an incident that while we lived with these peasants, my husband became gravely ill and he developed hepatitis. He was really in very bad shape and almost dying, and he refused to go to a doctor, because he was afraid that being examined, the doctor is going to find out who he was. But he was already so ill that the peasants would absolutely don't take no for an answer, and we had to go 13 kilometers in the winter in the snow to get to this place where there was a doctor, where they were very helpful, because they wanted my husband to live. They dressed him up very warm and they took a couple of horses and a buggy, and then we went to this doctor. As we walked into the doctor's office, my husband noticed that he had a little plague there which said that he was a railroad doctor in Warsaw. My husband walked into him and he says, "Oh, you're doctor so-and-so. I remember you from Warsaw. I used to be on the railroad too." They shook hands and they became friends right away, and actually when he needed a shot, he had the nurse just do it for him, and he did not really examine him. So there was a little close encounter which I wanted to mention. Well, to make my story a little more concise, we went back to our hometown. There was some Jews coming back from Russia and some Jews coming back from Polish, from camps and Germany, but unfortunately we found out that there was nobody. My husband found some uncles there, and he will tell about that. We did not want to stay in Poland too long. I felt that every stone had blood on it, and every wall had memories for me. I never went back to the place where my parents lived. I went back to the lady who send the Gestapo for me, and I really wanted, went to the police to talk to them about it, and to see if she can be reprimanded. But they told me there was no witnesses, so we just let it go. Only God was my witness at that time, but it ended up well for me, so I'm alive. We went to live in a different town, because my husband wanted to go back to the university. He had too his medical school behind him. So we found out that in Breslau, which became a Polish town, Broslof (ph), there is a medical school and that his professors from the previous school will be there. He had no documents and no papers. He was accepted to medical school for the third year and we spend a year there. That we also belonged to Acubootz (ph) there, that was Acubootz (ph) of students. And after he completed the third year and he could secure papers, we decided to go into the world. We absolutely didn't want to live in Poland. The memories were just too terrible, and there was an opportunity to leave into the unknown. We just took a knapsack and went to the border to Czechoslovakia and then into Austria. We were aided by the Breha (ph), by the Israeli officials who were helping Jews get out of Poland at that time, and we just went into the world. We were fortunate to come to Vienna, and in Vienna my husband was able to continue medical school at that time, and we became a part of a group of 400 Jewish students who came from all over to Vienna, and who were able to study in Vienna. The reason that the university was lenient to those people is because Vienna was occupied by all four, and the Americans made sure that Jewish students were not only accepted at the university, but they also paid very, very low tuition. Well, anti-Semitism was great, and the German professors were not that happy to promote Jewish students, but people still studied there and my husband was able to get his medical diploma there in Vienna. We stayed there for four years. I was working a little bit, and I decided to also to go to the university. After I

was at the university for two years, he was ready with his medical school, and we couldn't wait to get out, because we secured some papers to the United States from a distant family that I found and who were very gracious to send us papers, but they told us not to come before my husband is ready with his studies. So four years later, on October 1950, we were brought into the United States, and from then on we felt free, we felt happy. We were young enough to want to start a new life. We were young enough to try to cut off the past as much as we could. We decided that this is our country, we are going to live here, there's not going back, there's no complaining we have to become American citizens. We have to take the opportunity that this country has given us. My husband has a good profession. I felt that I didn't finish my studies, so when the children grew up a little bit, I went back to get my degree. We were fortunate to have things fall into place for us. We lived in Rochester, New York, where my husband was interning, then we lived in Buffalo, New York for a short while, and then we came into Chicago where we build our life practically from scratch. But we were fortunate that we were able to do so. We have a great family. Our nuclear family was two, then it became four, and now we are 11. So we did a good job, a very close-knit family, our family is now substituting for the family we lost. We are very fortunate to have great children. They are married, three granddaughters. And I feel that we build our lives and we were able to project to the children a normal set of values, not trying to burden them with our past. However, they have to know. They were maybe always more sensitive to us because they knew that that's all we have is them. They are very attentive. And except for the bad memories, I don't think that I have much of a stigma of really what happened now, because I still was 18 and 20 years old when I came to this country. I think that when you're older and when you have more of the past on you, like previous marriages and children that you lost, it's much harder to adjust in your life. But I must say that I adjusted to the life here very well, and embraced life for whatever it could offer me. Tried to compensate for lost time and my lost youth, and grateful to God that it all happened that way.

