

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Sol Lurie
November 30, 1998
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Sol Lurie, conducted by Steve Roland on November 30, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview 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.

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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape one, side one. What about that -- that -- the famous one, what's that, the Kovno diary?

Riya Lurie: He has that, I --

Sol Lurie: I have it.

Q: Yeah, that's the book? That --

RL: We have it, so --

SL: Yeah.

RL: No, there's two of them. I have that one.

Q: Right.

RL: He -- He -- He can't read it. He just -- it gets too hard for him.

SL: What?

RL: The Kovno Diary. It -- He's gets too em -- too emotional, it's not --

SL: No, it doesn't bother me.

RL: Yes, it does.

SL: Nah.

RL: You never read it. You bought it, but he can't read it. And he has this book, the pictures and all that, on the different one.

Q: Yeah.

RL: From -- From the history channel. I think the -- the movie is from the diary.

SL: Well, they have another exhibit on -- in -- in the -- in the Holocaust Museum.

Q: Yeah, I want to take my family to see that in December.

SL: See, the problem is, wh -- we were there about a couple of months ago. And we went from there -- from that Jews -- Jews --

RL: Jewish [indecipherable]

SL: Jewish --

RL: Jewish clubs.

SL: Club, all right. But they pushed you through.

RL: Too fast.

SL: I mean, when you go to a museum like that, you have to spend a day or two, right?

Q: Yeah.

SL: I mean, you have to s --

Q: Yeah, it's very --

SL: -- we went through in a couple -- in a couple of ou -- in a couple of hours.

RL: Two hours.

SL: Now -- I didn't have a chance. I was very disappointed.

Q: Hm.

RL: You go by yourself, what's the big deal?

SL: And how many times I was there already.

Q: Yeah, I thou -- I thought it was one of the best museums I ever went to. Cause sometimes [indecipherable]

SL: You want to see -- You want to see a terrific museum?

RL: Yad Vashem.

SL: Go to Israel, go to Yad Vashem.

RL: Yad Vashem.

Q: That one good too?

RL: Oh, first of all, you walk in, it's that eternal flame and this -- the way it's in a cave and the sound, it's like --

SL: Now, when you go -- When you go, like over here, you got a Daniel? The Daniel story, right?

Q: Mm.

SL: Now, over there you got -- it's the children's museum, right? And you walk through, and they got like the stars --

RL: That's not in Yad Vashem

SL: It's in Yad Vashem. Oh yeah, it's in Yad Vashem.

RL: Not --

SL: -- something else. Now when you walk through that -- you walk in and -- and you see the -- the stars, and you -- and while you're walking there, y -- ever ch -- the

children's names that were -- that got killed in the Holocaust, they keep on m-men-mention the children's name. It's very effective.

RL: That is, yeah. And also, when you walk towards the museum, you have the Alley of the Righteous people, of all the Righteous Christians that saved Jews. It's like a tree and there's a name. It's very effective. [indecipherable]

SL: There're about three, four museum, but the one in the -- the one in the -- in the -- Jerusalem is the best.

RL: Yad Vashem is the best. They also have the museum of the [indecipherable] fighters --

SL: They got one in Tel Aviv, they got --

RL: -- in the -- in the [indecipherable] and a museum -- next to it is the children's -- a hand to the child, in Hebrew [indecipherable] hand to the child, just about the children. That's a separate building --

Q: Hm, yeah.

RL: -- and it's about the children museum. By the way, you have to send them the picture.

SL: Right, next -- next time I go, I'll bring them the picture. I have a special picture there. And they have -- Nobody has it, so I want to give it.

Q: What is that a picture of?

SL: Huh? It's for the liberation of Buchenwald from the children that survived.

Q: Mm-hm. It's a photograph of the children?

RL: Yeah, we have it here somewhere.

SL: Yeah, I have it here.

Q: The one with you in it?

SL: I'm in there, yeah.

Q: They sent me a copy with a picture of you in it.

RL: Oh, that might be -- that's the one, [indecipherable] Daniel's story.

Q: I don't know if it's the same one. Just a Xerox. I think they --

SL: Oh, Xerox is --

RL: That's -- That's the picture, when they were taken out of Buchenwald.

Q: Yeah.

RL: And he met two people here, and tell him who else you met.

SL: Uh?

RL: Who did you meet here?

SL: That's me, here.

Q: Right. No, that's what -- They sent me a Xerox of this.

SL: [indecipherable] They come out okay?

Q: I'll show you. It doesn't -- No, it doesn't look like that.

RL: He has to make a copy for his friends. He met two people that he -- that are here
and they live right here with us. Yeah, that's --

SL: Yeah, that's me here.

RL: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah, there's you.

SL: Yeah.

RL: Yeah, yeah, that's him.

SL: And they -- they have it here, but they -- in Israel in that ya -- it -- the -- the -- the museum for children, they don't got it.

RL: They don't have it. They want it.

Q: And who are the people in here that you know?

RL: They live right here.

Q: Really?

RL: Two of them

SL: Yeah.

RL: He met them here.

Q: You just met them by -- by accident?

RL: Yeah. Well, through friends, yeah. One is the husband of the president of the [indecipherable] club.

SL: This guy here.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Right? This is Elie Wiesel.

Q: Ah.

SL: And --

RL: One of them is the Chief Rabbi of Israel here, too.

SL: And I met this guy in Brooklyn, by accident, coming to talk, and there was --

RL: Henry and Maury.

SL: Well, Henry. Maury -- Maury -- I don't know -- Maury, I have to look for.

RL: He has to find himself. We don't know what -- what he looked like. Nobody remembers what he looked like that time.

Q: But how -- how does it come that you --

RL: They know -- But there's --

Q: -- that you -- that you know?

RL: Well, we were sit -- They were sitting and talking, you know, when they -- we met -- we're sitting and talking, where do you survive? So he told them. He says, "From Buchenwald." So this guy says, "Me, too. I was liberated in Buchenwald." "Where were you?" So he [indecipherable], so Sol brought the picture, he says, "Find yourself." And he found himself.

Q: Hm.

SL: But they went -- They went to Switzerland.

RL: They went to Switzerland, and he went to switz -- to France.

SL: And I went to France.

Q: Right.

SL: 1945, right after liberation.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Cause you know, every government took some children.

Q: Right.

SL: So French took some children and -- and England took some children and Switzerland took some chingli -- children.

Q: And how long did he stay in Switzerland?

SL: He stayed there -- Henry must have stayed there til 1948 - '49.

RL: I think '47, maybe.

Q: And you -- How -- You were in France less than a year, right?

SL: Two years, yeah.

Q: Two years.

SL: Almost two years. I got there in June, I think and it -- I left in April, '47. I came June '40 -- June f -- June '45 and I left April first.

Q: Was that -- Did it seem like a long time to be there?

SL: Did it seem like a long time?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Listen, when you are a child, e-every day is long time.

Q: Yeah.

SL: It's when you reach certain ages the weeks disappear.

Q: Right.

SL: I'll tell you, the years disappear, it's just unbelievable.

Q: Mm.

SL: People say, "I'm going to retire, what am I going to do? It's going to get bored."

We haven't got enough time here.

Q: Right.

SL: Just unbelievable.

Q: Mm.

SL: Time flies, the weeks disappear, the years. Like we just went to New Year's party, right? It's another New Year's already.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, I feel the same way. Okay, let me just slate the interview. Today is -- What is the date today?

SL: Today is the 30th.

Q: The 30th. November 30th.

SL: 30th.

RL: Mm-hm.

Q: 1998. Steve Roland, in the home of Sol and Riya Lurie, in -- is it Monroe?

SL: Yes.

Q: New Jersey. And it's a little bit past 10:30 in the morning and I'm thrilled to be here, very honored to meet you both and thank you for having me.

SL: It's our pleasure.

RL: [indecipherable]

Q: And as I told you, the -- the -- this interview will be a little bit different than the one which I watched the video of. And it's -- and it -- you can help me direct it. So if it's going in a direction that you think is less important and you have something else you'd like to talk about, or just something you don't want to talk about, then just let me know, we'll just go to [indecipherable] thing.

SL: Okay.

Q: Some of the questions I have for you are just some questions that I had that weren't fully explained in the video, and then I have other questions that we'll start after -- after you left Buchenwald. O-One of the questions that I had was -- was, could you describe for me again, your perception of the -- the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Kovno when you were very young?

SL: Before the war, you're talking?

Q: Yes, before the war, mm-hm.

SL: Well, before the war, the relation between the Jews and the Gentiles was very good.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I mean, they didn't show no anti-Semitism, right. And never make -- like we had ra -- Gentiles working for us, right? They were the finest pe-people you ever met. Even I used to play with the Gentiles, they was never say, hey you dirty Jew or things like that. Everything was friendly, except one -- we used to have a boy that used to take care on our property where we lived. He used to be a janitor. And when Hitler start to come in power, you know, and he used to listen to the radio, and he be -- this guy became very

anti-Semitic and he used to say, "If Hitler ever comes to this country," he says, "I'm going to kill Jews." Openly, he used to say it. And my grandfather said to him, he says, "You'll never live to see that day." All right? That things just stuck in my mind. I was a baby and I still remember it, right? And sure enough, my -- my grandfather died in 1938 and -- and Hitler -- Hitler came in and took over Poland and this guy was -- and the Russians came in, and he don't like the Russians, this ja -- this -- this janitor, right? It was a janit -- yeah, it was a janitor. And then when -- when no -- when the Germans attacked -- no, the Russians, in 1941, the day before, that was a Saturday, the man dropped dead, okay? The Russians came in -- the Germans came in to Lithuania on -- on -- on Monday, right? Saturday that man dropped dead, okay? He never lived to see the -- see the day. Because if he would have lived, he would have killed plenty Jews.

Q: Mm.

SL: Bec -- They became so anti-Semitic after that, it was just unbelievable. I guess maybe because they didn't like the Russians, because the Russian depressed them. So maybe because of that, but they were such a -- so anti-Semitic, they were worse than the Germans.

Q: I -- I know this is something you can't really answer, but how do you explain that? How do you explain that sort of general getting along and then this in-incredible betrayal?

SL: I don't know. Maybe it could have been jealousy, because the Jewish people in Lithuania were we -- we -- pretty well off. And we -- we had the -- in -- in Lithuania --

in Lithuania was about 250,000 Jews, out of a population of a million and a half people. So we're a big percentage.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And -- And the Jew didn't -- I mean, they used -- they even used to speak Yiddish in -- advertisement in the street used to be in -- in -- in Yiddish. We used to have Yeshivas there and we -- we had the very sh -- very famous Yeshiva in Slobotka was ve-very famous. And I guess maybe it was jealousy. And I guess when the Germans came in and they were -- they were the -- they were depressed into the Russians and the Jews owned -- owned a lot of things, the chance to take everything away from the Jews. Maybe that's where they turned. Because -- Because the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians and the Ukrainians, they were worse than Nazis. They were -- All the killing, actually, was done by them. Very few Germans that -- that did the killing. All the dirty work was done by them. Even be -- When the -- When the Germans came in and all the pogroms was done by the Lithuanians. The Germans din -- We were come -- We were ra -- We ran away, you know, when the bobocart, and we start to run towards the German -- to the Russian border. And what happen, there were a lot of bombardments on the road and we were going by horse and wagon, you know, and the Germans were mechanized and next day they passed us already. So we stopped in a small town, I don't remember the name of it, and you know, they told us that we have to back where we came from. And while we were going back, on the roads, the Germans stopped us and ask us where are we going. So we told them we're going back to Kovno. So they told

us, "Don't go this way." He says, "You go with everybody, the German troops coming down the road, nobody will bother you." Because they said, "If -- If you're going to go this way, the Lithuanians are killing everybody -- all the Jews and taking everything away from them." I guess they had a chance to take things a -- t-take things away from the Jews and that's it.

Q: An-And how do you explain this message from the Germans? Why did they -- Why did they do that for you?

SL: They won't -- I tell you, they di -- all those killings, that they weren't that bad in the beginning of the war. The mass killing started in 19 four -- in -- in -- late in '41. That's when the mass killings started, and actually, the-they started -- the --the -- all the killings were in -- in the -- in the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania. They we --the -- that's where all the experimentals -- the killings started.

Q: What -- What were these experiments?

SL: Well, to see how the -- how they used to gather all the Jews and they used to get them in certain places and just shoot them. Because, I have a book about it, you know, and -- and that's where -- that's where they -- they claim that most experimental killing started in Lithuania.

Q: But I -- I don't understand what the experiment was. Was it -- Was it to figure out --

SL: Mass -- Mass killing.

Q: Was it to figure out that -- most efficient way to kill people?

SL: Right. That's wha -- That what mass killing. The only ghetto that turned into a concentration camp was the Kovno ghetto. Became a concentration camp in 1943, so --

Q: While you were there?

SL: Yeah. I was in the -- there was only -- there was only -- there was only about 5,000 Jews, from the Kovno Jews, Lithuanian Jews that survived the war. Out of -- Out of almost a quarter of a million Jews. And that included the -- the -- the ones that ran away to Russia. So, it's just -- and I lost most of my -- my mother got killed the day before liberation.

Q: Yeah, I know.

SL: Mm. And my -- One of my -- my father's youngest brother, he and the whole family went right in -- in -- in -- in the -- right in the beginning, when they took the first akcha. And they came -- Made us gather on a -- on the parade ground. And there's a [indecipherable] was go -- like Mengele, like in the -- in the be -- in the -- in being the Birkenau.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: He was calling us a whole day, who -- who should live, who should die. You take as -- this side and you -- you -- if you were on the left you were safe, on the right you went to death. That day, out of 40 -- 42,000 people, one ti -- one quarter of the people went to the -- it's called a nightfort, and that was the killing ground. So over 10 -- over 10,000 people went to the -- in that ca -- get killed.

Q: How -- How many people were -- were in your family?

SL: Well, my father had the -- altogether there were 12 children, so -- so five were in America and seven were in -- were in the -- in the Kovno, Lithuania. So they [indecipherable] ca -- you're talking the -- the general family, or my father and my brothers?

Q: Yeah.

SL: My family. Well, we were f -- we were four brothers and my mother and father.

Q: Well your -- your father had 11, there were 12 children --

SL: 12 children.

Q: in your father's fam -- in your father's family?

SL: Right, right.

Q: So, he had 11 brothers and sisters?

SL: Right. And there was a big family [indecipherable] I mean --

Q: And some of them were in America already?

SL: Yeah, five of them. Th-Three brothers and two sisters in America and seven were in Lithuania, Kovno.

Q: Mm-hm. And then how many got killed that day in -- well, that -- at the nightfort?

SL: Well, the nightfort that time was just one of my uncles with the whole family and my aunt and her husband and two -- and two daughters. The rest they didn't tak -- they didn't take, because, see my father used to work brin-bringing in food, also. Like we were -- we were on the bia -- on the oxia there, and what happened, they told us to go on the right hand side. And my father was out of the ghetto and when he came back,

you know, he -- he -- he -- they told him about the yakchi that's going on and my father went to the commandant from the ghetto, the German. And he says, "And my family's there, you know." So the commandant went with my father and they found us and they took us out because we were on the wrong side. We were on the right side, we were supposed to be killed and my father saved us. So -- And my father and my brothers, they survived the war and ja -- the only one that was killed is -- was my mother, because my father used to watch over us.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And my -- my -- my mother just got killed the day before she was -- liberation. And my brother got killed in -- after the war.

Q: Now how did he get killed?

SL: My brother?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Well, it was -- see, after the war, after the -- they were liberated from Dachau, they went back to -- because my brother, the one that got killed --

Q: What was his name?

SL: Haim.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: He wanted -- They made up that if we -- survive, we're going to meet in Kovno, right? And he wanted to go back to look for my mother. So the whole family went back. See, because I wasn't with them, cause as a child, they took me away to be killed. So

after that -- So when they went back to Lithuania, they couldn't get out no more, because that was Russia.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So they were stuck there and he -- he was working and he was working as a cab driver there, in Lithuania. And -- And there -- there -- as I understand it, he t -- he took somebody, a fare to the -- to his girlfriend, and this guy killed the -- the girlfriend and didn't want no witnesses, so he killed my brother.

Q: In the taxicab?

SL: Hm?

Q: Was he in the cab?

SL: No, that wasn't in the camp, that was in 1963.

Q: No, no, in the taxi.

SL: No, that was a -- yeah, he killed him in the taxi.

Q: Y -- W -- Shot him?

SL: Mm. A man goes through a war, all right? Saw hell and gets killed ba -- by -- by a jealous what they call it, a suitor, whatever they call him, right? Lost his life. Wonderful man.

Q: How old was he when he got killed?

SL: 1963, he must have been about 35 years old, 36 years old. Young man. Left two children -- two small children.

Q: Where are they now?

SL: Well, they're in Israel, they moved to Israel. My -- My sister-in-law -- I still call her my sister-in-law, wonderful woman. And she came to Israel in 19 seven -- '76 or '77, and she remarried there, to a wonderful man. When I come to Israel, my sister-in-law and her husband, he calls me my -- I'm his brother-in-law. Wonderful man, and wonderful people.

Q: So you keep in pretty --

SL: Oh yeah, keep in touch.

Q: Pretty good contact.

SL: Listen, I'm closer to her than my own brothers now. Just a dif -- it's a different feeling. We are ba -- very close.

Q: Wh-Why do you think?

SL: Well, I'll tell you. I did -- I didn't know my brothers for so many years. I mean, I didn't -- I didn't see my oldest brothers until 1989, because they were in Russia and you couldn't go there. So, I didn't see them. The same thing with my other brother, Shlomo. It's -- The af -- The affection is not there, the closeness isn't -- not there no more, because for so many years -- you didn't see somebody in 40 years or so, you know.

Q: They still live in Kovno?

SL: No, they're in -- they're in Israel now, yeah.

Q: When did they go to Israel?

SL: Well, one -- my brother Shlomo went in 1972. He was one the first ones, that when they -- they let the -- the peop -- the Jewish people could apply going to Israel, he was

one of the first one to apply. And for two years he lost his job, because once you apply to go to Israel, you lost your job, you couldn't work no more. They wanted to persuade you you shouldn't go.

Q: Mm-hm. What was his job?

SL: He used to drive a cab in Lithuania.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But -- So he didn't -- he di-didn't have no -- he didn't have no -- no job, he couldn't work, because -- because of that. And -- But he insisted, I want to go to Israel and that's it, and he went. And my other brother -- my father was supposed to apply to go to Israel, too. And three days before -- before he got his visa to go Israel, he died in Lithuania.

Q: Your father?

SL: Yeah. Three days before.

Q: What year was that?

SL: In ninet -- 1976.

Q: And how old was he?

SL: My father was -- in '76? No, '73 my father died, I'm sorry. '73 my father was '73 years old when he died.

Q: He was young?

SL: Yeah.

Q: What -- What happened, he was sick?

SL: Well, I gue -- I guess it's the heart. Listen, what the man went through during the war.

Q: Yeah.

SL: -- you know, and he's so -- i-it's a wonder all the survivors, that the way we came out is a miracle.

Q: It is.

SL: Yeah. Even I myself, I mean, the way I came out. Most of the people, you know, was mentally and a lot of them just had problems, but thank God.

Q: Well, I was going to ask you about this later, but let me -- let me ask you now and then I'll go backwards. Explain to me -- wa -- one thing that -- that wasn't -- that I didn't understand when I listened to your -- your story, when you left the children's home in France and went to look for your father and brothers --

SL: Yeah?

Q: And you found out that they had left Germany on [indecipherable]

SL: When they went to Lithuania, yeah, in 1945.

Q: Tell me what happened when you found that out. How -- Tell me again how you found out and what your reaction was and why you decided to go back to France?

SL: Well, I meant -- I met somebody, right? And we start to talk, you know. So he says, "Where you from?" So I told him, I says, "I'm from Kovno." He says, "Did you have pe --," my name, he says, "You know, I met somebody, Simon Lurie, right?" "Yeah," I said, "that's my father." He said because there was -- af-after liberation -- they were

liberated in Dachau together. So -- So he said -- So he said th-they -- that's why I know that my brother and sister, the one to go back to Kovno. And he says, "Your brother Haim only wants to go back to Kovno. He was looking with you -- want to look for the -- for his mother." See, but before I -- before I te -- before -- before I -- I got in -- in -- in the children's home, right? I found out that my father was alive. And that's -- that's when I wanted to go back and be with the family.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And while I was on the train, I met this guy.

Q: On the train to?

SL: I was going to -- to Germany.

Q: Right.

SL: Going to Dachau, and he -- he told me that the -- you -- you -- masta -- met this guy and they start to talk, you know? And there was -- he -- he says, "Where you going?" I say, "I'm going to see my brother and my -- my brother's and my father. We're going to meet." Because it's -- and it's -- he told me, he asked me what's the name. He said, "No, they went back to Kovno."

Q: So why did you decide to go back to France instead of trying to go to Kovno?

SL: Well, listen, I didn't know where they were in Kovno, right? And I know the Communists were no good already, right? So this way I know where I was.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: This way, I had friends over here already and this way I got a little better chance to survive.

Q: To come --

SL: Beca-Because after -- after I -- when -- what I -- the way I knew how to take care of myself already.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Because it's not like they -- the children here these days and they -- in America, you know, a -- a 10 and 11 year old is a baby, a 20 year old is a baby. You have to ge -- You have to take of them like a babies. The children that survived during the war, were not babies. At eight years old they were not babies no more.

Q: Well, was that a difficult decision for you to make? Did you have to stop and think about it?

SL: No, I didn't. I knew it -- not difficult.

Q: When you were on the train and you found out that your father was back in Kovno -- [indecipherable]

SL: Yeah. It wasn't a difficult decision at all. Just -- Listen, this is spur of the moment.

Q: But you were going -- you had to back to France first. Was your plan already to come to the United States?

SL: No, no, no. That was a little later. What happened, we were on the children's home and somebody came from the Red Cross. And we were talking about it and I remember my grandfather should rest in peace, he went to see his children in America, 1934. Now

he was rach -- I very attached to my grandfather and I wanted to go with him to America. So, he didn't take me, I was very upset. But I remember that making my -- and also my father and my ma -- we used to get letters from America and I remember New York, right? So one day the man came from the -- from the Red Cross and asked anybody if they got any family in America. And I remember my na -- my father's brothers. I remember, cause it's -- the name is the same as my father and my -- and his brothers, my uncles, right? So I gave one that my father has fam -- brothers in New York. And what happened -- when that -- when th-they put it into the Jewish paper, and my cousin was looking to the Jewish paper and she saw our name, Shya Lurie is looking for -- for uncles Ike, Ithzac and -- and, gee I forgot the names already, [indecipherable] loo -- an-and looking for the uncles and aunts. So, sh-she wrote me a letter and she asked me what my father's name was, what my mother's name was, what my grandfather's name was. And I got back a letter. That's --

Q: You were still in France?

SL: Yeah.

Q: And who -- And who wrote --

SL: Said they decided -- They as -- They ask me if I want to come to America. Listen, I was alone anyways, right? I said, "Definitely." So they made out papers for me, it took almost -- almost about two years, a year and a half or so, a little more than a year and a half or so, til they brought me over here.

Q: Well, just explain to me so I understand it, cause I -- an-and I -- I'm -- I don't mean to be -- to be challenging you, I'm just curious why you weren't trying to get back with your fo -- with your father, and when -- and at what point did you find out that your mother was [indecipherable]

SL: Well, that we found out much later.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Because my -- my aunt -- my cousins were telling me. That was many years ago. I didn't know when -- when she died, see? But my aunt and my cousin, they were in the same camp. Then they were in Stutthof, and what happened, we're -- had a cousin that was sick, some -- and they were liquidating the camp. So my -- my -- my -- my mother says, "I'm going with -- with -- with -- with my niece." So my Aunt Hannah was [indecipherable], and my cousin Edka. Says, "Bazil, come with us. Leave her, she's sick." She says, "I can't leave her alone." And she wouldn't leave her alone. Now, my aunt and my cousin survived.

Q: And your mother probably knew the consequence.

SL: I don't know if they knew or not, but they -- listen, e-e-eventually, I guess everybody knew.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they -- I -- I -- I understand they drown them in the -- and they drowned them. They sunk the boat. They put them all on the boat and they drowned them. Listen, my mother was a wonderful woman. She gave her life to be with her niece.

Q: But so -- so help me understand what was going on when you were in France and why -- why -- how it was that you decide to come to America and not to try to go back [indecipherable]

SL: Well, I knew where the Russians were going there, okay? And then there were -- I didn't want to go back to Russia, ma -- I knew before the war how they were and after the war, they were worse yet. So I didn't want to go back to Russia. And first of all, I didn't know if -- if I come to -- to Kovno, I know da -- what would it be, because in Russia you never knew. You could be in one place here and next day the-they -- they shipped you to Siberia. Here, I know where I was. And listen, I was very independent already, I could take care of myself. I guess it's -- it's fate, it's destiny, it's meant to be, it's meant to be that way.

