

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Andre Zalc, Lucie Ragin, and Joyce
Mizrachi
July 23, 2009
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Andre Zalc, Lucie Ragin, and Joyce Mizrachi, conducted by Peggy Frankston on July 23, 2009 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in New York, NY and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

ANDRE ZALC, LUCIE RAGIN, JOYCE MIZRACHI
July 23, 2009

Question: This is the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview, conducted by **Peggy Frankston**, with **Andre, Lucie** and **Joyce**, who were born **Zalc**. All brother – a brother and two sisters, and it's going to be – and it's on July 23rd, 2009, in **New York City**, and it's a continuation of the three separate interviews that were just done, talking about wartime experiences, and perhaps some of the experiences after the war, or some experiences before the war. So, I'd like to start with some of the things that you know about your parents.

A: Yeah, so, my mother, she came from a family living in – in **Latvia**, and – not in **Riga**, she was **Ventspila**(ph). That's a different city, it's a ha-harbor in **Latvia**. And she had two brothers, and t-two sisters. And they owned a – a farm of cattle, a cattle farm up there. But – and of course in **Latvia** there was a – a certain amount of Jewish population. And that way **Latvia** also was a – belonged to **Russia**, but before it belonged to **Russia**, was a part of **Germany**, was a colony of **Germany**. And the people spoke German, and later they learned Russian from the Russian occupation, or beca – the Russian got the – got the territory. And she – her – they were selling cattle to **Finland** and **Sweden** and everywhere. But then the – the tsar of **Russia** had a brother and his name was **Peter**. And when they went – they went in war with **Germany**, a – a [indecipherable] there were – he – he was afraid of the Jewish population because in those days the Jews were friendly with the Germans,

and they spoke Yiddish, which is an – an old German. It's a dialect of **Germany** from – from 500 years ago. So **Peter** decided, with his brother, the tsar of **Russia**, they decided to – to take the Jews and send them to the other part of **Russia** by the I-Iranian border, by the **Caspian Sea**, by **Azrahan(ph)**, by **Baku, Azrahan(ph)**. And they were sent there. And up there they – they started a new life, with different businesses to survive. And the gr – the grandfather, my mother's father started because there – up there is a lot of fish. The – the caviar comes from there, and the – and the best fish. And the oils from the whales, too, which was like, very important in those days. So he start the factory of smoking fish, and he was very successful with that because in those days, in the first World War, the Russian army had no C-rations like today, and they used to u-use a piece of smoked fish and a piece of bread. That was the food of the Russian soldier. And – and he couldn't produce enough smoked fish for the government, so we're – the government wanted they should produce more fish, they're working day and night. So he complained about it. So they told him, don't worry about it, if you're short of labor, we give you workers. So they gave him Turkish prisoners and German prisoners and Austrian prisoners from the first World War, and they used to work in the factory helping to smoke the fish. And – and two prisoners fell in love with my aunts, and they married my aunts, and when the revolution of **Russia** started, the war with the

Germans and Russians stopped, because the Germans made the Russian revolution, I don't know if you know that, yeah. Because they got **Lenin** in **Switzerland**, and they gave him money and they send him back to **Russia** to make the revolution.

And when they made the revolution, the war stopped. So those – those two prisoners took their wives with them to **Germany**, and then went to **United States**.

And one uncle – an aunt went to **Belgium**. And my mother, she was young and she wasn't married, so she stayed with – with her folks, and the two brothers went to the Russian army. And after the war, my mother was the only daughter home with the – with the two brothers. They went back to **Latvia** from **Azrahan(ph)**. But the parents died in **Azrahan(ph)**. They got – what's that disease? The fever –

L: Typhoid?

A: Huh?

L: Typhoid?

A: Typhoid. They got typhoid, and they died from that disease. Typhus, that's called, and a – typhoid, yeah, in English. So they died from that disease, so my mother became an orphan. So the Russians go – the Russian government gave a visa, as was already after the revolution, b-because she was an orphan, they gave a visa to go to her sister's. One lived in the **States** and one lived in **Belgium**. So she went to **Belgium** to go to the **States**, and by going to **Belgium**, she stayed by that

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other sister and she married my father. And that's – that's the wa – we were born in **Belgium** from that wedding, and –

L: And we had –

A: – my sister **Joyce** was born in **France** during the wartime, yeah.

Q: Where was your father from?