Q: I want to ask you a couple of things. You lived for a long time Azonarian (ph) Tell me what that ended up doing for you.

A: Well, living Azonarian (ph) actually didn't do anything for me, because the way I was brought up, I always knew who I was. My family was not religious. My father was the founder of a Zionist youth movement in my hometown. I always knew who I was. I always had holidays. I went to a Jewish high school where Hebrew was taught everyday. I was among Jewish people, Jewish friends, and I always knew who I was. I could have never lost my identity, and I was fortunate to marry somebody of my own faith. Now, just to give you an example, I had friends, who at my age, 14, 15, were also in the same situation that I was. But they somehow found Polish mates, who maybe at that time were helping them to hide. They never went back to Judaism or went back to being Jewish, and I cannot, I'm not the judge for them. I cannot blame them for that. But this is what happened to many people. This is what happened to a lot of males who married Gentile women, who were helping them and stayed in Europe and Poland, and are raising Gentile families. That happens to women that encountered the same thing. Some broke off and some stayed at the same. So I was just fortunate always to know who I was, and to be able to share my life with a person

who was of my own faith, and therefore it was never any question for me to be anything else but a Jew, because my parents instilled that in me, and because there was just not a way for me. It was just that everything else was just done out of need. If I had to go to church, it meant nothing to me. If I had to be arrogant, it meant nothing to me. To me it was only a means of survival, and I was fortunate enough not to have to continue this falsehood and get back to myself to be whoever I am.

Q: And when you lived Azonarian (ph) you learned a lot about anti-Semitism, that you think you otherwise wouldn't have learned.

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about it.

A: Yeah, this is very unfortunate, because I lived Azonarian through the two years during the war, and also for a certain time when we were liberated, I did not want to go back to my Jewish name until I left Poland, for cowardly reasons, I did not trust them. There were programs after the war in Kielce, there were programs all over. There was a lot of hatred, and I didn't want to survive the war and then something happen to me. For instance, I always telling my husband that if we live in Europe and I have a child and it's going to be male, I would never circumcise that child, because of my brother, who I think I lost because of that. I had certain feelings and certain stigma. After the war, I encountered a lot of anti-Semitism, I mean sayings like, for instance, "Oh, look at this Jew on the bus again. Hitler didn't kill them all. Here they're getting out of Russia. Here we have them again. We thought that Poland is going to be without Jews." So, I couldn't help but hearing all that, and that just made me feel very bad. I could not say anything, because I still did not want anybody to know that I was Jewish up until we left, and then, of course, my husband came back to his own name, because he had to have false papers too, just in case they catch him. And then, of course, as soon as we came to Vienna and we became students we decided that we absolutely want our name back and we wanted to be who we were. And that's why, you know, everything went back to our name. Our kept my first name because it was so hard for me. I was so attuned to it already, and there was just me, you know, between the age of 16 or 17. I was just so used to it already, that I modified it a little bit and kept my Hebrew name as a middle name, and just stayed with that name. But it's very unfortunate that I have to say that, but this is the very truth.

Q: I don't have anymore questions for you. Do you have anything you want to add?

A: Well, I feel that probably this interview will be completed was bad. If I omitted things, it's because it's very hard to concise six years of tortures and trouble into a small amount of time. I tried to be as exact as I could, and my memory still serves me so that I can remember events more or less, dates and at that point I think I was quite precise in telling the story the way it really was. I'm grateful to have this opportunity to say it, and to put it on tape for posterity. I always think of my grandchildren being able to press a button and see their

grandparents tell the story. I feel that there's a great need of these things to be known, because of certain people that deny the Holocaust. I am very grateful that I had this opportunity to do so, and I hope it will never happen again, America will never have to face up to anything so horrible that the Holocaust was. And I thank you very much.

A: Thank you very much.

End of Tape #3
Conclusion of Interview