Q: But I guess what -- what you -- is it accurate to say that this is two different reactions to the murders that you saw and that you knew how murderous the Russians could be, that your father and brother wanted to go back for some reason and you didn't want to go back.

SL: Well, they wanted to go for a certain purpose. My brother and sister, they wanted to go look for my mother

Q: Yeah.

SL: [indecipherable] They didn't know what the c-consequences they went through.

Q: Right.

SL: Now, but -- but that time, I knew where the consequences. Once you go in there, you can't come out. You could come in, but you can't go out. Even when I would start to write to my father, even the letters, they didn't go through. Finally I got through a letter and when I got a letter back from them, used to be opened and censored. Cause see, they used to open up the letters and censor it, to see whether I -- and used to take maybe five or six months before I used to get a letter from them. If I wouldn't a known what was going on in Russia, I might have gone back. But I knew what was going on there. And I tell you, when you went -- you go through a war like that, you become very selfish, too.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape one, side two.

SL: -- letters and censor it, to see whether I -- and used to take maybe five, six months before I used to get a letter from them. If I wouldn't a known what was going on in Russia, I might have gone back. But I knew what was going on there. And I tell you, when you went -- you go through a war like that, you become very selfish, too. You become very cold. Don't know wh -- you look out it -- for yourself. It's like an animal, survival. So if -- You're not attached no more. The feeling is not there no more.

Q: Le-Let me ask you this. You said in the -- in the other interview, that at a certain point, you made a very firm decision, that you would try to outlive Hitler.

SL: I did.

Q: Or that you would outlive Hitler.

SL: Yeah. Well, that's how I survived.

Q: Tell me what made you -- what was it that pushed you to that decision, or how you came to that decision.

SL: Well, I had a lo -- I always had a lot of willpower, all right? And the only way to survive, you have to do -- it's something to look forward to, which is why -- once you give up, that's it, right? So, if you make a goal in your -- in your own mind, I'm going to accomplish this, right? And -- And -- And -- And that's when it -- that was my goal. I want to survive so badly and I made my goal that I'm going to outlive Hitler. And that's what kept me going.

Q: So it -- How -- How important was that for -- like the difference between those who survived and those who didn't survive? To have a goal like that, where that --

SL: The goal was very important, because if you haven't got a goal, and you don't set your mind on something, you're not going to do it. So, there was so many times that ee -- I pee -- I want -- you want to give up. But just the thought that I might outlive Hitler and ca -- when I went back to Germany -- I'll tell you later about -- when I ba -- came -- went back to Germany in 1953, right? And I came back -- I came back as an American soldier in occupied Germany, I was the proudest human being you ever saw. Because I show you, you want to kill me, and I came back alive and I'm an American. That -- That was my pride. People said, "How could you love the Germans?" Right? But

[indecipherable] this -- this -- when I came back, I used to walk down the street, I was proud. I even became an American citizen in Germany.

Q: You became an American citizen --

SL: American citizen in Germany, okay?

Q: Well, tell me about that.

SL: Okay, when I was in the army, I went -- I went in the army, I wasn't a citizen yet.

So -- And they send me back -- send me into -- to Germany, instead of -- in the Korean war. And then they -- they -- they made a new -- a law that the -- the -- that if you're in the army, you become a -- you going to become a citizen. I was one of the first ones to become an American citizen in Germany. So I we -- I went to Frankfort, in Ame-

American headquarters, and that's where I was sworn in as the American citizen. And it's written on my discharge, too. So when I came -- when I first came back fa -- after the army, I came back to vote in the -- in the elections and I came into the -- when they asked you where did you get your American citizenship papers. I says, "I got it in Germany." So the woman that there was registering me says, "Don't be no wise guy.

What do you mean you got it in Germany?" I says, "Lady, I got it in Germany." She says to me, "If you don't play around -- stop playing around, I'm going to call the cop, he's going to throw you out." I says, "Lady, you could call the United States army.

That's where I became an American citizenship." And I took out my paper, you know, my si -- my American citizen paper and showed it to her. She thought I was kidding around.

Q: How important was it to you to become an American citizen?

SL: Very important, I didn't have to go to the army, but I went, because when I came to this country and I saw what the -- I know what the country did for me, the way I was treated. I had freedom, I could say anything I want, right? And I want to fight for this country, to preserve the -- [indecipherable] the freedom. I didn't say the -- it's a legitimate war, it's not a legitimate war. When the country calls me, I went. I didn't have to, but I went. I'm very proud of it, too.

Q: And do you remember that day, that moment when you became a citizen?

SL: Oh yeah. I was very proud. Yes I was st -- I was standing -- I was the fi -- the only one, and when the headquarters of the -- the seventh army, I was the only one that -- that was sworn in as the American citizen that day. And I had -- I had the two or three witnesses from my company there, to be witnesses, sigh? I was very proud. I was also written up the Stars and Stripe. That's where the -- That ne -- beca --

Q: What is that, a -- a military newspaper?

SL: Yeah, it's an American newspaper.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That -- That -- That -- That's a new law that came out.

Q: Which it -- What was the law?

SL: The law that once you serve in the army, right, you -- you're the ma -- you become an American citizen. Because, see, they couldn't send me in combat because I wasn't a citizen. So they can send you in occupied terr -- if you volunteered, you could send you

in occupied territory. I could have gone to the -- the Middle -- the Middle East, but I could have gone to -- to Japan, I think, like that, but I -- in combat they couldn't send you. That's why I'm [indecipherable] from now -- from the whole company, when I -- when I was in the -- in the -- in the Korean war -- that was the height of the Korean war, right? And 90 -- 90 -- 97 percent of the companies used to go right to Korea. Me and two other guys went to Germany, that was it, because --

Q: Because you weren't citizens?

SL: Yeah. Actually, I didn't have to go, but I wanted to go.

Q: Now, of all the places to go, was Germany a difficult place for you to go?

SL: No, I -- I came back, I -- I was very proud, that I was telling you. I was very proud because I came back, I showed you, you wanted to kill me, you couldn't do that and I came back as a -- an occupi -- occupied your country. That was my pride. I used -- And when used to walk in Germany as American soldier, I was like a hundred feet tall, like a giant. Felt great.

Q: What -- Was there any -- What was the climate in the army for Jews? Was it -- Was it difficult? Was there any anti-Semitism [indecipherable]

SL: No, no, no. First of all there was very little Jews in my company, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: In the whole -- the whole regiment -- I was in the 26th inf -- the regiment, there was only about four Jews, that was it. So when it came to a Jewish holiday, we didn't even know. I didn't know when Yom Kippur was or Rosh Hashanah. But there was no anti-

Semitism. Most of them were -- Well, first of all from the -- from the south, they were real hillbillies. And they mu -- know much anyway. They ask me, "Where you from?" I says, "From New York," and I have a air -- had a very big accent, I still have, right? And they say, "Oh, that's the way they talk in New York?" Right? They didn't even know I was a foreigner. They thought a Jew had horns. They didn't know. I used to be [indecipherable] some guys in our -- in the barracks there and the only pictures they used to have in the -- in their war locker, used to have in the pigs and the cows. They never had a family picture, you know, like a mother or father, or -- animals, that was it. They couldn't wear no shoes. Shoes used to come off from the -- from the training, you know. Used to take off the shoes, they couldn't walk -- they couldn't wear shoes. But very nice, very nice people. They thought a Jew had horns and things like that.

Q: So were -- were they surprised to find out not -- that all [indecipherable] New Yorker --

SL: Yeah, then -- I was very friendly with them.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I was ver -- I was very close with them. Had a lot of friends there. Listen, what people don't know -- anti-Semitism is only ignorance. When you talk to -- When you -- When you tell people that don't use their own mind. Don't know how to make up their own mind. They don't think for themselves, that's when anti-Semitism comes in.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And the person that doesn't know nothing, is not anti-Semitic.

Q: I'm putting up a second microphone for my -- myself. When I record the interviews for my radio programs, I don't record myself.

SL: Yeah.

Q: But for this one they asked me to and I forgot. I'm sorry. With the -- Let me -- I want to go back -- I know we're jumping around in time a little bit --

SL: Yeah.

Q: -- but I wanted to -- because we -- some of the important things to me, when I -- when I hear the -- your story and the other stories of survivors, is to understand what was special, what were -- what were the ingredients of their survival and I know part of it is -- is luck. It's just having --

SL: 99 percent was luck.

Q: Yeah, but --

SL: And somebody has to watch over you. I put -- See, I'm a very strong believer in fate.

Q: Yeah.

SL: In destiny. And I believe somebody's watching over you and you -- not-nothing's going to happen to you before your time is up.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: See, I put -- I personally believe in my grandfather, hey? He's the one that watched all through the war over me.

Q: Now can -- You -- You mentioned that several times and this was a --

SL: Yeah.

Q: -- the-these were the two things that I picked up from the interview that were very important, was one, your determination to live beyond Hitler, and then your being watched over by your grandfather. But could you explain how that manifests itself, or what it -- what it actually was, in terms of him watching you?

SL: Well, see, when I was a child, I was very -- my grandfather used to live by us. I was very close to my grand -- whatever -- I was like a little dog, right? Whatever my grandfather went, I used to go with him. I used to go to shul with him, whatever. To my aunts, my s -- children, right, whatever. And I fe -- I was very close to him, see? And he was reu -- he was very close to me. He wa -- He loved me, [indecipherable] and -- I fi -- and that's the only one, [indecipherable] I was a child and the way I felt, he was always there whenever I needed him, when I was a child, right? And the same thing during the war. I mean, there were certain -- certain things, like he told the guy, "You'll never see to -- li-live to see that day," right? The day before Hitler started the war, he died, okay?

Q: How old was that guy that died, I forgot to ask you that.

SL: That man?

Q: Yeah.

SL: He must have been in his late 40's. Young, young man.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Well he said, "You'll never live to see the day." And that was a prediction, a couple of years before it.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And the man never lived to see the day. So, there was something there. There's so many -- There's so many fi -- instance, you know, so many instances that I've -- I went through like a miracle. Nad in the war, and even after the war, the -- certain things. 19 f -- 1987, right, I was walking around like a time bomb, I didn't even know it.

Q: With your heart?

SL: Right. Now, sigh -- like a miracle, my -- my -- my -- my right ar -- my right ventricle -- right ventricle? What do you call that?

RL: Your right side of the heart.

SL: Right side of the heart took off ma -- took over the work from my left heart, because my left one was completely closed.

RL: The coronary artery.

SL: Now, when you -- if you ever read the report, you would never believe it, right? The doctor wrote the report. My wife is a RN, right, and she couldn't believe the report. Now, you don't -- you mean to say that somebody's not watching over me?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Mm. Somebody's watching over me. The same thing now. One of my -- my grafts closed up, right? But what happened, my -- my ha -- my body developed new ca -- carotical circulation around the heart, right, right. Somebody li -- if wouldn't be for that, I would have had a massive heart attack.

Q: Mm.

SL: And I thank God I don't need nothing. I just take medication, that's it. But shows that somebody's watching over me. First of all, my wife needs me, okay? I need my wife and my wife needs me. And it's still -- my time is not up yet. So is -- it shows, there's something there in destiny, right? In fate, hm?

Q: Is there any connection between this strong belief that you have and this -- or this knowledge that you have of somebody watching you and -- and your religion?

SL: Yeah, the religion has something. I'm not -- personally, I'm not religious.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I believe if you are a good human being, you have a good heart, you don't harm nobody, you help people when they're in need, that's the most important religion. It's nit -- It's not what you -- It's not what you -- you -- you -- you say abba, it's what you do. If you do good things to people and you help people, that's a religion for me.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: It's not if you go to synagogue or you go to church and you -- and you pray and you say that and then you come out and you steal people -- from people. That's not religion. Somebody is in need, I'm there.

Q: But was it -- What -- I guess what I'm curious about was tha -- I mean, that's -- that's an important distinction and -- and I would -- and -- and I think that it's -- well, it's -- it's not an uncommon view. I mean, my family is the same -- of Jewish people who are not particularly religious, but have very strong sense of values and ethics.

SL: The most important thing is values. See, because the Jewish religion, the most important thing -- that's where the Jewish religion -- that's what I was taught, okay? That if somebody's in need, be there for them, right? Never close your door. The same thing, it's like Passover, right? I mean, they -- you open up the door for Elino -- Elionowa to come in the house, your door's supposed to be open. In Europe to the synagogues, right? I mean, if you couldn't afford it, to pay for the -- for the ti -- to give a donation to shul, the shul was open for you. In America it's different. If you don't -- can't pay for the -- for the -- for the shul, you can't come in. And that's not religion for me. That's a business. And that's what happened, that's what a busin -- religion became, it's a business. I mean, not everybody could afford it, there are certain places in -- that you have to show them how much income you have and you have to pay a certain percentage. I want to send my kids to Yeshiva and I went to one of the Yeshivas, right? And the rabbi told me, this is my price. I told him I couldn't afford it those days, right? He says, "Well, if you can't afford it, you can't send your kids to Yeshiva." And he told me wife, she rest in peace, he says, "If you want to send your kids to Yeshiva, you go and clean floors. Become a housemaid and you make money to pay me," okay? Now -- This is not by me a rabbi. I told him, I says, "If you paid me, I wouldn't send my kids to Yeshiva, because you can't teach them nothing. You can't teach them the ethics. And by yours, the -- the ma -- th -- ya -- the money's more important than -- than to teach somebody." I went to another Yeshiva, says, "Whatever you can afford to, you pay us," okay? And that's the right way. And I gave my kids a Jewish education. If I

couldn't hav -- I couldn't do it, I wouldn't have given it to them. And believe me it was hard, whatever I paid those days, too. But my wife, she rest in peace, she wanted to give the kids a Jewish education.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I'm not sorry for it.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Kids were brought up right.

Q: And just -- How -- How did you -- This -- This sense of values that you got, who would you say was the most responsible for teaching that to you? Was it your -- your parents, your grandfather?

SL: Well, my parents and my grandfather.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Because it was in the home.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Our doors were always open, even for the workers. Did -- Those -- Those -- The people that used to work for us, right? They were crazy about the gre -- my grandfather, my -- see, in Europe, everybody had a nickname, right? They gave everybo -- And my grandfather, they gave a nickname, Smogas -- Smugus. Now, in -- in Lithuanian, it's -- it's a huma -- a real human being guy, a real fine person. That's -- Tha -- That Smugus means a very fine person.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And that's what my grandfather was named.

Q: What was his real name?

SL: Is this -- Labe -- Lable -- Lable in He-Hebrew, it's -- it's a lion. Big man.

Q: And this was -- whose father was he, your --

SL: My -- My -- My father's father. Also my mother's -- my mother's parents also were -- were nice people, but I wasn't as close to them. I got something through my -- from my mother's gr -- parents, also something good. I'm a cook, I love to cook. My grandfather was a well -- well -- really well-known cook.

RL: Your grandmother.

SL: My grandmother.

Q: Yeah?

SL: So, I got -- I got something from her, too.

Q: So what did you -- did you learn to cook from her directly, or you just --

SL: I didn't learn, I just -- I guess it comes with it.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I love to cook. Looks -- Looks good.

RL: He loves to cook.

Q: Yeah? What's his specialty?

RL: Anything you want.

SL: [indecipherable] I like to experiment. I never cook the same way twice.

Q: Yeah. I like to cook, too.

SL: Mm.

Q: I always liked it, when -- since I was little.

SL: I'll let you taste my lasagna. It's -- But, see something falls off. But the thing is, you see, we were brought up to respect people and -- and to help people. And that's the way I was brought up and it stays -- it -- it stayed with me, see, because they -- they got in this country, right? I mean, they come from a bad environment, that's why the children are bad. There's no such a thing. It's the house. It's what the parents teach children. See, the -- All the Holocaust survivors, right, that survived the concentration camp, and the -- and the how as they saw, that a human li -- a human life didn't have no value. Just like an ant, you step on it and kill it, right? I mean, everybody came out, they should have been killers and murderers, right? And everybody -- I would say 99 percent of the people that came out are very successful, respectful citizens, wherever they went. And they don't -- I don't know [indecipherable]

Q: And what's your explanation for that?

SL: Because they had a good upbr -- upbringing in the home, the value.

Q: Before?

SL: Right.

Q: Now, see if you can explain something to me. I have two children who are six and 10 years old. My perception is that these issues of the values that we teach them, that my wife and I teach them, are very important and very big, because they don't know that much. So I'm envisioning you at 11 - 12 years old, these values and these relationships

that you have with your parents and your grandfather, it's very big. And your understanding about what you just described about helping people and about being good to people, leaving the door open. H-How -- How does seeing what you saw affect -- affect it? It's a -- It's almost hard to understand that -- the balance.

SL: Yeah, the thing is, you see, it was instilled in me --

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And I was taught as a child, that no matter what you saw, after -- because you could teach somebody a certain age. After a certain age, that's it, right? So, when you were taught at a cert -- my -- at my age, a yo -- young age, how to da -- how to be to people, how to respect people, right? That if you see a woman, you open the door for her, right? Or you see an older person, you get up and give the seat. And if you see a woman -- especially a woman, even if it's younger than you, right? You get up and give the seat. And that's what instilled in me, to show respect. And I s -- I still do it now. Even when I -- I sit somewhere and I see a woman next to me, I get up and give her the seat. Or I go out and walk and I open that door, right? I'll hold the door til si -- the person comes over. Now you see in young generations, right, the young people, they don't even say thank you. Like it's coming to them, because it's taught in the home. There's no res -- There's no respect. Listen, [indecipherable] they see -- I must have this. Whatever they see, they must have, right? He grew up, he had two toys, was enough. You're growing now, they've got hundreds and hundreds of toys, right? And it's still not enough. And whatever the child wants, they pay. Listen, there's no such thing, you must have it.

Make use what you got. And -- And when I -- When I -- I -- I mean they -- the children, five, three, four years old, they have no respect no more. By us, I remember as a child, it was child -- you could be seen, but not heard. You couldn't say nothing. And you did -- If an older person spoke, you -- you f -- y-you -- you kept quiet. Here, an older person speaks, forget about it.

Q: What I'm curious about is -- is how a child like yourself, or other children, who have such a -- such a good upbringing and such a respect for other people and for elder people, how do you then make sense of the -- the horrible things that -- that were fostered upon you and the horrible things that you saw?

SL: You mean I ca -- well, I figured this, we [indecipherable] it had to be that -- I -- I s -
- I have a certain belief, you know, the questions here, where if there was a God, right?
How could it let it -- things like this happen?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Now my explanation is -- the way I think, that you don't question what God does, first of all, re? And also, the worst punishment for a parent is when the li -- they punish a child, right? There ca -- can't be nabarena -- the worse punishment than punishing a child. And God was punishing -- punishing the parents when they to -- when they -- when they punish the children.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So, that's -- that's one of the things. But you can -- you can't take it, there's no explanation. There's no explanation whatsoever. You don't question.

Q: Mm-hm. You were 13 when you were -- you were in a concentration camp when you turned 13, right?

SL: Yeah, I was -- when I went into the ghetto, when the germ -- when the Germans came into, I was 11.

Q: Mm-hm. So we -- What did you -- Were you -- Were -- Were you Bar Mitzvahed?

SL: Nah, Bar Mitzvahed?

Q: There was no way, right?

SL: No Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Was that --

SL: I was always in hiding, because the children, used to take away.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I was taken away a couple of times.

Q: Was that a problem, to -- to -- to miss a Bar Mitzvah?

SL: No.

Q: It wasn't important?

SL: Who -- Who was thinking of Bar Mitzvahs?

Q: I don't know, I'm just curious.

SL: We -- We di -- We didn't even have no shawls those days. We used to -- We used to pray in the -- in -- that nobody saw, hey? You didn't have no prayer books, you didn't have no shawls. Listen, people with beards, they used to shave -- the Germans used to cut their beards off. You just -- You just -- Bar Mitzvah never bothered me.

Q: No.

SL: Listen, the religion the -- hala -- it's -- it's not just the -- the only thing a Bar Mitzvah is, if you go before the Torah and they present you and you -- an-and you become a man. Over here they make a big thing, Bar Mitzvah. But in -- in Eu-Europe they didn't make no big things.

Q: I see.

SL: Most of the thing was done in shul and that was it.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: What -- Th-Th-Th-Th-There -- Those -- Those things never bothered me. If it be meant to be, I would have had a Bar Mitzvah, but to show that my -- my -- my -- what they call the -- the -- my destiny. I wasn't meant for a Bar Mitzvah and didn't have no Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: My biggest belief is destiny. That's why I don't worry about everything. Whatever is going to be is going to be. I live at present, see? I don't care -- I know what the past was, I don't care what the pre -- what the future is going to be. Live right now. Because why should I worry bou -- say something's going to happen? Why do I have to worry what's going to happen? I even taught my children the same way. Don't worry how to cross the bridge to wa -- before you get there. A lot of people, they worry, before -- before they get -- b-before something happens. Why should I worry about it? I guess the cant -- the time I spent in the concentration camp taught me that, too. Survive at present.

Do I know what's going to be next minute? No, nobody knows. So you live right now.

And a lot of people are saying the same thing, they finally seeing it. Same thing my son, too, as I say, he's going -- he's going to be get -- going for his Ph.D. in psychology.

Also, he used to worry about everything. I says, "Charles, what are you worried? When you get there, you'll worry about it. Why should you worry now?" She used to tell him the same way, yeah. Now it's -- after it's getting -- where he's going to get his p --

finally, he's getting a little common sense. Listen, education doesn't mean nothing. It's the common sense that counts. I don't care how educated you are. You could put --

Your most educated human being was stupid. And a little common sense, by me is more important than -- than education. What good is it if you're smart, but if you don't use your head the right way?

Q: Mm-hm. So t-tell me -- I -- I wanted to go -- start with -- just ask you a few things about the -- the liberation at Buchenwald.

SL: Oh, I'll tell you a story about it --

Q: Wa -- Okay.

SL: -- my liberation. Hell, you brought it up. I moved in over here two and a half years ago. And last year, a men moved I -- moved in five houses away from me -- I'm in 119, he's in 129, right? And when he came in -- and we are friendly, I walked over to him, I introduced myself and we started to talk. And he saw my accent, you know. He says, "Where you from?" So I told him, "I'm from Lithuania." He says, "No, where were you during the war?" I says, "I was in the concentration camps," right? He says, "What

concentration camp?" We start talking what concentration camps I were in. And I says, "I was liberated in Buchenwald." He says, "You know, I was the first tank into Buchenwald." I meet my liberator after 50 year -- 51 years. I meet my liberator who liberated me, you know? Is that a coincidence? And I -- Is-Isn't that re -- destiny, something?

Q: What's his name?

SL: What's his name?

RL: I don't know.

SL: Take a look in the book. I'll tell you in a minute. But that's a coincidence, isn't it?

Q: It's amazing, yeah.

RL: He doesn't want to talk about it at all.

SL: And the thing is, when I was ta -- I was looking -- I was looking out from the -- from the -- from the concentration camp and there was a ba -- there was woods there, uh? And I saw the tank coming down the perimeter of the -- of the -- of the -- of the forests, right? And I saw the ee -- that tank coming into the gate, coming right through the gate. And I meet him after 51 years. Now we had the -- We had the -- I had the interview with Spielberg here and I want him to be in, you know?

RL: Sol, what number?

SL: 129. And I want him to be in the interview, you know? Of course --

Q: Yeah.

SL: You know he's --

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: He says he couldn't go through with again. He couldn't go through it again to talk about it.

RL: [indecipherable] something like that. 129.

Q: Oh yeah. Now, what's his background?

RL: Well, he's very quiet.

Q: Jewish?

SL: Very quiet man, he le -- he'll -- he'll --

Q: He is Jewish?

RL: Yeah.

SL: Huh? He didn't want to be with people. Even -- Even when he lived over -- He lived in -- After the war, he didn't want to be with people. He lived like in a farm, secluded place. Very quiet man.

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two Side A

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie, for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape w -- two, side two.

SL: -- quiet man, he le -- he'll -- he'll --

Q: He is Jewish?

RL: Yeah.

SL: Huh? He didn't want to be with people. Even -- Even when he lived over -- He lived in -- After the war, he didn't want to be with people. He lived like in a farm, secluded place. Very quiet man. He told me, because he said, first he said his daughter is sick, then he told me why he didn't want to be in interview. He says, "I couldn't go through it again." I says, "Listen, if I could go through it -- when you talk about things like that," he says, "I can't talk about what I saw." But the thing is, you know, when you talk about something, you feel better.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I used -- I also used to be -- I used to talk a little about it, but I didn't talk about it much, til I open -- had my open heart surgery. It's like somebody said, "Here, you got another chance in life. Open up and talk about things." I opened up, I talk about it. My whole personality changed. I mean, I became like a different human being. My wife knew me -- She knew me -- How many years she knew me?