A: My father was Polish, from **Łódź, Łódź**. I mean, he came to **Belgium** too, but he didn't had his birth certificate from **Poland**, he couldn't get the birth certificate, he had to go back to **Poland** to serve in the reserve. In **Poland**, after the – after the – being in the army, he has to be four or five years in the reserve. So h-he – he couldn't go back there because he was married, he had no way of going back there. So he couldn't get married officially in **Belgium**, so he was just married by the Jewish law, yeah. So –

L: But he was from **Łódź**.

A: He was from **Łódź**, yeah, but he served in the Polish army in the war with **Pilsudski**. That's the Germa – the Polish general who freed **Poland** from the Russians, and **Poland** invaded **Ukraine – Kiev, Poland** took **Kiev**. But after that, the Polish lost the war, and the Russians came all the way to the capital of **Poland**. And things got very bad in **Poland**, and so he left **Poland** and he came to **Belgium**

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L: **Belgium**.

A: And he didn't serve in –

Q: Is that why your name is **Umal**(ph) on your –

L: Right.

A: Yeah, and that's why in **Belgium**, I didn't have my father's name, I was named **Umal**(ph) after my mother. And being that I was under my mother's name, I became a **Belgium** citizen automatically, because he came from – from foreign parents in **Belgium**, he didn't have the **Belgium** nationality, he had to go, he had to serve in the **Belgium** army to become a **Belgium**. So I was a **Belgium** automatically, I – in this country – I am considered – I was considered the son of the King **Albert**, King **Albert**, I was his son. I never seen him myself.

L: Yeah.

Q: **Lucie**, you remember what it was like arriving in **France**, you – what – going to the different camps?

L: Well, we were on a train going to **France**, and I think a bomb fell on the train.

A: About two weeks.

L: And it took us a long time, and we had to get off the train to go to the bathroom and all that. And when the bomb fell on the train, it divided the train in two, and

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part of the train was left behind, and we were lucky, our train went on. And that's how we got to other station.

A: To the south of **France**.

L: And that's – it's unbelievable, you know.

A: And – and also by the – when we traveled to **France**, they arrested the German fifth column, you know fifth column? They had German spies, they were dressed as priests, and the French police arrested them, yeah.

L: Just want to know **[indecipherable]**

A: No, no, just different things that happened there.

L: Yeah. And then they – you know, when they ask you for your identification, if you don't have one, they automatically put you in – in a camp, you know.

Q: When you went to the first camp, were you all together, or were you separated?

L: I think we were to –

A: All together.

L: We were together. We were together, and then **Recebedou** –

A: In **Brenz**(ph) too, were together, yeah.

L: **Brenz**(ph), **Recebedou**, we were together. Even in **Rivesaltes** in the beginning, we were together.

A: And then they separated us.

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L: Right. And then when **Joyce** was born, that's when we, you know, we escaped out. I was there for quite a while. And which **illow**(ph) are they making the museum, is it **K**? I think I was in that **illow**(ph) –

A: And something else –

L: – which is very unusual.

A: – something else. The people, from eating the – the **navets** – how you call the **navets**? The –

Q: Turnips.

A: Turnips.

L: Oh yeah.

A: They used to get water in the legs from eating that without stopping, because that's the only food they gave you, they used get w-water in the legs, they were – legs used to blow up.

L: A lot of people just didn't make it.

A: Used to get sick and die from – some of them who made it, you know.

Q: Do you remember crying a lot, you mentioned –

L: Yeah.

Q: – crying a lot.

L: Mama –

Q: Did you have any friends your age?

L: I don't – I remember they made a party, and they gave us some food, and that was very joyous, there was music and everything, but I think that was around the holidays, and that's when I remember. I even remember smuggling out a little piece of bread in my underwear for my mother, because she always saved everything for us.

A: And – and in camp too, there was certain rumors going around that if you volunteer to go to work in **Germany**, you get more food, and you get better things, and a lot of people volunteered for it. I don't know if they went –

L: Yeah.

A: – to **Germany**, but there was all kind of rumors going around, like people could get more food. They did anything they could, you know.

Q: Did you meet other children, the Spanish children or the **Roma** children?

A: No, the – the –

L: Gypsy.

A: – they were in a different part of the camp.

L: They were Gypsy children.

A: The Gypsies too, they were a different part of the camps. The Gypsies were in – in special part of the camp, and the Spanish too. Sometime you – we came together

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with the Spanish, but they spoke different language, we couldn't talk to them. And they were very good in throwing stones. They were throwing stones at electric wire, you know, yeah, the Spanish kids, yeah, yeah. In those days I couldn't speak Spanish, you know. Yeah.

L: Well, I have two friends that I was with in the Villa **Marianne**, which is **Elizabeth Silverberg**(ph), and she passed away in **Canada**. And her sister's still alive, but I haven't met her sister, I talked to her on the phone.

Q: Where does she live?

L: She lives in **Montreal**.

Q: How long were you in Villa **Marianna**(ph)?

L: Not that long, I don't really know, I don't know –

A: Couple months, about three months.

L: – because they send me – I think they send me back, right?

A: There's a – o-on the **Riviera, Saint-Raphaël**.

L: Yeah, **Saint-Raphaël**.

A: Yeah, three months, three months, yeah.

Q: Is it because you cried a lot?

L: I cried a lot –

A: No, they send us up there –

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L: – so they send me – I made everybody –

A: – to be on vacation, the – to make it easy for our parents in – in **Tresse**, you know.

Q: It was like summer camp, it was in the summer?

A: Yeah, in the summer –

L: No, was not – no summer camp.

A: – but it was terrible, there was no food, and – and we used to – at night I woke up and the kids were like having like a meeting, th-the boys, and – because the boys slept different with the girls. And then, they were talking about stealing tomatoes, so we went out at night, we stole some tomatoes and we ate. And the next day the French police came over the place. They knew that we stole the tomatoes, and they put us in a line, and they wanted somebody to – to tell the – that we – that we were the ones stole –

L: Yeah, that –

A: – but nobody said nothing.

L: They had fig trees –

A: So the French police left and –

L: Remember they had fig trees?

A: Yeah, outside, by the houses.

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L: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Sometime they send us to buy stuff in the – in the city. We were on detail to buy stuff in the city, and as we went to the city, we pass houses where there were – figs were growing. So we used to climb over the fence and grab some figs. But it was dangerous because of the people, people in villas, they didn't want nobody to steal their figs, yeah. Tomatoes too.

Q: And **Marjolet**? The Chateau de **Marjolet**, was that –

A: Oh, this was after the war, this was –

L: Yeah, this was at the end.

A: – in 1944, between '44 and f – and '45. This was when the [indecipherable]

L: Oh, they gave you food there.

A: – they were not occupied no more. **France** was free.

Q: He mentions **Lyon**?

A: Yeah.

L: Yeah, I was in **Lyon** when they took me to –

A: To the **Marjolet**.

L: – villa – **Marjolet**, or Villa **Marianne**?

A: No, **Marjolet**.

L: No, no, this was different. I was in **Lyon** when someone took me to the Villa **Marianne**, and she was an underground girl, and I had to be very quiet. She took me to her apartment, had to be very quiet, nobody had to know that I was there. And I just enjoyed being with her, because she was very pretty, and I was a little girl, I was fascinated, her co – her combing her hair, putting on make-up, things like that.

J: And also eating.

L: Yeah, she took me to a restaurant in **Lyon**, and sh – she taught me how to eat artichokes, which I had never eaten before, I never eaten – I mean, I've eaten it since then, but never before, and we had a nice evening, and then she took me back, and then she took me to the Villa **Marianne**.

Q: Was she Jewish?

L: I don't know, I don't know. I – all I know is I had to be very quiet, you know. Which I knew how to be quiet, you know.

Q: And then she took you to the Villa **Marianna**(ph)?

L: Mm-hm.

Q: And what happened when you left the villi – Villa **Marianna**(ph), your parents came for you?

L: Ah, was a – I went to **France**, right, from there?

A: We were make to **Tresse**.

L: To Tresse, yeah, I went back to Tresse. But many things occurred in Tresse, too, that we could have been caught a million times and we were just very lucky. Remember when they put us in that circle in the park?

A: Oh yeah, this a – this is when they looked for the people derailed the trains.

L: Right. I thought it was something [indecipherable]

A: No, no.

L: – they wanted to kill the priest.

A: Oh this is – they find the – the – the resistance –

L: Ammunition.

A: – they put the – they hide in the church, parachute and other weapons, so the – the Germans find –

L: Right.

A: – all that stuff, and they wanted to execute the priest. So the mayor of the town swore to the Germans that the priest is not – he – he –

L: Not involved, he's not involved.

A: – blamed everything on the – he's not involved. He blamed everything on the resistance and the communists, know.

L: But then, after awhile, they let us go. And my mother had a lot of Jewish – like a Jewish book, and a lot of Jewish things that she put – do you know what a [indecipherable] is?

Q: The what?

L: A [indecipherable].

J: It's feathers. It's a feather blanket.

L: It's like a feather blanket, she opened up the seam and put a lot of things in there –

A: She hide a lot of things in there, yeah.

L: – so they wouldn't find it. And the –

A: The pictures from our family and everything. She had pictures from her brothers in the Russian army.