RL: A long, long time.

SL: Okay? She can -- My -- My personality changed. My friends, right? They couldn't believe it's me. I became more open, I became more -- I like to make people happy, I like to make people --

RL: Likes to joke.

SL: Joke around a lot, right?

RL: [indecipherable] round -- around a lot. [indecipherable]

SL: Before I was very serious and s -- but you got another chance in life, and use it.

Q: Did -- Did you make a conscious decision after the war to not talk about it?

SL: No, I guess -- it's not -- it's not a conscious decision. It's certain things that when e -- I-like, even the -- there's certain things I blocked out from my mind. I don't even remember it, okay? Now, when I read -- I read a book, right, from the koba -- Kovno ghetto, it comes back.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But you just blocked it out. You didn't want to talk about. Something -- I guess your mind -- your body itself has certain shut off valves and it -- it cuts it off itself. It's the same thing like a pressure valve. If you -- If you [indecipherable] a valve to release, you would explode. See I -- I use my body as a plumbing system, right? That's the way I use my body. And if you built a lot of pressure up and you don't release it, you haven't got a valve to release it, you going to explode, the same thing as a hot water heater, right? And the same -- that's the same thing with your body. I use my mouth as a si -- kitchen sink, see? If you put in a lot of garbage, right -- if you watch what you put

in, your sink is not going to clog up. If you put a lot of fat in it and a lot of grease, your arteries are going to clog up, right? Same thing, right? So that's the way I use my body, I -- I -- that's the example I ha -- I give myself and that's the example I give people. It's to understand how it works. And it should work that way.

Q: Hm.

SL: Because when I was young I used to eat a lot of junk, so my arteries closed up.

Q: Hm. So tell me a little bit about -- so after -- after the -- the tanks came in in Buchenwald, what was the treatment like? I know you tal -- you talked it -- about the -- that was very interesting about the -- the food that the Americans prepared was too rich.

SL: Oh, yeah.

Q: People got sick.

SL: Well, after we were liberated, they came in and the Americans, you know, the -- a lot of people were sick, you know, they were starved. And they came in and th -- and they started to cook. They started to cook pigs with all kind meats. Very greasy food. People the -- their intestines were all dried up, right? And they started to eat like -- I mean, the people are hungry. Now me, like somebody was watching me too, right? And the -- the only thing I was eating is potatoes and bread. I wouldn't take -- maybe because my religious upbringing, a -- the hahsa, right? And you couldn't eat no hahsa, and that's -- that's -- not -- non-kosher meat, right? May-Maybe cause of my upbringing, I was saved about it. But the only thing I ate was bread and potatoes, right? Now, people were getting sick, they were getting dysentery. Te-Tens of thousands of

people died after the liberation because -- from the dysentery. Their intestines were all dried up and this -- they got diarrhea and they were just dying like flies.

Q: But other than that, what was the -- was the treatment good from the Americans?

SL: Oh yeah, very good. Listen, when they came into the camp -- and Buchenwald was one of the best ca -- was one of the best camps I was in, the same thing with Dachau, Dachau was also a good camp. But co-considering, you know, it's -- the treatment was very good. They treated too good, and weren't used to it. After about -- After about a week or so, they took us out from the -- they got all the children together, they took us out from the ca -- from the camps, where the German soldiers used to -- used to bring the barracks there, they had like big buildings, at least, I think four or five story buildings. And they took all the children and they put us into those barracks there and that's where we stayed. And then they did as -- the f -- the fren -- the French -- French government, the S-Switzerland, Holland, England. This -- They started to take some children, you know, because most of them, they were without parents.

Q: So, of that group of 500 children --

SL: 522.

Q: 522. How many went to France with you?

SL: A couple of hundred went -- went to France. Some went to -- I don't know how many went to Sweden and some went to England.

Q: And where you went in France, were there other children from other camps there also? Or was it just those --

SL: No, in the -- in this -- in this -- this one, the -- the -- there was only from Buchenwald.

Q: Right.

SL: Okay? But this -- this -- the organization that took us over is the Ozair, if you ever heard of it. It's a -- It's a -- It's a -- It's a Jewish organization.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they -- they -- the one that we were in, that was strictly from Buchenwald. That was with Elie Wiesel, well, and --

Q: And tell me a li -- What was your life like there, in that place?

SL: Oh, it was very nice. Listen, we were running around, I mean we had our freedom. They were trying to teach us a trade. They taught us -- Some people went to sc -- first of all, we went to school to learn a little French. So these the teachers and then some -- said all the ones want to learn, to l -- to -- to learn trades. The life itself was very good. We stayed in the -- one of the places we stayed was in Rothschild's pi -- one of his palaces there, all right? But the thing is, he didn't give us the palace, he gave us, for this, the stables, the servant quarters, where the horses used to stay in. But still, listen, it was very nice of them, it was very comfortable. We had -- We had plenty to eat. They gave -- They even drink wine, even when you're children, they give you wine, right? I mean, over there, everybody's a alcoholic there. And we played games. We have soccer, we used to have sports and -- listen, we had a little chil -- a ga -- a child upbringing a little bit, you know. We weren't used to things like that.

Q: Was there -- Were -- Did some of the children stay in France? Was there some expectation that those children who went to France would stay there?

SL: Oh some of them, yeah. Yeah, some of them stayed there.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: There's quite a few that are still -- still live there. Matter of fact, a couple of years ago, I met -- I met one of the -- two guys actually, that live in France, they settled there. See, but right after the war, I mean, the French government took us, but there was a lot of anti-Semitism there. A lot of them. I mean, right -- you know what the Jews went through, and re -- and when they were -- we -- we came there, they showed it. They didn't -- still didn't like the Jews. To this day, they don't like the Jews. There's only one place in -- in all France that -- that were friendly to the Jews. If you ever heard of Shablon, I think it was. This -- They -- They -- They saved the whole Jewish population there. They wouldn't give up one Jew. But the rest are anti-Semitic, they don't like the Jews, they don't like the Americans. That's why we never go back to France. I'll go back faster to Germany, than go to France. People say it's so beautiful there. I says the - the country is a beautiful country, but the people are rotten. And any place that don't like me -- don't like me as a person, as a Jew, they don't like me as an American, I would never go back and -- and spend a -- a penny there.

RL: Sol?

SL: Hm? Which one?

RL: All these are people from -- from France.

SL: Yeah, wait, let me see.

Q: Are they --

SL: That's right, we met some --

RL: Yeah. We had a reunion.

SL: Oh yeah. This guys here. This guy --

Q: Wait, wait. Put this in the front here, so --

SL: Okay.

Q: -- that you can -- so you can --

SL: This man over here, see, is a Frenchman. He came for a visit.

Q: Right.

SL: See, this guy -- his name is -- what's his -- which is tha -- I forgot his name.

RL: Arya.

SL: Oh, Arya, okay. Or this -- Also this guy here is also from France, see?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But this guy Arya, we were going to the same synagogue in Brooklyn together, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And I was -- I saw him in syn -- the synagogue maybe for about 10 - 15 years, right? Now, this guy never talks about it, doesn't talk about the war at all. I mean, if you ask him a question about the war, he gets very upset, doesn't talk about it. And there was -- When I came to shul once, and we're sitting and talking and he says -- and one of

my -- my -- my -- somebody I know says to this guy, "How are you?" He says, "What do you think, you're in France? You're chasing all the girls?" So I says to this guy, "Arya, when were you in France?" He says, "Right away you want to know my life hist -- biography?" I says, "No," I says, "I was in France, too." He say -- I says, "I was there in 1945." He says, "So was I, in 1945." I says, "I was in the -- in the Ozair, this and this home." He said, "For -- So was I." I says, "Don't tell me you were in Buchenwald." He says, "Yes." He says, "Oh, you the leedfacshiker, right?" Now, all those years we sit in the same synagogue and the man never want to talk about it, right, because he doesn't want to talk about the war. An -- Ba -- And then it came out that we were in the same concentration camp.

RL: They knew each other.

SL: Okay, we knew each other. Now, that's the guy I show you on the picture.

RL: With this --

Q: Oh.

SL: In the concen --

Q: Yeah.

SL: That's the guy Arya, okay?

Q: Hm.

SL: So it shows, if somebody talks, you ca --

RL: But these two were also with you in Buchenwald.

SL: Yeah, yeah, those two guys were.

RL: Those two guys.

Q: Where was this photograph taken?

SL: That was in Brooklyn.

RL: In Arya's house.

SL: They -- They -- They -- That -- They came -- They came for a visit. See, this guy Arya keeps in touch with everybody. This guy has like a -- he's like a fa -- a computer walking around. He remembers all the name, he's ga -- even got the ki -- kids from Buchenwald all over the coun -- all over the world, right. He knows they're in Australia, in Canada. He remembers the name, he keep in touch with everybody.

Q: Well then, I don't understand. He -- He -- He's the one who wouldn't talk?

RL: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, he doesn't talk, see, but he keeps --

Q: But he -- But he keeps in touch with everybody?

SL: -- he keeps -- he keeps in touch with the people. But if you want -- if a interviewers [indecipherable] na -- ca -- talk about the camp. He has -- Socially, he keeps in touch with them, okay? But if you want to interview him or something, he will never talk about it.

Q: Doesn't that seem a little strange?

SL: Even -- Even the same thing, if I mention something ba -- about a camp or something, he says, "Sol, shyer, don't talk about it. I don't want to hear about it, okay?"

Wouldn't talk about it. And I told him, I says, "Listen, open up, you'll feel better." And my next door neighbor, too.

Q: Mm-hm. Here?

SL: Yeah, my next door neighbor, he -- we -- from Auschwitz -- was in Auschwitz. And he also -- he didn't want to talk about it. So I finally talked him in, when Spielberg was coming here, right? I talked him in about it. "Take an interview." "No, I can't go through it." I says, "Try. I mean, you have to open up." He agreed for interview, okay?

RL: The son forced him.

SL: Huh?

RL: The son forced him.

SL: No. He ag -- He agreed for interview, and he was a nervous wreck, the -- for the -- for weeks before they came, you have to see him, the guy was a nervous wreck. And they started, they opened up, right? Now, he couldn't -- he couldn't believe how much he feels better now. Now, you could talk about -- more about the camps than you could before. And his children are very happy, because now they got that biography what that man went through. Before, they didn't know about it. They knew he was in camp, but didn't talk about it.

Q: It's very important.

SL: Yeah.

Q: It's very important.

SL: You see, the thing is, you have to open up. Once you open up, it's going to go out by itself.

Q: Yeah, well it's like that pressure valve you talked about earlier.

SL: Yeah, it's true.

Q: I believe in it, I think that's true for anybody who went through anything. But also, for his in particular, it's important --

SL: Wha-What -- What do you think a si -- si -- si-psychologist, right? When you go -- sa -- mentally, something wrong, now. Something is bad in back of your brain, your mind, right? And you ha -- keep it hidden. Now if they want you to keep on talking. [indecipherable] sessions you have, it's all talking, right?

Q: Yeah.

SL: They want to see what's bothering you. So when they hit a certain spot and you open up your valve, you let it out, you'll feel better. They'll be able how to -- be able to help you how to -- into -- handle it.

Q: Yeah. True.

SL: Now, if you keep in the mind, I don't know how to -- what's bothering you. Medication helps, but still, talking about it.

Q: Yeah. Hm.

SL: And that's without education I learned it. I have a very good mind. I have a very -- I -- see, I'm -- I'm very challenging. If I made up to do something, I'll do it. If I -- It's

like I'm very good in repairing things, right? Even if I don't know anything about it, I will not give up til I conquer it.

Q: Mm.

SL: Okay. Th -- It-It'll b-be on my mind, could go weeks and months and I'll conquer it. So there's certain things -- I do all kind repair work, I do -- I can do anything, there isn't a thing I cannot do.

Q: But I -- I'm -- I'm assuming that this is one of the keys to your survival.

RL: I think so.

SL: The challenge -- The challenge.

Q: [indecipherable]

M: Strong

Q: Very strong.

SL: See, I like something -- I like something challenging. Once that challenge is not there no more --

Q: Yeah.

SL: -- I ha -- I lose my interest in it.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But as long as the challenge is there, I -- I'll keep on going. Like I had the -- I used to live -- where I u -- where I bought my first house. That was one of my challenges.

Q: Where was that?

SL: In Brooklyn, all right? Had a leak, couldn't find it. Now, the houses, there were seven houses attached, right? I went to the builder, he sent to point the bricks, he waterproofed the house, the leak was still there. And it bothered me, it was on my mind. One day it woke me at night -- most of my ideas come fra -- when I'm sleeping. Wakes me up in the middle of the night, it was on Saturday, so on Sunday morning, I got up Sunday morning, I went outside, I fixed my porch -- the li -- I fixed my next door neighbor's porch, okay? My leak stopped. How did you come to the conclusion, right? I figured, when the building, it got steel girders, right? And it's called a I beam. And what happened, the I beam ended up in my hou -- in the -- the two joints, th-th-the beams, right, ended on my house. So what happened, she had the leak on her porch and the water was coming in from her porch and running down the I beam, and the end of it was in my house, okay? So that's where the water was coming down. So once I fixed that porch, I'm fixed up. And that was the challenge. No matter what I did to my pa -- my house, I di -- I couldn't stop that leak, til I figured it out. If I would have been the ba -- if I would have been when they were building the houses there, I would have known it. But I wasn't there, so I figured out that that thing like -- thing like that.

RL: Over here, too, you figured out what the leak -- he had a leak he figured out.

SL: Who?

RL: Here, too.

SL: Oh yeah, here, too.

Q: You had a leak here?

SL: Oh yeah. And the builder -- builders ca-came, he was going to do something -- so-something else. I says, "Mark, no way," I says, "water doesn't go up, it goes down." He says, "No, you don't know what you're talking about." I says, "You don't know what you're talking about." A-And then one days it was raining, I climbed up in the attic, I went and I went a -- and I went a -- and I look -- I was looking for that leak and sure enough, it start -- it was leaking onto -- it was coming from the top roof, going down, right? I got a hold of the builder. I brought him up, I said, "Here where the leak is coming in." He had to replace half of the roof. Now, he was going -- he -- he was going to fix the soffits. There's openings underneath for the air circulation. He was going to seal this up. I -- I mean, water doesn't go up, it goes down. And he come in -- That was a builder, mind you. And that's a simple thing.

Q: Yeah. So when -- So you di -- You were telling -- You told me that you -- How did you decide to put the ad in the paper in New York, to find your relative? Or somebody in France help you [indecipherable]

SL: No, no, da -- no, no da -- th-the -- the one there, from the Red Cross -- the man that came from the Red Cross, he's the one that asked if anybody has family in New York -- in America, period. And I told him yeah, I have cousins -- I mean, uncles and aunts and the whole family there. The Red Cross put in the ad in the paper, see? I didn't put it in, they put it in, because I gave them the names, you know? And they put it into the paper and my cousin was looking through the paper, because of -- right after the war, in 1945, bif -- people that looking for family and she noticed my name there. She didn't know it

was -- it wa-was a relation or not, but she wrote me the letter, you know. And then, in --
And then I gave her the right answers and it was my -- my mishpocheh. My family.

Q: Mm-hm. So when did you actually come here?

SL: 1947. April 15th.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

SL: Took almost two years before I --

Q: Came by boat?

SL: Yeah, Marine Flasher. Listen, those days it wasn't easy to come to America, espe --
they had quotas. You couldn't come in like -- like now. You had to wait. Because I
came to -- and I came in the Polish quota. Lithuanian quota would have been longer yet.

Q: Well, how did that work? Coming on the Polish quota?

SL: Well, I -- I wa -- I told them I was born in Vilna. Vilna belonged to Poland, see? So
-- So I came to the Polish quota, because in Lithuania, you had to wait til Lithuanian
quo -- it wasn't even open, the quota for Lithuania, those days, because there was not
that many Jews left from Poland, so they -- they had the quota.

Q: So this was a quota set up by the Americans? By the State Department?

SL: Yeah, the State Department.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: How many they let -- they only let in so many people -- nationalities, right?

Q: Yeah.

SL: So many from Poland, so many from the -- from France, so many from Germany, whatever it was, right? The biggest quotas used to be st -- Irish, if you w -- if you know. If you [indecipherable] the Irish had the biggest quota.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: The Jews had very little. I mean, I --

Q: Was there a distinction made between a Polish Jew and a Pole?

RL: No. I don't think so.

Q: A Polish Christian, or it was just --

SL: No, they da --

Q: -- or it was just the nationality?

SL: Well, no, they didn't -- I -- I think they -- they had them in the priority to come in.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: There was a -- I think there was. Listen, those days was very anti-Semitic.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Even -- Even during the war, I understand was it -- I understand there was so much anti-Semitism going on, the Germans against the Jews in ame -- in -- right then your -- in York --

RL: Yorkreel.

SL: Yorkreel, right? In Westchester. Ever hear of Yorkreel, Westchester?

Q: Mm-mm.

SL: It's a -- There wa -- Th-There was -- Used to be Germantown. There was so much anti-Semitism going on. The same thing is in -- in -- what e -- crayson manchenese. It was very racist over there, you know?

Q: In New York? Manhattan?

SL: Yeah, New York, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Nazis used to go out and demonstrate against the Jews and nobody did anything about it.

Q: Hm. So where did you go when you first got here? Who met you at the boat?

SL: Oh well, I had my aunts and my uncles and my -- they -- they met me in the 46th Street, I think it was, West Side. We didn't have to go to Ellis, and I [indecipherable] have to go to Ellis Island, see? Before, everybody used to come to Ellis Island. You didn't have to go to Ellis Island. So we were -- I think in 46th and West Side hi -- West Side there.

Q: Where did you get the money for the boat ride? Did they have to send it to you?

SL: No, my da -- my uncle -- my aunt and my uncle paid.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I mean, they made out papers for me.

Q: Right.

SL: Cause -- And they made out papers for me and my -- my -- my father's sister, my Aunt Bessie, she decided I'm going to stay berhow, cause the other ones -- one was in

Milwaukee, which I didn't know much -- I didn't know my Aunt Bessie, either, let's face it. And -- And my un -- my uncles, I mean there -- they didn't -- they di -- they didn't make -- they decided my aunt was going to keep me, okay? So they -- they got -- they got together, my u -- my u -- my uncles and my aunts, they -- and they got the money together. I think it's wa -- like 350 dollars that -- those days. And I was supposed to come on a -- on a fra -- on a big -- on a big boat. What happened that -- that boat, it burned down. So I came in a -- I'm a came in a armor troo -- armor transport. So that time the passage was like 180 dollars. Was a lot of money, 1947.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

SL: And I came and my aunts and my uncles, they greeted me, you know, they treated me very nice, but the thing was, you know, I was very inward. I didn't trust anybody, sil -- like -- like an animal, you know? Y-Y-Y-Yes -- Y-You look out for yourself, survival. So it's -- I didn't -- I wasn't trusting, I didn't trust anybody, you know? And I was very inward. I didn't talk about it, you know, it's -- it was very hard in the beginning, you know, til about a couple of months, you know, then I -- I s -- I saw that the beautiful people -- my aunt treated me just like a mother, she rest in peace. My aunts -- My -- My aunts name and my mother's name were the same names, you see?

Wonderful woman. And I -- And I s --

Q: Now, you -- this aunt, was she your father's sister?

SL: And my father's -- my father's sister, right.

Q: Mm-hm. She was older or younger than him?

SL: She was older than. And --

Q: What wa -- And her -- it was Bessie?

SL: Yeah. My mother was all -- my mother's rest in was -- name, she rest in peace, was Bessie, my aunt, she rest in peace was Bessie. Both had the same names. And the children took me in very nice, you know, my -- my aunt's children. She had -- She had a married daughter that just got married, she used to live with them, because after the war, you couldn't get an apartment. And then she had another son that was two years younger than me. And they were -- we lived very nice. Also my -- another uncle, my father's brother lived downstairs where my aunt wa -- lived, you know the -- it was a three family house.

Q: This was in Brooklyn?

SL: Yeah.

Q: You remember the address?

SL: Yes. 365 Williams Avenue, it's between Blake and Dumont, that's in east New York. I tell you, was a beautiful life those days. They didn't have much, but family was so close. I mean, they used to go on -- used to go on picnics every si -- Sunday, right? The whole family. It was the -- like the brothers and sisters and the cousins, everybody. We used to go to the beach, we used to go to the park. Family was close t -- had a meaning of family. Not like now. Brother and sister don't want to know from each other, right? Cousin -- The only time you meet a cousin, in a wedding and a funeral. Had one cousin and whenever I saw him, "Oh, we must get together, we must get

together.” And that I heard for 52 years. Now he passed away. I went to his house the first time, to -- to pay a shiva call, okay? That’s the way the family is. Before, was completely different. Was a nice, nice life.

Q: When -- When do you -- What did you --

SL: Was a poor life, but was a good life. Now you have everything and the life is not like it used to. Everything ha --

Q: Pretty interesting, isn’t it?

SL: Hm?

Q: It’s interesting.

SL: He had a interesting life. I mean, he was poor, all right? But you were happy, you were satisfied with everything you got, right? A child had a couple of toys, was a lot, right? And they played with it. Now, they got thousands of dollars worth of toys and they -- and they got nothing to do, I’m bored. I was born with one toy, I played with it.

RL: One toy.

SL: It’s true, that’s all. So, and tha -- and tha -- and that’s what life was all about. I’m -- I -- I remember I used to go to the movies, you know. Three of us used to -- used to go for a quarter, used to see two movies. Used to see a -- a cartoon and used to see the news. I learned -- I learned most of my English from the movies. Cause when I came to this country, and they didn’t have no -- the schools for refugees. You couldn’t go -- You couldn’t go to night school.

Q: So what languages did you speak then? You spoke Yiddish?

SL: Yiddish.

Q: Russian?

SL: No, very little Russian.

Q: Is Lithuanian a separate language?

SL: A separate language, very hard to --

Q: You spoke that?

SL: No.

Q: No.

SL: I didn't want to know from it. It's -- Besides, see, when we lived, we used to go to cheder, then used to go to Yeshiva. And then if you got a little older, then you used to go to -- to -- to reg -- to regular school. See, because Lithuania was just like -- like in Israel. That's all it too -- Hebrew -- Hebrew and Yiddish. And -- But I didn't like the language anyway. So I didn't like the people, I didn't like the language. And I spoke French. Now I don't remember it no more, but I didn't have to spea -- I didn't [indecipherable] to speak to French, didn't use the [indecipherable]. Most of our speaking was Yiddish. That's -- My aunts and my uncles all spoke Yiddish and that -- and little by little, I learned how to speak English. I didn't go to night school, I wa -- I -- I didn't have the chance. First of all, I went to work. So I didn't have the -- I wanted to go to college. My ambition was to become a engineer. Never made it. Za -- Even in the army, I went -- I start to go to -- when I went in the army, I -- I went to school. I di -- went for my equivale -- equivale -- equivalency diploma, right? So I had to go at night

on my time, and -- and twice I had -- twice a week, the army gave you off hours on their time. And I won a -- I won a 5,000 dollar scholarship in 1953, for Harvard University, right?

RL: He didn't take it.

SL: I fini -- I finished my -- I finished my course with distinction. But when I came out, you know, I didn't have no parents. I came out, I couldn't expect my -- my -- my aunt to support me, right? So I never took advantage of it.

Q: Hm. Did she know about it?

SL: Who?

Q: Your aunt.

SL: I never spoke about it.

Q: You didn't tell her?

SL: No. Never spoke about it.

RL: She treated him like a cha -- like a son.

SL: But listen, they were poor people, they weren't wealthy people.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Were hard working people. When I used to work and I used to give in -- I used to pay for the house, you know, for living? She took five dollars a -- a month and 10 dollars a month I used to give her. And then when I got married, all the money I gave her, she used to put away for me and when I got married, she gave me wup -- she gave

it to me back, okay? And very -- very poor people, hard working people. She treated me just like a mother.

Q: I want to take a break one second. Could I use your bathroom?

SL: Okay.

RL: Sure.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape two, side two. Okay.

SL: Okay.

Q: All right, today is November 30th, 1998, Steve Roland with Sol and R-Riya, right?

RL: Right.

Q: Lurie, in their home in Monroe, New Jersey. It's now about one 15, we're starting -- this is the beginning of tape number two. Let's see. Why don't we start -- What -- Tell me a -- Tell me a little abo -- about your -- your -- you -- you -- we were talking about your life here in America. How long was it before you joined the army? How long did you live in -- in America?

SL: I didn't -- didn't join. They called me -- They called me -- 1950 they called me, because the Korean War broke out and in nine -- and they called me to register for the draft, I registered for the draft. And then they -- they called me for -- to examination.

No, first they deferred me, because I wasn't a citizen yet, so they deferred me for two years. 1952, in -- in September, they called me back again. And -- And -- And they induct me in the army. I went for the physical and I was healthy and they took me into the army. So, I went in the army in October, 1952.