J: That's how we got everything.

A: She – she put all that stuff in there and the – the Germans came in, but they – they –th-th-they never dreamed of opening up the thing, you know.

L: And also, she threw a lot of things away in these public bathrooms, you know, where you throw things that – like in that movie, what's that movie where that little kid hid in there?

A: The – the public toilet?

L: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah. See, in **France**, in that town, there wasn't – we had toilets, you know, where we lived. But a lot of houses had no toilets and in the morning they used to come to the public toilet. They had like – at night they used to go in pots, like a bucket, and in the morning they used to come to public toilet, empty everything in there. The public toilet was very important –

L: Very rural.

A: – because there wasn't – a lot of houses had no public toilets in **France**. In that town where we lived [indecipherable]

Q: Okay, what do you want to say?

J: She also hid her wedding certificate, and a few – and my father's tallis in his coat, in the lining of his coat. Now I had – they found that.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was she – your – your –

A: We were all surrounded by Germans you know.

L: Yeah.

A: The Germans in **Oradour-sur-Glane** in **France**, they put all the population to church, and they burned them all, and they machine-gunned everything. And we were like minutes away from something like that, too, because the Germans wanted

to get even for their train, because the train went to **Italy**, used to carry German troops, ammunition. And used to carry women, who went to see their husbands in **Italy**. And the women who went to see their husbands in **Italy** brought their babies in there, and when the train derailed, they all got killed. And so wa-was a – the Germans wanted to get even with that, but they were a little bit afraid when they saw the French ta – ta – to do crazy things, because there was too ma – too much sa – resistance, too much resistance in the woods, and they know if they do something very bad, they're going to pay for it in fra – in the south of **France**, because in the – in the mountains, they cut off the – the roads, and they – they would have killed a lot of German.

L: Yeah, so that's about it, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Your father was in the resistance?

A: Yeah.

L: I – I knew he were – he was in the woods. Whenever the Germans would come in town, he would be in the woods, but I didn't know what he – what exactly for sure.

Q: But –

J: But he knows.

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L: But he knows.

J: But he knows.

A: Yeah.

Q: But he was working as a – a lumberjack, he was cutting –

A: A lumberjack, he was cutting trees.

Q: – trees.

L: Right, right.

Q: But he – was he with other people who were Jewish, or was he with other resistance fighters, or was he part of a – a – a work brigade?

A: No, he was – he was – the resistance were in the woods, and they used to hide by the lumberjacks, you – in the – in the – in the woods, where you hide the woods, where the pieces, where you cut the woods, they used to hide their weapons, yeah. And they used to go out to derail trains. But there wasn't mentioned nothing, you know. I used to say to them, how you got so many sardines? Boxes full of sardines from **Portugal**. In those days one little can of sardines was like a hundred dollars, you could sell it for a hundred dollars, nobody had it. And he didn't say, he say, oh we got it, we got it, know. And then I find out that the – by the train, the derailment of the train they got all this stuff. And their weapons too, came from the trains. They used to have German weapons, grenades, come off from the trains they used

to derail. To derail a train was very easy, they didn't derail it with dynamite. They used to unscrew the – the rail, and the train used to come, and go down in a – in a – off the mountain, know, in a ravine, know, and then that was it, know.

Q: Did the people in **Tresse** know that you were Jewish, apart from the woman who help **[indecipherable]**

A: Yeah, yes, some people knew we were Jewish, yeah.

J: I'm sure they knew. I'm sure they knew.

L: Yeah. But we were lucky, they didn't stamp **Juif** on our passport, which saved our life.

A: Yeah, yeah. The – the newspapers say that you got to go to the police and ask to – the passport to be stamped. So my mother sent me to the police with the passport. So the – the guy in charge of the police, he say go home, don't come to me no more.

L: Yeah, there were – we were lucky, that's – it's all luck.

A: Yeah, I **[indecipherable]**

Q: And when you went to school –

A: We didn't realize that we were so da – it was so dangerous at times.

Q: You knew you were different, that you were foreigners, but did they know that you were Jewish in the public school?

L: I don't know, I don't know.

A: In school, in school, th-th-they knew, but they – they couldn't speak German, the French, that was the – because one French teacher, he – he – you cou – I could see in his eye the hate, eh? I could see in his eye when he talked to me that he – he – that he hated me, you know, it's easy to see, y-you understand me? Yeah. And the Germans came when they took too long, during the war, they took too long, the Germans. And when they came, they came to **Tresse**, when they took too long, then they came from **Stalingrad**, the German troops. And they needed to buy paint and – and screwdrivers, and nails. So the – they asked the principal if somebody speak German here. He said, maybe there's a **Belgium** kid, meaning me, he speaks German. So this principal told the – this teacher told the principal, take the guy, send him with the Germans to translate, to – to f – to buy things for th – to speak French for them. So I went with them. So the Germans are translate, so I said to the Germans, why do you need so many – so many things? He says, we going back to **Russia**, there's nothing there in **Russia**. There's no nails, there's no hammers, there's no screwdriver. He bought a lot of tools. So the next day a-again, he came to school and I went with him, and the German officers. So the – the third day, the third day he said to me – the – the guy in charge of the German troops, he must have been a brigadier general or something, he says, he would like to meet you, because we told him we have a kid who speaks German for us. Would you like to

meet him? I said, yeah, if he wants to meet me, I mean. So I went with him to the base. In the wood they had the tent. And they had all the German officers in that tent. And outside were the trucks and the tents and everything. So I went in the tents with them, and the – the guy in charge there, I don't know, he was a big German officer, they all clapped their heels for him. I don't who he was.

L: Well –

A: S-So he says to me, sit down, have some tea. I have no coffee, I give you tea. So he gave me some cake and tea. And then he said to me, you see, all those officers, he says, they're **dummkopfs**, you know what **dummkopfs** are? I says, I thought you were joking. And then the officers, they got quiet, they didn't laugh. So I see it's – I told – I saw it's serious. So I say, what do you say that for? He said, because they went to **Heidelberg**, to the best universities, he said, and they don't speak another language, they only speak German, he says. And that's why we lose the war, he said to me. The – the guy in charge.

L: Yeah, but you always knew not to say –

A: Yeah.

L: – that you were Jewish, you always knew –

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: – that they didn't like the Jews.

A: And then – and then he – I stayed there may – a couple hours, have coffee and – and tea with them. And then he – he told the officer to drive me home, so he drove me back to **Tresse**. And I came home, I brought back a bread and some other food that they gave me, you know, they gave me some food, the Germans. So I never understood that he predicted that they're gonna lose the war, this – this ger – this German, the big German officer, he predicted like, they're gonna lose the war.

Q: You mentioned **Lucie** that the Madame **Laville**(ph) was try – was thinking that maybe you could be baptized.

L: Right.

Q: And maybe that was to protect you?

L: Could be, could be, you know.

Q: Did you learn the catechism?

L: Yes, I did. I went to church and I used to know [**speaks French**], I used to know al – everything and you know, in **France** it's not like here. In a little town, you see the priest, you kiss his cross when you see him, and I thought it was beautiful, you know, I was a little girl, this is, you know.

J: My mo – my mother did say, the priest did approach her and wanted to baptize us. She said no. She said, I was born a Jew, I am a Jew – meaning us as well.

L: Yeah.

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J: And they will die Jews.

L: Yeah.

Q: Even if it meant that you will die.

L: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you still speak Yiddish at home, even though you were in **France**?

A: Yeah.

L: We always –

J: I l – I learned Yiddish when I was –

A: Yeah.

J: – after the war. I did not speak Yiddish.

L: I did.

J: I spoke French.

L: Mm-hm.

J: That was my first language.

A: Yeah, we spoke Yiddish, but the French thought it was Flemish, they didn't know the difference. The French, they don't know the difference between languages.

L: Yeah.

A: They just know French. Other languages they don't know, they're like –

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L: Yeah.

Q: So we're gonna have to change tapes, okay?

A: Yeah. The French wa – I used to bring home kids, and I spoke Yiddish to my mother. So the kids used to say, stop speaking the Flemish, teach your mother French, you know.

End of File One

Beginning File Two

A: – and the Germans couldn't speak French. They couldn't speak it, they couldn't speak the language. They – even the fascists couldn't understand each other. And they – one – one – one another thing, one mystery about it, is how did the Italians got together with the Germans –

L: Okay, we have to go home today.

Q: **Andre**, You gotta give it – you've got to [indecipherable] others just talk a little.

L: Wait a second.

J: Give it a rest.

L: I can't talk

Q: I can see the family dynamic here, but you take it – you – you – you get the – you – you get the – the floor –

J: The gist.

Q: – and you don't let it go.

L: Oh, my God, I ca –

Q: It's a dictatorship here.

A: Yeah.

Q: And just because you're the oldest –

L: Well, girls are not in-involved in politics like he is, that's all he talks about.

A: Ah, ah, just mentioned that becau –

Q: [indecipherable] I mean – it's okay.