Q: And what were you doing in the meantime, what were you doing in New York?

SL: Well, I -- My first job when I came to America, I was working in a -- in a -- at my uncle -- my aunt got me a job working in the tie -- making ties, men's ties, right? And I was getting that time, I was getting 35 cents an hour.

Q: Now, what do you mean making the ties, were you like a -- sort of a tailor?

SL: On -- On a sewing machine.

Q: Yeah.

SL: The guy taught me how to make ties -- how to sew and I learned how to -- how to sew and I was getting 35 cents an hour to make the ties. Now, the regular operators were get -- were getting 36 cents a dozen. So after awhile, you know, I got -- I was doing a very good job and I told the guy, "Listen, I want to work piece work." I says, "because I ca -- I ca -- I can make four or five dozen ties an -- an hour, you know? So I can make a -- over a dollar an hour." So he says to me, "Oh," he says, "a seksha noisgia green." They told me in Yiddish. You-You're not no more a greenhorn, you know, not a foreigner no more. Now, you're an American, you want the same thing as American. So I says to him, I said, "Listen, is my work as good as theirs?" He says, "Yes." I says, "I want the same type of pay. Why should I work for nu -- for th-the money that you pay

me, nothing, 35 cents an hou -- an hour.” And I told him, “Listen, if you don’t want to give it to me, I’m quitting.” So the end of the week, I quit my job. And I got myself another job in Jamaica, Queens, working on raincoats, also operator. And I was -- I was -- I used to do the -- part of the garment, you know. What I was making [indecipherable] I think was 40 dollars a week. Was good money I got after -- after 15 dollars a week. No, but this guy with the ties, had to come in Sunday, too. Was Sunday, I had to work a half a day. So the half a day used to be from nine to three. So when I wor -- went to work in the raincoats, I was making a little bit of money, that was in 1947, end of ‘47, and was better. And then I got another offer, this guy was -- all the f -- he was a subcontractor for -- he used to work for manufacturers, making dresses. And o -- so -- so I got an offer from this guy also, and that was in Brooklyn, on Essex Street. Essex and Atlantic Avenue. And I got an offer [indecipherable] says you’re going to teach me how to be a cutter -- fabric -- by dresses. So, I says, “Oh, fine,” right? Meanwhile, I was wavin -- I came in, I was working on -- on the -- on the -- on the ra -- mean operator. And then he took me into the cutting room and I was, you know, laying out the material bring on the table, and -- and -- to make the -- put the patterns on top of it and he showed me how to cut. And I was doing a little cutting, small things, not big things, because if that -- you don’t know what you’re doing, you destroy your whole -- your whole -- the whole -- they put up like 40 or 50 dresses at a time, you know. So -- And it’s -- actually, it’s layers of the fabric, then you put a patterns on top and you -- and you mark out the patterns on a piece of paper -- on a paper. And then you -- you roll

-- you pull the paper over -- over the fabric, and it's a big table, a table maybe 40 - 50 feet long, you know. And then you -- you -- you -- you -- you -- it take ya -- ya -- ca -- the ma -- ma -- the cutting machine, just follow the pattern, just cut out, you know, for the -- the -- the patterns.

Q: Yeah, but you're cutting 40 layers?

SL: Yeah, 40 layers, 50 layers, depends how thick it is, right? It's very interesting. And one day I had an argument with my boss, because I'm very independent, right? I didn't want nobody to take advantage of me, and I quit that job. So then I went to work in New York. See, what happ -- the thing is, I didn't like to work inside. I didn't want to be cooped up. Maybe because from the -- all the time I was in concentration camp, I didn't like to be cooped up. I wanted to be always outside. So like -- like I felt -- like if - if I have to run away, it's open, I could run, see? Once you work inside, I mean, you feel like you're locked in. There's no place where to run. So I left that job and I we -- I went to work in New York. I we-went to work in -- for Regency Dress on Broadway. Think this was 1220 Broadway. And also dresses and I start to work in the -- in the carding room. I used to be like an assistant buyer. I used to -- n-not the big stuff, I used to buy like the buttons and the cotton and the threads and -- and also used to fix the -- the sewing machines. Because the boss saw I was very handy and -- and before he used to have a mechanic come in if a machine broke or thing like that, he -- he used to call a mechanic. I told him, I says, "I could fix it for you." He said, "Okay." And I was fixing it. He sa -- I saved him money. I also worked in the carding room, I used to be in the

receiving department. Like the piecegoods used to come in for the cutters. I used to take it in, you know, I had to check if there's no damages and see, I have a special machine onto it, that see there's no damages. There is damages the material, I used to put like a -- a marker there. So this -- Wh-When the -- When you -- When you goes into the cutting room, and when the cutter lays it out, he used to see the mark. So he knows it was a damage, so when he -- when they laid the pattern, he made sure that the -- the damage doesn't fall into the pattern. If no -- If not, the whole -- the whole piece of material is no good. And I worked there for quite awhile. I worked very hard, I used to work Saturday. And I told him, I says, "Listen, I'm working hard, I'm entitled to a increase, you know?" I was getting that time, 75 dollars a week. I says, "Listen, I want a increase." So there was two partners. So one the partners says to me, "Oh," he says, "you're not a -- you're not a refugee no more, you want -- you want to make money." I told him, "Yes, I want to make money." So one the partners says, "I'm going -- We're going to give you a raise." And the other partner says, "No, you're not getting a raise." I says, "Okay, I'm -- I quit." That's it. And I quit that job, too.

Q: And they were all -- Were all of these businesses owned by Jews?

SL: Yeah, all Jews, yeah.

Q: So was it -- Was that just sort of taken for granted that you would m-mainly be working within a Jewish community?

SL: Because -- Listen, they used to take advantage on foreigners.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I mean, if I do the work, right --

Q: Right.

SL: -- like everybody else, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I'm entitled to get the same pay.

Q: Sure.

SL: I didn't let nobody take advantage of me.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: If I want to give my -- my time to somebody, fine. But the -- people not going to take advantage of me.

Q: So would you say that they were -- that in -- in some ways, that the American Jews were looking out for the refugees by giving them jobs, but in other ways, they were taking advantage?

SL: Taking ad -- yeah, work a little cheaper. It's -- It was always this way, and still this way. As long as they could take -- as long as you let yourself.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But I know what I could do and what I can't do.

Q: Yeah.

SL: So -- So -- So one of the partners wanted to give me the raise and the other one didn't, okay? So I quit. Next week they called me back, they're going to give me the raise. I told them, I says, "Once I walk out, I don't come back no more." I felt very

independent, right? And I went to work -- I found myself a job, that was something I wanted, I wanted to be outside. So I found myself a job driving a -- a truck, right? And I go into this paint store and it's in Lavonia Avenue, East New York, name is Shamus -- M. Shamus and Son Paints. And I walked in there and they asked me, do you know how to drive a truck? I says, "Sure." I didn't have no -- no s -- no chauffeur license. So he puts me on the truck, you know, and I drive it. "Oh," he says, "you're very good." I -- He didn't ask me to show hi -- to show him my license. So, "When you want to start?" I says, "Not tomorrow, the next day." Meanwhile, the next day, to a -- the next day, tomorrow, I went down to the motor vehicle and I got myself chauffeur license, right? And I were -- I s -- I s -- I liked the job, because I had my freedom. [indecipherable] and I -- and I liked it. The work was very hard, but very nice bosses. I worked for them for 21 years. But the thing is, I was promised part of the bi -- of the business. One of the bosses said, "When I retire, I'm going to give you part of the business." He never -- Matter of fact, they're still in business, still got one of the stores in Essex Street.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And East Broadway, Manhattan. The one in Brooklyn got -- the area is gone a long time ago. And he says, "I'm going to give you part of the business when I retire." So I kis -- So I took for granted he's going to keep his promise. I worked like a horse. I mean, has this paint delivered new construction and had to bring it up in to some if the area houses. The big apartment houses didn't have no elevators. And some of the paint jobs used to be two or three flights up. I used to carry it up. Also, you know, the

painters -- you had to deliver to the houses, private painters. So no matter -- depends where they worked. And most of the houses were walk-ups, they didn't have no elevators, like in East New York and Brownsville. So it was plenty work, but I liked it. I was never afraid for work. Work never killed anybody, and --

Q: So you started this job before you went to the army and then you continued?

SL: Not all, no. But that was in 1951 I got the job at Shamus, see? Now 1952 they called me in the army, so I told them, "Listen, I have to go in the army," and that's it. So from 19 -- October 1952 to September 1954, right? I was in the army. So I got my -- I got into -- inducted in Camp Kilmo, New Jersey and I took my basic training in Fort Dix, New Jersey, for 16 weeks. And bay -- After bay -- And finished our basic training, we got our orders. Now in that time, the -- the Korean War was on a full -- full blast and more -- I would say 99 percent of the people used to go right to -- to Korea. Me and two other guys just -- we got our orders, went to Germany. As a matter of fact, our -- our Staff Sergeant said, "When I come out from the barracks," he says, "and when you see," -- I could still see his face right now. He says, "When I s -- When you see me, a big smile on my face when y -- I make your orders, you are all going to Korea." That's what he said, right? Big se -- big sergeant. And he came up, and he orders with a big smile on his face. I told you not -- 99 percent of the people went to Korea and my and two other guys, we got our orders going to Germany. After I spent so many years in Germany, I went back to my -- my ho -- my sweet place, where I had such beautiful dreams there, and beautiful memories. And I went to Germany, was in the -- let me see,

I know I -- think in February I left for Germany. And I got assigned to the -- the bloody red one, that was the first division. And I got stationed -- they send me to the 26th regiment in Bramberg, Germany. That's where I was stationed, that was right near the Czechoslovakian border, I think. And I spend there almost -- was 17 and a half months I spend there. We were always on alert, because that time the -- the -- that was the height of the Korean War and there was always -- don't know when the Russians are going to attack you from the east and so we were always someone [indecipherable] who was on alert, 24 hours a day were on alert, because you didn't know when the Russians were going to attack or not. And I mi -- I had -- I ma -- had a good time there, listen. I came back -- first I was in concentration camp in Germany, then ca -- I came back with pride and showed them that I outlived you and I'm back as an occupier, I occupy you people.

Q: While you were there, beside the -- the pride that you felt, did you have what a -- I mean, did it bring up a lot of the memories? Was it -- Was there a difficult aspect of it?

SL: No, they didn't -- the memories didn't bring back. Because in my mind, I felt so good because I survived you. That's what -- That's what my -- my -- my -- my -- my heart and my mind, everything, that's what I was thinking. I survived you. I came back like a conqueror.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Not -- Not -- Not as a slave, as a conqueror.

Q: See if you can explain something to me. You know, I've known about the Holocaust since I was a little boy, but o-only in stories and some friends of the family and from some books. I was born in 1955, so it was all --

SL: Yeah.

Q: -- over by then. Now, when -- when -- when I talk to people about it, when I talk to people, when I had this hope to be able to work a little bit with the Holocaust Museum, when I hear the stories, it just seems completely unimaginable that it actually took place. It seems -- I can't comprehend human beings. I can't comprehend -- and it seems that it happened a long time ago. Can you -- Can you describe for me what -- what it was like to -- to -- those first, say 10 years after the Holocaust and during this time period that you're talking about, how people perceived what happened, and did people really understand what had taken place?

SL: You mean the German people?

Q: Everybody. In America, like say the Americans.

SL: A lot -- Let me tell you, a lot of Americans didn't even realize, they didn't even know that that -- there was a Holocaust, okay? You talk to a lot of southerners, they didn't remember the Holocaust. Didn't know the Holocaust existed. See, the part of Germany that I was in, there was no concentration camps there. Like this, I would have taken and shown it to them. Now -- And the thing is, we -- the closest one was Dachau and Dachau -- and we couldn't get the fellow to go because we were always on alert. So we didn't get no -- to go, an-and mo-most of the hillbillies, they weren't even interested

in things like that. So, even now, you talk to a lot of the Americans, they don't know about Holocaust.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So it's -- I don't know.

Q: What -- Did you have a -- I mean, it's a hard -- it's a hard question to ask, I mean, I -
- I can't even find the right words for it, but I'm curious about your -- how you lived afterwards, with the knowledge that this thing had taken place?

SL: Well, I'll tell you, I blanked it out my mind. I didn't even think about it. Because if you th -- if things like that continues on your mind, you're going to go nuts. So certainly -- You just blanked it out your mind like it never existed. Forget about it. I don't know maybe ca -- I wa -- I was built in my -- my system like that, shouldn't -- I shouldn't go nuts or crazy. I just blanked it out. I didn't even think about things like that. The only thing I -- When I went back to Germany -- when I came there I felt like -- tall like a giant because I came back not as a slave but as a conqueror.

Q: Did a German --

SL: An occupier.

Q: Did the Germans know that you were Jewish?

SL: Oh -- Oh, I used to advertise it.

Q: How?

SL: I advertise it. I used to say -- I to -- I told them, I was in your country, I wa -- and I used to show them my number. I have a number on my arm. They didn't as -- a lot of

them didn't even know what the number was. As a matter of fact, when was it -- two years, three years ago we were in Turkey, right? In Anatalia, and -- see, a lot of Germans come to Turkey. In Anatalia, there's a lot of Germans and Jews, you know. So we were in the dining room and there -- the -- some German people were sitting in our table. And then we started talking, you know, and they say, "Where you from?" I says, "I'm from America," and where are you, "I'm from Germany." And after awhile I started to talk to them in German. So he says to me, "Where did you learn how to speak German?" "Oh," I said, "it's a long story," I says. "Many years ago, I was a guest of your government -- I was invited by your government as a guest," I said, "and I spent -- I spent four years in one of your concentration camps, you know." "Oh," he says, "I didn't know that there was concentration camps," okay? I mean --

Q: He didn't know?

SL: -- they -- they still deny it, okay? I mean --

Q: And what was his reaction --

SL: Huh?

Q: -- to your story?

SL: Oh, and he was talking and next morning, we came for breakfast, he -- he wasn't sitting no more on our table, okay? Before was very friendly and everything. And then we -- When they used to saw me walk down in -- in -- in the rest -- in the -- in the hotel, he used to -- he used to look -- walk away. So it still shows that a lot of th -- most of them I would say know about it, because now they teach them about it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: But there's a lot of ci -- there's a lot of these Germans in Turkey, cause the Turks go to work in Germany, if you know. And there's al-also Israelis. There's a lot of Israelis in Turkey. What's -- What wa -- I was surprised when we came there, remember Ry?

RL: [inaudible]

SL: All the Israeli flags, wherever you go. Especially Anatalia, that's the Turkish Riviera. Wherever you go, you see an Israeli flag.

Q: Why?

RL: Big hotel.

SL: Why?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Because it's -- Listen, it's also be -- the Turks are very nice to the Jews. And also, you know, it's business, because a lo -- a lot of Israelis go there -- go there for the vacation. Only takes an hour, an hour and a half, an hour and 40 minutes from Israel to Turkey, right? And -- And most you see, there is Israelis.

Q: So tell me a little bit about your family. When did you meet your first wife?

SL: Pardon?

Q: When did you meet your wife, your first wife?

SL: Well, I -- After the ar -- I came back from the army, was -- and I wa -- and I wa -- I came -- I came back on a Thursday, I got discharged. And I came into my -- my boss,

Shamus, and I told him, "Listen, I'm back in the army, I want to go back to work." And the law stated that if you were drafted in the army, you must get back your job. He says, "Okay." He says, "Come back Monday and you can start working." And I started to work in the -- back to the paint supply. And in 1970 -- 1956, a friend of mine introduced me to my first wife, she rest in peace. On a blind date, we went out to -- we were my friend and -- and I -- and his girlfriend and my future wife, went out on a blind date together. And that's -- From that time on, I started to see my wife, I started to date, you know.

Q: What was her name?

SL: Her name was Evelyn. And --

Q: Evelyn what?

SL: Evelyn Ba-Barkelle.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And we went about six months, seven months and we got engaged. And in 19 -- 1957 April, we got married.

Q: Now where was she from, where was she born?

SL: She was in p -- She was from p -- She was born in Poland.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But the -- During the -- In 1936 -- But during the war, their pa -- their parents ran from Poland and went to Russia. And they -- they spend the -- the war in Russia. And -- And after the war they -- they didn't go back to Poland, because used to be a lot of

pogroms there and up against the Jews, right after the war. So they went to Germany and they spend the time in -- in a -- in a Displaced Person, a DP camp. That's Dis- Displaced Person camp. And they were there til -- Now, my wife -- my wife's father had a brother in America, so he -- he -- he got him -- he got him permission to come to America, in 1952, they came to America.

Q: When you -- When you were dating girls at that time --

SL: Yeah.

Q: Was it easier for you to date women who were also from Europe --

SL: No.

Q: -- as opposed to an American Jew?

SL: No, most of the -- most of my friends when I first came here, were all Americans. I never had no -- no -- no immigrants friends. Because, first of all, when I came, there were very few immigrants that came then. And most of my friends were Americans. Even all the girls I used to date were Americans. But, see, the thing is, I was -- I was raised and I was very respectful. I was taught to respect -- not like now, you know, everybody fists, you know. I was taught to respect a woman -- a girl. Don't take advantage. That's the way I was raised and that's what I did, you know? And the American gir -- the American girls were a little too fast for me. I -- I couldn't do it, right?

RL: Can you believe it?

SL: They -- They wanted -- They wanted you should jump at them right away. I couldn't do it. I went out with one girl, very wealthy, those days they used to live in Washington Heights. In the -- In the -- In the 50's was one of the richest areas. You should know, right? Oh, well you don't know anything.

Q: You're talking about upper Manhattan?

SL: Yeah, Washington Heights.

Q: Mm-hm, yeah.

SL: And my -- And we went out together, you know, my cousin with another girl, he was all over her, all right? And me, I was respectful, you know? So she says to my cousin, "What's the matter with your cousin? He doesn't know anything about girls?" Right? "He's afraid for a girl?" I said, "No," I says, "you tell her, I have a lot of respect for a woman. I don't like when anybody -- it keeps in your pants." You know? That -- It wasn't my type. I wasn't raised that way.

Q: Mm-hm. Yeah.

SL: So -- But the European gi-girls were a little more -- much more respectful than the -
- than the American girls.

Q: But wa -- wa -- was there a clear distinction within the Jewish community here, between Jews that had been born in America and Jews had -- who had just come over, who were immigrants? Was there -- Was there a difference?

SL: N-Not -- Not -- I wouldn't say. I wouldn't say that. I didn't think there was anything difference. I didn't notice it, first of all. In the area where I lived, my -- most of

them were people that come over from the other side. I mean, there weren't no -- no newcomers. And most of the people that lived over there came -- came before -- before the second World War. Some of them came in the -- in the 30's, but most of -- most of them were foreigners. I would say 80 percent of the people were -- were -- were foreigners. They were American citizen, the children were born here, but they were -- they were foreigners. So it wasn't that -- that -- that much -- I didn't notice -- notice a difference between. Then -- But later on, like in the -- in the -- in the late -- in the 50's, when I came back from the army already, there was a lot of refugees that the -- foreigners that came to -- to our area where I lived. So then I start to make new friends, you know. So I start --

Q: Was it ea -- Was it easier for you to make friends with refugees?

SL: I mean, I always made friends. One thing, I never had no problem making friends.

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: It's true.

SL: No matter where I am. I'm very -- very -- I'm not ashamed to make friends. And -- But I -- I -- I don't know if -- I felt more comfortable with the Americans.

Q: Mm-hm. And when was your first child born? Tell me -- Tell me the names of your children.

SL: Okay. I have three children. My oldest one is -- is Beatrice. My oth -- My second one is Esther and my son is Charles. I have three kids. My daughter's not married and

she has two children her own. And my other daughter is not married, she's still single and my son is still going to college. He's go -- He's going for his Ph.D.

Q: What are -- What are their ages now?

SL: Beatrice is 39. Esther is 35 and Charles is 29.

RL: 36.

SL: 36 already?

RL: Mm-hm.

SL: Gee, time flies. 1960 -- yeah, 1962 - 36.

Q: Now wha -- Ha -- Was -- Tell me about -- about your feelings when your daughter, your first daughter was born. Was there a -- in addition to the normal, or -- the normal pride in having a child --

SL: Right, yeah.

Q: -- what -- were there things that -- that you think might have been different because of the amount of death that you had seen?

SL: Well, ulti -- it was. See, my problem was -- the way I was -- where I was -- after concentration camp, I was -- I couldn't show my feelings. In other words, I was -- I couldn't show my love, because I was afraid that anybody you loved, like in -- during the war, you know, anybody you loved, you lost, okay? So I was afraid to show my love, even my -- my -- my first wife, she rest in peace. I wasn't as affectionate as I should have been. And the same thing with my -- my -- my daughters, too. I wasn't as affec -- as affectionate as I should have been. If I had to live my life over again, I would

be completely different. Because, in concentration camp, that's what happened, you just lost your feeling of love.

Q: So what was it like for you, the -- having children, a brand new beginning?

SL: I wanted children. I did want the children, but the thing is, I didn't spend it -- enough time with them. First of all, I was always busy working. My wife, she po -- rest in peace, never worked. Because see, in Europe, you're taught the wife stays home, that's way you were raised. And the -- And the husband does all the work. And so I was working and she stayed home rai -- th -- took care on the children -- child, first of all. And what it was -- it was very hard, you know. The closeness that I should have shown more. Now -- Now, I'm completely different.

Q: Did -- Did this ever become something that you and your wife talked about?

SL: Well, my wife was also -- She was from the other side and they know -- she knew about it, you know?

Q: So, it was left unsaid, do you think?

SL: We used to talk about it, you know.

Q: Mm-hm.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape three, side one. So, it was left unsaid, do you think?

SL: We used to talk about it, you know.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But, still you can -- you can -- you can't change your feeling.

Q: Yeah.

SL: You just -- S-Something that's in you, y-you cannot change. Was very hard. See, like now, you know, a parent, they sht -- they spend more time with the children. They are always -- li -- I see, like my daughter, too. Now, they spend -- the Sunday -- ki -- the kids have Saturday and Sunday, the weekend, they spend their time with the kids, because they're both working. You know, that's their time. And there's more affection, there's more love. I couldn't -- I couldn't sh -- I couldn't show it, I couldn't -- I hardly spent any time with the kids. I know I missed out a lot.

Q: What was your -- What were your feelings towards religion and raising the -- raising the -- having a Jewish family?

SL: Well, my wife, she rest in peace, she came from a very religious home. She was Sherma Shabbes, you know what Sherma Sha -- well, this is ver -- is very Orthodox. Now, she wouldn't drive on -- on the Sabbath. She -- When I first met her, she wouldn't

put on the lights. No -- No -- No -- No cooking [indecipherable] on the Sabbath. I mean, she didn't do nothing.

Q: Mm-hm. Kosher?

SL: Strictly kosher, oh yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Always kosher. We had two sets of dishes for pa -- for -- for ma -- for dairy and for meats. Also had, for Passover, you know, we had different dishes and my wife, she rest in peace, two months before Passover, she used to clean the house already. Ma-Make sure there's no -- nothing left over from the whole year for Passover. She was very observant.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And I respected it for her. I wasn't religious, you see, listen what -- that was her belief and I did whatever -- whatever she wanted.

Q: Did that create any problems, that you had different opinions?

SL: No.

RL: With work, with work, yes.

SL: Only with work, see, because I wanted to go work on -- in the Sabbath and she wouldn't let me, see? Had some good opportunities to -- to go wor -- the -- for business like, right? But that was involved the Sabbath.

Q: Mm-hm. And that created some friction?

SL: Yeah, that created some friction. But listen, later on they -- had the three kids, you know, and then they had to go to -- to parochial school, because see, she wanted to teach them wi -- where the Jewish -- the Jewish religion, and they want to go to Yeshiva. And that, listen, it didn't make enough. So I told her, if you want to send to Yeshiva, I have to work. I mean, I can't help it. And then, little by little, she -- I started to work on the Sabbath. Listen, you have to, you have to.

Q: So what -- Now, just so I understand this, you were still working for the paint company?

SL: Yes.

Q: And then you were also -- became a -- a distributor of -- of cookies?

SL: No, that was later on.

Q: You were doing both at the same time?

SL: No, no, no, no.

Q: No.