A: If they – if they all would have spoke the same language, they probably would have won the war.

J: All right.

L: Okay then.

J: Calm down. Down, boy.

Q: You mentioned that your mother sang.

L: Yeah, she sang beautifully.

Q: Do you remember any of the songs she sung?

L: **Papa Rosen.**

J: Well, I would stop her from singing, because everything was sad. So I would make a big fuss, and she was not allowed to sing. Only happy songs, you know. I'm still like that, I don't like sad songs. Well, certain ones. But I was really – I was a –

L: My father sang too a little bit, you know, like when he prayed, or when we was home.

J: Yeah, but his voice was not good as hers.

L: He was –

J: She had a beautiful voice, which she did not give to anyone.

L: He was unusual. No. Yeah, she sang **Papa Rosen**, she knew **Yumela**(ph),
Yumela(ph) –

A: Well, the song – the song –

L: – you know, all Jewish songs and German song that you seen on Christmas time,
what's the name of that song, **Joyce**?

J: **O Tanenbaum**.

L: **O Tanenbaum**.

J: She –

L: Yes.

J: I remember her sitting down and saying, they were so wonderful, I don't know
what happened to them, I don't know when they went mad.

L: Yeah.

J: Because that's all she knew was **Germany** –

L: Yeah.

J: – and German people, and she couldn't understand it.

L: But as far as anti-Semitism goes, they have it all over, they have it today, they
will always have it, you know. It's – it – I was called dirty Jew all over; in **France**,
in – and in **Belgium** and in **America**. I see a lot of anti-Semitism always. They

don't know, because I don't look Jewish, you know. But – so a lot of people say things, but you know. It's like everything else, it's like with the black people, you know.

Q: When you went back to **Belgium**, did you go to a yeshiva?

L: Yes, I went to **Takaloyni(ph)**, it's still there, I went to visit it when I went to **Belgium**. But now you need to have security, you have to – they won't let you in just like that, but my – my friends that I have in **Brussels**, their grandchildren go to that school, so I went in and everything looks the same, exactly the same.

Q: So half – did you learn Hebrew?

L: Yes, I was very good in Hebrew, but now I'm not that good any more. Forgot –

J: And she was very good in school, because she came before me, of course, and I remember that – the saying, you are related? How? Same mother and father.

L: She was a tomboy, I was very prim and proper and did everything right. I had to, between him and her, I had to. So they couldn't believe she was my sister because if I –

J: I was the opposite.

L: Right.

Q: And **Andre**, you were 13 when you were in **France**.

A: Yeah, yeah.

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Q: Were you –

A: At – at 13 and a half I came back to **Belgium**. At 14, I mean.

Q: Did you ever have your Bar Mitzvah?

A: Yeah, in **Belgium**, in **Belgium**.

Q: Can you tell me about it?

L: I know about it –

A: Nothing was [**indecipherable**]

L: – because I used to pr – I learned the – learned the Haftorah with him. So he had Bar Mitzvah with about 14 boys who had it at the same time, and they all learned it together, and he won the first prize, which I remember, cause he was so good in it.

And then, that's it. Now he's not too much on Hebrew, right?

A: No, but I was in a different [**indecipherable**] up there when I – because I had the Belgian passport, and I could travel all over, and I got involved with somebody who was – smuggled cigarettes to **France**, and things like that.

L: Oh, I didn't know that.

A: Yeah, yeah.

L: Oh.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was 14 years old, you know.

L: He was tough.

A: Yeah.

L: I had to be the good one, because my mother had him.

J: And me.

L: And her.

Q: Did you graduate from **Lycée**, or high school?

A: No, I-I graduate – in **Belgium** I went to Flemish schools, Flemish schools. And I had forgotten a little Flemish, so I had to pick up – get back to – in the Flemish, you know? But I had no trouble, yeah. I [**indecipherable**] so bad, I never went to a – a high education, because I missed too much in school in **France**. I didn't know algebra, I couldn't understand algebra. They says, **E** and six is – is equal to – to **M**. I didn't understand that, know, I didn't had the beginning of the algebra. So – so I start working early, you know. I helped my father as a plumber, and then I became a jeweler, because they build a sh-shop for jewelers, and th-the guy [**indecipherable**] of the jewelers wanted me to work for him, so I started working for him, I became a jeweler.

Q: What did that consist of, what did learn from him?

A: Melted metal, gold platinum –

L: He makes beautiful thi – jewelry, he does.

A: – I make rings, bracelets, you know.

L: Makes beautiful jewelry.

A: I became a jeweler. Then I came here, I-I worked in the trade too, until I got drafted in the army, and the send me to **Korea** and **Germany**.

L: That was the worst for my mother –

A: Yeah.

L: – when he was drafted, because they send him back to **Germany**.

A: I never been to **Germany** before. I know I seen Germans in **France**, but I never been to –

L: Yeah, but they send you.

A: – to the German territory.

L: So he was in the army.

Q: How did you feel about that, going back to German – **Germany** as an American citizen?

A: I was a soldier, you know, like I patrol the border, I go on maneuvers and everything, slept in the snow in the woods. Yeah, was a – because **Germany's** cold in the winter. And when you have seven army – the seventh army – I was in the seventh army – seven army alert all over **Germany**, so the seventh army goes in the

field, and you sleep in the snow for about a month. And you come back, yeah, it's a – was tough, tough duty.

L: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: **Lucie**, you mentioned the American Jewish soldiers who looked up your family after the liberation.

L: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: Do you remember the names of any of them?

L: Just – just the one that helped us find my aunt in the **United States, Simon Corla**(ph). And I'd like to find out exactly where his family is, but I could never find out. And I –

Q: Do you remember where he was from?

J: **New York**.

L: From **New York**, yes.

J: He was a New Yorker, probably **Brooklyn**, from what I gather. I've tried, I've – but whatever I came across – someone did tell me that, and I don't know how true it is, that he went to **Israel** in the beginning and he was – I don't know if he was sort of thrown out of this country. But I'm not sure.

L: And I have a letter by him, so –

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A: You got what?

L: A letter.

A: Huh?

L: A letter.

J: And I have his army number, and I've tried to call army's – the army, and see if I could get information, and I could not get anything.

Q: Did you stay in contact with anybody, do you remember anybody from **Rivesaltes** at all?

A: From **Rivesaltes**, no.

J: Not from **Rivesaltes**.

L: No. But I know there's so – there's a lot of people that live in **Canada**, like **Shmeltz(ph)**, you know, **Jackie** –

A: Oh yeah, yeah, I –

L: **Jackie Shmeltz(ph)**. He lives in –

J: He was in **Rivesaltes**. He died, didn't he?

L: No, his sister lives in **Canada**.

J: Right.

L: S – you know, probably could find out where she lives, but I don't know if she's still alive or whatever.

J: There's a lot of things I wish I had asked, and been con – persistent about.

L: Right.

J: But I wasn't. I didn't want to know, I was afraid to know, I didn't want to start – bring back anything to them, so I left it alone. Now I'm very sorry. I'm sorry I didn't ask more, I didn't try to find out more, but that's past. And there's no one to ask.

L: Yeah. People should write things down, like if their parents tell them things they should write it down because as you get older, you forget things, you know.

Q: One of you mentioned that your mother wanted to come to the **United States** and your father wanted to go to **Israel**.

L: Yes, oh.

Q: And that your father had a hard time adapting to the **United States**. Wa-Was he a plumber when he –

J: No.

L: No.

J: He couldn't get into the plumbing union, because at that time it was predominant – in **New York** it was predominantly Italian, and he could not get in. So he took whatever he could. He worked in a factory for a while. He did –

A: Lamp, he made lamps for ships.

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J: He did different things.

A: **Perko**.

L: Yeah.

J: And –

L: Yeah.

J: You know, he gave up – he was not a plumber.

L: No. But he always talked about **Israel**. He read til all hours in the morning, until you know, he couldn't see, he became blind. But he always wanted to go to **Israel**.

And I went to **Israel**, and the strangest thing is that when I arrived in **Israel**, and we went touring, we – he always told me about **Rachel's** tomb, and **David**, and all these things. And when I arrived at the – in **Israel**, and we went sightseeing, we stopped at this big cemetery, and it made me think of my father. You know, with the trees and everything. But –

Q: Did you belong to a synagogue when you came to the **United States**? Did you –

L: We went to synagogues, now I belong to everything, **ORT**, Hadassah, the Holocaust museum downtown here, the one in **Washington, D.C.** What else do I belong to **Joyce**?

J: Everything.

L: I belong to everything practically, and I go to temple, and **Joyce** belongs to the temple in **Middletown**, and you know.

Q: Did you notice that your parents changed their religious practices before and after the war? I remember you – that **Andre**, you mentioned that you kept kosher.

L: Mm-hm.

Q: And did they change after the war?

J: No.

L: No, we were kosher after the war too. We were kosher after the war, my father went to temple. He laid Tefillin, you know, he did the –

A: Yeah, he believed, he believe – I don't –

L: He believed more than we do, know, yeah.