SL: Well I -- I worked for the paint company til 1960 -- '69, actually. '68, I'm sorry, '68. Listen, I saw one the bosses, he took in his son into -- into the business, right? And I says -- If I was promised a par -- a share in the business, right? And I don't see nothing -- nothing moving in my way. I was making a good living there, but still -- I was making over 500 dollars a week, but if I was promised something, I want to -- I want to -- I want to get it if y -- its -- so I s -- I know there's -- nothing's going to work my way. I told him, "Listen, I got a an -- I got another offer from somebody I know, that --" He

had that cookie business, right? He was one of the supervisors there. He says, "Listen, there's new -- new routes opening up, if you're interested." So I says, "I'm very interested in that." And -- But they weren't paying much, because they started you with 150 dollars a week. And I had a family, you know? Here I was making over 500 and here I'm going down to 150. And I discussed it with my wife, I says, "I have good -- a good opportunity to ge-get ahead, and I should take it." She says, "Listen, you worked 21 -- 21 years by -- by Shamus and what did you get, nothing, right? Just promises. So I told them I'm quitting. And I left the job and I took the cookie business. That's with Wachtel Biscuit Company. And, in about three months I got my own -- I was work for the company.

Q: What's the name of the company?

SL: Wachtel.

Q: How do you spell that?

SL: W-a-c -- c-h-t-e-l. Okay. And after three months, I got my own route. But it was -- it was very hard work. And in the beginning it was -- and -- until you built up a good route. I used to wi -- I used to -- used to leave the house like five 30 in the morning, didn't come home til nine at night. And little by little and I start to build the route up. And tho -- those days, if you -- if you di -- if you did like 2,000 -- two and a half thousand dollars a -- a week business, was a good business. But still, you know, we used - we used to work on 20 percent. But it wasn't enough. So then they opened up -- and then the -- long hours. And I -- I had -- I had 135 stores to take care of. And when

you go into a store, you had to, you know, check the merchandise, the bo -- you had to take out the broken cookies, because they -- the -- the store gave you the space, and you had to take care of that. So I used to take out the broken coo-cookies, take out the shou - - you had to rotate the cookies, because new ones go in the back and the old ones go on top, you know? And it was a lot of work. Then they opened up a territory in the -- in the Bronx. So he asked me, because I used to have Manhattan and Westchester, he say if I want to go into the Bronx, it's -- it's a lousy area. I mean, that was -- you heard of po -- Fort Apache?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Okay. That's the area that opened up. I says, "I'll go in, I'm not afraid." I said, "I got a -- I go -- I got a guy that's watching me upstairs, I'm not -- I have no fear for nobody." And I went into the Bronx and I -- I got some good stores there. From the 135 I gave up, I was left with 26 stores. What a pa -- I built up a business, I was doing 15,000 dollars a week.

Q: Hm.

SL: And I -- And most of my stores used to be dropoffs. Instead of parking out at stores, I used to drop off. And I built up a nice business. And from -- instead of five days, I'll -- now, I cut it down to three days. And instead, for -- from the -- from six and then one, until nine at night, I used to be -- I used to -- I used to be finished by one o'clock. Ja -- The only thing was -- was just risky there. I only got held up once, which it wasn't bad.

Q: With a gun?

SL: Huh?

Q: With a gun?

SL: Yeah.

RL: With a gun?

SL: Well, th-the first one had a gun, yeah, he had a gun. I know he didn't show it, but I knew he had a gun. That was -- You know the story with Gery --

RL: Getz.

SL: Getz? Remember Getz?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Okay. Remember the guy that he shot in the subway?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That's the guy that be -- that he shot in the subway, that's one of them that held me up. That was 169th Street and Jerome Avenue. Boston Post Road, I'm sorry.

Q: So I guess you approved of Getz?

SL: Huh?

Q: Did you approve of him?

RL: He wanted to go to the --

SL: I was going to testify.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: But what -- That time, I started to get the trouble with my heart. My wife, she rest in peace, wouldn't let me go. So, what happened, you see, I was in the truck, unloading

my truck, you know, getting -- preparing the order take in the store. And this guy comes over to me and asks me what time is it. Was right in front of the store. I said, "It's a quarter after 11." And he walks away. Meanwhile, I get off the truck and I -- I put -- I put the merchandise on the hand truck and I tie up the -- the hand -- the -- you know, the -- the -- the -- the merchandise on the hand truck to -- to the -- to the hand -- to -- with the rope. I had 21 cases in it. And I close the truck, and as I -- I ba -- you know, I -- I prepare to pull the hand truck up and on the curb, you know, backwards, had to pull it up, the guy grabbed me from the back, puts his hand in my pocket and ta -- and he took out the money and he ran away. And this guy that Getz -- Getz shot, comes over to me -- that's was the first guy that came over and asked me what time it was, "How much did he take from you?" See? He had the gall to come over and ask me how much he took from me, okay? He was an accomplice. So I told him -- took 250, I told him 750. Go look for it, go fight with him. That time there was --

Q: He was asking you because he wanted to make sure he got his share?

SL: Yeah, wants -- yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I mean, the -- the -- the gall to ask me what time. I didn't even ere -- and the thing is, you know, there was so many people in front of the store. And nobody even bothered to come over. It happened so fast.

Q: No, it's a good thing you didn't fight with him.

SL: And I -- And I'll tell you --

Q: It's not worth it.

SL: -- I didn't -- I didn't make a big deal about it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I went into the store, I unloaded my hand truck, I did my -- see, he should have waited, because if he would a waited, he got more money.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Because it was COD. So, that's what the life was all about there.

Q: And what -- what did you -- did you have to make a conscious decision about whether to talk to your children about your experiences, or was -- was --

SL: Well, the kid -- my children used to ask me, I didn't want to talk about it. I just didn't want to talk about my experience. It's like I just wanted to put out my mind, just forget about it, like it never existed.

Q: But did you think it was important for them to know that it had happened?

SL: Is you -- Yeah, I thought it was important, but I just couldn't open myself up to talk about it, because every time you want to talk about something, it brought back very bad memories.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Yeah. And then your minds just start to wander. So instead of the -- th-the -- like happened, things like that, just ignored it. Cause I in -- I understand why certain people don't want to talk about it.

Q: Why they don't want to talk about it?

SL: They don't want to talk about it.

Q: Yeah, sure.

SL: Don't want -- They don't want to let the -- the -- the worms out of the bag. Sees --

Q: Did you -- Did you -- Did anything different happen? I was just thinking about this and there's just sort of a -- it ca-came in my mind. Did anything different happen when your children started to turn 11 or 12, about the same age that you were when you started the experiences? Did you look at them and think about yourself at the same age?

SL: No, well, because the kids were spoiled. I -- Things that they wanted, they got, right? I used to think to myself, I says, "By their -- their age, I went through hell." Even right now, I say the same thing. God forbid if something would happen, those children would never survive.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Never survive.

Q: Well, what did -- How does that make you feel? Now you have grandchildren who are approaching that age and wa -- one that is almost, right?

RL: Right, yeah. One is eight.

Q: Right.

SL: Listen, that's the -- But they want -- they want be -- instead of things -- things that - something that's worthwhile. See, our granddaughter [indecipherable] be well, okay? She's involved with cancer.

RL: [indecipherable] a 10 year old.

SL: 10 year old, she involved --

RL: Raises money.

SL: She raises money for cancer, because her -- her grandmother passed away of cancer.

Q: Mm-hm. Your mother?

RL: No. My mother too, but she didn't know my mother. My mother died in Israel.

SL: That's from the -- the father's side.

Q: Oh, oh, oh, her -- yeah, mm-hm.

RL: That's paternal -- paternal grandmother.

Q: Yeah.

SL: So she's involved with certain -- with -- with cancer.

RL: Lot of money she raises.

SL: And she raises a lot of money, okay?

RL: A little girl, over a thousand dollars every year, all by herself.

Q: Hm, wow.

SL: Know, she has the -- she has the heart in the right place, see?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Which is important.

Q: Yeah. But is it -- da -- is -- has it been difficult for you to have gone from so -- so many crises and so much -- so many hard experiences, to a life that's easier?

SL: You mean wa -- so -- You mean we -- what happened a -- I don't understand.

Q: I-It's a funny question and it may -- may be it doesn't make any sense. It's just something that I thought that if you had be -- you had taught yourself to be a survivor and to survive not one or two experiences, but many horrible experiences, any one of which is worse than almost anything that almost anybody here goes through. I can't ee - - you know, when I read these stories, when I watch your videotape, you know -- I was in a car accident once. I was in one, really bad, horrible car accident that -- that was one of those accidents that I probably shouldn't have survived.

SL: Yeah.

Q: And you look at the car and you say, "Boy, nobody lived in that."

SL: Yeah. Yeah, your time is not up.

Q: And is it -- And it was --

SL: You had to come and interview me, you can't go.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Right? It's -- I mean, it's certain things.

Q: Now -- And I was very aware of that and I was aware of a gift that I had been given. But even that one accident is not a comparison to anything -- any of the things that you went through. And now -- And th-then I look and I'm reading your story and watching you and I'm saying, "Gee, how -- how can somebody go through all that and then -- and then it stops?" I mean, of course you want it to stop and of course you want and deserve to have a -- a -- a life, and a nice life. But is it -- is it difficult, the cau -- because you've seen so much?

SL: No, it's not difficult. You know, because life was meant to go on, okay? If something happens, you shouldn't say that's the end of it and that's it. Life was meant to go on, til your time is up, then it'll -- going to stop. So don't give up, see? That's what I believe in. That's -- Some people know, like you leave a -- lose a spouse, you know, some people just fall apart, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That's the wrong way to do. Listen, you survived, it's meant for you to survive, right? Life must go on. I don't think your other spouse would want you to say that's the end of you, give up, right? No. My wife should rest in peace, I mean, she knows it. While she was dying, she used to ask -- t-tell me, go call Riya, she lost her husband a year ba -- about a couple of months before, right? Go call Riya, her mother, she -- she rest in peace, was sick in Israel, dying from cancer and we used to go to support group, right? I should go call Riya and see if she wants to go out with us, or if she wants to go to -- to support group with us, right? Now, she and my wife -- I didn't even know, they used to spend ours on the telephone together, okay? My wife, she rest in peace, was pushing me to her, I shouldn't be alone.

Q: Oh, that's remarkable.

SL: Hm? That's was -- And shows that y-you can't just give up life.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I got completely different outlook. I enjoy life, now. I mean, you could see what -- life -- life is very short, so might as well make the best of it.

RL: So he's in a camp for grown-ups. This is a camp for grown-ups --

Q: Oh, th-this --

RL: -- this place.

Q: -- development, uh-huh.

SL: And --

Q: Are there a lot of activities with people -- with people --

RL: A million, a million.

SL: Too much, too much.

RL: It's one big party a whole day, going on here.

Q: Really?

RL: Anything you want, you have here.

Q: Hm.

SL: She like -- like her -- her daughter's father-in-law, is also -- he lost his wife to cancer, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That -- Very nice people, lovely woman. But the thing is, when she died, he was like a baby. He wouldn't go in the house, used to sleep in the car, right? He's like a lost -- a lost soul. Na -- Because they didn't prepare themselves to -- to -- for a -- a thing like that. Me and my wife, she rest in peace, we went to support groups. Na -- You were expecting it, right? I mean, there were -- you -- that showed up, and a -- a lot of other people go through the same thing as you are.

Q: Yeah.

SL: You prepare yourself for the worst. I mean, you know there's no -- there's no hope.

After she passed away, I went to -- I went to a -- also support group, for widow support group.

RL: Widow [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I mean, everybody's in the same -- in the same shoes.

Q: Yeah.

SL: So -- And also, in a wa -- helped me to s -- see aba -- in 1997, I had open heart surgery.

Q: 1987.

SL: Huh?

Q: 1987?

RL: '87.

SL: '87. And my whole personality changed, my whole life changed.

Q: Yeah, tell me about that, now was that -- was it instantly or was it kind of gradual, or --

RL: No, that was --

SL: No, it was instantly, right.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I was healthy, I used to work like a horse, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Beside -- Besides that cookie business, had a repair business. But my repair business was as a hobby. I used to -- I loved to do it. And what happened, one day we came back from Florida, was president -- president weekend, we went to Florida. And I came back from Florida and there was some snow on the ground and I start to shovel a little of snow and I felt something, right? No pain or nothing, but it's a certain discomfort, right? And my son says to me, "What's the matter, Dad, you don't feel good?" I said, "No, Charles, I'm okay." Maybe it shows on my face. And I went back to shovel snow. And -- ba -- bac -- ba -- couple of days later, I we -- I broke down with my truck, and I was walking to a gas station, and I had to climb up some steps and I got the same -- the same discomfort. I said, "Oh, something's not right." It's the first time I admitted something, see? I never admitted something before. See, before that, I used to - I used to smoke. And I used to have problems from the cigarettes because I used to be outside and my foot -- my left foot used to bother me. So I went to orthopedic man and he says, "Oh, you got a dro -- a dropped metatarch -- metatarsal arch, that's your problem." So what happened, he taped it up. He says, "That'll help you." But instead of helping me, made it worse, because it cut the circulation altogether. So after five weeks, you know, I couldn't walk on my foot no more. I went back to him, I said, "I don't know what it is." He says, "I'll send you to a vascular man." And when I went to a vascular man and when I walked in and looked on my leg -- he told me later, but he didn't tell me ri -- he thought I was going to have to amputate it. There was no

circulation there. So the first thing he says to me, "Sol, do you smoke?" I says, "Yes." He says, "Listen, if you want me to treat you, first thing you have to do is stop smoking. Because if you don't give up cigarettes, I don't want you as a patient, and I don't need your money and don't even bother coming back to me. I don't need you." Okay, that's plain and simple.

Q: That's pretty good.

SL: Okay?

RL: Yeah, but wha --

SL: And I walked out, that was a Friday night, I says, "Boy, he's got some nerve to tell me not to stop s -- to stop smoking." And I walk out and I go into the ki -- to a grocery store and I buy a carton of cigarettes, to spite him, okay? And next morning I got up, and like somebody said -- a -- a voice came into my head, "Sol, who do you fool? The doctor or yourself? The doctor is looking out for your health, right? Not for his health. If you -- If he -- If he wants you with your money, would tell you to come, smoke and come, all right?" I said, "He's looking out for your health. Sto -- Stop smoking." And that's the last time I took a cigarette. I put a carton of cigarettes on my night table and I used to dare myself to take a cigarette. That carton of cigarettes was laying on my night table for a whole year. Never touched a cigarette since.

Q: And you had smoked how many years?

SL: I -- I haven't smoked?

Q: How long did you smoke up until then?

SL: I smoked from 1945 -- the American soldiers gave me when they came in the concentration camp, til 1970 -- '78, okay? That's 30 -- 33 years. No, more. 35 - 45 - 30 - 35 - 40 some odd years. And there's the last time I took a cig -- that's the first time I admitted a problem.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: See, before -- if you told me day, right, and I said it was night, it's night.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Nay -- I wouldn't admit it.

Q: Right.

SL: And that's --

Q: But again, this is something else that's in -- an interesting aspect of your personality --

SL: Yeah.

Q: -- because most people can't stop smoking.

SL: Yeah. The same thing --

RL: Yeah, he [indecipherable]

Q: [indecipherable]

SL: -- I like -- I love ice cream, right?

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: I love ice cream.

RL: -- the personality.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Now, if I haven't got it in the house, it bothers me. My inside is just urt -- hurting for it. If I have it in the house, I'll open up the freezer and look at it, right? I'm not eating you, right? And I would never touch it.

RL: And I wind up finishing it.

SL: I -- I wouldn't touch it. It could lay for a year and I throw it out. She eats it up now.

RL: Yeah, [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. Hm.

SL: See, I have a very sa -- a very -- a very strong persa -- the personal -- the will.

RL: Will -- Willpower.

Q: Yeah, you do.

SL: That's this -- That -- Like the survival, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

SL: So, as I was saying, so I admitted my problem and I went to the doctor and I went to my -- and he examined me and he says, "I didn't see nothing wrong," he says. "Your heart is good, and a little high blood pressure. The cardiogram is perfect. Your heart, it sounds strong." He said, "I didn't see nothing wrong." He said, "But just in case," he says, "I'll send you to -- to a cardiologist." So I went to a cardiologist, he examined me, gave me a cardiogram. He says, "I don't see nothing wrong." So he says, "You know what," he says, "I'll set you up for a stressed -- for -- for a stress test in tallium."

RL: Tallium stress test.

Q: What's it called?

RL: Tallium stress test, where they inject them with a dye --

Q: Oh.

SL: Dye.

RL: -- and you do your -- it's stressed exercise --

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: -- and it's being monitored and -- and they monitor it, and they see how the blood flows in the heart --

Q: Yeah.

RL: -- as it wor -- as the hear -- how the heart works and everything. And this is when they can see that something is wrong.

SL: So I went to my stress test. I went through the whole stress test, nothing, perfect.

Then I went -- say -- said, after the stress test, you go home, you could eat and come back three hours later and we'll give you the other test.

RL: The [indecipherable]

SL: So when I -- when I came back, they ga -- I came back three hours later and they gave me the tallium test and they saw something there. Because the dye -- Because the blood doesn't go through, it lights up, it gets lighter. So he says, "You got something there." I mean, he didn't tell me, but they gave the report to the doctor, so when I came to the doctor for the visit, he says, "There's something there, but we don't know what it is, okay? But I would suggest you ja -- you go to a angiogram."

RL: Angiogram.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And this -- the doctor says that, "There's one man that's excellent, one of tops." He says, "If I had to go, I would go to that's gatta, and the hospital's one of the tops in the country. It's Saint Francis Hospital in Roslynn, Long Island. And Dr. Ambi is one of the top men there." He says, "Call up and make an appointment." So I called him up and made an appointment. The earliest appointment he gave me, was in June.

RL: When was this?

SL: And that was in -- that was in the end of -- of February or beginning of March. I says, "I'm not in a hurry, nothing bothers me." But one day in May -- in April I think it was, I didn't feel good. So I called the doctor, he says, "Okay, come down." I came down and he examined me, he said, "I don't know, there's nothing there."

RL: What did Ambi say?

SL: He said, "What happened with the -- Didn't you make an appointment Dr. Ambi?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "So wh-when do you go -- When did you see him?" I said, "I didn't see him. The earliest appointment he gave me in June." He says, "Let me talk to him." So he calls him up, and he took a -- speaks to Dr. Ambi. He says, "Do me a favor," he says, "this is a very good friend of mine. See if you could see him earlier." He says, "Okay," he says, "you know what? Send him down Wednesday, I'll examine him." So I came down Wednesday, he examines me, he don't find nothing there. He says, "I'm going to set you up for a stress test," I mean, "angiogram." Tha-That was for

the May first. And I came May first, they gave me the angiogram. He says, "You know, you are a walking time bomb." He says, "Your left artery is completely closed." He said, "You are -- You should have had a massive heart attack." And he says, "You can -
- You going to stay in the hospital, you not go home. Because," he says, "I'm ta -- I'm going to try and see the angioplasty. But is -- you have to wait 11 days before." I says, "I'm not going to hang around the hospital." I mean, just lay in the hospital and wait 11 days and what's was -- an-and I don't know what a angiogram was, never heard of it. Just [indecipherable] you could go nuts.

RL: Angioplasty.

SL: Huh? So, I says, "I'll come back in 11 days," and I went to work, like a nut. I worked 11 days and I came back the 11th. And he told me right away, he says he doesn't know if he'll be able to go through, because I was born with my left artery has like a little bend there. It's not straight, it's a little bent. So he may have a problem getting through it. He says the right arteries also was clogged, but is -- that wouldn't have no problem. So I came back 11 days and they worked on me for two hours -- two and a half hours. Tried to open it, couldn't do it and I went in emergency surgery.

RL: And he had a bypass --

SL: And I had --

RL: -- and changed his lu -- personality.

Q: So tell me about the personality change. When did you -- When did the personality change?

SL: Well, after my open heart surgery --

Q: Yeah.

SL: My whole personality changed completely, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I became very -- I mean, very open, I start to talk about the concentration camp.

Q: Right away, or was it [indecipherable]

SL: A couple of weeks after, right?

Q: A couple of weeks?

SL: Anything tha -- Everything I was -- I was spoken about everything, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: It's like when the o -- when they did me o -- when they opened up the valve and all the pressure came out and I star -- my -- I started -- became very, very je -- with jokes all the time. I -- I make people ma -- make them feel good, right? And -- And what -- And the main thing, I opened up, but -- bout the -- bout the ca -- 'bout the concentration camp. I started to talk whe -- what I went through. I want my kids to get involved. I start to show a lot more love and affection. I started to hug my kids.

RL: Started to cry.

SL: Huh?

RL: Started to cry.

SL: And I became very sensitive. I mean, years ago, before that, no matter what I saw, what I wat -- didn't bother me at all, like -- like a piece of ice. After my open heart

surgery, anything sad, I start to cry. Beca -- If -- If I watch a la -- a movie, you know, some with a sad part, I start to cry. I became very -- I be --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning of Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie, for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape three, side two.

SL: I started to hug my kids.

RL: Started to cry.

SL: Huh?

RL: Started to cry.

SL: And I became very sensitive. I mean, years ago, before that, no matter what I saw, what I wat -- didn't bother me at all, like -- like a piece of ice. After my open heart surgery, anything sad, I start to cry. Beca -- If -- If I watch a la -- a movie, you know, some with a sad part, I start to cry. I became very -- I become -- became very affectionate. I like to hug people, especially my wife, okay? The kids, too. I sha -- I sha -- I started to show more love to the kids.

Q: And what was their reaction?

SL: They were shocked. My friends couldn't believe it was me.

RL: They still don't believe it's you.

SL: Yeah. It's like -- It's like a -- Listen, you got to -- It's like a different person was born. And agai -- and you got another chance in life, and make the best of it.

Q: Some people -- I -- I -- I -- I think it's not uncommon for survivors to not want to talk and at some point, they make a decision to talk, when they think maybe it's time or maybe I better do it, maybe it's important. I don't have the sense, when you're telling me this story, that this was a decision that you made, it just sort of happened.

SL: No, no.

Q: Or am I wrong?

SL: Listen, I know so many -- I know so many people that -- from the concentration camp. I would say 80 percent and they don't want talk about it.

RL: They don't want to hear about it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Yeah, they don't want to hear about it. There's one guy here, he -- he talks about it, okay? He goes to school, he talks a lot about it. There's another guy, he don't talk about it at all.

Q: No, but what I'm ap -- f-for -- I -- I want to ask you about that, but what -- but what I'm asking you is, after your surgery, was this a decision that you made to talk, or was it just something that happened?

SL: Something that happened by itself, no decision.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I wa -- And I was speaking to -- to a -- th-the doctor, he says a lot of times, they don't know why, they cannot explain, but the people, the -- always, the whole personality changes, they don't know why.

RL: They become very emotional, very sensitive. They cry easily.

Q: Di-Did you have a sense that you were close to death? That you ma -- that, you know, that it could have gone the other way and you could have died?

SL: Well -- Oh, definitely. Listen, I told my wife -- I mean, when -- I said, "Listen, if something happens to me, I don't want you to be alone, remarry." I -- An-And listen, when you go this type of surgery, I -- Y-You didn -- You don't know if you're going to come out or not.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Now, it's a little easier.

Q: Yeah.

SL: That was almost 12 years ago.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Was a different situation. So -- But it's like even th-the -- my recovery was excellent, excellent. I mean, the doctors themself couldn't believe it. That I went in -- I went in to surgery, was three 30 -- a quarter -- a quarter after six, I was out of surgery, right? By seven o'clock my wife was talking to me, [indecipherable] right? The doctors told her, "He doesn't know what's going on." I opened my eyes, I'm shaking my head, okay?

Q: That's funny.

SL: Dowah.

Q: Now when -- when -- Now let's lit -- ta -- Now, you're tel -- You're saying that a lot of the survivors that you know don't want to talk about the experience.

SL: A lot of them, a lot of them.

Q: Is that a -- Is that a -- Who a -- Who are they protecting? Are they protecting themselves, or they protecting their families?

SL: See, they don't want to open up. In other words, this -- the thing that -- the thing they -- they know something that hurt them, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they bury it in deep inside --

Q: Yeah.

SL: -- and they're afraid if they open up, it's going to start -- bring back very bad memories.

Q: Yeah.

SL: It's like somebody with -- with somementally right? And also, to start talking about it. Before he -- he's afraid he's going to get int -- have a nervous breakdown.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So they figure if they don't -- if they don't open it up, they'll feel a little better. They're just afraid to open up.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Even Hurley, you know.

RL: Yeah, he doesn't --

SL: He -- He -- He ca -- He goes to talk -- I -- I -- There's a guy out here that lives in that community, he goes to talk about -- he goes to schools and talks about it, right? But when you want to talk between you and him about, he don't want to talk. Now to me, doesn't make sense. Because your story is -- talk to schools about it, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: What you experienced, why can't we talk between ee -- with -- between the two of us?

Q: Yeah.

SL: He wouldn't talk.

Q: Hm.

SL: But -- But I tell you, [indecipherable] that I told my friend next door to -- he made a -- made a video and he talks a little more about it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Before that, he was afraid.

Q: How long ago was that?

SL: This year, was it?

RL: About a year.

SL: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

RL: About a year.

SL: Yeah. And he's very happy he did it. He used to tell me, "Gee, I don't know why I told you I was -- I'm going to do it." I tell you, for weeks, he was li -- he was walking around like a maniac, he was afraid. And I told him, "Bill, you'll be okay." Now he's happy he did it. He says, "Now I got something to leave for m --" is -- his sons, right, is so happy to -- because he never -- they never knew.

Q: Yeah.

SL: When they watched the video, you know, they -- they couldn't believe it. Important. People don't realize it.

RL: He never watched his videos.

SL: Who?

RL: You.

SL: Bill's?

RL: Yours.

SL: No, I don't want to watch.

RL: Okay.

SL: I talk about --

Q: Did -- Did you watch it?

RL: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Listen, [indecipherable] watched it, he was so impressed with -- he works for NBC.

RL: He was here one day when they did it.

SL: He was here too, when they were -- when they were taping it.

Q: Oh, they taped it here?

SL: Yeah.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

RL: No, Spielberg taped here.

Q: Oh, Spielberg's, right.

RL: The one in Washington was taped in Washington. So --

Q: Right. Are they different the interviews, the one that you did for the museum and one for Spielberg?

RL: A -- A little different. Every interviewer --

Q: Yeah.

RL: -- brings out himself and puts himself [indecipherable]

Q: Sure.

SL: Well, the one that in Washington, she was a much better interviewer.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That is -- That was the director of the Holocaust Museum, right?

Q: Yeah, Ringelheim, Joan Ringelheim.

SL: She's very good.

Q: Yeah.

SL: She knows how to bring it up.

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: She cried then.

SL: Yeah, she cried.

Q: Yeah.

RL: She cried [indecipherable]

SL: She says the first time, says she cried.

RL: And I cried in the other room.

SL: Mm. Listen, there's s-so many things that I got locked into my head, you know. I don't want to talk about it. I mean, mo -- most -- most of the things, I talk about, but there's certain things like your bod -- your mind just blocked it out.

Q: Yeah. I was thinking about that during, you know, when I watched it. I mean, they asked me to talk to you about other things.

SL: Yeah.

Q: But if I wanted to talk about those things, I could -- there was a lot of things I could ask you about, but I didn't -- you know, a few -- a few of them I -- in fact, really, there were a few specific things I wanted to ask you about. One was, she -- she asked you a question in the early part of the interview and you said that -- she asked you if you had been beaten while you were in the ghetto in Kovno, and you said no, you'd seen other people getting beaten, but you were never beaten until you got to Birkenau.

SL: Birkenau, yeah.

Q: Now, what -- But she didn't ask you about the beating. Was that the time you got hit with the shovel, or was --

SL: Yeah, with the shovel.

Q: -- oh, that was -- okay.

SL: That's my arm, here.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That's the one I can't straighten out.

Q: Now, and what happened, the officer was mad at somebody else?

SL: Well, we were walking -- we're working on the railroad, you see, unloading.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And a guy [indecipherable] Hungarian Jews, Romanian?

RL: Hungarian.

SL: Hungarian Jews, yeah. And -- And they all -- They -- They just came into the concentration camp and they weren't used to things like that, you know. And we were -- We had like a -- It's like a wheelbarrow, but you carry it. And one guy in the front and one in the back, you know.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they used to put in rocks, or whatever, use -- you had to take it here and the other group used to take it back, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And what happened, we -- we loaded up -- they load -- they loaded our -- our thing up and you had to run, you couldn't walk, you had to run with it, right? And he didn't -- he didn't move. So, because he didn't move, we both got a beating. So I got hit with a rifle on my arm.

RL: Shovel, you said.

SL: Huh?

RL: Shovel.

SL: Shovel, shovel.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: The shovel in the arm and -- and it broke, I didn't even know.

Q: Your arm broke.

SL: My arm was broken. But I didn't feel no pain or nothing.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And all those years, up til 19 -- 1987, right? It used to bother me, but my arm -- I figured maybe it's arthritis. So it used -- it used to bother me and I never paid attention to it, because my arms just were la -- and then, when I had -- when I had my open heart surgery, I had a problem with my back. So I went to orthopedic man, and after -- and I was getting treatments, I told orthopedic man about my arm. He says, "Let me take a x-ray," right? He took an x-ray. He said, "Here's your problem, your arm was broken." You could still see the break. And it healed, but the thing is, when yo -- after a certain time, it gets arthritic.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And that's what happened.

Q: Now there was another story that you -- you also said ri -- in about the same part of the interview, that you were only in one fight in your life, once. And she didn't ask you about what that fight was. Was that a different story?

SL: No, that was something else. The only dif -- When I was a kid, I had the fight.

Q: Where was that, in the ghetto?

SL: No, that was before the ghetto.

Q: Even before?

SL: Yeah.

Q: What was that about?

SL: L-Listen, like kids.

Q: Just kids?

SL: Yeah. A little fight, that was nothing.

Q: Oh.

SL: I was never a fighter.

Q: Uh-huh.

RL: You're with three boys.

SL: Yeah.

RL: They [indecipherable] he was the baby.

Q: Right.

RL: There were four boys, he was the baby --

Q: Yeah.

RL: -- so they [indecipherable] with him --

Q: Right.

RL: -- the brothers.

SL: Listen, I never got mad at anybody, I never looked for a fight. Even with the goyim, even with the Gentiles, right? We got along very good. We never looked for fights, we never looked -- we were -- we were always play together, we used to go play soccer.

RL: [indecipherable] show him your father's grave.

SL: Wha?

RL: Your father's grave.

Q: Were there -- Were there any particular -- You talked -- You talked -- When we were having lunch, you talked about the guard who was kinder than the others.

SL: Yeah, the German guard, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Well, we -- we -- he used to bring us his -- his fre -- his bra -- bra -- lunch, breakfast. When he was around, we didn't have to work hard, you know, you used -- but when the one -- once they -- whether the -- the captain, you know, from the -- from the camp, because we wen -- we -- we went into another camp, was part of Birkenau, we were working at. And -- And the one -- once, there was a ca -- a captain there. And when we used to go with the guard and working on the farm there -- when there -- when

no -- nobody around, used to say, "Take it easy, sit down, relax." He used to give us this or this, a piece of bread. Whatever he had, he used to give us. But once the captain used to come, he used to turn. He used to tell us, said, "Listen, I don't want to be that way, I can't help it." It's his life or your life, you know? But then, he never beat anybody or anything like that.

Q: Now were there -- were there other guards that you remember that were the opposite?

SL: Oh, some of them. And some of them, listen, you -- you just look the wrong way, they kill you. But the -- This guy was -- mostly used to watch us. He was -- He was -- He was nice.

Q: Was there any -- Was there any -- Did you have any knowledge of what happened to any of the guards, after the war?

SL: No. Listen, if you -- they're not going -- nobody's going to treat them like they treated us.

Q: Yeah.

RL: [inaudible]

SL: That's not humane.

Q: Yeah. Wh-What's that picture?

RL: This is his older bro -- hi -- the brother that was two y -- two years older than him, in front of the grave of the brother that got killed in Lithuania, and one is his father's grave.

Q: Oh.

RL: That's Sol's brother. Three years --

Q: This is Haim?

RL: No, the -- this is Shlomo.

SL: That's Shlomo.

Q: No, I mean, it's Shlomo, but the --

RL: Haim is the brother that --

Q: -- the grave of Haim.

RL: Yeah, that's his grave, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I got [indecipherable] taking a video, I got it.

Q: Yeah.

RL: [inaudible]

SL: My brother that killed -- got killed in Lithuania, he was so liked by the ga -- the Gentiles, right? They went -- They went to look for the guy that killed him, you know?

Q: Mm-hm. The jealous boyfriend.

SL: Yeah.

RL: Yeah.

SL: You know, and the -- the -- the jealous boyfriend killed himself --

RL: He was afraid that the mob will kill him.

SL: -- because they're going to kill -- the mob was going to kill him. Now, beca --

Q: W-Why would the mob kill him?

RL: Because he killed Sol's --

SL: My brother was so liked over there, all right?

Q: Oh, bec --

RL: They carried him through the whole capital city. Kaunas is the capital city.

SL: They carried him like a -- like --

RL: Through the whole capital city, th-they carried him to the cemetery on their backs, they wouldn't let a ho -- a hearse [indecipherable]

SL: You know, the whole town stopped, when my brother --

RL: For this funeral.

SL: -- my brother's funeral.

Q: Hm. Wow.

RL: That's [indecipherable]

SL: And they carried him, the Gentiles.

RL: The gent -- they loved him very much, he was liked so much, that's his brother.

Q: And which city was this?

RL: Kaunas

SL: Kovno.

Q: It was in Kovno?

SL: Yeah.

RL: They lived in Kovno all these years.

Q: Yeah. And is that where the cemetery is?

RL: Yes.

SL: That's why I want to go back. I want to go back to the cemetery. The only thing --

Q: So you weren't there, you haven't been there?

RL: No. He [indecipherable]

Q: This is just -- his brother sent these photographs?

SL: I was in -- I was in Kovnos in 1944.

Q: Mm.

SL: I have -- I have no --

RL: He was afraid [indecipherable]

SL: -- feeling for that.

Q: Yeah.

RL: I'm afraid --

SL: But the only thing -- the only thing I want to go back, I want to go to see my father's grave.

RL: I'm very afraid of that, because we went to -- to Maine and he got sick in Maine because of this. Tell him what happened.

SL: Well --

RL: We went to Maine, now [indecipherable]

SL: We went to Maine about two months ago.

RL: Four months ago.

SL: What?

RL: September.

SL: Okay.

RL: Yeah, two months ago.

Q: Right, right.

SL: Three, three -- two or three months ago. And what happened, we went into a monastery there. And there was one of the -- the monks, right? Was talking, you know, he says, "Oh, we ran away. We ran away from the Communists in 1940 -- '45 --

RL: A Lithuanian monk.

SL: -- or '46," right? A Lithuanian monk. He says, "I'm from Lithuania," okay? So I told him, you know, "I'm from Lithuania, too." "Oh," blah, blah, blah, made a big thing about it, right? And then it -- he turns around and start to tell the story that they ran away from Lithuania because the Communists didn't let them practice their religion, right? And tells a whole big story about that, right? So after he finishes talking, you know, I go over to him, I says, "Listen," I says. He was 89 years old. I ga -- I says, "Where were you devoted monks -- where were you when the Nazis and killing all the Jews, okay?" He looks at me and just walks away. Ignored me and walked away.

RL: And he had an angina attack, right there.

SL: I -- And -- And I -- And I got so upset, because his age, right, that age, was one of the -- of the -- of the Nazis. He could have killed plenty Jews, because they were worse than the Commun -- they were worse than the Nazis. All the -- All the killings were

done by the Lithuanians, as soon as the Germans came in. All the massacres, before the Germans eve -- wer-were done by the Lithuanians. They killed thousands of Jews, right in the streets.

Q: Did he know you were Jewish?

SL: No -- Well, yeah, of course.

Q: Before you asked him that question?

SL: Yeah. I told him I'm Jewish. I says, where were you when --

Q: No, but I mean, the far -- when you first said you were from Lithuania --

SL: No, no, no, no.

Q: -- and he was excited, he thought you weren't Jewish?

SL: No, right.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And he just -- And -- And he could have been one of the Nazis, and get away with it.

RL: And he got an angina attack and wind up in the hospital for two days.

SL: I got -- I got -- I ended up the in the hospital for two days

RL: For 48 --

Q: In Maine?

RL: He was on a monitor, a cardiac monitor for 48 hours in th hospital [indecipherable]

SL: And Nazis --

Q: And what -- no -- and then why -- I mean, was this -- I mean, did you -- did you want to kill him? Did you have a -- a feeling of rage towards him?

SL: No, no, it just bothered me, the thought, you know, that he could have been one of the Nazis, the -- the killers that killed the Jews, okay?

Q: Yeah.

SL: And then they cu -- And he has a nerve to say that they took away his freedom to practice his religion and comes to the country and gets away with it. You know how many Nazis you got in this country? They let in the Nazis first, then they let in the Jews, right after the war. There's plenty of Nazis here.

Q: Yeah, I know.

RL: [inaudible]

SL: What's his name, Vo-Von Buren?

RL: I don't know.

SL: In the rockets, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Was it Von Buren?

Q: Ah.

RL: The rockets Society.

Q: Oh yeah.

RL: German.

SL: He was a Nazi.

RL: No, I was in ra -- in Poland, I didn't know anything about rockets at that time.

SL: Now he wa -- Now he was a Nazi, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they let him in.

Q: Yeah, they wanted him.

SL: The hell with the Jews.

Q: Hm.

SL: Yeah.

Q: So you had to be careful where -- I mean -- I guess, are you worried if you go there, you'll be -- you'll be too upset?

RL: That's what I'm afraid of, yeah, yeah.

SL: What?

RL: He'll see everybody that's in the 70 - 80's and 90's, he'll be a suspect.

SL: I'm going.

RL: Not 70's [indecipherable]

SL: I have to go to the cemetery.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I want to see my father's grave.

Q: Yeah. Well, even when I was in Warsaw and even at my younger age, and not having been through this, you know, where we -- I was staying, we were -- had this conference of radio producers and it was in a suburb of Warsaw --

RL: Prague?

Q: Maybe -- No, it was a little, tiny place. And it was like a sort of a -- a ri -- it was a -- like a conference center. But it was out -- it wasn't the suburbs, it was just like the country, kind of. But there was a lot of older, poor Polish farmers. And everyone I looked at -- I mean I -- I mean I was, well -- well, where were y -- where were -- I was wondering to myself, where were you?

SL: Come on, they were all -- they were all racist --

Q: Yeah.

SL: -- they were all anti-Semites. Even now.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: Even now.

Q: I remember seeing that -- that film, "Shoah."

SL: Yeah, I have it here.

Q: And about halfway through it, he had some interviews with some of the Polish peasants.

RL: [inaudible]

Q: And they were sort of -- they were out there and you know, they were standing in the farms, they had no teeth, they were --

RL: Yeah.

Q: -- stupid --

SL: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- ignorant people, and they were just saying things like, "Oh, I wish we'd a killed more Jews." You know?

SL: Yeah. Listen, ther-there were killers right next to them, right? We didn't know, right? Right on top of the grave, they didn't know.

RL: I have tapes from Ukraine --

SL: You know the --

RL: -- that mine husband's brother went back after the war to fix the cemetery and whatever and he'd survived in Russia --

Q: Yeah.

RL: -- [indecipherable] this one. And he went back -- the first time he went back, I think the tapes are when the Soviets were still in power. Then he went back a second time after that. And he was talking, but the only problem is that he spoke Hebrew and [indecipherable] and this was an old [indecipherable] it's a long time ago, they weren't so pa -- so -- even know how to handle it, whatever, the guy that did all the movies. So it's not a very good picture, but boy, I watched it and my late husband watched it and that -- that movie put him into the grave, my late husband. That's how he got [indecipherable]. Because he saw that in the Ukraine the [indecipherable], that they dug holes and his mother and sister, my husband saw them being put in the gra -- in the -- in the ditch. He saw it, that -- he -- from far away, he was -- he was on -- on a tree, hiding. So, and then his brother took it -- took pictures there with the -- and he -- and he says in English, "The earth is moving, it's moving, the earth is moving."

SL: They used to bury them alive

RL: The bones already -- you know, the bones -- all the flesh is gone. The bones already are just compact, just the big bones are left, probably. And the soil is soft and he says, the Russians -- the Ukrainians come here and dig and look for gold, because people had teeth and whatever.

SL: Mm.

RL: They just buried them alive They looking for the gold teeth.

SL: Isn't -- There's only one town in French, Sha-Shablon -- Shablon?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Right? That's a village. And I did -- They didn't let the Germans take one Jew out of that village, okay? They saved every Jew in that village. The Germans threatened the whole -- the whole village, to kill the whole village and they would -- they would -- they would -- they refuse to give up any Jew. Now, if you -- if you had enough willpower and you would have showed the Germans that you were against it, he would have stopped. But then, nobody wanted it. Nobody liked the Jews and they didn't give a damn. A little village, that's the only town. Same thing with -- with Franco. He's the only ones that chased the Germans out, right? They gave up and left.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Now when they comes, they -- they -- they're killing those -- those anti-Semites there, they're make a big deal about it. What do call him, the -- the Serbs?

RL: The [indecipherable]. Oh the ser -- well, yeah, but that's -- you don't want another Holocaust.

SL: No, listen, I'm against it. But they -- they -- they were -- they were -- they were with the Nazis.

RL: The Bosnians were with the Nazis and the [indecipherable]

SL: Mm-hm.

RL: Slovenia, the Slovaks, all of the [indecipherable]

SL: But they still -- And it shows the world stands by and lets them -- let the people be killed. Nobody says boo.

Q: Yeah, when -- And then there was something like that that happened in -- in Africa last year.

SL: Yeah.

RL: Oh, yeah. And not because they're killing each other [indecipherable] for centuries [indecipherable] the tribal wars.

SL: Same thing with the Arabs too, they killing each other for centuries.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: Listen, everybody -- it's human being --

RL: But they kill a lot of Jews, the Arabs, too.

SL: Listen the -- the -- one -- o-once a dictator comes in and takes over and -- and that certain people follow, and that's it -- that's what happens. So --

Q: Were you -- Did you pay attention to or -- or follow some of the trials of the Nazis, in particular the one that --

SL: No, I didn't pay any attention at all.

RL: [indecipherable] thing at that time.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I'll tell you [indecipherable]

Q: But there was one a few years ago that -- the one in Canada, where --

RL: Eichmann he follo -- he followed, but --

Q: No, the one -- What's the name of the -- the man who wrote the -- the Kovno diaries? The book you just showed me?

RL: Kaddish.

SL: Kaddish?

Q: No, the other one, the one who wrote the -- the diary.

RL: No, not Kaddish. I forgot his name

Q: Torey?

RL: Ben something.

Q: Tor-Torey, I think.

RL: T-Torey. Torey.

Q: Yeah, he testified against one of the -- one of the German f -- officers who was in charge of the ghetto.

SL: Yeah.

Q: And when -- And he claimed -- The officer claimed he was never there. And Torey came and testified and brought --

RL: He had documents.

Q: -- documents then, that they were signed by him.

SL: Yeah, yeah. But you know, that -- it came from Israel, right?

Q: Yeah.

SL: Right? Now, in American paper wa -- nothing was written about that trial. I didn't see anything about a trial at all? Did you see anything --

RL: You couldn't go to the trial anyway, you were hidden.

SL: Nah, I couldn't testify, listen --

RL: He was hidden. He couldn't testify, he was -- he was illegally in the ghetto, he was hidden by the parents. He was never around.

SL: Well --

RL: He didn't go to school, you didn't do nothing.

SL: But the thing is, in those -- I mean, I -- I am not going to go over and say he did it, because I don't remember it.

Q: No, I wasn't asking that, I was just curious if th-th -- this was something was an impor -- that was important to you?

RL: It would be important to him.

Q: Or if it changed also, did -- did that -- did your -- did the importance of these things change before and after your operation? Was it something that you were more interested in -- in, following --

SL: After -- After -- I'm more interested after my surgery.

Q: That's what I mean.

SL: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Before my surgery, I didn't care. I didn't -- Like you want to forget about it, never existed and that was it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: So I got -- Right now I do -- Anything about the Holocaust I look at -- look for it.

Just [indecipherable] know is good. I want to make sure, you know, so I can tell --

Q: Make sure what?

SL: That what the -- Things are written up that's the -- you know, for the world to know.

Listen, a lot of things that when I read that, I -- I don't know, too. What -- I'm very interested now. I may go -- I may go start talking about it, too. I go to schools. Because they were asking me, I did -- didn't want to talk about it.

RL: My granddaughter asked him to go to her school

SL: No, because I belong to Rikkles.

RL: I know.

Q: Yeah.

SL: They got a Holocaust survivors club, it's Rikkles American.

Q: Where is that?

SL: Huh?

Q: What is that?

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: [indecipherable] And he -- he's the one that -- that's -- he donated this book there, they call -- this one here.

RL: This one.

SL: He's got a whole section in the library about the Holocaust here.

RL: That's from our library.

Q: Oh.

SL: And -- And they -- they -- they have it -- it's away -- it's Americans, it's not -- they're not fa -- they're not --

RL: 45 dollars [indecipherable]. Sol said, "I'm going to buy it."

SL: They're not the Holocaust survivors.

RL: A little too much money.

SL: They wanted, in -- in -- in this Rikkles club, all -- most of them are American educators. Teachers, principals, assistant principals --

Q: Yeah.

SL: -- that's the ones from the club, right? And they -- And they get people to go and talk ba -- in sch -- with schools, you know, about the Holocaust. They get the Holocaust survivors to go talk about it.

Q: Yeah. Well this is a stupid sounding question, but I'd like to hear you -- what -- hear you say it, why is it important for you to -- to explain to people what happened?

SL: Well listen, if nobody talks about it and people forget about it and people say it never happened. But if you -- When you see a -- somebody th-that went through it, a lot of people don't believe you even if you went through it, you know? You show them all the proof and everything, they didn't believe you went through it. But if you talk to a hundred people, right? And if two or three people believe in it, right? And those three people knew -- they -- they -- they -- they -- they say, I was there, I heard this person talk about it. And they spread the message to another hundred people, another three people believe in it. You got six people already, out of 200. And after awhile, you know, th-the -- the ma -- the -- the people are there. Like my daughter too, I tell her, you know, she's -- she ne -- she -- she's not even involved in the Holocaust. She's involved in everything il -- she's involved in the -- in the Civil Liberties and all that, right? Anything has to do with the -- with the lower -- the -- with the -- what do you call --

RL: Underprivileged class.

SL: Underprivileged people, right? She's involved in all those things. But when it comes to the Holocaust, she's not involved at all.

Q: Is that a disappointment?

SL: Yes, it's a very big disappointment.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: Because she's a real brilliant girl and anything that she wants to do, she's terrific in the job.

Q: This is your oldest?

RL: The oldest, yeah.

SL: My daughter, right.

Q: Beatrice?

SL: Beatrice, right.

Q: And what's her profession?

SL: Crime. Crime prevention.

RL: Yeah.

SL: She's involved in your area, in Philadelphia.

Q: Oh.

RL: Yeah, and she -- and [indecipherable]

SL: In the bad areas, my daughter there.

RL: She's their advisor on crime prevention.

Q: Really?

SL: On crime prevention.

RL: She's very good, too.

SL: She's in Philadelphia, she's in Connecticut, she's in --

RL: The Bronx.

SL: New Hampshire, she's in -- in the Bronx, in east New York, in Brownsville, in Chicago.

RL: Very big city. Chicago. She travels all over, she does it [indecipherable]

SL: Oh, she always -- but she's very good in that.

Q: Yeah.

RL:

SL: Has to do with crime.

RL: She [indecipherable]

SL: And politics. But she's only for the underprivileged, but I told her, I says, "Why don't you get in ti -- involved with this?" "I have no time." But in the other things that, she has plenty of time.

Q: Now how were -- how would you say that your experiences in the war affected your politics over the years, here?

SL: Me?

Q: And your voting patterns and your interest in social [indecipherable]

SL: Well, I vote for a person, you see, I don't vote for a party. Years ago, if you were a democrat, you had to vote democratic. If you were Republican, you had to vote -- I didn't believe in it. I vote for the person, if I like what he stands for, I'll vote for her. But the problem is with politicians. They tell you one thing and do another thing. Same thing in our community, right? This guy was running for -- for -- on the board.

RL: Yeah.

Q: Here, in this -- the [indecipherable]

SL: In our community, right? In certain things, there's another guy, I didn't like certain things he did, I went dakim and I campaigned, I got the guy 80 some odd votes. He won by 39 votes, right? I got him 80 some odd votes to vote for him. Once he got his seat on the board --

RL: [indecipherable] changed his mind.

SL: -- completely different, okay? He --

RL: There's a lot of money [indecipherable]

SL: I say I'm going to do something, I go out and I do it.

Q: Is it?

RL: There's a lot of money [indecipherable]. A few million -- what is the budget? A few million dollars a year.

SL: Four million dollars[indecipherable].

RL: Four million dollars a year budget, just in here. [indecipherable]

SL: Besides the -- Besides the -- Besides the budget --

RL: [indecipherable] a lot of jun -- garbage going around.

SL: Listen, I go out, I found certain things out, before I brought it up, and --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie, for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape four, side one.

SL: All right? There was so much -- na -- not -- stealing going on, was ridiculous, okay?

RL: Unbelievable.

SL: But, so wa -- wa -- one point, I ba -- I brought him out, we used to have late charges. They don't pay the bills on time, they get late charges. I says, "How come you don't pay the bill?" We -- We got it reserved, over two and a half million dollars in reserve, right? I say, "How come nobody pa -- not -- nobo -- nobody paid -- don't pay the bill on time? You got the money in on time, right?"

RL: We have a management company.

SL: Nobody ever noticed it. So I went over to see o -- from one the banks, you know. We're discu-discussing it, and I told him about it, right? And -- And I was going to go up and ask him the question. Well, he went up before and asked them the question, says, "How come you got late charges? You got plenty of money to pay, why should there be late charges?" Was about 700 and something in late charges.

RL: For car rental.

SL: Soon as we brought up the question --

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: There's no more late charges.

Q: Hm.

SL: Hm? We have telephone bills, four and a half thousand dollars for a month.

Q: For a month?

SL: A month.

RL: A month, yeah.

Q: Wow.

SL: I s -- I started to ask questions and no -- now you didn -- as soon as I ask the questions, a thousand dollars, 1100 dollars. No more four and a half thousand dollars. Was other things.

Q: Yeah. [indecipherable]

SL: See, I wanted to go on th -- I wanted to go on the board.

Q: Yeah.

SL: So the -- the person from US Homes he's -- ee -- he's -- he's -- he's in charge.

RL: He's the head of it. He's still in charge, yeah.

SL: [indecipherable] he asked me to go on the board, because I make a lot of noise. I don't let them get away with it. I can't go on the board.

Q: Why?

SL: Why?

RL: Because we got bor -- it's [indecipherable] boards -- elected -- we only have one elected rep-representative, because the builder is still here. He has four, we have one -- no.

SL: We have three.

RL: We have three?

SL: Yeah.

RL: No, we have one on the board.

SL: We have three on the board and they have four on the board.

RL: Yeah, so two are from Wittingham, which is the old community, that's a must and we have one. Greenbriar has one. I'm saying it right.

SL: Uh.

RL: And the builder has four. And I got the other advisory b -- committee instab that he wanted to go, are appointment -- a-are appointed. So that the builder told him that ke -- we have a lot of applicants, we cannot ac -- take everybody. They wouldn't take him. I told him, don't even bother because they're not going to take you, you have a big mouth.

SL: Listen, I don't like when nobody -- anybody tries to cheat, right? Stealing. They like people that don't say nothing, keep their mouths shut and that's it. They don't like the noises. I don't go for it. I don't like when anybody -- th-they think they're smarter than di -- th-than me. I might not be s -- I might -- I might -- might not be smart, but I'm very sharp.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Very observant. I -- I showed it the accountants, we got CPA's here. There's one accountant that's -- that's 45 years a CPA, right? He never noticed it. Now, all those

accountants want to be on ma -- because I wa -- be forming a committee, right? All of them, they want to be on my committee now, okay? Because --

RL: He's the organizer.

Q: The troublemaker.

RL: Yeah.

Q: That's good.

SL: Listen, somebody's ca --

Q: How long has the community been here?

RL: With the -- Originally, there was -- there were 413 homes that a builder built. And it's supposed -- he's supposed to build 800 -- 1800.

Q: 1800?

RL: Yeah, but he went busted.

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: So, US Home bought it from the banks, I think. When the bank took it over, he bought it from them. And it's going to be 1600 and --

Q: Wow, that's a lot.

RL: Not 13, he -- now he has to be short a few homes.

SL: Can't build more than 16.

RL: 16 -- five --

SL: 1613, it's going to be 1607.

RL: 1607 homes is going to be here.

SL: You got houses here worth 400,000 dollars.

Q: Wow.

SL: Crazy.

RL: They go buy all this. We have a big house. You got to see the bedroom, the size of it, it's huge. All this for two people. People put in a basement, so they can have storage for their -- closets for the clothes in the basement. And an upstairs with a bedroom, a sitting room and an extra bathroom. Who needs it, it's -- We are only two people. [indecipherable] you go away from the big house and he tells you, "I'll build it." Then they build it. And he builds it whatever you want.

Q: So what -- Ho-How -- How was your -- You've alway -- You've always been involved in Jewish activities since the war? [indecipherable]

SL: No, not involved with -- wasn't involved in nothing.

Q: But your involved somewhat now?

SL: Not in Jewish activities. Well, it -- my wife, she rest in peace, was involved in the Haddassah.

Q: Right.

SL: Okay. But I never -- I -- I used to belong to -- I belonged to Knights of Pythias.

Q: What's that?

SL: That's the Jewish or -- It's a philanthropy organization. It's one of the biggest Jewish organization in America.

Q: What's it called?

SL: Knights of Pythias. Give -- They raise a lot of money for charities.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And --

RL: We used to give money to the Holocaust Museum, to Wiesenthal Center --

SL: Yeah, but -- yeah, I gave to that, you know.

RL: [indecipherable] money.

SL: I gave to Wiesenthal Center, I gave to the Holocaust Museum, I gave to -- what other one there?

RL: Any Jewish wi -- da -- charity used to send you a letter, you send money.

SL: I still do.

RL: Y-You still do.

SL: Listen, that's something else.

RL: He does that. He's a -- Well, he bela -- he formed that Jew -- Holocaust Survivor's Club here.

SL: I formed the Holocaust Survivor's Club.

Q: Oh, you started it here?

SL: Yeah.

RL: Yeah, he started it.

Q: And how many members are there?

SL: How much?

RL: About 150.

Q: Wow.

SL: Had 150 --

Q: And is that -- Is that just a coincidence?

SL: Actually --

Q: Ha -- That seems like a lot.

RL: No, we work very hard.

Q: But I mean, that they even were here.

SL: They were not all -- not all Holocaust survivors.

RL: [indecipherable] they took him now to be --

SL: You see, I we -- I we -- I say -- We said, all -- every Jew is a Holocaust survivor, right?

Q: Okay.

SL: I mean, if you go out and you join the club and you know that -- that you are an American, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And you join the club and you could talk about the Holocaust, too, to people that wa -- that don't know anything about the Holocaust. So -- So, because there used to be a Holocaust survivor in -- in Clearbook --

RL: Clearbook, and they [indecipherable]

SL: -- and they were falling apart.

RL: Yeah.

SL: Didn't have no members.

RL: So we [indecipherable]

SL: So I says, "Why don't you -- Why don't we merge together?"

RL: So we merged, we made our own club.

SL: And we got a nice -- a nice -- nice Holocaust survivors club, that we g -- we have parties and things like that and you get together all the t -- you know?

RL: We get together once a month and we usually -- several of us have a light breakfast. Everybody pays a dollar at the door, covers the bagel with cream cheese and coffee and sometimes we bring in some entertainment, too. We try to bring an entertainer, there's a -- some woman that -- a woman that's a very good singer in one of the communities, in Enelebant. She's -- Gets up on the floor and she sings and they dance. They having a ball.

SL: Come back from Florida, I'm going to get bi -- get bigger.

RL: We'll get bigger

SL: We'll go to the other communities and get some more [indecipherable]. But li -- listen, if --

Q: D-Do you find that people -- Do you find that -- that survivors, people who survived the camps, that there's a certain understanding or communication between yourself, that's different than people who weren't in the camps?

SL: I don't think so.

RL: I think he has the same feelings to most European Jews -- most people that came here from Europe. We sort of like -- seem to cling together.

Q: So that's the distinction --

RL: No matter ha -- camp --

Q: -- not necessarily being in the camp or not --

RL: Yeah.

Q: -- but people who were in Europe?

RL: In Europe, yeah.

SL: European people have a different --

RL: European background, yeah.

SL: -- a different --

RL: Mentality.

SL: Mentality than the Americans.

RL: We were brought up a lot different.

SL: They also, you know, the a -- between the Americans, a lot of them are jealous in the Europeans.

Q: Oh, about what?

SL: Beca --

RL: Because, about our achievements.

SL: Because th-th -- fir -- the -- ach -- what the Europeans achieve. You came back after -- You came out from hell, right? And most of them are in business -- big businesses.

RL: Some of them very big business --

SL: Very successful.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: And they say, here, I lived here all my life, right? And I got nothing.

RL: I think that --

SL: Listen, I could have been well off, but my -- I'm too good natured.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: I -- I -- For -- As a business person, I couldn't go in and rip somebody off. Couldn't do -- I couldn't do it, even with --

RL: He [indecipherable]

SL: -- even when I was doing my work --

RL: I mean -- anybody's that has to do something. People call --

SL: I don't charge, even.

RL: -- [indecipherable] to hang a fan, a fixture, fix some things. He says, "Don't call him, I'll come over, I'll do it for you, don't call. I'll do it."

SL: Used to go my customers, right? I used to work for them. The husband passed away, right? Or the wife passed away. I used to go and do work, "How much do I owe you?" "Nothing. No [indecipherable]." I used to buy the part. I haven't got no heart.

Q: Well, let me -- let me ask you this, th-the survivors that you were just talking about, who were very successful, ran big businesses -- maybe you don't know, you don't have

a way of knowing, but is your -- ow -- what kind of ethics did they display as business people? Were they more or less ethical, or the same?

SL: No, some of them are --

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: No.

RL: They hard working, most of them. Very, very hard working. Look at Leo. He works them -- sa -- a business, a ma [indecipherable]

SL: He's a very hard worker.

RL: Very hard working, the man doesn't have to work any more, he's still working, he's still pushing th -- and he doesn't need the money, it's not the money any more.

He's just very, very -- they're used to -- they're ambitious -- they're [indecipherable]

SL: Listen, I have a friend of mine, he's a very wealthy man, right? And very -- He gives a lot of charity.

RL: A lot.

SL: Lot of charity.

RL: I mean [indecipherable]

SL: I mean, you go over to him, just one word and that's it.

RL: And you get it.

SL: Ma -- When they had that missile -- missile in the Iraqi war? You know --

RL: Th-The [indecipherable] on Tel Aviv, on --

Q: Yeah, yeah.

SL: He called all the friends together, and he said, "Whatever we -- I -- you -- we collect, I'm matching it," okay?

RL: Whatever people in our -- that shul --

SL: He doubles it

RL: -- will collect. And he lived in Long Island, not in our shul, was just a friend. So whatever [indecipherable] shul --

SL: And he -- he doubled whatever we -- we paid, okay? And --

RL: -- I double it. So he doubled the money and him and his -- and a man from our shul, his friend, went by plane to Israel, not -- not using that money, that money was going for Israel. He paid for the double -- the fare -- the fare tickets and -- and hotels. He went to Ramatgan, told the mayor to call a meeting --

SL: People that had damage and things like that.

RL: -- of all the people that had the damaged, and he gave to the elderly people who had -- that he na -- gave them cash in their hands, from that money.

SL: He gave out about -- He gave out about 400,000 dollars.

RL: Okay? In hand, to people [indecipherable]

SL: And then some people came later on, you know, and they didn't know about it, he took out another 25,000 dollars over there, that -- yeah.

RL: Out of his pocket, yeah. And this is one of our people -- one of those survivors.

Q: But what -- What -- Do you think that some pe -- that some survivors continued what you described before, as a sort of an animal instinct, and were less ethical?

SL: No. No, no. It's one thing survivors -- the survivors, none of them have an animal instinct.

Q: They don't?

SL: No.

RL: I think they afraid of it. You saw t -- I think they felt too much bestiality -- too much of it.

SL: They wouldn't harm anybody.

RL: Too much of it to inflict it on another person.

SL: See, because --

RL: Right after the war, when the war was finished, they caught somebody that was a collaborator, they finished him, they hang him right away. There wa -- They didn't even ask questions, there was no trials, they were like hang trials. A lot of them people that -- a lot of those kapos went to Israel. They found them there. The minute they saw them, they killed them, on the spot. And in Germany and in Poland, the same thing. They caught su -- They saw somebody, they killed them. There was no -- not two words about it.

Q: Jews and Gentiles, or just Jews?

RL: Genti -- If -- If they knew a Gentile, they got him, they killed him.

Q: [indecipherable]

RL: Yeah.

SL: See also, you know, that they wanted to be successful to prove to the world, because you know, they said oh, the Jews, they -- they're one -- only good for a -- for -- to -- to -- to take away from somebody else, or rip somebody off, right? They want to prove to the world that they could -- they could make something with their life. Which is -- I mean, it's -- it's a proven fact where you come out -- y-you look over here.

RL: Look at Israel.

SL: Look what they did in Israel.

RL: If you see it, you won't believe it, it's like --

Q: Yeah.

SL: You have to go there --

Q: Tell -- Tell me a little bit about your -- your general feelings towards Israel and how they developed over the years. Were you always a su -- a supporter of Israel, from the beginning?

SL: I was always a supporter of Israel, yes. When it -- it --

Q: What was it -- Tell -- Tell -- Explain to me how important it was for Jews to be able to go there after the war.

SL: Listen, because nobody wanted the Jews, let's face it, okay? Now you turned around, if they had -- if they had the home land, right, they could have gone to Israel. Israel lets any -- as long a -- any Jew in, okay? Took -- Look in Ethiopia, all right? The way -- The way the Eth -- the Ethiopian, they -- they claimed the Jews, the falafels, whatever they're called.

RL: Falashies.

SL: Falafies, right? They claimed the Jews and they went to Ethiopia, they paid millions of dollars, you know, to the ell -- a -- what's his name there, the empi -- the Ella Salassae?

RL: No.

SL: Oh.

RL: Now.

SL: What?

RL: Whoever is now, I don't know.

SL: And brought out the -- And they clai -- I don't think they even Jews, okay, but they say they're from Jews descendant. I think the -- 32 million dollars they paid. Get the Jews together, got them out and brought them to Israel, okay? What other nation -- and look how small Israel is, right? What other nation in the world would do a thing like that? To go to a country and buy the people out and bring them in? Nobody.

RL: And teach them, bring them into this century.

SL: And they come, they're all --

RL: Bring them into the 19th century --

SL: -- they know nothing.

RL: -- now to the 20th.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Na -- When the first time, you know, when they first picked them up from Ethiopia, did you ever -- you ever hear the story? They stayed -- They claimed that one day messia -- the Messiah is going to come with a bird and take them to Israel, you know?

RL: To the Promised Land.

SL: And what happened, when the plane came, they took the -- the ellar -- the 747, took all the seats out and now it's -- it only holds like five - 600 people? They took all the seats out, everything from the inside. There was -- And they took in 1100 people at a ti -
- in that plane. But Ethiopians were -- they were so -- and they were so naive, you know, and that is -- that the plane was the bird. And they lit a fire inside the plane. And now -- now this -- you go to Israel, you see, you wouldn't believe it.

Q: When was the first time that you went to Israel?

SL: 19 fi -- '89, that's the first time I went to Israel.

Q: After your -- After your surgery?

RL: Mm-hm.

SL: Well listen, before -- before my surgery, I didn't have na -- I was se -- I was self employed, right? Worked for myself, and the thing is, you couldn't leave over a business and go away, because superma -- if you have a store, you close up and go away. Here you were dealing with everythi -- with -- with supermarkets and you can't just say, "I'm going away." And then the -- the -- th-the -- the store says, "Listen, I wa -
- need my merchandise." They haven't got no merchandise, throw you out. So I couldn't go. But after my open heart surgery, I had a little time already. I retired.

RL: You had no choice, the doctor told you to stop.

SL: Yup. And I stopped working, and so I had a little time and I didn't -- and I want to go to Israel and they my bro -- I had a chance, my brother --my eldest brother was coming from Lithuania t -- for a trip to Israel, see if they're going to like it. So he came with my nephew and they came to Israel. And that's the first time I saw my -- my brother in 45 years. Also -- And then --

Q: So who were -- who were your re-relatives that were living in Israel already? Was your sister-in-law --

SL: Well, I had one of my brother's there.

Q: Right.

SL: Also had an aunt and a aunt and my -- well, I have cousins and I have -- have a lot of cousins from mother side, she rest in peace, and my -- my father's side. And then I had an aunt, and then my sister-in-law was there already. And my brother, my -- one that next to me -- one that's two years older than me.

RL: And your stepmother.

SL: He was there.

RL: And your stepmother.

SL: My stepmother was there.

Q: Your stepmother?

SL: Yeah.

RL: The father remarried.

SL: My father -- My father remarried, yeah.

Q: Oh, oh, oh.

SL: He married a niece.

RL: He married a niece, do you believe it?

Q: He married --

RL: A niece.

SL: A niece.

Q: His niece?

RL: His oldest sister's daughter.

SL: Well, she came back, her husband got killed and she came -- she was in -- they were in Russia during the war --

RL: And she came back with her child.

SL: And they came back to Lithuania with a daughter and she didn't have anything.

RL: She was close to them in age.

SL: And so she mo -- she moved in by my father, and they got together.

RL: Got married.

SL: You know, and they got -- and they got married.

RL: She raised all -- She took care of the -- all the three, three men. She ran the whole house, she worked all her life with them in Russia. She babysit, she raised all the grandchildren. She was a -- She's an old lady, she's a bi-beautiful lady -- beautiful woman. She's in her 90's, you look at her face, it's amazing, she doesn't look 70.

SL: Yeah, she's full of arthritis.

Q: When did she -- When did she move to Israel? After you fa -- After your father died?

RL: After his father died.

SL: Three days after my father died, they got permission to --

RL: They got permission --

SL: -- go to Israel. Cause -- Cause 19 -- 1949 -- 1969, took me two years to get my father in for a visit.

Q: To come here?

SL: Yeah, because th-they don't -- they di -- wouldn't let you out. So one person had to stay in the -- over there. If I want to bring like my father and my stepmother here, they wouldn't let them out, only one person. And that was -- They held -- They held your security. And -- So it took me two years to get my father here for a visit. I had to go to -
- to the -- our councilman and I had to go to the state Senator, and I had to go to the --
the -- the -- what do they call it?

RL: The embassies?

SL: Huh?

RL: The embassy -- embassies?

SL: No, besides the embassy. I had to go in Washington -- Wa-Washington at the wa --
wa -- who was it that time? And then I had to go to a -- maybe about 15 different people
I had to show, okay, before they gave my father permi -- they made it so hard for you.
They figure if you have to go through all the trouble, yo-you'll give up. And -- But I

didn't [indecipherable] didn't give up. And I got my father here for a visit. He came for six months, they gave him a visa for six months. The thing is, he got sick when he came here.

RL: Hm. Got a middle ear infection.

SL: He -- Si -- Hi -- No, it's the, you know, from the plane, from the height. So you see, it affect his equilibrium. So he got -- So he was like a drunken man walking around. So he thought he was dying already, so he only stayed -- three months he stayed, and he went back.

Q: And why was -- What was it like to be reunited with him?

SL: What was it?

Q: What was it like to see him?

SL: Oh, it was beautiful, it was real beautiful. But I tell you, after all those years, you know, it's not -- th-the -- the affection is not there no more.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: It was 20 - 20 - 25 years I didn't see my father. Th-The bond, like father and son, is not there no more. You have to start all over to get used to each other. We used to correspond, you know, by all the time writing each other, but the love like you had a father and son wasn't there no more. The feelings, you know, there were no feeling no more.

RL: [indecipherable] because he didn't know him any more, he was not that little boy that he knew.

Q: Was he disappointed that you didn't come back to Kovno, or did he understand that you wanted --

SL: No, no, he wasn't disappointed at all. He wasn't disappointed at all.

Q: Was he proud of your achievements?

SL: Oh yeah. Listen, he was proud of this -- the way I -- the way survived by myself and -- and I had freedom, you know, they -- they see what I had over there. I mean, what father would want -- would want his son to be in that place where you're afraid to open your mouth, right? You come over here and you're talking, the -- and -- and you say anything you want. You know, when I was talking to him, he says, "Sh, sh, don't talk about it, maybe somebody is listening." I says, "Papa, nobody is listening here, don't have to be afraid." I said, "I could say the president, go to hell. I'm not afraid." Over there you are afraid to say it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: I mean they were so [indecipherable] that he was afraid to say something. That's the life was there. So why would you want to be that [indecipherable] should have been there? I would have want they should a -- should have been over here, they'd be different.

RL: His brother doesn't want to come here.

SL: My brother in Israel?

RL: Yeah.

SL: When he came in 1972 -- I wanted to bring him here. He was one of the most fearless person you ever saw in your life. He wasn't afraid for nothing.

RL: In the ghetto.

SL: During the war, he -- he saved my life twice, okay? And -- But after the war, he became the bi -- the biggest coward you ever saw in your life, afraid for every little thing.

Q: Why, do you think?

SL: Well, maybe -- maybe he realize, you know, he -- the -- his luck is -- ca-cannot hold so -- so -- so l -- so long. He just fear.

Q: Now how we -- which were the times that he saved your life? One was when you were hiding in the bottom of the [indecipherable]

SL: SL: Yeah, I was hiding -- I was hi -- No, that's the -- Yeah, that's one time, right? There was another time that we were hiding, too. They were looking for the children and he put me in one of those -- what do they call it, the --

RL: Water barrels?

SL: Water bar -- Water things.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: Twice he took me out from there, because they were always lo-lookng for the children, children didn't have no use. Also, once, what he did, my mother was sick and she couldn't go to work. So he got -- he dressed himself up as a woman, with a kerchief, with a -- with a dress and everything and went to work for my mother's place.

Q: And what was the purpose of that, because she would have gotten in trouble?

SL: No, because if you're sick and you don't -- you have to report to work, right, you work -- she used to work in the air field. Now, you have to report to work, if you're not -- you don't report you to work, the Germans used to check where are you, right? And if you're sick, they kill you, there's no use -- there's no like -- they don't use for you. So, he got dressed as my mother and he went to work for her. Now, when I came to Israel, I was wa -- I wanted to walk, I -- I was walking at -- I wanted to walk at night. He says, "It's dangerous, don't walk," right? I says, "Shlomi, I'm not afraid for anything. Something is going to happen, it's going to happen no matter where I am." I walked. He was in the -- in the Yom Kippur War. He worked when they came in the Suez canal. He worked in the factory that they build the --

RL: The bridge, I think.

SL: It wasn't the bridge, it was the bridge?

RL: I think he said in the -- by the bridge that -- that bridge that they lay, he was part of it.

SL: He was part of that -- that secret thing they were building for -- to -- to get -- go over the Suez canal. You know, where the wa -- They put up the fa -- the -- think it was like underneath the water.

RL: He's also mechanical.

SL: Tell them.

RL: He worked by trucks as a -- all kind of trucks and -- and -- and the -- but the army and the tanks, but swi -- but the trucks, he was in charge of repairing things, I don't know what he did.

SL: I k -- He came in Israel, I says, "Shlomo, come over here." Hi -- Ha -- We -- We -- He's very -- Was very good mechanical and things like that, you know, and then the way I remember him as a go-getter, he wasn't afraid for nothing. I say, "It's a perfect country, you can make a fortune here," all right? He says, "No way am I coming to the United States." I says, "I put out to go to Israel and that's where I'm going to stay, that's my country."

Q: But is that -- Yo -- You -- On one hand, you're saying that's out of fear, or -- or is it more out of an allegiance and wanting to be in a Jewish place?

RL: The second one.

SL: No, but he beca -- He became a -- He became a coward after the war. He was in the -- like th -- we -- He wasn't afraid for nothing, even after the war, he was afraid to speculate and things like that.[indecipherable] So, is --is that just because allegiance to Israel?

RL: No, but to Israel he went, he wants to be there, he doesn't want to leave his family.

SL: Listen, he wa -- he was in the -- in the soo -- in the war. Was at -- It couldn't have been that -- I don't understand it.

RL: He doesn't understand him.

Q: Does -- Does Israel represent a -- a place which -- which will help, that there won't be another Jewish Holocaust?

SL: Oh yeah.

Q: There's a place for Jews to go.

SL: Listen, the thing is we're eve -- at least a J -- a Jew has a place where to go. It's a small country. I mean, this time and -- this time and age, I mean, the -- Israel doesn't mean nothing. One bomb and it's all gone. Think they going to get all the Jews together in one place, they get rid of them faster.

RL: Mm.

SL: I mean, it's so tiny. What it -- The thing, listen is, there's something there that you say, "If you don't want me here, I could go over there."

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So, we have a place where to go. In the second World War, if there wouldn't be -- be an Israel, a lot of Jews could have been saved, because they could have come into Israel. They didn't have to beg every country to let you in, and they didn't. No.

RL: Also, the Israeli army is one of the best armies in the world and that gives -- when did they say -- the Jews [indecipherable] fighters --

SL: A lot of brains there.

RL: -- [indecipherable] like lambs. That's what they said.

Q: Yeah, yeah, you mentioned that in your interview, I wanted to ask you about that, about the -- I mea -- ho-how do you -- it's hard for me to understand how so many people didn't fight back during the Holocaust.

SL: Listen, whey they -- when they used to teach us --

RL: They did -- You read this book, they did.

SL: You know, there's a lot of that.

RL: There's a lot of escapes, a lot of [indecipherable]

SL: Now, you're talking the majority, there was a lot of g-guerrillas, right, underground, they were fighting back. But the thing is, the Jews were taught, when somebody hits you, turn the other cheek. Because they didn't want to make no waves. But in the ca -- in Kovno ghetto, we had a lot of people that fought back. One of the most resistance -- resistance against the Nazis was in Kovno ghetto. You know that? But tha --

RL: [indecipherable] look at how they write down, [indecipherable] Jewish prisoner Yakoucile Garfinkel, number 43071 is shot while escaping.

Q: This is the book from Auschwitz you're looking at?

RL: Yeah, yeah. This is '42 - 1942. 999 Jews from Belgium arrive with the second RSHA transport from Malinascamp. There are 407 men and 79 boys and 445 women and 68 girls in the transport. After the selection, 290 men and 228 women are admitted to the camp as inmates and receive [indecipherable]

SL: Everything is so -- so written, it's unbelievable.

RL: -- and receive numbers, 58 - 226 to 58 - 515 and 1600 -- 60 -- 16737 to 16964. The other 481 deportees are killed in the gas chambers.

SL: Wh -- They picked out whatever they needed and the rest went to gas chambers.

But they tell you how many women, how many men, how many children, how many girls, everything. Th-That's all -- That's all -- all from the records. Because, what happened i -- th-the Russians confiscated a lot and they put in the archives, you know. I mean, they -- they -- they -- they -- they took it away. So when they -- When they communa -- When the Communism -- When they broke down the ca -- the Communism broke down, right? There were a lot of the files. A lot of them got lost.

Q: This comment that you just made about Israel being small enough to -- to hit it with one bomb --

SL: Yeah.

Q: Does -- D-Do you get concerned over this --

SL: Oh definitely, I am concerned.

Q: -- this stuff with Iraq?

SL: Yeah.

Q: And with Saddam Hussein?

SL: Oh yeah. You know what bother me in Saddam Hussein? They let him get away with it. And the thing is, he came to a point that he --

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: This is an interview with Mr. Sol Lurie for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, November 30th, 1998, conducted by Steve Roland. This is tape four, side two.

RL: -- receive numbers, 58 - 226 to 58 - 515 and 1600 -- 60 -- 16737 to 16964. The other 481 deportees are killed in the gas chambers.

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SL: Yeah.

Q: Does -- D-Do you get concerned over this --

SL: Oh definitely, I am concerned.

Q: -- this stuff with Iraq?

SL: Yeah.

Q: And with Saddam Hussein?

SL: Oh yeah. You know what bother me in Saddam Hussein? They let him get away with it. And the thing is, he came to a point that he became a big hero be -- with the

Arabs. Because they see, I'm not afraid to stand up to the Americans. But I say one thing. If you'd mean -- If somebody -- If you're going to do something, do it and don't - - and don't delay it. I mean, Bush made a big mistake for letting him get away with it. And now -- And th-this threat, you know, they -- this -- they say, "Hey, we're going to do this and we're going to do that." And they don't do nothing. You say it, do it. Now -- Now he's a big shot, right? The way he talks back again. And -- And Clinton says, "Oh, we're going to do this and we're going to do that." Meanwhile, doesn't do nothing. I'm not a Clinton fan anyways, I can't stand that man. I can't stand any -- any human being that a country calls you and you run away from the draft, and he go ta -- talk against the country and then he becomes a president, yet? But it's okay to send somebody else's children to fight in -- in the different countries, that's fine.

Q: So you didn't like him from the beginning?

RL: No, he never voted for him.

SL: I never liked him, especially now. Okay, whatever he did in private life is not my business. I would have a lot of respect for him, he would a come out and said, "Listen, that's my private life. Whatever I do in my private life is none of your business." I would have a lot of respect for the man. But he comes out and lies, he says, "I didn't do it." Right? "I'm telling you now I did not do it." Right? And then he says he did do it and now he came to the report again, [indecipherable] do it. I mean, it's -- it's so ridi -- it's [indecipherable] to pretend --

Q: I can't figure him out, I'll tell you.

SL: -- a-and they give him all the credit because the economy. It's not him with the economy. I don't care what anybody said. There's only one guy that controls the economy and it's not the president. It's a Jewish man.

Q: Oh, Greenspan.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: Who else?

Q: Right.

SL: Let me tell you, instead of lowering the interest, right? If he would raise up a -- a -- a point or two, what's going to happen to the economy?

Q: I don't know, what?

SL: It's going to fall apart. The stock market is -- it'll collapse. Because they getting cheap money, they could ren -- they could lend cheap money. The one that ge -- the one that gets hurt is the little guy. I mean, you take the stock market, it's not worth half what people pay for it, because the -- the -- the -- the -- the -- sa -- when you buy a piece of stock, first you don't pay no interest. You don't pay nothing. The only thing you hope is on capital gain. Now, why is there capital gain? Because when you have money in the bank, or you buy securities, right, treasuries, they don't pay much. So people going to the stock market. And the demand is there. Listen, you want it, you pay for it. 87 percent of the stock market, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: You people pay for 80 per -- seven percent per dollar for this -- for the stock. It's not even worth -- it's a -- it's a high inflation on the stock if it's 27 percent. Now, it's 87 percent, and who controls it? Goes into Mutual funds. I mean, they ga -- they have a hundred -- millions of ...

Q: Still, I think that in --in terms of -- of that, I think -- I mean, part of it you tol -- I thought that the story that you told of your wife's illness and her urging you to -- to -- to continue --

SL: Yeah.

Q: I thought that was very moving and I think it's -- it's --

SL: You're talking on the tape.

Q: Yes, the tape is now on.

SL: I'm talking about the video you're talking.

Q: Oh yeah, well and -- and what you told me before. In fact, let me just lay this -- this is section three of the interview with Sol Lurie and Rina Lurie, November 30th, 1998, and it's now about three 30 PM in their home. Yeah, w-wha -- I -- Just -- Just the idea of her getting sick and wanting you to continue and to be comfortable and to be taken care of. I -- I found it moving.

SL: Well, in 19 -- My wife used to complain you know this -- that she showed blood in the -- in the stool, in 1989, just before I went -- I went -- I went to Israel. So she went to the doctor and the doctor examined her and said, "Well," he says, "I'll set you up for a colonostopy, I don't see nothing there." So she went for the colonostopy and they gave

her the colonostomy and they couldn't find nothing. He says -- The doctor says, "Well," he says, "you -- looks like you have internal hemorrhoids and that's your problem, you know, that's why you're bleeding." And my wife listens, she took it for granted that that's the problem. I mean, th-they went in the colon. So she forgot about it, but every time she used to go to the bathroom, she saw some blood, right? From -- From 1989, and then 1990, me and my wife went to Israel, we met my brother and my sister-in-law and my nephew, the f -- buc -- my brother came from Lithuania and the family there. And she met her aunts and uncles, I mean she had -- my wife -- and listen, while my wife was -- all the time she had the problem with -- with the hemorrhoids, so she kept on [indecipherable] the doctor. He says, "Well, what do you want?" He says, "It shows hemorrhoid and that's your problem." When the -- Later on, 1990 -- 1992, she had -- she start to get pain when she was walking, in the groin. So he send -- So he -- The doctor send her to orthopedic man and the doctor said, "You got -- You got arthritis, that's your problem, that's why you can't walk." So she figured that's the problem, you have to learn to live with it. Now, my wife always wanted -- she wanted to move to Florida. And also one -- During the time, you know, my wife's personality changed a lot. I mean, her whole character changed. She became very, very hard to live with. And I figured maybe it's the change of life or thing like that. And all the time, you know, she had problem with the -- with the -- with the stool. And that's -- So we went -- we went to Florida and I bought a place over there, because she wanted it and I bought a place over there and we came back. That was in January of 1993. And we came back and

what happens? She went to the bathroom and like blood just gushed out, right, from the -- from the stool. So, she went to the doctor and told him. He says, "Well, we're going to get another colonostomy." And they gave her a colonostomy and it came back they -- they mi -- they misread something on -- on -- on the -- she had a -- she had a tha -- she had a polyp in the rectum, they said it was a pol -- they didn't look in the rectum, they went right into the colon. And the polyp was right behind the -- the -- the -- the -- the pa -- the -- the hemorrhoids. And by that time, in 1993, by that time, the cancer was in the bones already, and it went to the liver. So the doctor said, see if we could do something about it. And we got a -- we got a wonderful doctor and she called him up and told him, and he saw she was very distraughted, you know, very upset. This Dr. Cohen, here's a guy, he didn't have no office hours. And -- And that day he said -- he said, "But you come into the office, I'll see you." Okay? And we went to -- So he opened up the office specially. We went to him in Long Beach and he examined her and took tests. And he says, "You got the cancer in the -- it's in the liver, it's also on the lungs." Because he was going to operate on her. He says, "But in Sloan-Kettering, they have a -- they -- they have a new method, that they -- they give chemotherapy. They implant radiation right into the liver. So instead of the fa -- this did not give you the -- the -- give the che - - chemotherapy all over your body, it just works in that area, you know, so it doesn't affect the rest of the body. So my wife, she wen -- sh -- Evelyn went to Sloan-Kettering and had the surgery to put the implant radiation and when he opened her up, he said -- told us, he said, "The body -- cancer spread all through her body, nothing you could do

for her. If she live three months, it'll be a miracle." He said if she would have come like two years before, she could have been c -- she could have been cured. The type of cancer she had is the easiest cancer to cure. Because they took out part of her colon, ri -- an-and the tumor didn't even penetrate the wall, was just in the colon, the easiest cancer. And -- And they didn't -- They just closed her up and they were giving her chemotherapy. And the -- the doctor said if she lived three months, it'll be a miracle. And she made up her mind she's going to beat the cancer. And whatever there was a little sl -- little hope, she went.

RL: Yeah.

SL: She was ca -- from one doctor to the other. She was getting ther -- chemotherapy. And then the pain got bad so she was getting morphine. They started her up at five milligrams of morphine. And she wanted to go to Florida, I says, "Okay, let's go to Florida." Went to Florida, she was getting chemotherapy there and wh-when the five milligrams of morphine went up to 350 milligrams of morphine. And that didn't help no more. It came to a point, you know, that sh -- she sa -- she said, "I want to go to the hospital." S-So we went to the hospital -- no, she went -- she went to another doctor before -- just before that, went Sloan-Kettering and she says to him, "Is there any hope?" He says, "Listen, you want to hear the truth?" I mean, she was -- she gets -- used to get sores and blisters all over her mouth, she couldn't swallow. When -- They came from the -- right, from the chemotherapy and the radiation.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: He says, "You want to hear the truth? Could you take it?" She says, "Yes." He said, "Well, there's nothing more we could do for you." And we went home and there gra -- she says, "You know, Sol, I don't want to live no more. That's it." And then the -- the pain got so severe, that even the 350 milligrams of morphine -- she used to get a patch -- didn't help no more. So I too -- I took her to the hospital and she was getting more morphine there and five days later, she died. She died in my ma -- she was waiting for me. I had to go, because in the hospital, they didn't have the patches for the chemotherapy. So I had to -- I had to go and get it. So I had to wait til the drugstore opened up, because I used to be in the hospital from seven o'clock in the morning, til 12 - one o'clock in the morning -- the morning. And when the -- So I went, waiting for a drugstore to open up, when I came back, the doctor was there, trying to give her intravenous. She was like [indecipherable] pain. And when she saw me, you know, she - she opened up her eyes and put out her arms just like she was waiting like a Messiah came, okay? And she said, "Sol," okay? And I came over to her and I told her, I says, "I'm here, H-Hava." I used to call her Ha-Hava. And I was there and she calmed down, was very relaxed. And then, about two o'clock, the doctors called me and he says that's the end, there's nothing more we can do for her, that's it. Because she made out a living will and he said, "It's time to sign the living will," you know? So I signed the living will. And they probably gave her some -- they gave her so much morphine that --

RL: They gave her morphine, put her to sleep [indecipherable]

SL: They kill her. She died in my arms. Yes. After that, listen, life has to go on. I was -- was a wasted life, but life had to go on.

RL: It wasn't a wasted life, she left three children.

SL: Yeah.

RL: It wasn't a wasted life, she left you plenty.

SL: Still, she could have lived longer, okay?

RL: Wasn't wasted. While she lived -- She lived a nice full life.

SL: Yeah.

Q: I think he meant to say --

SL: Yeah, but it's not --

Q: -- if they hadn't -- they made a mistake.

RL: It was a -- It's a shame that -- yeah.

SL: It's not, it's the pain, the suffering. The suffering that she had to go through, that's what -- I mean --

RL: That mistake cost her her life.

Q: Yeah.

RL: Because that cancer is so prevented -- I mean curable in the early stages, and she got it in early stages, she noticed it.

SL: She went in plenty of time.

RL: Yeah, the doctor said six months before, he could still help her --

SL: Hm.

RL: -- the surgeon said.

SL: What --

RL: She had a -- her oncologist, is a very nice man. We used to -- I used to -- I knew him personally, we would talk. I once talked about another friend with him, the chemotherapy and stuff. He was so good, such a good man. And he told -- And she was going to him and I didn't know that.

SL: Yeah, she [indecipherable]

RL: And she told me she's going to him, I says, "He's a wonderful human being, so much heart in him." And he's good at what he's doing. And he refused to give her more chemotherapy, so she went to the partner --

SL: It's a waste.

RL: -- to poison her a little more.

SL: The doctor, he didn't want to give it to her.

RL: No.

SL: Cause he know there's no hope. So the only thing -- She used to get these blisters, the whole mouth, the whole lips.

RL: That's from the chemotherapy.

SL: The s -- throat, she couldn't even swallow no water.

Q: Yeah.

RL: Yeah.

SL: It -- It's a shame, I'll tell you something. Dr. Kevorky, they should give that man a medal. I'm telling you, because people suffer.

RL: But Sol, she wanted, to live.

SL: This way, the person don't want to live no more, that's it, forget about it. But when you -- you used to -- when you went through things like that, then you know what suffering means. I mean, you could see the person just being wasted away. The doctors don't care, as long as they get -- make the money out of it.

RL: Most of them do care, Sol. Oncologists do care. You get burned out in that, [indecipherable] very fast.

Q: I would imagine.

RL: Very fast. You can't eve --

Q: What kind of a nurse did -- were you -- or are you?

RL: Surgical.

Q: Surgical nurse?

SL: Listen, even --

RL: You get burned out --

SL: -- even belong -- we belong --

RL: [indecipherable] in surgical too. In all of them, you stay a -- most people, they rotate back and forth. You can't stay in one place too long.

Q: Yeah.

SL: And we belonged to a support group, or I went to support group, and after awhile you know, you see the person, so okay, th-the cancer persons, right? The day is there, you come next meeting, perpa -- the person passed away. After awhile, you know, you - - it's -- yup -- well, after -- after she passed away, it was very hard, very hard. Had a very good fird -- had friends. You know, my friends used to -- didn't let me go nowhere alone. They used to drag me wherever they went.

RL: You were their cheerleader.

SL: Huh? Yeah, the cheerleader. And -- But still, you know, it's a lonely life, and life had to go on. And I met my -- my -- my wife is now, her name is Riya. We were friends together for about 30 some odd years. And my wife's husband passed away before my wife passed away.

RL: And she came -- They came to the house [indecipherable]

SL: And she became fre -- came -- she talked to Riy-Riya and Evelyn, she rest in peace, used to talk all the time. It seems like -- as -- they wanted -- my -- my wife's husband [indecipherable] and my wife, she rest in peace, they both wanted us to ga -- be together, so they both left us, so me and Riya could be together.

RL: [indecipherable]

SL: It's true. It's from both of them.

RL: -- that the kids accepted it. And it was -- it wasn't that hard.

SL: Listen --

RL: And the little ones are crazy about Sol. He's Poppy Sol.

SL: And it's na -- Listen, it's -- it shows destinies, was meant. You travel all over the world, right? Look, she was in Russia, she was in Poland.

RL: And in Israel.

SL: Went to Israel, came to America, right? To get [indecipherable] Sol.

RL: Hitler couldn't kill you or me.

SL: No.

RL: I was buried before I was born.

SL: Listen, we have a very good life together.

Q: Seems like it.

SL: Mm, very good life.

Q: Yeah.

SL: We're happy together, good companionship.

RL: And we travel all over.

SL: Good friendship.

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: That's the main thing.

RL: He made me a se -- a secretar -- financial secretary of his Holocaust club.

SL: Oh yeah.

RL: I got to do all the work for all the [indecipherable]

SL: You got paid for it.

RL: Well yeah, I got paid.

SL: Yeah but, it's -- it shows there's another -- there's another life after.

RL: Yeah, there's always something after.

SL: I'm very -- And it seems that I'm ve -- I'm very affectionate, I became very affectionate. [indecipherable] lover boy.

RL: He's a pussycat, yeah, a pussycat.

SL: Listen, life is short. You have to enjoy every minute of it.

Q: Yeah.

SL: Every minute of it. Like my friend came in yesterday, there's a neighbor -- there's a neighbor on my -- lives over here. Man is worth so much money, didn't know how to enjoy it, right? You didn't buy the man for 30 million dollars. But is not happy, not a happy person. He got a stroke.

RL: He had a heart attack.

SL: A heart attack and a stroke and -- li-like a nu -- a nothing, right? So my friend went to see him yesterday. He came in here, he says, "Sol," he says, "you have to live every single minute." Right?

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: Enjoy your [indecipherable]

SL: I says, "Allen, I been doing it for quite awhile, okay? I live at present, don't worry."

RL: Yeah.

SL: You have to enjoy your life, life is too short. Mi-Might as well make the best of it, because nobody knows what the next minute is going to be.

Q: That's true.

SL: Listen, never too late to start over again.

RL: Enjoy it, yeah. The only time he -- he has pleasure, he goes to the daughter and plays with the little ones. And [indecipherable] they are so cute. That little girl is like a little, dainty lady. She's three years old, she's like -- a head on her like a seven year old.

SL: Uh-huh.

RL: She understands and she -- [indecipherable] even if she doesn't understand, the way she makes it with her head and the faces she makes, you think, hm, she approves of it.

Q: This your gra -- your granddaughter?

SL: Yeah.

RL: His granddaughter, adorable little girl. The grandson is brilliant, very smart.

SL: Why don't you [indecipherable] picture, you ever see -- yeah.

RL: Yeah, that -- that's the grandchildren. Only the little one is missing. His daughter [indecipherable]

SL: [indecipherable] my -- my -- haven't got it there.

RL: Yeah, your little one I'm missing.

SL: You should see this little one, what a mouth on her.

RL: With the pink blouse, yeah.

Q: Right.

RL: Oh, she -- she -- I walk in, she says, "Gamma, where's my Poppy?" I says, "Poppy's in the car." "Is Poppy coming back in?" She's not even three yet. "Is Poppy

coming in?" I says, "Yeah, he's coming in." Two minutes later, "Gamma, where's Poppy?" I -- "He's coming." "Gamma, I want my Poppy, where is my Poppy?"

SL: Once I come in, ah-ah.

RL: Once he walks in, that's it.

SL: She called up, the -- the two big ones were here, we were watching them, right? So she called -- So the daughter called, she says, "I want to call -- talk to Grandma." She calls on the telephone, "Grandma --

RL: "Are the kids still there?"

SL: "Are the kids still there?"

RL: The two big ones.

SL: Artilla -- Artoona -- the ca -- two cousins, right?

Q: Mm-hm.

SL: So the little one says, "Are the kids still there? Cause I want to spoke to the kids."

They are adorable, they are adorable.

RL: Yeah, they adorable, all four -- all four of them. All six of them, all six of them, you eat them up.

SL: There's -- There's --

RL: For them I sit on the floor -- For them --

SL: They destroy the house.

RL: They can do, all of -- all six of them.

SL: See, this one is going to be a -- the politics, my -- my grandson.

Q: Yeah?

RL: They're going to be [indecipherable]

SL: Stick to politics.

RL: The father --

Q: How old is he now?

SL: Huh?

Q: How old is he?

RL: He is eight.

SL: Eight.

RL: I don't have a late -- the last picture didn't come out so nice, so I left it there. I have
eno -- I have enough pictures with us, to get --

SL: He wanted to be a fireman all his life.

RL: Firefighter, no more.

SL: Ah, you va -- he knows more about the fire department -- the fire -- he knows
everything about the fire department. There isn't a fire house in ber -- in New York he
wasn't in, okay?

RL: In New York he wasn't in, yeah.

SL: He wa -- He was sworn in as a -- as a junior firefighter by the fire commissioner.

Q: Oh.

RL: This little kid

Q: Amazing.

RL: [indecipherable] his father's in politics, you know.

SL: But you know, he was watching -- they had a couple of firemen got killed, in the --
in one of fires. That's it, no more fireman -- no more firefighter, that's it.

RL: He's not [indecipherable], no. He'll be a politician like his father.

SL: Nah.

Q: And what does his father do?

RL: A politician.

Q: Oh. That's your son?

RL: Son-in-law.

SL: My son-in-law.

Q: Your son-in-law.

SL: Yeah.

RL: The daughter's husband.

Q: Uh-huh.

SL: He's involved in politics.

RL: He's the -- He is the chief of staff for Mark Green, the consumer advocate of New
York City.

Q: Oh yeah.

RL: He is his -- yeah, he's kind of a big [indecipherable]. He runs the office there. He's
a lawyer.

SL: Listen, he could have been a big man now, yeah. He wants to be in politics, so what good is it?

Q: So what do you think, that all of these experiences you've had, the good and the bad, the -- does it make you an optimist or a pessimist?

RL: Oh, he's an optimist.

SL: Who me? I'm an optimist.

RL: He's an optimist, no pessimist.

SL: Experience me -- Every experience, you learn something, from the good and the bad. Bad, you learn about evil and the good, s -- it's always nice.

Q: Mm-hm.

RL: Well, he is a go-getter, a doer and --

Q: I can see. It's great.

RL: He's full of life.

Q: Yeah.

RL: And he's still in -- in --

SL: I like to fight for the underdog, though.

RL: -- in the brain, he stop -- the brain, he stopped when he was 10 years old. Like everything that happened after he was 10 doesn't count. He's still a little kid at heart.

Q: Good.

RL: You have to see them. Yesterday I got mad at him. The big one -- What did you do with them? Oh yeah, the two -- two big ones, I was watching them and they started

arguing and he butts in and gives her a bad advice. Like a child -- wa -- di -- a chi -- a child's advice, and she follows it. I thought I'm going to kill him.

SL: That straightened it out, you saw how nice it straightened it out?

RL: You had to apologize.

SL: No, I didn't apologize. I straightened it out. Because it --

RL: I forgot what it was.

SL: -- the big one picks on -- on the boy, right? She accuses him of something and she says she's going to throw out his toys, and I'm going to give her --

RL: And no, no, no, he played with her Barbie's ta -- dolls. And he lied that he -- she says, "That was -- Did you play with my Barbie dolls?" He says, "No." But he did. So she says, "Well, somebody, they really messed them up. They not organized, they not me -- they messy. You played with them, please go and put them back in order." He says, "I didn't do it," but he did. So he says to her, "Take one of his toys," he plays with the Leggos, "and throw them in the garbage." And she goes and throws them -- the Leggos in the garbage. And he's having -- and the bell -- and the little boy is having a heart attack there. He's suf -- so upset, he's ready to [indecipherable] I says, "Sol, --

SL: And I tell him to take hers. I'm a instigator.

RL: Oh, what he did there. I sa -- I said to him, "Come a -- Take it easy Sol, don't give him advice like that."

SL: To make war.

RL: One minute I walked away from the room.

SL: Yeah, but they were -- after they became -- they were nice, didn't they?

RL: Yeah, they were nice the whole day.

SL: See? First I showed them something. It works two ways, right? I mean, what she could do, you could do the same thing.

RL: And then she -- she sat down --

SL: The psychology --

RL: -- and she put everything away. [indecipherable]

SL: -- and -- right? And then it worked out, they were a pleasure after that.

RL: Oh, they were good. We had them for two days.

SL: Psychology.

RL: But what he did, it wasn't psychology, it was like a little boy's game, throw it out.

And she did -- went.

SL: Same -- Listen, it's common sense.

Q: Yeah.

SL: The smartest person, by me a -- a brilliant person has common sense. No matter how smart -- b-book smart or thing, he not smart, if you have no common sense. You have to know when to use things and when not to use things. Listen, my son-in-law's a brilliant man, right, with no common sense. You know I -- what makes [indecipherable] smart. Book smart, knows everything. He won the Harry S. Truman scholarship award.

Q: Hm. What's that? An award for what?

RL: For some kind of college.

SL: Political -- Political science, political law. There're only two from the state.

RL: He's teaching [indecipherable] at NYU.

Q: Oh.

RL: Adjunct, yeah.

Q: Oh.

RL: Adjunct professor. He loves teaching so he's doing it part time there. Plus he runs the [indecipherable] too.

SL: He won a free scholarship to Chicago University, he had. And then the -- the dean made him enter the -- the -- for Harry S. Truman scholarship award, they only give two from the state.

Q: Wow.

SL: And he won it. But the thing is, they have no common sense. No common sense.

Q: Okay. I'm going to stop.

SL: Okay.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Conclusion of Interview