A: Yeah. I'm not a believer, no.

Q: The war did not change his –

A: Maybe if the war wouldn't have been there, I probably would be maybe religious too, but I grew up in the south of **France**. They're more – they think different, know, I beli – I think a little bit like they do.

L: Well, the war robs you from your childhood.

Q: You mentioned a Rabbi **Bloch**(ph), who helped you tha –

L: Right. He lived on **Riverside** Drive, we – we came from – the **HIAS** brought us over here, and R-Rabbi **Bloch**(ph), they got us an apartment on **Riverside** Drive, and that's where we lived. And Rabbi **Bloch**(ph) had the synagogue on **Riverside** Drive, in a hundred –

J: [indecipherable] 138th Street.

L: 138th Street, and my parents went to worship there. And he always called up, he came to my wedding, he came to **Joyce's** wedding, he brought her a present, right? And he always called up and inquired how my parents are doing, as old – you know, he wasn't young any more either.

J: And he always called me on my birthday.

L: Yeah.

J: Because he's the one who gave me my Jewish name.

L: Yeah, **Chana**(ph).

J: And I went to Hebrew school, and he was my Hebrew school teacher. I spent most of the time outside that classroom as well. I – it was my **m.o.**

Q: He came – how did he get out of **Rivesaltes**?

J: I think that when – he must have escaped before the trucks came, before they took everybody to **Auschwitz**, I think he escaped and went to **Switzerland**. For some reason a – I believe that's correct. And then after the war, he came to the

United States. He had two daughters, and I know that his – I once spoke to somebody –

L: And he lived in **Rockland** county.

J: And – and his grandson was trying to find out about him – more about him. And she was trying to get – give him information. Because he did run that camp. I mean, he was the religious leader of that camp. He was a very lovely man.

L: He's – he – they mention him in that movie, "**Journal de Rivesaltes**."

J: And it – there's also a book about **Rivesaltes** that he is mentioned in.

Q: What was – how did you – how did **HIAS** get you to the **United States**?

J: Well, it's not just **HIAS**, it took five years for us to get here, because they kept selling –

L: Our visa.

J: Our – the visas. Finally, my aunt got this man who had some power and had the money, and made sure that we would be leaving when they said we would be leaving. And that and the organization got us here.

Q: It took five years?

J: It took five years to get here.

L: Mm-hm. From 1945 to 1950.

J: 50. And that's – that's when we came.

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Q: It was the Belgian authorities who made it difficult?

J: I don't know who made it difficult. I think some of the Jewish organizations were not that up and up as well, after the war.

Q: It was hard to get –

J: It was hard. It was very hard to get out.

L: To the **United States**.

J: And it was very difficult to get to the **United States**.

Q: There was a quota in the **United States**.

J: Very much so. So –

L: Well, now you can come in like –

J: – at that time the quota was very difficult to buck.

Q: Do you remember going through **Ellis Island**?

J: No, we didn't.

L: No, we didn't.

J: We came in style.

A: **Hoboken**.

J: We came –

L: New amst –

J: – on a luxury liner. We came **New Amsterdam**.

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A: **New Amsterdam.**

J: It was a cruise ship.

A: Yeah. We came **Hoboken, Hoboken.**

L: We came to **Hoboken.**

J: So, it was lovely, it was a lovely trip.

A: Swimming pool and everything, yeah.

L: It was great. Then we went in the subway. I thought the doors were gonna close on me.

Q: And where did you stay when you first got here?

J: My aunt's house.

L: I didn't, I stayed at the **HIAS**, they had –

J: Well, we stayed at the **HIAS** for a little whi – I had stayed for maybe a week.

Q: It's like a dormitory.

L: Yes, it's like a shelter for – for the Jewish – for the immigrants. It's a shelter for the immigrants and we stayed there. She didn't stay there, she stayed by my aunts.

J: The way I can really describe it is I remember seeing a movie, "**Bitter Rice**," and they had a scene of a big dormitory of a big shelter, and it reminded me of that.

Now, I went back to the **HIAS**, which is now **Pabst** theater. It became a – it became a theater.

A: It's on **Lafayette** Street.

J: Yes, and it's **Pabst** theater, and my daughter got me in to see. And it's strange because I remember the staircase, I remember the upstairs, I remembered where the dining room was. But it's a theater.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience?

J: No.

L: No, we just want to say that, you know, actually we doing this for my parents, for my cousins who never made it, and they say the Holocaust never happened. That's why. And it did.

Q: Thank you.

L: Yeah.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview