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תוכן העדות:

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אין הגבלות על השימוש בחומר.

V.T.-11307

Lewkowicz (Pozmanter) Fela

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Today Yod Bet BeAdar Aleph, 16th of February 2011. I am Dina Shefet, interviewing Fela Lewkowicz born in Skepe Poland. She will tell us about her life and her family's life during the war in Poland.

Q: Please, Fela, I would like to hear first memories of your childhood.

A: Well, I can say I had a good childhood. I was a free spirit. Free like a bird. I played a lot outdoors and I used to go on vacation.

Q: But maybe we will start with your parents. And when you mention their names, please mention their full names.

A: Yes, well my father's name was Shlomo Pozmanter. My mother's name was Rivka Pozmanter. And then was my oldest brother – Shimon and my sister Sarah and myself. We were a small family. Considered that time in Poland, we were a small family.

Q: And what was your father's occupation, maybe tell us about the background.

A: Well, he was a businessman and he was always...he was a lot away from home. Especially he never missed coming back on Shabbat like on Thursday.

Q: What kind of a business man was he?

A: He was actually in china business, you know, buying from the factory and then selling to store keepers or people who went on markets, you know, selling their china. But he was the one that bought it from the factory.

Q: Did you know a little bit about the background of your father, about your grandparents' family?

A: Well, he came from I would say a religious family. They weren't to the point where you know like to the point what you call here in Bnei Brak. But my Zayde was (...) Chassid and he used to go to Góra Kalwaria I think once a year or twice a year.

Q: Chassidut Gur.

A: Yes, to see the Rabbi there.

And other than this he was also a person that looked after poor people. You know, in Poland before the war there was a lot of poverty. And people were coming from everywhere to places where they could get some money to survive. So when they came late in the afternoon and couldn't leave for another place later, they didn't walk in the dark because they didn't come in cars or buses. They just walked from town to town. So he used to bring them home. And my grandmother at that time when I was a little girl – I have a very faint memory of her. So I can't say very much about her. But he lived with his daughter. It was his house. And they had there a Shikse maid. So many times he brought people to sleep over. In the morning when the maid went to make the beds, she starts screaming: "(Polish)" that means: "Lady, have look the whole back is full of lice. You better start telling your father not to bring these people. They are so dirty. " Then she took everything off. And that's how my grandfather, that's what he did. He brought them for meals. He made sure that they have a place to sleep. You know what he did, like this time they told him. Next week he brought again some other people but it's the same story. He didn't take 'no' for an answer. That's what kind of a person.

Q: And what was your daily life like?

A: My daily life – well, like a 9 year old school and after school lots of play.

Q: A Jewish school?

A: A Jewish school – no. At that town we did not have a Jewish school. There was a 'Cheder' for the boys. And my mother tried to bring in the same Rav teacher that used to teach....When he was finished with the boys, so she asked him to come and teach me and my sister. But we used to run away, we didn't like to learn Yiddish.

Q: Did you learn Hebrew?

A: Very-very little. At that point we just knew the Alphabet. That was as far as we went.

Q: So you spoke Polish at home.

A: A lot of Polish, Yiddish too, Yiddish too. My Zayde came, we never spoke to him Polish. We always spoke to him Yiddish. And he was so good. More than us he had other grand children. But I don't know, when he came to our house, like an angel would walk in.

So my life was good. I never knew about... You know, I remember coming sometimes to my friends, my friends' house

Q: Were your friends Jewish?

A: Yes, most of them were Jewish.

So you know, there was a girl and she kept on....: "Mom, I'm hungry. I want to eat something." So her mother came and she gave her a piece of bread. She said: "But I want butter on the bread." So her mother says: "No, you can't have. I have some butter, but I have to keep it for your father, for my husband. You can have a little sugar on your bread. That's all we have in the house, believe me." There was a lot of poverty.

Q: What was your school like at that time?

A: What do you mean by that? anti-Semitic or....?

Q: Was it anti-Semitic? How were the teachers? What attitude did they have towards you?

A: Towards me – I cannot say a bad word because most of the time they put especially Jewish boys – they put them in the back of the class, and all the Jews together. But I was practically always sitting in the first row or the second row and mixed with Polish girls. I didn't encounter this somehow. They were nice to me.

Q: But yet Jewish boys were always at the back.

A: Yes, they were at the back.

And you know, there was no reason because they were good students and they were quiet, they weren't trouble makers. But somehow I don't know, we mostly had women teachers. So sometimes on my mind I said: "Maybe they just don't like boys", but they didn't put the gentile boys in the back rows and they hardly took part in what

we were learning at that age I only finished three grades. Or maybe I was good. In whatever I learnt I was good. So maybe that's why I was always sitting in the first row or the second row.

Q: You tell us that you mixed with non-Jewish girls. Were you invited to their homes? Were they invited to your home?

A: Not so much. Somehow we stuck with our Jewish friends. But we weren't harassed, you know, like it came on what was it when we were....on racist, you know, we weren't around. And sometimes we played together and other times they just played with their own friends and we played with our friends.

Q: There were religion lessons. What did you do when the gentiles took those classes?

A: We just walked out. We walked out. They knew. They didn't have to say anything – the Jewish kids just walked out.

Q: Did you feel different from them? And if you did, on what way?

A: Yes. Yes, in a way that it wasn't something, it wasn't like our country. We didn't have that much love for it. I mean we did what we had to do, but not that we....You know, how Israelis feel for Israel.

Q: No?

A: No, no way, we didn't feel that way. But on the other hand, you know, like my mother went so many years before I did to school. And at that time they had only 5 grades and she made the 5 grades and she had some girlfriends afterwards when she was married. And I remember that she was on very good terms with them. You see, I had such experiences with Poles that actually during the war I would say that they saved our lives. Some were strangers and some of them we knew. So I cannot say bad things about Poles. If it wouldn't be through them, I wouldn't be here.

Q: But yet I would like to know about your religious life. How did you celebrate the Chaggim? Let's go, let's say Yom Kippur. Do you remember Yom Kippur?

A: Yes, because the parents were all day in Schul and the kids were running around.

Q: In the Synagogue?

A: No, not in the Synagogue, outdoor of the Synagogue. You went into the house and you stuffed yourself with all kinds of goodies, with cookies and fruit preserves and all kinds ofBut I don't know. I never was told by my parents that I have to sit there with them. I never sat too long. Most of all I didn't like where the women were sitting. If I went, I went where my father was sitting because he was always sitting like the second row from the Aron Hakodesh. And I used to sit and listen.

Q: What was the Seder like, Pessach?

A: Big, but every family like mine – we never went to my Zayde's for Seder. He never came to our house. He stayed with his daughter and the family. My aunts uncles – everybody had his own Seder.

We were just talking about it recently how we never....Like here people make a Seder and they have 40 people, 50 people. In our small town – I don't know everybody had his own Seder.

Q: Without any acquaintances?

A: No relatives, no acquaintances, everybody celebrated Pessach in his own way.

Q: Who baked the Matzot? You bought it?

A: No one, privately – nobody did. There was one baker and he was an extremely religious person. We were always buying bread from him and it was good. But in Pessach he Koshered the whole bakery and used Polish workers who were rolling the Matzot. And they had a person who was beating the eggs for cakes. And everybody bought the Matzot there. They took a big sheet, a white sheet and went and filled up with Matzot. That's how I remember it. But sometimes I wonder – we were a small family, my Zayde was a small family. My mother's sister – also they were – why we didn't all get together and have one Seder. But we always had our own Seder.

Q: When actually did you see your relatives?

A: When did I see them, after the war or before the war?

Q: No. No. No. You say that you didn't celebrate Chaggim together.

A: We were, you know, like in and out. It was a small town. Whenever I felt to go to my aunt and play with her children, she had younger children, I went. And my mother used to get to go and see how they were doing. It was just like crossing the market. We were on one side, and they were on the opposite side of the market. And we just go there we didn't knock on the door and ask if we can come in. We just....

Q: I want to know more about holidays, about Pessach. Yet how did you celebrate it? What food did you have at that time?

A: What food? The same as we have in the Diaspora. We ate whatever, you know, with some people.

Q: What was the food in the Diaspora?

A: We ate a lot of potatoes in Pessach. We ate borscht, a lot of borscht. And we ate a lot of meat, I suppose. You know, my mother used to make other different things whatever the children liked and whatever they could afford to have.

Q: Like what?

A: Well, for breakfast we used to have the Matza Pancakes, all t the special pancakes. And we used to have a lot of chopped liver with gribenes on the Matza which was delicious, and of course left- overs, some fish or other things.

In our house, you know, I'm not like generalizing, but there was no shortage of things because when it came for Passover, my mother didn't buy one dozen of eggs, but she used to buy like ten dozens of eggs, you know, and other things.

Q: Maybe this is also the time to ask a bit about your mother. You didn't tell us about your mother. How would you describe your mother? Because later you were all the time together and you told me she had saved the whole family.

A: Right.

Q: So maybe tell us about her as you remember her at that time.

A: She was very concerned. She had only one sister left in Skepe in that town they all had left for either....one sister lived in Hamburg before the war; One brother was in Mexico....

Q: What were the names, you know, first of all – your mother's name.

A: Maiden name Zamonskewitch.

Q: And first name?

A: Rivka.

And she had three sisters in New York and two brothers.

Q: And she never thought of leaving for New York.

A: Of course she did. Of course she did. That's the sad story. The sisters – two of them were widows. And they could not make the papers. You had to show that if you bring relatives, you will be able to support them because people were coming and there was nobody to help out. And the government would not take responsibility for them all the time.

So she wrote them letters and she asked that the situation in Poland is bad, the anti-Semites are harassing us and it's really frightening and would they make the papers for us. And not to worry about the money for the passage. We have money and we think that we won't need any help from any one. The only thing – someone has to say that he is going to take the responsibility, the financial responsibility.

But there was only one brother who was a wholesaler of fruit business. And he was the one who could afford toin case we would need the help. But somehow he didn't do it.

Q: He refused to do it?

A: Well, he said his wife said it's not wise to do it.

Q: For what reason?

A: She was afraid that we are going to ask for help. That's why we got stuck in Poland.

Q: So I want to go back to your mother. How would you describe your mother?

A: My mother wasn't an ordinary person. I can tell you that much, just like my grandfather on the other side, she was just like him. She lived just to do good for humanity, for people.

Q: What was her life like? What do you remember as a child?

She was not working of course....

A: No.

Q: So what Jewish woman at that time, from your milieu, what was her life like? So from your milieu, what was the life of a Jewish woman like?

A: Her life – First of all, her sister wasn't a healthy person. So she was constantly travelling because we didn't have good doctors. Where we lived. As a matter of fact, we only had one doctor in town and we didn't even have a dentist. So she was taking her to doctors constantly which my father didn't like so much.

And another point also – she needed financial help too. And afterwards he husband worked up a pretty good business, but (...). That's what she did.

Whenever somebody needed....There was a baker that lived two doors away from us. And they were a very large family. And he was a Shtetel a baker...There were three bakeries or four. So he was very poor. So each time when they brought flour, he didn't have enough money to pay for it. So my mother was the one that was...you know, lending him money. If he paid back, fine, if he didn't, he didn't. That's who she was.

And she saved actually two of the same sisters, two children. They were by Poles, lived by Poles – one with a kind of, not a written contract, by mouth contract that the mother won't survive, the child was going to be theirs. But just after the war she could not rest. She knew where the child is. And she went. And she worked with the Russian police, with the Israelis there where they were gathering Jewish children and she took that girl back.

And then while she was doing things for her, she found out that her brother is maybe somewhere. She heard somebody say that a Jewish boy is maybe in that place. And

sure enough that was very dangerous in 1946 to go back to Poland. I don't know if you heard, but a lot of Jews were murdered by Poles.

Q: Of course.

A: But she went back and she walked in. She recognized the boy immediately. And he didn't want to go with her. He kept on saying: "I'm not going with a Jew because I know what Jews are doing. They are going to kill me and then they will use the blood for Matza. And I don't want to leave this place". That's what the Goy kept on saying. He was only(How old was he? He was born in 1935. And this was in 1946. So how old was he?) about 11 years old.

But she got him back. And now the girl that she took back married an extremely....He wasn't extremely, but his family was... You heard about the Freund family, Orthodox people?

Q: Yes.

A: She married a Freund. She had 3 children, but now she has 21 grandchildren. And I'm not sure how many great-grandchildren.

Q: To go back to the Holidays – What was, for example, Sukkoth like? Did you build a Sukkah?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

We had a house. It was a big house. And we had (...) in our house. So that was a kind of tent. My father took out the lumber that we used for heating in our house. He took out all the lumber and then we kids decorated it. And then all the 4 neighbors and my father and my brother – we kids were running in and out. And we had a big Sukkah. It very nice.

The women were busy preparing wonderful food, really good....Sukkoth was the best holiday.

Q: Really, so at that time you had family coming over?

A: Yes, after you know, not to sit and eat because there wasn't enough room for everyone. But the people that lived in our house – they all came. They were all together. It was very nice.

Q: Simchat Torah?

A: Simchat Torah was also very nice, very nice. We ran around with flags and we sang.

Q: Did you dance with the Tora? Did you go out?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. We did.

Q: Did you go out to the streets or was it in the court of the Synagogue or the yard of Synagogue?

A: It was around the Synagogue, a lot inside. My Zayde just went around. He took us children around his arm and we were on his back.

Q: He was dancing.

A: Yes, he was dancing. He was always so happy dancing. He was lovely.

Q: Do you remember Hannukah?

A: Yes, I remember Hannukah. I had to stand near my father, near the window. We put on a Hannukiah and we sang. It was good, it was very good. We didn't miss....

And Purim – don't ask.

Q: What was Purim?

A: I don't know.

My mother baked for Purim – you have never seen what she made for Purim.

Q: What did she bake?

A: She baked Hamantashen with fruit, all kinds of cakes filled with fruit and how do you say Doughnut?

Q: Sufganiot, Doughnuts.

A: Doughnuts. Whenever a child wanted, she made. We had a variety. The table was set just with different different cakes that she make. She was always so busy – preparing, making.

And we kids were dressed up not as nice as here, but you know we put on a long skirt of somebody or something – painted the face.

Q: Really? How old were you at that time?

A: 6, 7, 8.

We laughed. People knocked at the door. I remember we had this man that used to carry water from the pump. And we didn't have water indoors. So he came in and he put on a paper bag and he cut out the eyes. And we always knew it was him because he always wore the same clothes, poor man. And we all: "That's not who cut... This man, that's not him. No. No. He is too busy carrying water." We were making fun of him. He came. He got the coin. And that's how he was going from house to house.

Q: Was it a Zionist family?

A: Well, my mother was very Zionist. But my father wasn't against Zionism or anything, but he felt somehow comfortable there, where he was. My mother – because then when her brothers refused to send her that letter that she needed for immigration, so she approached my father and said: "Listen, we have to leave. It's getting bad. I don't like what's going on here."

And my father, you know, he was kind of indifferent.

Q: When did it get bad?

A: In the beginning of 1939.

Q: You are talking about this year. It was too late anyway.

A: Because it was already, you know, we lived in a corner house in the middle of town. And one morning we get up and there are everywhere signs: "Don't buy from Jews", "Jews are pigs", you know, stuff like that.

Q: Before the war?

A: Before the war.

Q: So actually when did you ...because until now you spoke about a very comfortable life. You did not describe any anti-Semitism. Life was nice to you, kind to you.

A: Yes.

Q: When did things change?

A: I'm telling you that that was the year, maybe 1938, 1939, I think this you could tell because the Jewish stores were kind of....The Poles did not come to buy like they used to to Jews. And a lot of Jews were kept on, you know....And especially my mother's sister that lived in Hamburg came in 1938, I think the beginning, she came to visit. And I remember I was....We were all sitting and eating and they started talking about something. And my mother didn't want me to hear what they were talking about. So she made me go out and my sister too. They were discussing. My aunt was describing the bad situation in Germany. And they said it's beginning to be very dangerous to live there.

And as a matter fact in no time they sent them out and they came and stayed with us because they weren't actually German citizens. They were Polish citizens.

Q: So they came back to you.

A: They sent them out and they only brought like suitcases with stuff. They didn't bring like furniture or anything else. And also their money was taken away from them.

Q: Was your aunt's husband a German Jew?

A: No, he was a Polish Jew. He was actually a Mashgiach there. They had a butcher shop and he was also a Mashgiach.

They were sent away and they came to us. And then when we were sent away in 1939 from Poland, they came with us. We went to Warszawa and they stayed with us. They had one daughter. We all stayed together. And then they started....

And the other aunt, my mother's sister.

Q: The sick sister, the one that was not so well....

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: What was her name?

A: Chava.

So we all went back to Chava. We stayed in Warszawa until, I think, 1941. And then my father paid off a Polish woman also bought a document for my mother a Polish document, a birth certificate. And we all were smuggled out, we all went to Chava's.

Q: But I want to keep chronology here also. I asked you – How did it all start? You say that already 1938 was difficult.

A: I suppose so, yes, yes.

Q: And in what did your aunt arrive to your place from Hamburg?

A: I think it must have been 1939, the beginning of 1939, I think, the beginning of 1939..

Q: Do you remember the first day of the war?

A: Of course I remember. I had just come back from a stay with my father's relatives in another town. I was practically all summer there. They didn't have children and they wanted me to come and stay with them.

And also my mother did not come back. I came back on Sunday. And my Mommy came back. I think the next day my mother was with my sister on a vacation near Warszawa for a month. And she came back the next day.

So I know it was already, you know....When my father came to the train for me (I arrived by train), he was very sad. I kind of sad to him, you know. "Daddy, why are you so sad?" He says: "Oh, I'm a little morbid. Why are you worried? What...?" "Well, they are talking about war".

Q: You came before the war started.

A: Yes. The war broke out, I think, about 10 days later.

And actually we didn't....And my father right away arranged that we all go to a village, not to be in our town but go to a village because we had there like distant relatives. They had a store there.

I don't know why....How people were naïve at that time. It was only like maybe 25 kilometers from our town. So we were afraid to stay in our town, but we went to that village. And we stayed there for a couple of weeks.

The only one that didn't want to go was my Zayde. He said "This is my place. I'm here for so many years and I'm not moving anywhere."

The same thing happened when the Germans gave us a week for the whole town of Jews that we have to evacuate this place in one week. So of course, you know, everybody with lots of sadness and lots of pain to leave everything behind and "only take whatever you can take because you are going by train", they told us. "You are all going to Warszawa".

Q: Was all the population evacuated?

A: No, just the Jews, the Jews only.

At that time I didn't want to go either. But my mother went. She pled: "Fela, if you are not going to go, they will shoot you. They will kill you."

And he was sitting on the train. I remember he was so sad. He was saying: "I will never see this town again."

Q: He knew he would never come back.

A: In the first year in Warszawa he died.

Q: We will certainly talk about it.

I want to ask you again. When your aunt came from Hamburg.

A: Yes.

Q: She came to stay with you.

A: Yes.

Q: She came to the ghetto, to the Warszawa ghetto or she came to your home?

A: There was no ghetto at that time. No, there was no ghetto. She stayed in our house.

Q: She came to Skepe, not to Warszawa.

A: Yes. Then she came with us to Warszawa.

Q: Yes, but she came with....

A: She came with her husband and her daughter.

Q: And what did she tell from her experience?

A: Well, from what she had to tell at that time we all knew that the situation is grave and Hitler is doing things, you know, what he was doing.

And we all stayed with Chava in one house. And then she was... It's not clear to me, but she was taken away. And I think she wasnot her daughter. Her daughter at that time was 21 years old, but she was taken away to some kind of a women's camp.

Q: Did she come back?

A: No. No.

Q: So they came to take her from your home?

A: From where we stayed in this town Gostynin.

Q: Who took her?

A: Who took her? At that time it was maybe Jews, but they were told by the Germans. It was a transport of women and she was amongst those women.

Q: You don't which camp it was.

A: No. No.

And she was older than my mother.

Q: And what happened to her husband?

A: Her husband went probably to Auschwitz....

Q: But yet he was with you.

A: Yes. Yes.

But you can't imagine when you don't see this. Every few days they had this....

Q: A new order, a new decree.

A: Yes. That: "All the men should come to the market square." And when the men came there, what did they come for? They just put them on trucks and took them away. And at that point we didn't know about Majdanek. We knew that there are places where they are killing Jews, but not exactly ...or Auschwitz or Buchenwald.

Q: So all of you were evacuated to Warszawa?

A: Yes.

Q: Where did you live in Warszawa?

A: Where? At that time the chaos was just horrible because Warszawa was very bombarded and so many houses were destroyed. You know, there was no room for all these people that were coming then to Warszawa.

But somehow, I don't know, my father found a family. And they had two bed rooms and a kitchen and a little dining room, I don't know. And from them he rented one room for.... we were 5 and they were 3 – for 8 people. And we shared the kitchen.

Q: How did you manage so many people with your aunt and with your....?

A: We slept on the floor and we slept 3 people in the bed. You know, under the circumstances we did the best we could. We did whatever we could.

He was the one that was running around looking for things, for food, for drink for everything because at that time they still had enough money to pay for all these things.

Q: Did you with you take something personal from home?

What did you take with you to Warszawa, that you remember? What did your father take? What did your grandfather take? What did they take with them?

A: My grandfather – not very much.

My father and his brother in law since he always travelled, he was in business....And we lived in this part of Poland where we had a lot of Germans. A lot of Germans lived. And we called them Volksdeutsche. They spoke a little different German too. And my mother and my father spoke good German too.

And we had a driver. When they needed a taxi, they always took this guy, this Volksdeutsche. He was like in the family practically. So my uncle and my father said: "You know what? There are beddings and a lot of things. We are going to take a large wagon, a covered wagon. And you are going to drive us to Warszawa. The women are going to go on a train with the children and I and my brother in law – we are going to go with you."

And he agreed. And sure enough my aunt was really also very well to do. She had a lot of personal jewelry and gold pieces and what not. .So she gave all this to the German driver. He should have on him because when we come to Nowy Dwór , they are supposed to be dividing from this part of Poland to that part....We are going to be like examined, whatever.

And just so happened. This happened when they came in, they made them take off the clothes and they looked everywhere for money and for other things. Of course my father didn't have anything on him and they didn't have....My uncle didn't have anything on him.

So they went out to the wagon. And what do you know? The wagon was gone with the driver. We didn't have anything.

Q: But it shows that your mother had trust in him.

A: My mother no, my father.

Q: Your father trusted him.

A: Yes. Yes. He was like one of the family. He came into the house. We treated him always so well and everything I liked.

It just so happened – my father didn't give him a lot of money or jewelry. Most of it he brought it to the children. We got all new shoes. And he put a lot of paper money in our shoes.

My mother – we had like sweaters with buttons. So she took off the buttons and she put in a kind of fabric. And we had like little gold pieces, you know. So she put them all in the....

So as far as money, we weren't big losers, just other things that we didn't have..

So we came to Warszawa we didn't have all the beddings and stuff that we needed, but somehow, you know what, if you have to, you will manage, you are doing the best you can. But my aunt – they were left practically with nothing.

Q: What did you eat at that time, when you were all of you in this small room?

A: I don't know.

Q: How did you wash? Where did you wash?

A: It wasn't....believe me, it was bad. It was very bad.

Q: So where did you wash yourselves? Still you were eight people altogether. .

A: I don't know.

When women washed, we washed in basins. We didn't have any showers. When men washed, the women went out. I don't know....Somehow we managed. And I remember my aunt – Branna was her name. She was the one who prepared meals.

Q: What meals? What was available?

A: Whatever was available.

Q: What? What? Do you remember?

A: You could get everything.

Q: Could you?

A: You could, yes, but the prices were very....

Q: Including meat?

A: I think so, yes, I think so. Somehow, I don't know how my father managed to bring.

Q: Was your grandfather with you?

A: No. No.

Q: Where was he?

A: He was with his daughter, the one that he lived with. He didn't live very long. We came there maybe not quite a year, he died. I don't remember seeing him a lot, I don't.

Q: So I would like to know the initial stages in Warszawa. You lived in this place.

What do you see? What do you encounter, let's call it.

A: Many times you encounter children, people lying on the street dead, covered with a newspaper or something, just lying everywhere.

Q: Actually it's the first time you encounter death.

A: Yes.

Q: As a very young girl, how do you deal with all that? It was all new to you.

A: Of course it was new. I mean it was....I don't know....It's such a long time that the feelings. You never forget, you have the picture before your eyes, but how I reacted, I cannot describe.

Q: No, what I would like to know if you talked to your parents – did you talk to thad about it at that time. Was it shocking to you as a child or you get used to the situation very quickly. That's also another possibility.

A: Yes. Yes. You have a point. Maybe, you know, it bothered you and then you tried to look away. But what would you do if you saw....If it will be somebody not dead yet, struggling, maybe you would go over and do something. But what can you do to a dead person?

Then my father found another thing by which he made a little money – to make soap. . In that little kitchen he made soap. .

Q: How did he make soap?

A: I don't know. He bought in some ways fat because he had to have some kind of fat. And then somebody told him that there is a chemical that you have to use. And this were cooking in those big huge pots for hours. And then he put some kind of a wooden floor. He put it on that and it was cooling on the balcony.

Q: And he sold it.

A: Yes. Than I went with him many times. There was a market, and I was standing and watching. I went with him to that place. And we were like selling pieces of soap. And once while we were walking practically out of the market, we hear sirens, sirens. And people were running like, you know. Everybody is running. So we don't ask questions because they won't tell us anyway. And we start running – my father and I. And we were running because they were out to catch men and put them right on the truck and took them away. But thanks God, he wasn't caught then. I fell, I hit myself

and all this, but then I survived. I'm O.K. And then he was kind of afraid to go to that market.

So we found another place. It wasn't that great, believe me. When we escaped from the last place where we were, so a Pollack that I knew, I used sometimes to work for him. so we went to his place. He says: "it is so dangerous here. You are not safe at all. It's too close to the city," he says, "But I will not make you go now, you know, it's cold and it's dark. You will stay until about three or four. And then I will lead you out. I will show you which way you should go. And go fast and as far as you can."

So sure enough we did what he told us to do. And he also told my mother we should never go into a village and right in the village and right in the village look for a place. But we should go, you know, there are some homes – poor people they built some ways out like one house, I don't know, maybe five kilometers away from the village, just standing in one place no where.

So we walk and finally we see this house. It was very dark inside. We go in there and we learnt to say a prayer. When you open a Polish door, you say a prayer. We said that yprayer. And then a woman, she looked old, maybe she was only 40 years old, but she looked like 140 years old. She was very tired and old. My mother said to her: "Would you let us sleep over this night here?" She says: "Yes, why not? But I tell you that now – I don't have much. If you are hungry, I don't have much in this house to eat."

So my mother says: "So what do you have?" She says: "I have potatoes, but they are frozen". Frozen potatoes, cold like you wouldn't believe it. And there is standing....just the whole furniture consisted of two, you know, bad looking beds. She says: "And that's all I have. The three of you can sleep in one bed and I can sleep in the other bed."

And then she thinks and thinks: "But if one of the girls wants to go to the village, it's not very far. She could get a little milk there." So my mother says: "O.K. my older daughter," like I'm going to go.

Sure enough she gives me a pot. And the pot doesn't have like those things that you hold. But that's what she had a broken up pot and frozen potatoes.

So she told me exactly how I should go to the village for the milk so I could buy there milk. So I go out and it's so cold, so bitter cold. And the whole way is nothing but a white blanket – snow, snow. My things go. At that time I didn't wear pants, everything wet and I walked and walked and walked.

Finally I found the place. I go in and I got the milk.

And I'm going with the milk and carrying. Then I feel that my hands are stuck to the pot. They got so frozen to the pot. But I don't want to drop it because that milk is so precious. I need that milk to bring back.

My mother had to stay and rub my hand and rub it until it got a little warm. So she could take out the pot from my hand. I will never forget it.

Q: Being a religious man, did your father go to any Synagogue? Was he praying at home?

A: All the time, every time.

Q: At home?

A: Yes, he lay Tefilin. My brother lay Tefilin. They always prayed.

Q: But they did not go out to Synagogues, did they?

A: On Shabbat they went.

Q: In Warszawa?

A: Yes, they found a Synagogue, they prayed.

Q: Did they?

A: If they found a Synagogue.

Q: Now, let's go to your grandfather. He went to his daughter who lived in Warszawa, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: She was living there all the time.

A: No. No. No. She was also sent out. The whole population of Jews was sent out. She was sent out too. But her husband wasn't there on account that he was in the Polish army.

CD Number 2

A: He didn't look Jewish, but he had a Jewish name. His name was Cohen. So he changed his name. He was like a prisoner of Poland, caught by the Germans. And he changed his name. And they liked him their a lot. But he knew that one day something is going to happen, it's going to come out. So he escaped somehow. And he wrote a letter to his wife and he told her not to contact him, he is in hiding. Then he also came to us, where my aunt, Chava lived. And he was hiding there. But then he was caught when they had those things when they were catching men and he was sent to Buchenwald. And actually there he met my father. But my father, before he went to Buchenwald, I think he was in Auschwitz. And then he was sent to Buchenwald.

Q: Did your father survive?

A: No, but Bernhard survived. My uncle survived. He actually lived in Israel and he died in Israel a few years ago.

His wife didn't survive. The child didn't survive, but he survived.

Q: We will go back to all your family members.

Again because I want to stick to chronology I ask you how did you manage, all of you? How did you wash? Where was the toilet? Such stuff, such questions.

A: You know the circumstances were bad. It is not to describe how bad they were actually. But you did your best, you know. I myself say: "How could I live like this?" "How could I...." you know. And I was only a child. And the grown-ups – how could they live in those circumstances?" But you didn't have any choice. You couldn't get anything better or so. How did they live in concentration camps?

Q: Did you go out?

A: Yes. Yes. We went out, yes. But you were never sure. O.K. They didn't hunt kids down, but they were constantly, you know, they were all over one minute and there was an alarm and people were running and the trucks were already standing. And whoever they could shoot they were shooting. They were shooting and they shot people. And then just like cattle, they just put them on those trucks. And that's it.

Q: Did you see it yourself – how Jews were put on trucks?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. I saw how they hung a few Jews too.

They weren't any men left in that place.

Q: Where was that?

A: That was in a town called Gostynin.

Q: When did you go there?

A: We went because everyone had to leave their homes and come to the city square.

Q: You are talking about Warszawa now?

A: No. This was when we escaped, after we escaped from Warszawa.

Q: We will come to it of course.

Because we are talking now about Warszawa – what did you see in Warszawa?

A: Mostly like what I told you. I saw people on the streets lying, covered with paper. And I saw them being counted like animals and put on trucks. You never saw anything good, you only saw tragedies. You saw a couple of men schlepping a wagon. And on that wagon I don't know how many bodies they had to dump them somewhere, to dump the people.

They were going around and picking up the dead and put them on one wagon, one on top of the other and they dumped them somewhere like mass graves or something.

Q: Now, let's talk about your grandfather. How was his situation? Did you see him?

A: I must have seen him. He would go, as my father used to say: "He is again in that Shteible." So he went to a Shteible, but it was bitter cold. And he was sitting there and learning all day. What was there for him to do? I mean.

Q: No, but it's interesting that he went to the Shteible and that was how he spent his time in the Shteible. Probably it gave him comfort.

A: Yes. My father said he used to sit in the Shteible.

Q: About your grandfather we are talking?

A: Yes. Yes.

He was learning. Nobody could do anything for him. By then there was nothing.

There were no other things for him to do.

Q: That was already the ghetto time.

A: There was a ghetto, but it was not completely closed.

Q: In Warszawa?

A: Yes.

Like you had a paper – you could go in, you could go out.

Q: Do you remember the street you lived in?

A: One street was Zamenhofa.

Q: Yes, that belonged to the Warszawa Ghetto.

A: Yes. And one street was not too far from thePawiak. Have you heard of that?

Q: The prison.

A: The Pawiak Prison.

Q: The Pawiak Prison, yes.

A: Not far from the prison. This was like – Pawiak and a Smocza, it was like a corner.

Q: So you moved from one place to another. What was the reason you left one place and went to another place?

A: Because in that first place after a while the people that we were paying rent were saying we are using too much water and we are using too much heat. And you know, maybe my father gave them another few....to make up for. They weren't people that you could live together with. We are too much room in the kitchen; We are cooking too much. I don't know. So we went to another place.

Q: And what was the other place like? Better conditions?

A: In a way, yes, there were better conditions.

Q: All of you, the whole family?

A: Yes, the whole family.

You know, we did whatever we could. Because there were people who were envying us, the way we lived because they had worse conditions than we had.

Q: Many of them were on the streets. Did you see the people who were living literally in the streets, did you see them?

A: They opened those big-big homes, whatever a Synagogues and they put I don't know how many families. And they put those bunk beds, two or three. They were lying and the food was just horrible. We had nothing to eat.

It was just....undescrivable, believe me! You just can't believe it! You didn't live to see it. It was just impossible.

Q: You were only 9 or 10 years?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do yourself? Did you have a book? Did you go with your father? Did you stay at home most of the time?

A: No, I was....In the second apartment where we lived there was a big court-yard, you know, like a building. And in the middle of it they had a courtyard. And then some of them were very nice....I don't think.... They were women. I don't think they were married but like 17 – 18 years old. And they would come down and they would play with us. They would sing songs with us. They would bring us sandwiches. So, you know, it was good.

Of course we didn't stay there long in Warszawa. We just came there in the end of 1939 and we left in 1941 I think.

Q: It's two years.

A: Yes, not quite two years.

Q: Almost two years.

A: My brother, I think, started going, but he wouldn't say especially in front of me and my sister, maybe my parents knew that he was going and doing something with the underground. He had Bar Mitzvah in Warszawa. So he was 13. But I think he must have....because every day, you know, he would dress and he would go away. We wouldn't see him for hours.

Q: How did he celebrate his Bar Mitzvah in Warszawa?

A: He just went with my father and my uncle. We didn't go. Maybe my mother went, I can't remember. Just to have his....

Q: Was it in the Synagogue?

A: In a Synagogue, yes. But he probably read the Haftarah, I don't know.

Q: Was anybody preparing him? That's the question.

A: No. He had private teachers before the war because he was going to go to some kind of a seminary in Warszawa, my mother wanted him to. So he had to learn a lot of Hebrew and stuff like that. He had private teachers teaching him. He was an extremely good student. He was like in Polish in all the other subjects he was always higher than hisHe was a real student. He loved to study. He had another friend who was just the same. And they were most of the time studying together.

Q: Now, about your aunt that was deported. How was it done actually?

A: From where?

Q: You said that your aunt had to be taken to a camp. You remember that when she left?

A: No.

Q: You were not there?

A: No. No. I don't remember at all. I know her daughter was shot.

Q: Until you left Warszawa, what happened?

Did you live under false papers?

A: Well, my mother had. Children – they didn't bother that much. And I don't know how my father and my brother went through, but they also came. You know, they were caught and they were put in jail, but they were let out somehow.

Q: But did they have false papers? That's the question.

A: No, my brother and my father did not have.

Q: Neither you.

A: No, I was a kid. Nobody actually bothered. What they did, that was my mother's idea, we had to travel....Once we got out of the hiding place, we had to walk and then we had to take a bus to go to my aunt Chava's. So I looked very Polish, blond hair. And my uncle, the one from Hamburg, he looked very Jewish actually. But it was in January.

Q: When you say 'very Jewish', what does it mean, very dark?

A: Yes, he had a dark beard and a short beard, you know, and somehow his looks. He looked Jewish. And he didn't want any....that they should know that he is a German Jew. So he kind of when we got on the bus, we talked about it before, he says: "More or less I'm going to pretend that I am mute – I can't hear, I can't talk," so....you know

My mother was the one, I suppose, who said that I should go with him because I look so Polish and I will be holding his hand going on the bus, you know, and we will be sitting together. And they put a little shawl, you know, since it was so cold, a shawl around his face. On top of it a hat. And somehow nobody asked him any questions. I mean, they came on the bus, looking for tickets, but nobody asked questions. And we got there O.K. the two of us.

You know what, we used every trick in the book, whatever we could.

Q: Like what?

A: Like whatever you know to hide us. I was just telling you the story.

Q: But meanwhile you were not in hiding. You were in Warszawa you tell us.

A: Yes.

Q: You were not yet in hiding.

A: No, in Warszawa we weren't in hiding. But afterwards, this was only what? This was only 1941. And the war didn't end until 1945. So there was still so much time.

Q: Of course.

A: All the others were gone. The only ones who were left was my mother and my sister, that's all. We didn't have anybody else.

Q: But that's why we want to hear the story, how it did....

What happened between the Warszawa Ghetto? Where did you go later? How did you go?

A: From Polish homes, from home to home.

Q: So from Warszawa where did you go and how did you go?

A: Now we stayed with Chava. I told you we stayed with Chava in this town Gostynin. And there when all the men were taken away, and just my brother was left....

Q: That was already in the time of the ghetto in Warszawa.

A: It must have been, yes. But there it was also a kind of a ghetto in Gostynin, all the Jews in one place, but if you had a paper that you could go out or in, you could still.

Q: Yes, but before that I would like to know how did you leave Warszawa? How did you leave it? Where did you go?

A: I'm telling you – we went everybody with the idea to go to Gostynin to Chava.

Q: But yet it's in Warszawa.

A: It's not in Warszawa. It's probably by bus I would say maybe a 5 hour drive. And we got there not together, everybody on a different day.

Q: She lived there?

A: She lived there, yes. She lived there.

Q: So how did you Still it was not so easy to leave the ghetto and go to another town for a Jew. How did you do it exactly?

A: We were taking chances, we were risking, how else?

Q: Yes. So you went. What did you take with you?

A: Nothing, whatever we could put on ourselves, no baggage, no luggage, no... just whatever we could put on ourselves.

So my mother used to take me to a place where there were wires.

Q: In Warszawa now.

A: In Warszawa. It wasn't yet closed with the high walls, but just wires around it. So she would lift up the wires and I would go under the wire and get on the Polish side. And she would put on my body like a belt that she made. And I would go to a Polish store. It wasn't easy because they had also some special coupons to buy food, especially like sugar or a piece of butter or an egg, you know. You couldn't buy as much as you want. And of course I didn't have those coupons. But I took a chance and I went into a store. And I'm standing because it wasn't like here – you go to a supermarket and you pick up grapes and you pay for them. There you had to ask that you want to buy grapes – so they picked it up for you and they gave you. So I'm standing in a line where everybody is standing. And there is a girl behind me. And she keeps on: "Jew! Jew! What are you doing here? Jew!" . And I pretend like I don't understand what she means.

And then she begins to punch me in the back. When she punched me, I guess, I start crying not that loud, but I cry.

Then we come closer with the woman that sells this stuff. And she says: "This is a Jew. You shouldn't be selling to her." She says: "What? I know that girl. This is not a Jewish girl. I know her mother. Her mother is a very sick woman in bed. And you should have pity because her father was killed in the war and they never came back from the war. And she is the only one who goes out to buy food for the family".

Q: You were lucky. You were lucky.

A: I was so....'lucky' is not a word.

Q: So what did you bring home?

A: What did I bring? When I went out and I wouldn't see people. So I would lift, you know, whatever I wore, a sweater or whatever and I would put an egg there and a

little bit of sugar and a little bit of....Salt was a big commodity, you know, even salt you couldn't get sometimes.

Q: At that time did you have meat, chicken or something?

A: Maybe a little of something. You know what, I can't remember eating a lot of meat or a lot of....

Q: Probably not. And vegetables?

A: The same. Vegetables in Poland you had only when they were growing. It wasn't that important. Maybe before the war it came from other countries like Italy or whatever, you know, more places, but during the war, especially for Jews....

Q: But you had cabbage, you had other stuff, potatoes?

A: Maybe beets, cabbage, potatoes.

Q: Grapefruits.

A: Something, that you know stays all year round without being refrigerated.

So I told my mother what had happened so she wouldn't let me go any more. She was waiting in the same place to lift those wires so I could get in.

Q: Did you do it with other children? Did you escape under the barbed wire whatever?

A: No. No.

The same happened in Gostynin. When we got to Gostynin, the same thing. She would do this and I would go to the farmers. I never went to a store. I would just go to a farmer and I would ask if they need some help, something to do in the house. It just so happened, once I knocked on the door and the man says: "Yes, you see my wife? She is lying in bed. She can't walk. If you know how to sweep the floors and if you know how to peel potatoes and do some, so you can come every day and you can work here."

So I used to do this. I used to go everyday.

Q: This was in Warszawa?

A: No, this was in Gostynin.

Q: I really want to finish with the Warszawa Ghetto and really understand how you all lived in the ghetto. When did you depart from your grandfather?

A: It just happened when my father hired this smuggler woman and was during the night.

Q: You were smuggled.

A: Yes, we were smuggled out. This was a paid person, a well-paid person especially for so many people. And she gave us instructions where to stay and where to go...

Q: 'She' is who, your aunt, Chava? Who is 'she'?

A: The smuggler.

Q: The smuggler. It was a woman?

A: A woman, a Polish woman. And from her my mother bought the document.

Q: She bought a false document?

A: It wasn't a false document. She said that this was her sister and she had died and she has her birth certificate.

So my mother had to get used to that name.

Q: For her what was? Did your mother change her name?

A: Of course. Her name was Pozmanter. That was a Jewish name.

Q: So how many birth certificates did you buy?

A: It wasn't. She only had....

Q: Only for your mother. .

A: Yes. He had one, also he bought one.

Q: In Gostynin you came to your aunt, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you depart from your grandfather?

A: He was dead, I told you. He died the first year we were in Warszawa. He died.

Q: Do you remember his funeral?

A: No. No. It was very cold. It must have been January, February. Only my father went, my mother and my aunt. I heard they took a piece of wood and they put his name, the dates and all the things.

After the war I went there to look for it, you know. Did I find it? I only found a piece of wood in a cemetery of hundreds of stones. When I was there, a lot of them were just broken up and thrown into the side. There were like mountains full of those....stones from before the war. I don't know, the Poles must have done that, just took them out.

Q: And when you came to Gostynin, you lived with your aunt Chava?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the situation there?

A: It wasn't so bad because I think my uncle, her husband was doing some tailoring.

Q: Actually why did they choose Gostynin?

A: On account of Chava.

Q: Yes, I understand, but do you know why did they choose, why did Chava and her husband chose....?

A: Because her husband had a brother that lived there from before the war. And they figured if they get there his brother will find them a place to live and so forth. That's how they went and we went on account because they were there.

Q: Yes.

So here they had a larger flat probably your aunt Chava.

A: Yes. Yes. A larger flat was what? three rooms – all they had.

Q: And what was your life there? How did you manage there with food, with living conditions and all that?

A: You know what, we managed the best we could, exactly how – I don't know, but we weren't hungry. We still managed to buy food and eat. The main problem was to have what to eat. I'm sure that we didn't eat good food, but we ate. We didn't starve.

Q: Did you go out? Did you play? You were a young girl.

A: Yes. Yes. I made some friends, I played.

Q: Jewish friends?

A: Only Jewish friends because it was already divided where Jews were allowed to live and where Jews could not live. So we had no choice.

Q: Were you in a ghetto in Gostynin?

A: As I told you, it was a ghetto – people used to have those permissions to go if there was work outside, they had those permissions, they had to show it. There was a gate. The police was standing and they had to show.

Being a girl, my mother used to do the same thing. She would lift the wires, and would just run out.

Q: So far you haven't mentioned even once an S.S. or a Nazi. Did you see them in the ghetto? You never mentioned them.

A: Of course I saw them.

But I'm not saying that they came to our house and they made somethingI will tell you a story. If you want to hear.

Q: Yes, of course I would like to hear.

A: This comes afterwards.

Q: You can tell us now that you will not forget later.

Where was that – the story that you want to tell us was in Gostynin?

A: No, that was in a small Polish village.

Q: After Gostynin.

A: Yes, after Gostynin.

Especially my mother. she had already accommodated my sister in a place and they made up like they are going to keep her to the end of the war – my sister. And I was in a place where they were very nice to me. But they were also getting a little more scared of the situation because in every Polish door practically there had to be a sign that they don't have any strangers.

I don't think at that point they knew there were no Jews anywhere. So they didn't mention Jews or anything. But the Poles were very scared to have strangers in their

places. So one day my mother says: "We are going to go to these people, Pavorsky," (Pavorsky I think.) Whatever she said, I do.

We both go to that village. And that village was only maybe I would say 20 kilometers or maybe less from my town. We were going, we were changing places, but we were coming closer and closer to the place of my town.

I said: "You know, it's not far." And she says: "We have no choice. We have to go there." I didn't know anything.

We come in there and he definitely recognized my mother right away. And she says: "Yes, I came to you because you are the only person that can save our lives or you can dispose of us. We have no where to go. We have nothing left. We have no money. We have nothing to give. But you know, now our lives are in your hands", and why? Listen to this. Just a year before the war apparently children weren't told these things, this man was in North America. He came back with a little bit of money. He was a poor farmer. So once he came with some especially American money. So he was going to build himself a nice house. He started building this house. And in the middle of doing it, he ran out of cash. So he came to my father for a loan. And I guess my father gave him the loan. I don't know what the conditions were. Was it on interest or just Good will. You know, children weren't told this story.

So he was thinking and thinking. Then he said: "How can I kill you or your daughter? Your husband was so good to me." So my mother says: "Where am I going to stay?" He says: "Don't worry. I'm thinking. I will come out with some kind of a plan. Get undressed," whatever we wore.

He had lost the same year a son and a wife of tuberculosis. So "My daughters are going to make you a nice lunch and all this." And he sat down. At that time he was doing very well. His house was done. And then he comes and he tells my mother: "You cannot be around the house or outdoors because a lot of people know you. So, I'm going to build you a double wall kind of in the horses' stable. And that's where you are going to be. You are going to be very uncomfortable, but that's the only

solution you have to be hiding. Maybe the war will end tomorrow." My mother says: "I wish it would." And she was staying there. The daughters were taking in food for her of course. And I was running around. He had a daughter at my age. He had at that time I think 4 daughters in the house and one was in Germany. She was taken to work in Germany. And it was going on for a few months, 3 – 4 months.

One day we were sitting like Saturday and having lunch. And he says: "You know, it's a pity." (His daughters were calling my mother 'aunt'). "It's a pity that the aunt cannot come out. She hasn't really washed herself properly or had some fresh air. I think that Saturday is a very safe evening. I think she could come out, you know, because most of the Germans here – they would like to have good times. They go to the beer parlors and they drink and they get drunk. And they have women there and all this." And his plan looked so good, you know. The girls were so happy. Of course I was over-joyed with my mother. I'm going to sleep with my mother.

And sure enough she comes and we have nice supper and all this. We go to sleep. Around 2:00 or so somebody is knocking on the door, started with us. And he runs out. Like was in another room, he wasn't in our room. But the knock was getting harder and harder and then they started: "Aufmachen! Aufmachen!"

Q: "Open! Open!"

A: Yes. "Aufmachen!" And he takes a lantern. He puts on the light and he goes to the door. And it was black and black and brown uniforms Gestapo. A Gestapo walks in and I can't remember it was one Pollack or two Pollacks walked behind. And he goes right a way with a flash light and he looks. "And who is that old woman over there?" And he says: "That's my sister." "Your sister? Don't you know that this is not the time when people can come and socialize and visit sisters or brothers?! Don't you know this is not allowed?!" He doesn't know what...because he was talking German, you know. The other person translates and tells him what to say. And he is shaking. He is holding that lantern and he is shaking like you know.

And then he says: "Documents! Documents!" So quickly my mothers says in Polish to one of the girls where they areSo they bring the birth certificates. And he looks and looks: "That's your sister.And why is she here?" "Well, he husband has just died recently and she has nobody. So she came just for a couple of days." "Well, that's the last time she is going to come here because she is not allowed to go anywhere. And you are not allowed to have any people in your house. And if I see any strangers here another time, your house is going to be burnt and you and your family with it." Can you imagine? Just that Saturday – can you imagine this? And he was the one that saved our lives. Because of him we went through Germany as Poles. When we came after the war, he was dead. The Germans killed him. They killed him and his son too.

Q: But with your permission we will go back to Gostynin.

What can you tell us about your life there with your aunt?

A: Well, we did the best we could with everything. But they were constantly hunting like animals they were hunting people.

Q: How did they do it, you remember? When you say 'hunting...'

A: Well, they came out, a lot of them with rifles. And if they couldn't get the person, they shot him on the spot. And they hung all those people too.

I don't know what the crime was, I can't remember.

Q: Did you see them?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Where was it in the centre of town?

A: In that centre of town in the square. Everybody with children, with babies, women, everybody had to get out and get there. "And that's going to happen to all of you, if you...." I can't remember what the crime was and they were hanging, I don't know, a few men.

Q: Were they young people?

A: Yes, they were all young people.

I remember my mother put her hand on my eyes: "Little children, they shouldn't see".

Q: Did you wear the Jewish badge?

A: No, I never did.

Q: Did your mother?

A: My mother did. I never did because I ran around like a Shikse.

Q: But your mother and your father?

A: Yes, they had to because if you were caught and you didn't wear it, you were punished.

Q: Since when did you wear the Jewish badge, the Judenstern?

A: Since when? Since Warszawa maybe. I can't remember. I think it must have started in Warszawa. We had like a yellow Maggen David it says: "Jude." I never wore it, no. As a matter of fact, you know what I wore? I had to right away take it off. I wore a Hitlejugend jacket.

Q: Where did you have that from?

A: That's another story.

Q: Yes, please tell us the story.

A: Just when my mother and I were in Germany, Sundays we had off. So I got somehow very jittery – you know staying in that same place all the time, doing the same thing. And I said to my mother: "I'm going out to the village. "This was out on a farm, way out it was – sugar beets – a huge farm thousands and thousands of acres. This man had that farm before. He was a German. Before the war he was a very rich person.

And my mother says: "No, I don't want you to go. You have to pass this forest. I don't want you to go". You know you are a kid, you don't listen to your mother.

So I get up in the morning 6:00 and I go. Then I walk around. A lot of places were closed, but one like a tavern was open. So I go inside and there is this very high counter. And I am a short little girl standing, I don't even reach the counter and that man a huge man, a fat big man, he looks down. He says in German: "Little girl, what

are you doing here? What do you want?" You know, girls don't go to this just....And I pretend that I don't understand but I...."Arbeit! Arbeit! Arbeit!" He kept looking at me, you know. "Arbeit! Arbeit! Arbeit!"

So he was looking at me – Is this girl going to work? So he starts screaming: "Mutti! Mutti!" They lived in the back of the store, the tavern.

And she comes out and he says: "This little girl wants to work. You believe that she knows how to work?" And she says: "I have such a mess inside, you know, I'm preparing dinner because our daughter," she gave the name. I understood every word. I knew German pretty well. ... "And I have no time to clean. I have no time for this or that."

So he says: "Take her in," you know, "Take her in. Let her clean".

Sure enough I go in right away. She tells me to wash the kitchen floor, to clean the silver. And she gives me chores. And I work-work-work. I didn't look up just work and work.

And then it's getting dark and I look out the window. She says: "You want to go home?" I say: "Yes because I have to pass this forest and it's dark." She says: "Do you have something to wear?" I say: "I wear only what I....I don't have any clothes. I only have this".

So she goes upstairs and sure enough she comes down with a Hitlerjugend jacket. And she says to me in German: "That's my son's jacket when he was in the Hitlerjugend, but now he is already in the army." And she gives it to me. "You can wear it. You can keep it".

I come back and my mother sees that jacket. She says here because there were other workers besides us. There were Russian workers, Ukrainian workers, there were Italian prisoners in that same place. "They are going to see you wearing 'Hitlerjugend jacket, they will think that you turned Hitlerjugend and they are going to kill you". She was so worried.

The next day I went to a place and I bought some navy blue paint and she poured in hot water. And she dumped the jacket and she made me a navy jacket. I was wearing it a year after the war. I didn't have a better jacket.

Q: So we are still in Gostynin.

A: Yes. Practically all the men were taken away. And there were women and little baby children left.

Q: You mean the Aktias? You saw Aktias?

A: Yes, you know practically every few days another....Those big trucks with men. My father was on it. Once my mother bought him out.

Q: You didn't mention about your father – how was it? They came to take him from home? They took him from the street? They caught him in the street?

A: They caught him in the street.

Q: And put him.....

A: Put him on the truck.

So the first time we went there.

Q: Where is 'there'?

A: A place where those trucks were standing.

The Gestapoes were running around with rifles. And if they couldn't get somebody who was trying to run away, they shot him. So not too many men were running away. Mostly they stayed and they put them on those trucks.

Q: Did they kill them on the street also? Did you see that too? They were killed in the street?

A: No. I didn't not see them killing people in the street. No, I did not see. But I saw them hang.

So I don't know, she had some, I don't know – they must have had some a couple of gold pieces or something that she gave somebody, one of the Jewish people like they were taken. But they knew if it's not going to go this time, it's going to go next

time. We didn't know, we felt – that's the end. They are taking these trucks and no more.

Q: You knew where people were taken?

A: No. Nobody knew, except I think my mother mentioned once after the war not during the war that somebody escaped from one of the concentration camps. I can't remember which one it was and came and said: "Jews, do whatever you can – run, hide because you are going to a place where you are going to be burnt. They are burning people."

Q: And what did she tell you? Did they take him seriously?

A: Some did and some didn't. But where was there to run? Where was there to hide? There were no hiding places. There was maybe one single person out of a thousand. Where was there to go?

A friend of my husband from the same town – he was hiding (what do you call it?) In the winter they have enough room in the barns and they keep it. This is where he was lying for weeks, for months. He froze his feet.

Where was there....we came to ...that was the end and that's it – either that or go to the camps. .

Q: So let's go back to your father. First of all because your father did not come back, how would you describe your father? What memories do you have of your father?

A: I have great memories.

Q: Like what?

A: Well, he was a very kind, good man. And to us, children, he was you know ...when he came in, he was like Santa Clause walked in. He always brought us goodies. And in general he was a very good person.

Q: Did you see he was changing during the time?

A: Changing in what way?

Q: Changing in his personality? Was there any change because at the beginning you describe that your father was happy to stay in Poland before?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: When he saw all that, all this process, how did he face it, do you remember?

A: I don't know. He didn't believe that that's going to be what happened because he could have gone to Israel. So he didn't go to America. I mean he wasn't so happy to go to America either.

So my mother suggested we should go to Israel. In Israel you didn't have to have somebody sign papers for you. All you have to show is you have so much money or whatever.

And we had that money and she begged them. She was a Zionist. She loved Israel. She wanted to go, just leave Poland.

Q: Why do you think he did not want to go? Maybe he felt comfortable in Poland? Maybe he had trust in Poland? Maybe he wanted to be in Poland?

A: I don't know how much trust, but he was comfortable.

You see just before the war, if the war broke out two months or three months later, we wouldn't even be in our town because he was negotiating to buy a big house in a bigger city, Włocławek . He practically gave already deposit. But my mother somehow, I don't know she kept him back and she said what is good because this way we still had money to save.

Q: Who was more dominant, I mean in the hard time, when you were in the ghetto or when you were in Gostynin? Who took the initiative? Was it more your father or your mother?

A: I think maybe my mother. Afterwards he was depressed because he knew that we are going to get separated, he won't have his family, he was very depressed.

Q: He changed.

A: Yes. He wasn't a happy man. But it was too late. Everything happened too fast, too soon, too... and sure enough. What can I say?

Q: Do you remember the last time you saw him before he was caught and sent?

A: Yes. Yes. I was sitting and crying.

Q: But at that time you didn't know he will be going.

A: Yes. We knew he was already on the truck. They were still hunting for more people to put them on.

Q: And you saw it, you went to the...?

A: Yes. Yes. I was there.

But they kept on saying they are taking them to a place, to a working place. They are going to be working.

Q: Did you have some time to separate, to say something to each other?

A: I think so. I think so.

I think from one or two places he wrote us letters. I don't know how he did it because there was no mail for Jews in the concentration camps. I don't know how he did it, but we received once or twice letters.

Q: From Buchenwald?

A: No. It must have been from Auschwitz.

I have now (which is also very rare) because a lot of people that were in Auschwitz they never rememberedI don't know if he had a number or not that anybody had to sign a document. But a cousin of ours was in Washington a couple of years ago. And he found in the files , my father's name and his signature on the document. And I can tell it's my father's signature. I remember my father's signature. I have it. He wrote me a couple of letters.

Q: What did he write to you?

A: In the letters?

Q: Yes.

A: Do you know the spirit of the letters?

Q: Well, mostly there were questions – how we are doing? What are we living from? Where are we living? Things like this.

I don't know how this happened. Maybe they had somebody that looked after them. You know, they were groups – one group of tailors, a group of electricians.... Maybe he gave them that he is something and he was in such a group. Maybe the man that looked after them was nice enough. Some Germans were nice in the concentration camps too. And maybe he mailed that letter for him. I don't know.

CD Number 3

A: So what else can I tell you about Gostynin?

Q: Yes.

A: I can tell you that it was almost like a smaller version of Warszawa where people were hunted, especially men at first. And we knew that any day everybody will be sent away from there. There was a lot of unrest and a lot of hungry people running around.

Q: I asked you already. Did you have some of your family members who were hunted?

A: Well, I'm not so sure, but I think that my aunt Branna, the one that lived in Hamburg was sent away to some kind of a working camp.

Q: And her husband?

A: And her husband, not together, but not very long after they took him too. So only the daughter was left with us.

And then it started with my uncle, Chava's husband. And practically the only one as far as a male was left was my brother. He was only about 15 years old. Once he jumped from a second floor window. They were coming in one way and he just jumped and ran away. So they didn't catch him.

Q: How was it done? Was it done by the Germans? Was it done with the help of the Jewish Police?

A: I don't think it was done by the Jewish Police, maybe some Polish, Pollacks, you know.

Q: The Polish. Wow people were treated when they came? How was it done? They knocked at the doors? How was it done?

A: They were going from house to house: "Raus! Raus!" you know. People should get out in the street.

And some of them were running away or trying to hide. So they came in and they looked under the beds, in the beds, where was there to hide? But they lived in very small homes. The conditions were not what you have in a house. You had beds, a table....It wasn't like a beautifully furnished house or a big house and not obviously as big for us would normally live under such conditions. But when you had to live like this, you lived as long as you had a place to stay.

And that's how we....the confidence was very down when everybody was depressed because most who was there – women and children. And some didn't know how to manage with all the children and all what's going on.

Q: You were left with your brother?

A: Yes with my brother and my youngest sister, Sarah. We were still, you know. I was the one that my mother used to help me get out. She just lifted up the wires and I would go. And I would go to a farmer, maybe I don't know 5 kilometers, 10 kilometers.

Q: From Gostynin you went?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. I was going.

And I was asking if I could do some work. And I told him that I....He knew that. He was a smart man. And I said: "We are all hungry. Would you us....at the end of the day when I'm finished, will you give me something to take home for my brothers and sisters?"

Q: Did he give you?

A: Yes. Yes. He always gave me. He was very nice.

Q: What did you do at the farmers'?

A: What did I do? I swept the kitchen floor. I washed the dishes. I peeled potatoes.

Whatever he asked me to do I did.

He had a sick wife. She was lying in bed. She must have been paralyzed. She couldn't talk. And sometimes she told me or he told me to make some kind of a soup, something cook up and give her something to eat.

Q: And what did he let you take home?

A: It depends. He was actually very nice to me.

First of all, he gave me bread and then a little bottle whatever, a small bottle with sweet cream. And I was carrying under my clothes everything except the bread I didn't.... Some potatoes, carrots, whatever he could he gave me.

Q: And when you left Gostynin for the farm, you were not checked, you were not....?

How did you do it?

A: Somehow no, no, no. I wasn't

Q: It was possible to do it.

A: Yes. Yes. My mother also was waiting and she helped me get under those wires and I crawled in and crawled back.

And one day. I asked him if he could also (my mother was a very good worker) could she come there and help and do some things like wash clothes.

Q: And did he agree to this?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. He agreed and we both went. We both were working not every day but maybe you know once a week or so.

Q: Did he know you were Jewish?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes. He knew.

He was a nice person that not only for his benefit he needed us, but he wanted to help. We told him that we have an aunt and she has small children and the children are hungry and they have nothing to eat.. So he was very nice.

Q: What was his name?

A: I just can't remember. I cannot remember his name, so many years ago.

And this was the place where we escaped the last time where they were already taking with trucks women, children, old people. So that night we decided we are not going to go on the trucks and we all ran actually towards that farm towards his farm. But on the way we heard like bullets were flying because a lot of some other people were also running. And between those bullets flying I think my cousin Sara, Branna's daughter was killed, her close friend that also ran away because we never saw them again.

Q: One minute, they ran with you.

A: They ran. Everybody ran practically in one direction like towards out of the city. And they realized that the people are running. So they started shooting. It was mostly women. A woman that had 3 or 4 small children – she couldn't run. So she stayed where she had to stay. She was the first one to be taken on the trucks. But someone, you know, like my cousin – she was only 22 years old, her friend from the same age. My brother started running.

Q: This cousin that you just mentioned he was taken from Hamburg, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: Because she perished, can you tell us a bit about this girl, the daughter of your aunt, your cousin? What do you remember of her? What was her name please?

A: Sarah.

Well, I don't know what school to she was going to in Hamburg, but she was a very nice and refined girl. And we were trying to teach her Polish because you know she spoke mostly German. And as children we had a good relationship. She was trying to teach us German and she was, you know, but she couldn't be too helpful on account ofshe didn't speak the language. She didn't know too much Yiddish and English whatsoever I suppose. And sometimes she pretended that she is mute when it came to Germans, you know, something so she pretended that she cannot talk, I don't know why.

They knew that German Jews were persecuted even worse than Polish Jews at that time.

Q: So all of you ran away from the home, yes?

A: Yes.

Well, they came. Wherever we went, they came with us.

Q: Yes, but how was it done that she was shot?

A: I'm telling you she was running away when they were catching.

Q: With all of you.

A: Yes, practically. We – my mother and I and my aunt Chava with her three children and my sister – we went first because we had a place to go. We went to that farmer.

We didn't know if he is going to let us stay, but we took a chance.

Q: And she didn't join.

A: And she joined, but later, you know. It wasn't wise to go in big groups to begin with. Because my mother had to help out her sister because they were all small children. So she was helping with the small children, carrying them. And I probably took my sister's hand and dragged her with me.

And apparently my brother was hiding in a toilet outdoors (You know at that time the toilets were outdoors) and he was caught in one of those toilets. And we never saw him again.

Q: That was already in the village or before you went to this village, to this farmer?

A: What do you mean?

Q: I'm talking about your brother.

A: It was still in the town where he tried to hide. He had in mind, if things were quite down, he won't hear voices, he is going to start running in the fields and run away. But he must have been caught and put on the trucks. Since then we haven't seen him. We didn't know where he disappeared.

And we did what he told us, , to get up early in the morning and just try no to go to a big city but go on side, little roads and get to small farms somewhere. .

Q: When you ran away, when you escaped to this farm, how long did you stay there?

And how many of you were there?

A: Only my mother, my sister, myself and my aunt with the 3 children.

Q: And he got you all in?

A: Yes, just for a few hours, we needed to ...practically a night, like 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning we had to leave and he showed us where to go.

Q: Where did you go?

A: We went to a place, I think it was called ...the city next to this place was called Ciechanów, but we didn't go into homes in Ciechanów. I don't even know if Jews were still there or not, but he told us to avoid not to go there, to go to small farms. So if we see somewhere there is a farm is standing on its own to knock on the door and come in.

Q: And people let you in?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Because there were some people.

A: Well, we didn't go all together....

Q: You, your aunt with her children, your mother.

A: We didn't go all to the same... You know one went next door, one went this way, one went that way. And my mother had some little gold pieces.

Q: So she gave him gold.

A: She told the man. First I was supposed to stay with this family. He accepted this. He said I can stay here. He has a big family and I look like a Shikse and I will be fitting in really well with them.

She left me there.

Q: Who were they', this family, this farmer, do you know the names? What were they?

A: No. I told you I don't remember the names.

Q: How long did you stay with them?

A: I probably stayed with them six months or so.

Q: And what can you tell us about your life there?

A: I ate a lot of dead birds that much. They had poultry, they had chickens and they had geese and turkeys whatever they were raising were dying of some kind of a disease. So every day when he went in the morning to barn, he came back holding a whole bunch of chickens or turkeys whatever. And she was pouring on it hot water. And we were kind of getting rid of the feathers and than she was cooking it and we were eating it.

So right away I wasn't hungry, you know, I wasn't starving like sometimes in the places in the ghettos.

Q: Did they know you were Jewish?

A: Yes. Yes. They knew I was Jewish. They were trying to teach me....

Q: So what did you do there, what work? Domestic work?

A: Yes. Most of the day – a very exciting job – I was sitting and peeling potatoes and carrots and stuff like that.

Especially we are talking about winter time – what's there to do on a farm.

Q: They had other children?

A: Well, there were, I think, three daughters married with their husbands. And maybe one girl was a little older than myself. They were all like mostly grown.

Q: Did they come to visit when you were there?

A: My mother?

Q: No, this family – other people of the family – they were not suspicious that you are there?

A: No. No. Don't forget, this is war time. People were not socializing. They just wanted to be left alone. They themselves didn't know what tomorrow is going to bring for them.

The Germans, you know, their things you heard all the time. They were burning up farms, they were...you know, doing all kinds of things to Poles too.

Q: But it was very risky for a Pole to keep a Jewish girl.

A: Of course. That's why they didn't socialize, they didn't have any visitors.

Q: That was my question. You said that they had three daughters and three sons in law. Did they visit?

A: They lived there. They lived with them.

Q: They lived with them.

A: They all lived, you know.

They didn't have a big house. They had 2 or 3 rooms in the house.

Q: And how did they treat you? Did you eat with them?

A: Yes. Yes. As far as food, I ate. Whatever they ate, I ate and they were very nice to me. They never abused me. They never called me names.

It just so happened I had some kind of I guess I was not washing enough. So I had a lot of those on my feet. From top to bottom I had those....

Q: Lice?

A: Not lice, those you know open....openfirst you get a little pimple. And then the pimple gets bigger and bigger and it opens and pus comes out sore , because had stockings and in the evening I wanted to take them off but they were so glued to the things. I could hardly take them off. But I think once she gave me water I should soak it.

Q: Where was your mother at that time?

A: She was also in a place for a few, you know, she was going from place to place. Actually not too many people wanted to keep her.

Q: Because she was older.

A: She was older and she looked more Jewish. But while I was there, she came to see me once or twice.

Q: What did she tell you? In what conditions was she in?

A: Well, the same, you know, it wasn't not good conditions. Most of the time she didn't even sleep in a house. They kept her in a barn somewhere, very bad conditions actually.

Q: What happened to Chava and her children?

A: Chava was caught by Germans with one child, with the baby. And she made up some kind of kakkamanya stories and they just didn't believe it. And they were trying like to... They gave her questions like you would question a spy, you know. And she kept on saying: "What are you talking about? I don't understand." But they thought that she was actually a spy. They didn't think that she was Jewish, but a spy for the Pollacks. And they killed her.

And apparently the little boy – she didn't say that she had a child, a baby, but the Pollacks in that village – they all knew that the little boy is Jewish – a boy, you can recognize. So they drowned him. They put a stone around his neck and they drowned him.

Q: Who gave you this information?

A: A neighbour in that village that knew about that. He told my mother about these things.

Q: Chava actually owned a house in Gostynin, yes?

A: She lived in that house. I don't know if she owned it. I doubt it.

Q: You all came to her actually.

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: She was caught after you left for the farm? When was she caught?

A: Yes. Yes. She was caught at that time.

Q: She did not run away with you?

A: She ran away with us. She found a place for She had one girl and two boys. The girl was like a middle girl and she went into a house. And in that house she left her because this couple did not have children and they were delighted when she

said she is going to leave the little girl because they wanted a child very badly and they couldn't get a child.

And somehow the woman said: "Under one condition - you survive the war, I will give it back to you. But if you don't, nobody can take her away from us. She is going to be our child." And right after she left, they took her to church and they baptized her and they looked after her O.K. She had a nice home.

Q: And?

A: And after the war my mother remembered where her sister left her. And she went there and she wanted the girl back. She says: "But you are not her mother. You are only an aunt. You have no right. We made up that only if the mother survives, she can take her back. No other person will take her alive from us."

So she didn't know what to do, how to deal with it. So she went to the Russian police. And there was a Jewish man there. He was in the police, I don't know what he was actually....

And also at that time they already organized an Israeli Counter-Agency I think and they were looking for Jewish children. This was somewhere around Krakow, in Galicia. And my mother didn't know what to do, how to You know, she is not going to leave this little girl with the Pollacks.

So she went there after she left us in a DP camp - me and my sister. And she went back to Poland and she told them the story what had happened - she can't get the child out. And they said they are going to take care of it. And they got her out. They said that they must. They came here to rescue Jewish children and bring them back to Israel and no Jewish child can be left behind.

Q: So they took her.

A: So they took her by force.

Q: To Israel in the end?

A: Yes.

Q: She lived here.

A: Yes.

Q: She is still around?

A: No, actually they took her to my mother, where my mother was waiting in Austria at that time. And my mother took her and she brought her back to the DP camp where we lived.

Q: And after that she left with you for

A: It's a long story.

From there we all went. There she found he sister's son, that little boy. He was at that time because when the war broke out, he was 4.5 years old.

Q: How did the boy survive?

A: He wrote a book now. He survived... They were throwing him out from every house. Nobody wanted to keep him. And he didn't know anymore where his mother was, where his aunt was....He didn't know about things. Some things he didn't remember. Finally one Pollack, a very nice personbecause when they asked him: "What's your name", he said: "Abramek Strikosky." Strikosky was their name and his name was always Abraham. So they called him Abramek, Abramek Strikosky. What does a child know? He remembered his name. So he says it this way. This Pollack called him to the house, took him to the bed room and he said to him: "Listen, little boy, your name is not anymore Abramek Strikosky. I mean you can have Strikosky, but Abramek – forget it. If you want to live, your name is going to be Józiek. And just if anybody asks you: 'what's your name?' Józiek". Forget that you had an Abramek name because that's a real Jewish name."

He didn't even know the real meaning of Jewish or anything. What does a 5 or 6 year old child know. He never went to school.

And he says: "I'm going to try and ask around in the village. I don't need a little boy to help me. But maybe somebody wants you."

So that's what he did. In that same village he couldn't find anyone. So he went to another village. A man came. He says: "I'm so short in help. I'm going to teach that kid whatever he wants to do and I will take him."

And he went to that man. But that man was such an anti-Semite. He knew he was Jewish and all the time he gave him such a hard time. He was there for almost three years. He never slept in the house. He always slept in the barn.

And he did work. He used to get up. He said: "You must get up in the morning 4:00 in the morning and bring water for the horses and put hay for them."

So he slept there with the horses and that's what he was doing. He never washed with warm water. He started growing a little. So whatever he had in clothes, everything was too small what he had from before. So he was just wearing rags. And shoes he has – two left shoes – not a right and a left, but two left shoes he found somewhere in the garbage or something. That's how he was dressed.

So one day after the war in 1946 I think it was the farmer went with something to sell in the weekly market. You know they had a weekly market there. On Wednesday they have a weekly market. And he took staff and he says: "Józiek, you come because you have to sit on the"....what they call it. I forgot already. They didn't drive cars. They didn't ...".buggies". And he said: "Because I'm going with the staff to sell and you have to sit and watch the horses nobody steals."

So of course he sits and watches the horses. And a man passes by. He says so: "Boy, what do you have for sale?" He says: "I have nothing." "So what did you come to the market for?" He says: "Well, my man told me to sit here." "What do you mean, your man? Your father." He says: "No, I don't have a father."

So this man goes a little closer. "So who are you?" "I work for the man." He sees that big-big person, a big worker, a little boy. He says: "Get off the wagon." So he goes down the wagon and then he takes him to the side and he says: "Put your pants down." He looks and he says that he is a circumcised boy. So he figured he must be a Jewish boy.

So he didn't say anything but he phoned into like I told you they had there like an Israeli Counter-Agency. They had some Russians who were looking for lost Jewish children. And he told them: "I have seen." And he found out that farmer's name and he found out the place where the place was. And they asked my mother if she wants to come along to see if it's her sister's son, her nephew.

And sure enough the minute she goes in, even he recognized my mother. He starts screaming: "I'm not going to go with her! No, I don't want to go with her because she is a Jew and they kill the children and use their blood for Matzot." He starts screaming: "I'm not going to go with her!"

But she didn't pay enough attention. She starts talking to the Goy. So he says: "I need him, but if you pay me good, you can have him." And she took along a little bit of money. And she told him she is going to give him everything that she has. And she took him away. And she brought him back to Feldafing.

And he was so dirty, that we were rubbing his hands here and his feet for weeks. Everybody was taking turns. We just couldn't wash off that dirt because he was there like over three years or something and he never had a warm bath. He never washed himself with soap and warm water. And that dirt just wouldn't come off no matter how much soap and how much whatever We put oil on it to soften. It got off.

Q: How was his adjustment to the family, to life?

A: For the boy?

Q: Yes.

A: Somehow he adjusted pretty fast, pretty fast.

My mother got right away for him a Hebrew teacher and she started teaching him, a little bit of Hebrew. And then his Bar Mitzvah came up. So she hired a person to teach him for the Bar Mitzvah. In the DP camp in Feldafing he had his Bar Mitzvah. So we had them both. We had the girl and we had the boy. And they travelled with us, wherever we went.

Q: Because you mentioned the Bar Mitzvah you told us that actually your brother still had a Bar Mitzvah.

A: That was in Warszawa.

Q: In Warszawa.

What was at that time a Bar Mitzvah like in this situation?

A: I don't know. I know that my father and mother just went in the morning to Schul with him. We didn't even go. This was no excitement, no....no guests invited. And I told you, we weren't so back off comparing to other people that didn't have money or couldn't do anything.. And I guess we just had enough, but we couldn't you know, we didn't.....

Q: Who prepared children at that time for their Bar Mitzvahs? Who prepared him then, your father?

A: I don't know, I really don't know. I don't know.

He had a background because he was going to 'Cheder' and he had also a tutor who came to teach him because he was going to go in Warszawa to a school.

Q: We will go now back to you.

You told us about your life with this farmer. You met with your mother you told us.

A: And also I want to tell you about one incident.

Q: Yes please.

A: I was with this farmer. It was a small family.

Q: Are you talking about a specific farmer or another farmer?

A: Another farmer because you know, you didn't stay long periods of time in one place. Some people got to know that you are there, why are you there for so long. At first they gave an excuse: "My cousin's daughter came to visit." Or: "My sister in law," and all that. So how long can a guest like this stay? So you know we were switching, we were going from place to place.

Q: And you wanted to tell us about a certain....

A: Yes, this incident.

So one morning after breakfast she says to me....They had those big shelters where they kept onions, beets, carrots, potatoes.

Q: For the winter.

A: For the winter.

They cover them up with lots of straw – first earth and then lots of straw. And there they were preserved like somebody puts in a fridge for a long period.

So she says: "You know what, there isn't much to do in the house. So take two straw baskets and go in there and try to gather if you see rotten ones...." Sometimes they get a little rotten or something. She says: "Put them in those baskets and sit there. Take your time."

And I'm sitting. Suddenly I see like a shadow. You know it wasn't a window that I could look out but like a shadow passing close to....they had a bunker there. By nature I'm very curious. So I run out to see who is walking. It was a very cold, freezing day. Sure enough I see my sister. I didn't even know where she was, where my mother left her.

So she is walking and I....her name is also Sarah. I say: "Sarah, where are you walking?" Then I look at her. And she was crying, I suppose. So she was crying, her nose was running. And all of this was frozen, hanging from her nose. She says: "They threw me out and I don't know where I'm going. I'm just going to find a place. I saw a house. Maybe I will go in here." I say: "Sure you are going to go in here because I'm staying here." And she started kissing me.

Q: Did she join you in the farm?

A: Yes, but she couldn't stay. They couldn'tBut she was very nice. She told her to take everything off and get the cold out of her. And she made her warm milk. And she gave her whatever something to eat. And she was sitting and crying and crying. So she says: "Don't cry. We are going to find some kind of a solution for you." Her husband wasn't home. Then when the husband came, she told him what had happened that she was thrown out of the place and she has no place to go. So he

says: "Let her sleep over here. In the morning I will put her on the wagon." And he had somewhere some relatives. I don't know they were brothers and sisters. . . He says: "I'm going to drive her over there. Maybe they are going to keep her." That's what he did. There were some nice people, I'm telling you.

Q: So really the question, what I see from your story, that you had trust. And those people treated you very kindly.

A: Yes. Yes, because I never had a bad experience. Never anybody like beat me up or called me, , 'dirty Jew' or said: "Just get out of here." A German woman did it once to me but not because she knew that I was Jewish, because I did that bad thing. So she threw me out. This was in Germany.

Q: When was that, after?

A: It was after. This was just a year before the war ended.

She let me iron stuff. And I – how much experience did I have with ironing stuff? So I burnt a lot of her stuff with iron, you know. It was an iron that you put....It has like a little they called it 'heart' and then you put it on coal so you heat it up and you put it inside the iron. It wasn't an electric iron. The iron was too hot.

She let me iron her husband's shirts and I was burning them. So she came and she beat me up and she threw me out: "Get out of here!"

Q: We will come back later to that.

So what else can you tell us about those farmers? What did you eat at that time?

What was it? You said you ate chicken and poultry.

A: Yes.

Q: But what else.

A: Potatoes merely you know. They have a neck of making all kinds of dishes with potatoes – fried potatoes, cooked potatoes, potatoes with flour – make some kind of Kreplach or whatever.

Q: You went outside the house?

A: Very seldom. Very seldom. And they never asked me to go to church with them. I never went to church. They all knew I was Jewish and it didn't bother them.

Q: You were almost....How old were you 20?

A: When?

Q: Not 20, let's say 12, 13, yes?

A: Yes, I was born in 1930. And this was in the forties, the early forties -1942, 1943. The war ended in 1944. We were practically the first ones to be liberated in January 1945.

Q: But when you were in all those farms, how did the men treat you? They were not....

A: No. No. Nobody ever abused me or did anything bad to me. I have nothing to....You know, I don't like to advertise it and say what kind of a....But it's a nation – there is a lot of bad people. A lot of them after the war when we returned to our town, one Pollack got drunk and he kept on knocking on our door: "Open the door! You are a dirty Jew." "Jews do this." "Jews do that." He says: "What Hitler didn't finish, I'm going to finish tonight. I'm going to kill you all, you dirty Jews." And he lived in our house, because we didn't know being in Germany, being in Poland, being in so many places, when the war ended, we thought all the people that were sent away – some of them will come back. We didn't think that all of them, but eventually many will come back. And there is going to be another Jewish Community. But we were the only ones who were sitting there from January till almost the end of October. We were sitting and waiting for people to come.

Q: So now when you were in those farms, you sometimes met with your mother, sometimes with your sister.

A: Not very much with my sister – once.

They found her a place and she stayed until the end of the war. She was there over a year. And that was actually very close to our home which was in a way dangerous .

But she didn't have any choice because once they took her in and they were willing to keep her. So she was there until the end.

And she learnt there how to cook and how to make things. She was only 12 years old, but she became a big balabusta,

Q: At that time you knew that your brother was,,,?

A: No, we didn't know about him at all where he was.

I think we have once received a letter from my father. It must have been either from Auschwitz or Buchenwald, I don't know. Once we received a letter, I remember.

Q: From your father?

A: Yes.

Q: What was written in it?

A: He never wrote too much about himself. He wanted to know how we are surviving, what we are doing.

Q: Do you know any information about your father, what happened to him?

A: Apparently, he was sent on Death March and he just didn't want to live.

Q: He died?

A: He diedI don't know that's what a person told us. He didn't push himself to survive.

Q: When he was marching.

A: He wasn't pushing himself to live, let's put it this way because he kept on saying ...He kept on saying he has nobody. His wife is gone; his children are gone. He just didn't want to live. That's what we heard from a person that survived and told us because in the camp he somehow managed. He was O.K.

Q: He was sure that none of you is still alive.

A: So one day my mother comes to where I am and she says: "You have to leave this place." And I said: " Why? The people are so nice and so good." She says: "But it's not safe enough. We have to move. And I have only one more place and this is

our last hope. If this family is not going to take us, I don't know where we are going to go."

Q: How did your mother know about all those farmers? How did she know that to this place she can go or to the other place she cannot go because as I said, it was so risky. There were a lot of denunciations.

A: Yes. Yes. I don't know, God was with her. She just took her life in her hands.

Q: That was an instinct of hers? That's what I would like to know about your mother. Was it an instinct that she can go here and not there? Did she have any (...)?

A: She was trying. She was trying.

And you know when she say the people's interest that they want to be paid for what they are doing she had some of those gold pieces that she kept on giving. She paid them off a little. But you know what, they realized that they are going to be left with the gold pieces and they won't be alive. You know, they never knew what the Germans could do to them.

Q: Exactly. Right. Right.

A: So she comes and she tells me this: "We have to go to this village." I said: "What? It is so close to where we lived."

Q: Was it near Gostynin?

A: No. No. It was near Skepe where I came from.

Q: So all the farms were near Skepe, not near Gostynin.

A: There were farmers there too, there were everywhere, you know farmers. But this farmer just wasn't that far from where we lived.

Q: So you had to leave your farm.

A: So it was more dangerous in case somebody....Because people knew my mother aroundSo she was in a bit of a danger, but she had to do it. She definitely had no choice.

Q: But the farm, your last farm was around Gostynin, you said.

A: Yes, that was near Gostynin. .

Q: So you had to move from Gostynin area to Skepe, yes? How did you go there?

A: We just walked.

Q: You walked there?

A: Yes.

Q: It was a long walk.

A: Everywhere we walked. There wasn't such a thing of going on a buggy or busses.

There was no transportation, nothing whatsoever. We walked. We walked.

So she says: "We are going to go there, to that village." I say: "Do you know somebody there?" She says: "Well, in a way I do." And she explained a couple of things to me.

And she knocks on the door and we go in.

Q: What did she explain to you?

A: She explained to me that this farmer owed us money, but of course we don't go there for money but for a favour for something.

Q: From a previous time.

A: Yes.

So somebody opens the door. We come in. And that farmer has one look at my mother. He knows her, you know. And she knew his name and she says: "You know, it's so nice to see you." And then she says: "Would you come in to the next room?"

And I follow them and they went there.

And she says: "Look, you are our last hope. You are the only person that can help us or, you know what, if you don't feel like helping us, you have to finish us off because we have no where to go, we have nothing. We don't have any money any more, we have..."

And she told him the whole story. And he looks and looks and then he says: "Tell me, how can I kill your daughter and you when your husband was so good to me when I was in such dire need of money...."

Apparently he came back from the United States in 1937 or so, I don't know. He brought a little bit of money and he started building himself a real nice house (he was a poor farmer) and he ran out of money. He didn't have enough money to cover maybe the roof or whatever.

Q: And your father helped him.

A: And he came to my father for a loan. And my father gave him the money. He says: "As soon as I get the (...) off, so I'm going to have.... I will be loaded with money." He made it ... My father knew that he is not going to pay, but he gave him the loan. He says: "How can I... I was in the same situation. If I wouldn't have money to put that roof on the house or whatever, finish off, we wouldn't have where to stay. I'm going to help you, but give me a little time. I'm going to think how I'm going to do it." Two people. "Your little girl is not a big deal. She can run around with my girls, but you are a different story."

So he comes with an answer. He says that in the horses' stables he is going to build a wall and she is going to be lying in that place. And they are going to bring her meals there and that's in and the problem is solved.

And we were so happy because first of all he wasn't anymore such a poor farmer. They were cooking good meals we would want to eat. And I was always free just (...) daughter who was practically my age.

Q: Weren't you afraid that people will find out?

A: No, somehow not because they didn't live like in the middle of the village but a little bit out. But you know people were probably jealous because they had one of the nicest houses in the village.

Q: What was their name?

A: I think their name was Pavorsky, I think so.

Believe it, the name of the village was Buksapwatch ("God will pay you"). In the whole Poland there is not another name like this. 'Buk' is God and God will award you, something like this.

And we stayed there a few months.

Q: What did you do in this farm?

A: My mother didn't do anything. And I was with the girl. We were giving food to the horses, to the cows. We were going in the fields when the potatoes were growing and there were a lot of weeds. We were weeding things, you know the vegetable garden, whatever.

CD Number 4

A: So he says: "Yes. I must help you. I must help you." And that's how it was.

But once on a Saturday we were sitting and having lunch - the whole family. He had one son. He had about 4 girls. His wife wasn't alive. His wife died just before we came and one of his sons died of tuberculosis. So he says: "aunt" they called an aunt (shotka - Polish): "She has been in that place for so long. She has not taken a bath and she has not smelt fresh air. I know that Saturday evenings the Gestapo, the Germans they go to bars, they drink and they have girls there. They don't bother people at all. They don't come out checking in homes anything. I think this is the perfect night that she should come out and stretch her feet and have a bath and have a meal." She ate the same as we did so she wasn't so hungry for a meal.

So the youngest one that I was a friend with she runs and tells my mother: "You are coming out. You are going to be... We will make you beautiful." O.K. my mother somehow she was hesitating, she wasn't sure if she should to do it, but they were so excited about it, the whole family.

She came out and we had a nice supper. She washed herself, she combed her hair right. I think also...her hair was always dark-brown so they wanted she should look more Polish. I think they put this dye on her head to make it lighter, blonde.

And then we all went to sleep obviously. Around 2:00 there is a knocking on the door, real hard knocking on the door. First of all the farmer gets up and he is so shaky, and he pretends he doesn't hear or something. So they: "Aufmachen! Aufmachen!" They are screaming. So he runs back and he puts on, , he had a

lantern when he used to go this barn with it. He puts on the lantern and he runs to the door. And they keep on: "How come it took you so long to open the door?" They are screaming at him.

And I was sleeping with my mother. All this happened so quickly. One of the youngest daughters also came to the bed. So we were three people in the bed. And I got very close to my mother and she noticed there was a third person. Somehow he goes with a flash light and he sees us: "Who is that old lady?" So he says: "Well, that's my sister." "Your sister? Where does she come from?" He told him.

"Documents!" he would like him to show the papers.

It just so happened that my mother had bought the birth certificate from a Polish woman, Her sister passed away and she sold the birth certificate to my mother. So she got the birth certificate out and she showed him. He looks and looks and looks. "Well, I can see she has some kind of a paper, but this is not the time to travel. This is a war and papers don't go from place to place. This is not a time to socialize and be together with brothers and sisters. If I ever come here again and find your sister, the whole thing is going to be burnt down including you." And they walked out. Can you believe it that night? So it became so dangerous. "We can't," she said.. We all were afraid. Of course he was mostly because it was his farm. And he didn't want to throw us out. He knew we have no place to go. Every village had to give some people to send to Germany. We lived actually very close to Germany. The location of where we lived belonged at one time to the Germans then to the Poles back and forth. And the war started over this part of Poland.

So they took his older daughter – 18 years old and they sent her to Germany to work on a farm. So I guess she immediately started working. There were no telephones. There were no faxes to send. I don't know how....he must have been a very clever man, how he disguised it to say you know: "Your aunt the one that lives say in Beer Sheva," (let's say for instance) "... She needs some help. She needs some help. If

she needs some help, you know my sister the one that lives in another...." He is willing to go there and help out, a whole kakkamanya story he wrote.

And this 18 year old girl she understood and was not going to say that he has two Jewish people and their names. And somehow she went from farmer to farmer and was asking around if they need help.

And it just so happened a farmer was in the war and he cut off half a foot or something, they sent him back. He couldn't be anymore a soldier and his wife was pregnant. So they had a small baby and they needed help. You know, there was nobody to work in the farm. So imagine that he came on a train and he got to this village and took us back to Germany. Have you heard of anything like this?

Q: What was his name? Actually why did he do it?

A: Who did it, the Pollack?

Q: Yes.

A: That same Pavorsky. The same person we stayed with.

Q: I know it, but why did he do it. Do you think he was religious?

A: He was a good kind person.

Q: Or just a kind person.

A: Yes, I guess he was touched with what ...that my father gave him that loan. I don't know which loan it was that he had to pay interest or he didn't or whatever, I don't know. And this was the only, you know, to give back that big favour in one way. So we got to Germany like I told you.

So they separated us. My mother went to work.

Q: Did you change your name?

A: Yes, I had the same paper as my mother had on the paper.

Q: To what did you change your name?

A: My mother's name was....What was her name? A Polish name.... Can you believe it a minute ago I had it on my mind?

Q: Never mind.

What was your name? To what did you change your name?

A: The same as my mother's name.

Q: The first name.

A: This is a Polish name.

Q: So you did not change your first name.

A: No. No. What was this name?

Yet, when they threw me out, I knew where my mother is. So I went to my mother's place crying and saying that I'm sorry, but I didn't know how to do chores, I didn't know how to iron.

Q: This is the story now back to the family. .

A: Yes.

So my mother said to the woman that she was working for the husband was in the war, so: "You don't mind if my daughter will stay. She is a good worker. She is going to help." She figured she already burnt there, maybe I'm going to burn her house. She said: "I'm not allowed to have more than one help."

Q: Where was that exactly? Do you remember the place?

A: It was near a big town – Rosenberg in Germany. It was a sugar farm.

So she says: "You have to go to the Arbeitsamt and they always need workers. They always need people."

Q: Did you know the German language? Did you speak it?

A: My mother spoke perfect German. She spoke the language because I'm telling you we lived very close to the German border and we had a lot of very rich German farmers. And my mother when she went to school at that time a second language they taught was German. So she knew how to read and write German. But she pretended that she doesn't know a word. And when I came in, I said that I can speak, I learnt already that language and I can speak and whatever he wants to know, he should ask me and I'm going to ask my mother.

Q: And he was not suspicious.

A: No. No, to us.

Q: Even though you told us that your mother looked Jewish, she looked Jewish.

A: She looked Jewish. Did I show you a picture? .

Q: We will look at it later.

A: So they said they can send us to this sugar farm, sugar beet farm. And there was a bus. They told us to get on the bus and it's going to take us straight there. It's how we went there and we stayed there to the end of the war.

Q: So what did you do there?

A: Well, we worked in the fields where they grew sugar beet. This was the main thing.

Actually this German that owned it was there forthat was the second or third generation of Germans. They were very wealthy. It was not only one little place, but it was like a whole village. They supplied the workers with little homes too before the war.

Q: So it was a sugar factory.

A: Yes, first it was a farm, they were growing it and then we were....practically the end during the summer we were weeding it in that work. And in the fall you had to get those sugar beets out and there were big trucks and they were taking them to factories I guess. It was acres and acres because it wasn't just us – Polish workers, there were Ukrainian workers, Russian workers. There were Italian prisoners, British prisoners. It was a big undertaking there. And we worked as.....

Q: And in what conditions did you sleep? Where did you eat?

A: Actually next to the kitchen they gave us a little room. And in that room they accommodated another woman with a girl, almost my age and myself and we were sleeping like on bunks. I slept on the top. My mother slept on the bottom.

Q: Did you have sufficient blankets and that stuff?

A: Well, not really, one pillow, one little blanket. It wasn't you know. It was not the Hilton Hotel.

Q: And what did you eat at that time?

A: Mostly they cooked us potatoes with beans, potatoes with cabbage, potatoes with....On Sunday everybody got that much meat. That's about all, but we didn't complain that much about the food. So there we didn't have to worry very much about being Jewish. I mean we never spoke that we are....but one Polish woman somehow....she was a nut she said to my mother (Polish).

Q: What did she say?

A: You know what, we just didn't pay any attention, like you know she doesn't mean 'us'. And one night she woke up and she was very vicious. Why was she like this? Because the day before they took out my mother of working in the field and they put her in to peel potatoes in the kitchen. And peeling potatoes was a much better job than bending all the time and doing things in the field. So she was very jealous and she started: "I know she in not one of ours, she is a Jewess," she said and she started cursing and this. And my mother, I could tell because I was sleeping up on top and the whole thing was shaking, she was so nervous, she didn't...

So I started crying, not just a cry like a child's cry, but I start: "Why is she calling us names?" And this was like the middle of the night. And at 5:00 we had always a man, a German that used to pound on the door: "Get up! Time to get up to work!" Every day, every day he

And I'm sitting and when I heard him, so I went even louder and I start....So he says: "Who is crying there?" And he opens the door. And I say: "I'm crying because here she is calling us such horrible names." I didn't say 'Jew' or anything, "And my mother is sick and she is making me sick. All night she is...I can't sleep."

So he just closes the door and walks away. It doesn't take 10 minutes comes the inspector, the one that looked after the people. He was also invalid from the war. So he came on a horse, riding on a horse. And he always had a whip on him. And he walks in like a devil and he says....Now I know my mother's name – Dublica. So he says: "Dublica, what did you do to her?" So I said: "She didn't do anything. She was

just sleeping." I'm the spokesperson. "And all night she is calling my mother horrible names. And she is cursing my mother. I don't know why is she like this. She is disturbing us."

He goes over and he says: "Sit up!" She was lying in bed, "Sit up!" And he starts beating her with a whip. We didn't laugh, but we were safe. He just hit her with that whip. He says: "Get out of bed! What do you want from this poor woman with the girl? Why did you call her...? If once more, I hear any complaints about it, I'm going not to take a whip, but I'm going to take a gun. You will be dead." That's what he told her.

And sure enough 2 or 3 days later they make her move from our room that we shared and they put in a Russian woman with a baby. She conceived there and she had a baby. So they put in this Russian woman with the baby. It was O.K. I don't know, all we had was luck, that's what I can say because that woman could make such....A good thing – she didn't know a word of German because she could have explained something about the Jews, but she never said one word the Jew because if they would hear something 'Jew', they would already start investigating.

But also that Pollack, that Pavorsky that made, you know because of him we went to Germany he was also like an angel sent from God because one day somebody comes into our room and says: "You have a package in the post office." A package in the post office? So we go to pick up the package. What do we have? We have like an envelope with aabout that big. We open it and there is a whole funeral, pictures of a funeral. And there is also a letter: "I wrote to you, my dear sister, that our brother had passed away. And I'm sending you all the photographs for you to see what kind of a service, a beautiful service we gave him and we took all the pictures with the crosses with this thing...." Really, how they are going to the church and what they are doing in the church – the whole funeral.

And there are Pollacks and we show them around: "Look, my mother's brother died."
They all believed that we are big Catholics with all the pictures with the crosses with the things.

Q: Did you pray there?

A: No.

Q: As if pray? .

A: No, somebody somehow , I don't know. The Russians, the Ukrainians the Poles weren't going to churches there. There were German churches. I don't know whether they went. We didn't go.

Q: So they didn't celebrate anything?

A: No. Just before the war ended some of them got a special permission to go for a week, 10 days back to their homes, like on a Christmas vacation kind of. I wanted to go badly too, but my mother said: "Where do you want to go? Where are you going to go?" I said: "I want a change. I'm already restless. I can't stand here." We stayed there I would say about a year and a half or something until the very end.

Q: How many hours did you work during the day?

A: Probably I don't know 8 – 9 hours.

Q: And on Sunday did you work?

A: No. Sunday was off. On Saturday we worked.

Q: So what did you do on Sunday?

A: Not much.

One Sunday I just gave my mother an ultimatum: "I have to go and do something."

So I went to that village and I went into a bar and I asked for work. Did I tell you this?

Q: So it looks as if you were pretty sure, pretty safe. You felt you are pretty safe.

A: I think so.

Q: If you went to a bar, you went to the village.

A: Yes, yes, I went to the village. I got up at 5:00 in the morning and I walked. I don't know, I was very....I forgot the situation we are in. I guess maybe I pictured it like this

is going to be the rest of my life. We didn't have any radios. We didn't read newspapers. We didn't know of the world.

Q: But were there rumors? What did you know about the fate of the Jewish people at that time? Did you hear about Auschwitz, Majkdanek, Treblinka?

A: No.

Q: Gas chambers?

A: We knew because we knew that they were taking them away. There were working camps, but we didn't know about Auschwitz – what was going on, no– nothing. We didn't know. We knew that the Jewish population....And dead people – we saw so much death in Warszawa, so many people were dying out. It was just.... Actually it was bad. And they were emptying towns, cities, villages. They were sending the Jews away. Where did they send them? Were they drowning them? We didn't know about concentration camps.

Q: Do you believe that in this farm there were other Jewish people?

A: In the sugar-beet farm?

Q: Yes.

A: No. I don't think so.

And when they evacuated us, they told us that we all have to leave – the workers and the people that looked after us and the prisoners, we all have to leave.

So we all gathered in one place and actually the owner - he was dead but his wife and a single daughter and they had this beautiful coach with 4 horses, white horses. and they were sitting on that wagon. And there was another wagon going packed up with staff. We just each took whatever we had, a little bit of stuff. And we were walking beside. They were going first and wethe inspector on his big horse . They were already then down. They knew because they had radios, they had communication with the world. But we didn't have any newspapers. We didn't have anything. I assumed that this is the end of the war.

Q: But it was not yet the end, was it?

A: It didn't take very long I think because people were registered to go back on vacation. They were stuck, they couldn't go any more. Some trains didn't function. And all the people were there, just walking beside each other – hundreds of people. And then we heard all the bombs' explosions everywhere. The next day when we went out, we were walking on bodies. There was a front going all the time.

Q: Where were you evacuated to?

A: We were in the middle of battles, But we didn't have any place to stay. We saw an empty house or a house with a light, we just went in. Some were empty and in some they were just frightened Germans as we were of the front, of the shelling and shooting. And that's how it ended.

The Russians came in right away.

Q: How long did it take from the day you were evacuated till the day that the Russians came.

A: Maybe a week..

Q: And who gave the order to be evacuated from the sugar farm?

A: The administration. I don't know if the inspector had the last word or the woman who owned it with her daughter, but you know what? They really didn't bother us. We didn't feel as if we are prisoners of something. You know, you didn't hear of a punishment of beating, of killing. They treated very badly the Italian prisoners. They didn't give them enough to eat. They didn't clean their clothes, they looked dirty.

Q: Why did they treat the Italian prisoners worse than the other prisoners?

A: I don't know why – that's a good question, because some were with them. And a lot of them were prostitutes that treated bad the Italians. But when it came to the British prisoners, they were very kind to them. So we could tell that the British had a different treatment. They looked, always so fresh and beautiful and their clothes were washed and clean and they ate well.

Q: Did you have contact with those people?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: On what occasions?

A: Well, when we were sitting in the kitchen and eating and they would come in. So they would kid with us. They would try to speak English. Of course nobody knew how to speak English.

It just so happened one came over one day to my mother. What did he call her, 'Mutti' 'Mutti' or 'Sabta'? What's 'Sabta' in German?

Q: Oma.

A: "Oma, are you going to bake for us Christmas cakes?" So there was someone who translated and told me and I translated it to my mother. So she says: "If you are going to bring me all the good stuff. If you are going to bring me white flour, sugar, butter, chocolate, I can bake for you." But it didn't come to it because it was supposed to be for New Year or something. It didn't happen because they sent us away.

Q: And what do you remember of the time Russians liberated you?

A: They were mean to the women, believe me.

Q: Can you tell us about it?

A: I remember my mother. She always said I shouldn't smile, I shouldn't talk. I shouldn'tyou know....They were really mean to the women. They were raping women left and right. So it was terrible.

Q: How did you and your mother survive?

A: I don't know, miraculously. Just somebody was watching over us.

And then we were walking and trying to go into one of the Germans' houses that the owners had left.

Q: Where was that exactly, do you remember the town?

A: It was all in that city, as I told you.

Q: Near Skepe?

A: No. No. No. Not near Skepe. It was in Germany, in Rosenberg. It was around there – the farmers....

So people were running in and grabbing whatever they could – some clothes to put on themselves. Other things they were stealing. But how much could you carry? How much could you take? But a lot of houses were just standing empty. Nobody was there.

Q: And how did you have food at that time?

A: Whatever we found in those homes.

Q: Was there?

A: They left the food. Some of it was still even warm.

Q: Because they fled.

A: They fled. They had a reason to run. Probably half of them – the Russian soldiers finished them off. They were shooting them.

Q: How did the Russians treat you and your mother?

A: You know what? They didn't even give us any special treatment. They didn't even ask if "You are hungry?" or "You want to eat?" or....They were also busy with themselves. They were looting. They were stealing too.

Q: From whom?

A: From the Germans.

Q: From German houses, farms?

A: Yes, they were busy with that.

They were already in the war for so many years. You should see what they looked like. They didn't look like soldiers. They looked like big Schleppers.

Q: Did you meet Jewish soldiers among those soldiers?

A: No. No. No. They didn't come out to say they are Jewish, not really. Maybe later on when we were in our place and from there we went to Berlin to get to America (We wanted to go to America) so we met some nice Russian officers and people. They were already different, not the ones that we met right, after the war that were different people. They were trying to help.

Q: What was your weight in this time?

A: The weight - I don't know.

Q: Were you very skinny?

A: No. No. I wasn't very skinny at all because when I was on that sugar farm, we used to get three meals a day.

Q: Three meals a day!

A: Yes. The food wasn't good. It was always almost the same thing. We had a Russian cook, a woman. And it was the potatoes and the beans and the potatoes and the barley soup and that was all. And we didn't have normal plates. The plates were made out of wood. They were so black. And in the morning always the same piece of bread with some kind of horrible jam. It was bad, but we didn't go to bed hungry and that's what counted.

Q: What was on your mind at that time to go where when you were liberated by the Russians?

A: I don't know. My mother immediately decided that she wants to go to our town.

Q: To Skepe.

A: Because we didn't know exactly what had happened. And we figured out that we would have to get there to meet the other people that will return.

Unfortunately, nobody came.

Q: So the first thing you came back there.

A: We just came back.

Q: What did you see there when you came there?

A: Well, we just went in and there was one woman there.

Q: In the house?

A: Yes. We asked her: "What are you doing here?" So she said to my mother: "What are you doing here?" She said: "This is my house. I came back to my house finally." And she looks at my mother. She has a nerve to tell me that this is her house. She says: "Well, I stayed here during the war. I was working for these... the Germans were here." My mother says: "I know the Germans were here. But what are you

doing here? You go where you came from. This is not your house!" But she wouldn't because when the Germans had left, she packed up a basement full of stuff whatever and she figured one day she is going to take it away and empty it. She thought maybe she will live together in this house and we will never come back.

Q: Did she let you in to see the house?

A: Yet, she let us in.

Q: And what was there of the furniture?

A: There was nothing left from our stuff, nothing.

Q: Did you meet with other people you knew before?

A: I will tell you, the people that we knew before, especially neighbours that my mother expected that will come in and will say....Not too many came in. If they saw my mother on the street: "So many of you lived through?" (3 people) "So many of you lived through? So many? " My mother was stunned. She didn't even want to discuss with them.

Of a community of 600 people or over 600, 3 people. "So many!"

Q: So how long did you stay in Skepe?

A: We stayed, I think, until October.

Q: Where did you stay?

A: In that house.

Q: So she let you stay.

A: We chased her out. We told her: "If you want." We gave her one room and we told her she could stay. She didn't want that room. And she didn't want us to go in the cellar to see what's in there.

So as soon as she could get out whatever she wanted to get out, she left. And she was a single woman. She wasn't married.

Q: When was the first time that eventually you hear what happened because so far you told me that you did not know. You knew about working camps. When did you know actually what happened? When you came to Skepe or later?

A: Later because two sisters from another town came to us. One was married to our neighbour's son. So she came looking for him. And they had numbers, Auschwitz numbers. And they told us a lot about what had happened where they were. Then an aunt of mine survived in Częstochowa. Have you heard about this place?

Q: Yes.

A: And she came and they told us a lot about these things. And they said everybody is concentrating and staying mostly in Lodz. So if we would go there, we would find.

Q: Actually, where did you plan to go? What did you have in mind?

A: Well, my mother right away was planning actually. We were waiting and my father didn't come and my brother. Of her sisters nobody came.

Q: So you were waiting?

A: She started writing letters.

Q: Yes, when you were in Skepe.

A: Yes.

She started writing letters to them, to America. She wasn't sure if she remembered all the addresses as well, whatever because I think she got in touch with some. She wrote, she said that she wants to leave. And of course from Skepe you couldn't go. You had to go actually if you were lucky enough if you could get to not even Warszawa, you had to get to Berlin. And from there you could immigrate to other different countries.

Q: But when did she or you or she check actually what happened to your father, to your brother? When did you know?

A: Look, this was already like so many months into to the month of January. And nobody returns. Isn't it obvious that, you know? Wouldn't he look for us? We knew something isn't right. We put their names everywhere, wherever we could find.

Q: Where for example did you put their names? Where was it possible?

A: When those two sisters came my, mother wrote the names because it was a bigger town and there were a lot of single people that had returned there. And she put there and

My aunt came. So she went back to Lodz.

Q: How did your aunt survive? What was her story?

A: That was a sister of my father's. And she survived in Częstochowa. It was a working camp, it wasn't a concentration camp.

They were telling us that the biggest population of Jews are now concentrating in Lodz. And from there they are immigrating to different parts of Poland or they go to.... We used to call it: the American Zone, the British Zone, the Russian Zone because from these parts of Europe you have the chance to go to other countries.

Q: So you moved to Lodz.

A: No, we did not go to Lodz.

Q: Where did you go after Skepe?

Q: We found out we were only about 15 kilometers away there was not a Jewish I wouldn't say community, but some Jewish single people mostly and they were planning to go to Berlin. They were planning like to get a big truck because it wasn't Kosher, it wasn't just like you know – you get a truck and you drive. We couldn't go. We were liberated by the Russians. So it was restricted to go from one zone to the others. But my mother got in touch with them. And they told us to pack up. She told them the incident about the Pollack that he was knocking at the door and screaming that what Hitler didn't finish he is going to finish. He is going to kill us. So they said: "You are not safe there. Don't stay there with your two daughters. This is fire! So just come and stay with us. And as soon as we are going to leave, you are going to come with us. Wherever we go, you go."

And that's what we did. We went with them. And we wound up in Berlin.

Q: With this truck.

A: It was like a military truck that paid off the Russian Jews.

Q: It was not so easy to get to Berlin. Nobody checked you?

A: No. You know what, at that time there was so much monkey business going on.

They must have paid off. And he paid off the one that was standing the watchman.

One paid off the other. Somehow we got in safely.

And we just followed. Wherever they went, wherever they went to sleep that night

and afterwards, we found a German, actually a German woman and we found a

place to stay by the German woman.

Believe me, there were so many things. I already forgot how many places till we got

to a DP camp. We didn't even know they had already at that time started a DP

camps.

Q: In Berlin?

A: Yes.

They had started already a Jewish school and they were teaching us how to read

and write Hebrew and also English a little bit.

Q: In which DP camp was that that you are talking about?

A: Well, this is before we got to Feldafing, we were in this place.

Q: In Berlin?

A: Yes.

Q: You don't know the name.

A: No. It was run by a Rabbi, who looked like a conservative Rabbi, a Chaplain,

actually I think he was an American Chaplain.

Q: Who was it?

A: I don't know. Every Friday he made Oneg Shabbat and he gave us chocolates and

he gave us sweets. And it was very nice. He taught us, he was a teacher. He taught

us how to read, how to write.

Q: What else did you do there in this DP camp in Berlin?

A: Not much.

Q: In what conditions were you? Did you visit other places? Did you go out?

A: No. No, because it was in winter and the conditions were bad and Berlin was so bombed. You couldn't even walk in a street where you didn't have to go over mountains of stones and things.

We just went to places that we had to go, for my mother to different offices because she would want to get in touch with her brother and sisters and they were in the United States. And she wanted to immigrate. She was always busy with stuff like that.

Q: In Berlin?

A: Yes.

And she was doing something. Some kind of a job she was doing. I don't really remember what, but she was.

Q: What was the atmosphere in this DP camp. After all all those people were the only survivors of their whole families. Did people speak about their experiences?

A: Yes. They spoke about the war experiences. And everybody was busy. They were going to Israel; Some where going to South America; Some where going to North America. Everybody had these things on their mind – to go somewhere and start a normal life.

So some people needed some...They really did organize well because there were little shops where they were teaching people trades.

Q: In Berlin?

A: In Berlin already they started, yes.

Q: What trades did they teach for example?

A: Mostly men trades and girls like also. We joined this ORT organization.

Q: In Berlin?

A: I think so. I think it started in Berlin. They were teaching us how to sew, how to....They wanted to normalize everything.

Q: How did they normalize by giving lessons, by what else?

A: Yes. Yes, because you know from the survivors there were some people that before the war they had trades, they were educators and they went back to their own

I remember there was this beautiful young woman from Lithuania I don't know, she spoke Yiddish with the Lithuanian accent, a very pretty woman. And she spoke English just like you speak English at that time. And right away she started like....She took a group of us and she was teaching us English. She was very good at it. So she must have been I suppose either finish English teaching before the war or she was just in university. She was lucky she survived.

Q: In what conditions were those people? How did they deal with it? Because you told us that you just were O.K. with food and everything and you were not skinny – neither you nor your mother. How were people? How did they recuperate? This is my question. How did they recuperate?

A: The best they could, I suppose.

We didn't fuss around. Whatever we were given to eat we ate.

Q: What people for example – a simple question – people did not go to the dentist for years.

A: You are right.

Q: What did they do? In what state you were with your teeth?

A: I had horrible teeth. But at that time you didn't pay too much attention to whatever you would do now. To begin with - you probably didn't have any money seek out these specialists because you couldn't pay for them.

Q: Not specialists, ut probably people some of them lost....Your mother, for example....I'm sure some of the people lost their teeth.

A: My mother didn't loose her teeth because just before the war she had (which wasn't anymore the style) but she had gold teeth all over because she just had those crowns left and her whole mouth was gold teeth.

el don't know my father, if they let in my father. My father didn't have gold, but he had platinum. He didn't like the yellow teeth. So he made himself all platinum teeth. They probably ripped them out in Auschwitz or somewhere from him. They wouldn't let him have a mouth full of platinum.

So afterwards when we went to Feldafing, she went to a dentist and she had those teeth.

Q: So from this Berlin DP camp you went to Feldafing.

A: Yes.

Q: What do you remember of it?

A: It was a good place actually because the whole area where we lived there used to be a place with those barracks for soldiers. They took a few acres of land. During the war it was a German....where the soldiers stayed, they had those barrack. And we lived in those barracks. And some people the ones that came early enough they chased the Germans out and they took their homes like little villas. They lived there. And then, I guess, the German government must have stopped it. So some of the Jews lived in villas and some lived in the barracks. We lived still in the barracks. And then everything was free. We used to get some clothes and we used to get of course food. There was always one person that took care of each barrack and he brought.... When the packages from America or from other countries for the refugees. So he distributed the food amongst us. So we always had eggs and oil and flour whatever. So we could start like get back to the normal, bake a Challa, make....all the stuff.

Q: Did you have Hebrew lessons there as well?

A: Yes. They opened a school and they couldn't actually grade it. We had an interview, but they didn't know, they couldn't really be sure what class would I belong in because when the war broke out I had only three years of schooling. I was too old to put me in grade 3. So they put me in a grade maybe 6 or 7 where I belonged at that time according to my age. But there were some boys and girls that had come

back from Russia. And in Russia they had education in history, geography, arithmetic.

CD Number 5

A: Well, we had real good teachers. They really tried their hardest to teach us – first of all to speak our own language which was Yiddish at that time. We actually had one teacher that didn't allow us to speak German or Polish. He was very much against it. And we didn't have a big variety of teachers because they were not available at that time. But whoever taught us taught us the most. And of course we were at a point where we wanted to learn. And for us, especially for very few that survived concentration camps, but there were some and mostly were young people from Russia and actually they came back with families with fathers and mothers. My sister and I – we only had a mother because my father never returned, he was killed. And we just....

And then my mother – I told you the story before - she went back to Poland and she brought back her sister's two children – Abraham the oldest one and Fela – the younger one. And they had to start from scratch because they didn't know how to read and write at all because they didn't go to school. They were with Poles and the boy was just ...I can't remember exactly what age he was – he must have been, I suppose 11 years old when we brought him back maybe a little over 11 years old. And he didn't have any education, nothing whatsoever.

Q: I asked you already – what was his situation? How did he adjust to all of you?

A: It wasn't easy. It was actually very difficult.

Q: Can you tell us about it?

A: Well, we were like strangers to him. The only one that he still remembered and could identify was my mother, but he didn't remember me for instance or my sister. And I can't remember if he remembered his own sister. And she didn't know anyone. She didn't know anything. She didn't....When my aunt left her by this Polish couple, she was only a child.(I would say she was born in 1937, the war broke out in 1939

and this was 1946). So she was 9 years old wasn't she? I suppose. So she just got to know us, like my mother told her: "This is your cousin, This is your cousin Fela."

Q: Did the children cry? Did they misbehave or something like that?

A: Not really. Well, the girl missed them a little because she only knew that couple. They were her parents, they were very good to her. They took her to church. They baptized her. And they just kept her like their own daughter. So she missed them, but she wasn't like My mother was very lucky because she was afraid – she was so attached to them that she will never never want to ..., she would run off. We had to watch her.

Q: Were you in touch with the Polish family?

A: Not really because they were so heart broken when she was taken away from them. And my mother says: "You don't have to carry on like this because you are my family. Why don't you come with me? I don't know. Right now I'm living in a DP camp, but eventually I will be going either to America or Israel. And you go where I go."

Q: And what happened?

A: But they didn't agree. They didn't want to leave their farm, their place.

Q: But they were so small. Could they decide at that time?

A: Who is 'they'?

Q: The children.

A: Are you talking about the children?

Q: Yes.

A: I thought you were asking about the family that she stayed with, the couple.

Q: Also I asked, but she still came with you.

A: With my mother – yes.

She was taken away by force.

Q: Yes, I understood that. I can imagine that it was very hard for the family.

A: It was. It was very hard. She was their only child. They didn't have any children. They were a childless family. And they took her in and made kind of like a promise to their mother if she survives, she will go back to her birth mother, otherwise she is going to stay with them. She is going to be their child.

Q: Did they know each other before?

A: No. No, not at all. Just you know my aunt the three children with her. And she left the boy in one place. And then she knocked on this door or maybe somebody in the village told her that this couple will take in the little girl because they don't have any children. I don't recall this, but she was left with this childless couple. And the baby she took with her.

Q: For the girl – was it harder to adjust?

A: You mean in Feldafing, when we took her back?

Q: No, I'm still talking about the girl that your mother took.

A: You know what, I don't know whether somehow because it took my mother....Coming back she had to go through Wien. There was a DP camp. From Poland she went to Wien because she heard that there is a DP camp and from that DP camp it takes a while because a lot of people are waiting there to get to the American Zone. Wien was, I think, in the English Zone (if I recall). So she waited there for maybe six weeks to be able to get back to Feldafing.

So during that time somehow, I don't know, they adjusted to my mother and it was like she would be their mother. At the beginning of course she had a very hard time, especially with the girl. She was crying. She wanted her Mamusha and Tattusha.

Q: This is why I asked if it was harder for the girl to adjust than it was for the boy, for the brother.

A: The boy had a fear because the Pollack the farmer that he stayed with was constantly saying: "You are lucky that you are with me because if you would be with the Jews, they would kill you because they take the blood for the Matza." So he kept saying that all the time.

To my mother he was saying at first: "You took me back because somebody will kill me and you will have my blood for your Matza." He believed what he heard. His childish mind...

Q: Was it also difficult for him to depart from the farmer?

A: No, it wasn't because he had a hard life there. This was only his fear that the Jews are going to kill him, but the farmer – he couldn't stand because the farmer when he came into the house and he asked his wife: "Is my supper ready?" and she would say: "Yes, your supper is ready." So he says: "Let the Jew get out of the house. I can't stand looking at him." He never let him sit at the same table where he ate. Either in the corner they gave him a little bowl with soup whatever or he would go to the barn. Really he was an anti-Semite, a Jew hater. But he used him to....He slept in the barn all the years.

When he came back and this was after so many weeks that my mother tried to clean him up because he never ...in the years he was with him he never had a bath. He only washed himself with cold water from the well. His body wherever it was uncovered was as black as can be. And we were all taking turns to scrub. I mean, we didn't want to torture him, but as much as we could every day somebody took a turn and was scrubbing him, trying to wash it off and wash it off. I don't know how long, but it seems to me that it took for ever to clean him up.

Q: Did you ask yourself why actually did he take him in, just to work?

A: He took him in because he needed ...He didn't have any sons. He had a daughter. And I don't know what happened whether he didn't have sons or they were in the army or something. He took him in so he could get up during the night and put feeding for the horses and water and whatever work that he could get out of him. He used him as a labourer and this was a child.

Q: Can you recall if the child took liking to him?

A: No, he didn't like him because he called him bad names and he didn't let him, like I told you, eat at the same table where they ate. And when my mother came in, he was

wearing two left shoes, two different shoes, left ones. That's what he found. He told my mother that he found them somewhere else..

Q: How did your mother find them in two different places. It was not easy.

A: It wasn't easy, but a Jewish man from a different little town came to the town where he was sitting on the wagon. I told you?

Q: You told us.

A: And then he told him to let his pants down. He saw that this was a Jewish boy. He didn't, you know.... so he let the people know about it. And my mother says: "I'm going to go and see. Maybe this is my sister Chava's boy."

And the minute she came into the house, he recognized my mother somehow. He was at that time... (.He was born in 1935 so 1940 – this was 1946), he was 11 years old. And my mother right away got for him a teacher and he was teaching him Hebrew. And right after when he knew a little bit Hebrew, he started teaching him Bar Mitzvah and he had in Feldafing his Bar Mitzvah.

Q: Describe to me what was a Bar Mitzvah like in Feldafing.

A: There was no party or anything. He just took him to Schul, I think, I can't remember very vividly how it was. But he had a Bar Mitzvah. They were talking about Bar Mitzvah. And he probably took him to a Shtiebel, a place, where he read his Haftarah.

Q: Those children – did they have friends there, in Feldafing?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: They could associate with other children?

A: Yes, their ages, yes. They made friends.

Q: Another question is how did your mother have this strength and courage to take care of all of you actually?

A: Well, my sister and myself were grown girls. I was 16 – 17 years old. And my sister was 2 years younger. And we just..... We didn't depend that much anymore, you know, on my mother with everything. Actually we helped her. I used to wash

laundry by hand like sheets and pillow cases. And I used to help out with the two younger kids and I helped with the cooking. Whatever I could I did chores, all kinds of chores in the house, like you know, help my mother because my mother besides this looking after us meant also - we needed other things. We needed clothing. So sometimes she went to the Germans and she bought some - I can't remember what it was she bought from the Germans and sold to the Jews and vice versus - she bought from the Jews and sold it to the Germans. And she made a little money to buy for us a piece of material, made for me a dress, for my sister. Sometimes she bought wool. So somebody would knit us sweaters. She tried whatever she could. She also used to get from time to time packages from her sisters in the Unites States.

Q: And what about your brother?

A: Well, my brother was very hard to talk about because he was caught running away from Gostynin, I think, it was. And we didn't know about him at all. During the war we didn't hear from him and didn't know where he was, if he is alive or not. But after the war a man that knew my mother from another town nearby told my mother: "Your son was with me in Konin - a working camp that was called Konin." And there was one day, I think he said Sunday, I can't be recall exactly. I think one Sunday he and a friend of his (of the same ages they were - 15 years old) they ran out of the camp (on Sundays they weren't working) and they went to the fields and they stole potatoes (potatoes were just ready to pick to be dug out). So they put potatoes, they tied up their pants and they put the potatoes in and they were both caught and they were both hung.

Q: In this camp?

A: Yes.

Q: And what can you tell about this brother as you remember him as a child as a...?

It's too hard for you.

A: Yes.

He was something special. He was excellent in everything – school.

Q: How old was he when he was hung?

A: 15 years old. He was very-very clever. He was our a shinning star. We all looked up to him.

Q: He went to a Polish school?

A: Yes.

He was enrolled in Warszawa in school to go, the year the war broke out to go to a special school.

Q: A Jewish school?

A: No, it wasn't just a Jewish school, it's something with Hebrew, it was some kind of a Hebrew academy or something, I don't know.

Q: How do you have information about this brother? Who gave you this information?

A: My mother. We used from another town.... in our town there was no one to teach him because he was above....

Q: So talented.

A: Yes. We used to get that teacher from another town. He used to come by train. He used to come and give him special lessons.

And I'm sure, you know, he never talked about it because when we were in Warszawa for days and at that time he was only 14 years old because he had his Bar Mitzvah in this town maybe a year later in Warszawa, he would get up in the morning and he would leave the house. And he wouldn't come back until real late in the afternoon, it was almost dark. I think he was involved in some kind of an underground thing for young people or whatever. Maybe my parents knew about it, but we didn't.

Q: You were younger?

A: Yes, I was 2 years younger. They never talked about it.

Q: Do you remember a nice event with him that you can share with us, memory, something, a dinner, a holiday, games?

A: Yes, Hannukah we had. We were a family that just loved to enjoy. And my mother helped us because she was also into a lot to do with Israeli songs and of course she read a lot of books. So she was telling us all kinds of what she read – stories and always.... She was a big Zionist. But unfortunately my father was a tremendous husband, a loving husband, a loving father, but when it came to Israel, he would say: "Why do I have to suffer when I have it..."

Q: "So good?"

A: Yes. I don't know if "so good," he said, "but, you know, I have a good life." Because if you read papers, you know what's going on and in Israel there was a very hard life in the thirties. And he just wouldn't go for it.

Q: Do you remember the Bar Mitzvah of your brother?

A: Well, there was no party.

Q: Even not in your home town?

A: No, he had Bar Mitzvah in Warszawa in 1940. We weren't any more living in our own home.

Q: Yes, I know, but in 1940 they still had Bar Mitzvahs.

A: The conditions were very bad. The family was whatever family we had, you know, my mother's sisters or my father's sisters – everybody lived in different places.

Q: But probably they went to the Schul with your brother.

A: I don't know. I don't remember going to Schul at all unless I forgot.

Q: In 1940.

A: I don't remember. I just think that my father, maybe my grandfather was still alive and he went with them andNo, I don't remember.

Q: Do you know actually what was the route of your brother? What happened that he was separated from all of you?

A: Well, we couldn't.... When we were living in the ghetto of Gostynin when most of the men were gone to concentration camps, they were sent away – we didn't know at

that point about concentration camps, but we knew they were taken away. They were taken away, it was already a bad omen, you know.

So we tried to save him whenever we could, to hide my brother. So he stayed on with my aunt, my mother, the children. And we decided that we are all going to run away, we are not going to go out in the market where they were supposed to gather all the women and children and put them on, buses and take them to the trains. So we decided we are going to run away. So he also decided. But we could go all of us together.

So you know we all went at different times.

Q: You described it to us, yes.

A: Exactly.

And somehow we don't know how it happened that he was also....

Q: Did you meet with somebody that could give you more information? Somebody saw him? Was with him?

A: Well, I will tell you what. We just found out last year.

Q: This year, yes?

A: Last year.

I have a cousin. Actually she's a real cousin to me because my mother and her grandmother were sisters. And somehow on the internet she was digging, you know, she wanted to find her roots. And her husband and herself – they went to Washington to the Holocaust Museum. And there they found my mother's name. They knew my mother's maiden name and they knew this and they found my mother there. They also found my father's name from Auschwitz and from Buchenwald. And I have at home, they made a copy of a document they own in Washington. And there is my father's signature on one of the documents which was there.

I asked so many Holocaust survivors that have been to Auschwitz and nobody remembers ever signing anything, but I have this piece of paper and I could identify my father's writing. It says Salomon Pozmanter on it. It starts from where he was

born, where he lived and I think my mother's name was on it and three children. I

have it all

So they made a copy of this. We got to know each other. They came to see me.

So this person is actually not even Jewish, but they have been married for like 35 years and they are a very good couple. He is exceptionally a nice person. And when I told him: "Mike, maybe you could do something to find my brother." And I told him the information that we do have about how he died, so he says: "I will try. Whatever I can, I will do."

And what do you know? He found a person that used to live in Israel. I mean, he didn't find the person, he found the name I should say. He is not alive any more, but that man – when he was in Konin, he wrote every day like occurrences – what happened each day in the camp..

Q: A kind of a diary.

A: A diary like this for instance. And in that diary my brother's name is mentioned.

Q: What did he write? Do you know what he wrote about?

A: That this occurred about the boys that went stealing potatoes.

Q: He mentioned the hanging.

A: Yes.

And my brother's name is in it. That's what Mike told me. And Mike bought the book , in New York I think he was or in Chicago, he bought the book. I don't know the name of the book which I made a mistake because knowing that I come to Israel, I should have....

My daughter tried to call her and find out the names so I would buy that book and find out. . But Mike said that he bought the book and he found a Jewish woman that's going to translate it into English. So I don't have the book yet, but I'm hoping to get it soon in the future.

I went to Konin about....

Q: Konin is next to?

A: It's next to where should I say? I was there 10 years ago. I went there especially. But there are only mass graves there.

Q: In Konin?

A: Yes, and it's all in the Polish cemetery. So there is, you know, I went but I came back with the same thing, I didn't get any information of Konin about this.

Q: You just mentioned you were a happy family, all of you, that your mother knew how to enjoy life and all that. Can you say something about it?

A: Well, we were very close with uncles and aunts and their children. And we were like one family. We were four families, but we were like one family.

Q: Were you also connected to your father's family as well?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: You all were in the same town.

A: Yes. He had two sisters. One brother he had in Montreal that went before the war. And he also came from a small family. He had two sisters and there were two brothers. But my mother's family was like 12 children. I would say 6 of them were in the United States and one aunt was in Hamburg. So their family was more scattered, you know, a little bit here....

Q: But yet you met each other.

A: Yes. They were so close my mother's brothers and sisters, but when it came to make papers for us before the war, because one had to sign that he is responsible for our well-being in the United States, you know you could come to the United States but you had to have sponsors. In case you didn't bring enough money to live, the sponsors were supposed to look after you. So there was no one that wanted to take that responsibility. That's why we stayed there because my mother saw what's going on and he didn't want to go to Israel, so we were going to go to the States. So she wrote them and begged them to send us papers, but they didn't.

Q: It happened to other people too.

And after Feldafing you?

A: After Feldafing she had a brother in Uruguay.

Q: That left before the war?

A: Yes, he left before the war. I never remembered him before the war. And he said: "You know, it looks like you have a long wait to the United States and I have some (...) here in Uruguay and I can make the papers. In about a couple of months you are going to be here with me."

So that's what we did. He made the papers for us and in no time we went to Uruguay.

Q: In what year?

A: In 1948.

My mother stayed until 1950 and I stayed longer because at that point I knew already my husband. We were friends like in Feldafing we used to date each other and he kept on writing to me and I kept on writing to him. And then when I told him that I will be going to Israel, my mother and all of us are going to Israel from Uruguay (we don't like Uruguay), so....

Q: Why didn't you like Uruguay?

A: It was very difficult for us.

My mother's niece and nephew were little kids, they weren't that little but they needed schooling, they needed to go to school not to work there. They didn't have enough education. Not that we had, my sister and I, but we were already growing up girls. So when we came there, my uncle could not support us. He tried his very best, but unfortunately he wasn't a rich man and he just couldn't support the family – 4 children and my mother – 5 people. It was very difficult.

So we saw the situation, so my mother right away found a job. And then she knew somebody that had some protectia with people that owned factories and some businesses. So she got me and my sister to find jobs paying jobs.

So the three of us were working, and the two kids were going to school. And because we weren't experienced in anything, we just made enough to whatever we needed to pay the rent and eat. We couldn't afford there anything.

Q: How did you adjust to the language?

A: We learnt the language really fast. Spanish is not a hard language to learn. And somehow before we got the papers in Feldafing to go, maybe only two months, my mother got us a German woman that came to the house and she started us off a little bit with the Spanish, just words, not speaking but words.

And when we got there, she said: "Just try to speak it." And she unfortunately didn't learn very much, but my sister and I somehow in no time we learnt the language.

So when my husband heard that we want to go to Israel, he said: "Why would you want to go to Israel? It is so hard to go now to Israel."

Q: Also your husband said so?

A: Yes, the one that I married.

Q: Yes. Like your father.

A: No. No.

Q: You mentioned that your father said before: "Why should we go to Israel?"

A: Yes. He was repeating the same....I know what you mean by that. So he talked me out of it.

Q: Where did you get married?

A: I got married in Toronto because he brought me. From time they went to Israel it took a year for me to come from Uruguay to Canada.

Q: What is the story of your husband, he lost all his family as well?

A: Yes, he lost two brothers.

Q: He was born where?

A: He was born in Radziejów – a small town. We went twice to see the town.

He had two sisters, older sisters and two brothers, younger brothers and his parents. Everybody there was gone.

Q: And how did he survive? Where was he?

A: From camp to camp most of the time.

He says that his mother was always...like he believed in dreams and he believed in miracles, especially his mother. He says she always told him how to act somehow in dreams.

And whenever something happened where he was almost at the brink of death, somehow he survived. He was a big believer in his mother's dreams. That's why he never wanted to give this because he says: "All I would do is sit and cry," because he just loved his mother so much.

Q: Do you know a little bit about his mother? What was her name?

A: Yes, her name was Frimet, and his father's name was Socher, but other than this – I don't know.

Q: Was it a religious family?

A: You know what, they weren't like Orthodox – Hassidim, but they were like in the small Shtetls we were all. Everyone observed Shabbat and all the Jewish holidays. Every man would never go out without....They didn't wear Kippahs, but they always had hats on their heads. They sent the boys to Cheder and everything. As far as Kashrut, everything was very observed. You know, I just don't know. Very vaguely I remember, maybe in our town where my Zayda was a Gere Chassid and maybe they were another....I don't know if they were another 10 families that were like Orthodox, real Orthodox, but everybody was observant.

My mother didn't wear a Shaytl, she was very....She prayed. If she didn't go to Schul, she prayed at home. But she read a lot of Jewish books and newspapers. She was always up-to-date with everything.

Of course she spoke German fluently; She wrote and spoke in Polish.

And my husband's mother too, my husband's mother even went to a Gymnasium.

Q: A Hebrew Gymnasium?

A: No, Polish. He had an aunt in Milwaukee and she came to our wedding. So she brought pictures of his mother. She said: "You see, this is the clothes she wore when she went to Gymnasium." And she was showing it.

Q: Do you have it?

A: No. We wanted, you know, she should leave it. She brought them and my husband said: "I'm going to make copies." And those pictures I can't forgive because if you come to Milwaukee and you want (...) take it to a photographer and do it. This goes back you know, like....We were married 59 years, a long time. So we never got the pictures.

Q: The Holocaust was spoken?

A: In our home?

Q: In your home?

A: All the time. All the time.

He had so many stories because he went to so many different camps. It wasn't like he was in one camp, but he was sent from one place to the other. He was kind of making up, lying that he is an electrician. Once he was an electrician, once he was a tailor, once he was....you know all the kinds ofthat he should be able to get work. And he was always trying to act older than what he was. He was born in 1926.

Q: So after Uruguay you left for Montreal?

A: No, for Toronto. He was there by other time, he was already there. He already had a job. And when I came, he had already rented a place – two rooms. He couldn't afford to pay a higher rent. And he was starting out a little bit on his own.

Q: So where did you get married?

A: In Toronto.

You had to get married immediately. That was the Canadian Law – if you don't get married within....because I went as a bride to Canada. I had to get married within one month, if not, I would be sent back to Uruguay.

So I came on November 2nd 1951 and we got married on December 2nd 1951.

Q: Who attended your wedding?

A: From Israel my mother couldn't come. She didn't have enough money.

Q: Your mother left for Israel.

A: Yes, she was in Israel.

Q: From where? From Uruguay?

A: Yes. Yes, from Uruguay with my sister and with the two children.

Actually the two children had a grandfather in Israel. He left just a few years before the war – their grandfather.

So my mother says: "Maybe he is going to help me with the children. They are getting older and they need to go to school and they need....They need a lot of things especially a man around too, a grandfather."

In the meantime when she came here, she found out that the grandfather Nebech is so poor. He lives with his daughter on a Kibbutz somewhere and he could not help, he could not do anything for them.

Q: And your mother with the children did not want to go to the Kibbutz.

A: I guess not, I don't know what was the reason. No, no, I don't think.. My sister at that point too – she wasn't a Kibbutz type.

Q: So how did your mother make a living?

A: I think when she came first, she worked in a school helping out not as a teacher, but doing other things, some things with children. And my sister – I don't remember what kind of a job she had.

They were here in Israel, I think first they lived in Ramat Gan. And then somebody introduced my mother to this man, a very Orthodox man. And he became a widower and she married him. And they moved to Bnei Brak.

Q: So she became more religious.

A: Yes, here she put on a wig. At home she never wore a wig.

Q: And what happened to the other two children?

A: The other children – they were in a special home. (Asking her daughter): Where were Fela and Abraham when they came first to Israel?

The Daughter: I think in Bnei Akiva camp, a Kibbutz for children who were war orphans.

Q: So your mother could not have them with her.

A: No. No. No.

My sister afterwards came to the United States because she married a guy that had one sister two sisters in Brooklyn and she insisted they should come and she made papers for them.

Q: So the children also left for the States?

A: No. No. No. They didn't.

Q: What happened to them? Are they still alive?

A: Of course. I will show you pictures.

Q: No, these children, your cousins, they live where?

A: He lives in Giv'atayim and she lives in Bnei Brak. She married a very religious son from a very religious family. Maybe you have heard of them – Freund.

Q: It's a well known family – Freund.

A: So she married. And she Bli Ayi Raa .has 21 grandchildren. She had 3 children.

Q: Do you meet with her?

A: Yes, all the time.

I don't know how many. How many great-grandchildren does she have? I don't remember, but she brought up....(Yiddish)

Q: A dynasty.

A: 3 children and 21 grandchildren, by now maybe 10 great-grandchildren.

Q: And whenever you are here, you probably meet with her.

A: Yes. We meet, we get together. I go, I stay for a few days with her.

Unfortunately, he is not well now. He had a stroke a couple of weeks ago.

Q: The brother?

A: Yes.

And he just went through a rehab. He was in the hospital for two weeks. Now he is in a rehab place.

Q: Did you visit Poland?

A: Yes.

Q: You said that you visited Konin.

A: Yes. Yes. I have been back to Poland about three times four times.

Q: You went with your husband.

A: That time I went with cousins. She went with her husband and I just went with them. But other times I went with my husband all the other times.

Q: Did you go back to your home town?

A: Yes, I went to my home town.

Q: What was it like?

A: It was empty, you know, like you come to into an empty house, that's how I...First I work myself up and I'm all so excited, But then when I get there, it feels like it's a place that you know, like there are no people because I don't see a Jewish person. I don't see a Jewish store open. It's just emptiness. I see everything like no meaning to it.

I see my house standing. I go around, I look here.

Q: Did they let you go in? Did you see your home, your house?

A: If I would want to because in one place there is a hairdresser. Did I tell you there is a hairdressing place?

Q: Yes.

A: And I open the door and I say: "Hello," And you know, I start mixing things with Polish.

And she says: "Welcome, you can come in. Why don't you come in?" and then I say: "No. I'm sorry. I thought it was something else." It's just an excuse. I just couldn't take it to go in.

Q: So you could not go in.

A: No. No. I just couldn't go in.

Q: It was too emotional for you.

A: Yes, I guess so.

Q: So actually it was a real ghost town for you.

A: Yes, like...you know, I was going around as if I have drunk or so....That was too empty, no emotions somehow.

Q: But yet you say you went three times to Poland, why?

A: I don't know. Once I wanted to see the place where my husband came from.

Q: How was that visit for your husband?

A: For my husband – I will tell you. There was one Jewish man, but my husband kept on saying he was no good before the war. And after the war he married this Polish woman and he is the only Jew in the place there.

And the Poles were harassing his children something terrible. We went to visit him. So he says: "You know, I have to send my kids to different places to school. They can't go to this town because they call them names and it's not that they hate Jews so much." He was finding some excuses. He says: "Because they are jealous of me, because I'm the richest one in town." And he was so proud of himself.

Mind you, he kept on constantly asking of every person from the town that he knew that was alive after the war. So he wanted to know where they are, what they are doing, how they are keeping.

So my husband said to him: "Do you have to stay here?" "Where would I go? I have such a good life here. I'm a rich man."

Q: Even though he is the only Jew, he can live there.

A: Yes.

When we were in the second time, he was gone already. He died and his son was there. And the son didn't even ask us to come in. He looked like a real Goy.

Q: You and your husband are from two different towns, but did you meet with people? Did they know about your family when you came, for example?

A: No, I didn't say who I am, no, no.

CD Number 6

A: My sister was married to Israel Kaplowitz and married here and they lived in a small town around Tel Aviv. And she has a son Shlomo. And from Israel they moved to Brooklyn.

Q: They also moved.

A: Yes.

First I think they lived in Brooklyn for a short while and then they moved to New Jersey. Eventually they came to Canada. We wanted to be together.

And then she had two more children. All the years were very good being together and we knew we had family. And my mother used to come from Israel to visit.

Practically every year she came and she would stay for a few months and return to Israel. And we would come back sometimes and stay with her for a while.

And my sister took sick three years ago. She had a bad cancer and she passed away. She was younger than myself.

Q: Did you talk to your children about the Holocaust?

A: All the time.

Q: All the time.

A: All the time because, my husband being all alone and I guess he wanted to. And instill in them that they came from a family, from his family. And he felt bad because somewhere on the way when they were chased out from their town, he was separated from his parents and could not go back to the place where they stayed. And they couldn't come to the place where he stayed. So he never so them again. Before he went to working camps....He was in concentration camps, working camps....he never saw his family again.

Q: You told us that he mostly spoke about his mother.

A: Yes, mostly, his mother was his shining star.

Q: Can you tell us about your children?

A: My children?

Q: Yes. You have 2 children or 3?

A: Yes, I have....Francis is my shining star. Today is her birthday.

Q: Mazal Tov.

A: We are going to celebrate later in the evening I suppose. What do you say,

Francis, I think we are very close.

I have a son, a younger one.

Q: Are you also close to him as much?

A: No. No, it's very hard to be close with him. He is not an easy person. He is actually a doctor of psychology.

Q: What's his name?

A: His name is Sheldon Lewkowicz. He lives in Vancouver and I don't see him very often. If I go there, I see him, but he doesn't come to Toronto.

Q: Has it ever crossed your mind to name your children after your parents?

A: They are named, both of them.

Q: But a second name.

A: What do you mean?

Q: Francis is....

A: Francis is Frimet after my husband's mother.

Q: Francis is Frimet, I see.

A: And it just so happened that his father and my father had the same initials because my father's name was Shlomo and his father's name was Socher. So we named him Sheldon. I don't know what was the reason actually, I can't explain to anyone if they ask me: "How come you named him Sheldon?"

Q: How was your life together after the Holocaust in Canada? With whom did you celebrate for example Chaggim after all? You lost all your families.

A: I will tell you, it's just like my daughter she is now in Israel over 30 years. And she came, she didn't have a friend....(Turning to Francis): How many friends did you have? You could count them on your fingers. And now she has such a crowd of friends. She knows so many people. And they are like a family. And that's how we had in Toronto. Believe me also survivors very few that had one parent, very few. I had a mother. I was one of the lucky ones. And the rest – most of them did not have.. Maybe they had a brother or a sister, but no mother or father. And we all became like one family.

Q: All the survivors.

A: Not all, but you know.

Q: Of course, I mean the ones that you knew.

A: We started with friends and that friendship invited one another to our home and then we became like we would be a family. My children always thought that these friends were their family. And very often we invited each other for meals, for Shabbat, for Chaggim. We are very close. (Turning to her daughter): Did you feel like you have no family when you were growing up?

Q: So it was not a sad atmosphere.

A: No. No. In Toronto it wasn't sad. We never cried that we are poor or we don't have this...We were happy with everything we had. And believe me, it was a struggle. It took quite a few years until we really could travel and be able to afford more luxurious things. But in a way we made it. We made it. We had everything. We had everything. We only need good health. We only wanted good health.

Q: When you go back to your hard experiences – I'm talking about the war, do you think you survived because of luck, because of Zechut Avot, accident?

A: I don't....I am religious in a way, in my heart, but I'm not the a showy religious. Do you know what I mean?

Q: Yes, but my question is. You survived....

A: I believe in Beschert, you know.

Q: You believe in destiny, yes, destiny.

A: Yes. Exactly. And getting older I just live from day to day, like they say in Spanish: "Que Sera, Sera." Whatever my destiny, like you put it is. If my destiny is to live and suffer, I will suffer. If not....I'm not afraid of death, of dying.

Q: You are not afraid?

A: No.

Q: You believe in....?

A: In after life?

Q: Yes.

A: In a way, I guess. And if not, whatever.

Q: Before we conclude our interview, would you like to add something? Do you have any message for your grandchildren, for your children?

A: Well, my children – most of all – they should be well, they should be healthy. and their children so far – they are doing O.K. I think they have children that they don't have to be ashamed of. They are good in school. They are O.K. and I hope they continue with the best that I want for them.

Q: What would you like for them?

A: I would like most for them they should grow up to be Menschen, like on our way we raised like children with values with Menschlichkeit and love for each other and respectful people.

Q: Thank you very much, Fela.

A: Very nice talking to you.

Picture number 1: That's my grandmother – Feiga Zamonskewitch . I'm named after her. She was my mother's mother.

Picture number 2: This is my Zayde – Avrum Zamoskewitch. He's my mother's father.

Picture number 3: This is my mother's younger sister – Chava. She was married before the war and has 3 children: Abraham, Fela and Chilik. The 2 children are alive, but she, her husband and Chilik were killed during the war.

Picture number 4: That's my mother Rivka, Rivka Pozmanter. And she lived in Israel, in Bnei Brak for many years. And she died in Israel and was buried on Har HaMenuchot

Picture number 5: This is also my mother in her elderly years, when she lived in Israel. She really enjoyed life in Israel. She loved the country.

Picture number 6: That's my mother's sister – Lilly. She lived in the States, in America and she came to my son's Bar Mitzvah. My son's name is Sheldon and my daughter – she is the oldest one – her name is Francis.

Picture number 7: This picture is of me and my sister Sarah. We had two friends. She had a friend and I had a friend. And we were in Muenchen. They suggested we should have a picture taken of the four of us.

Picture number 8: That's another picture of me. I suppose it must be either 1946 or 1947. At that time, I think, I looked great.

Picture 9: That's my husband and myself. I guess we just like to take pictures and we also liked other people to take pictures of us. And we were very much in love at that time.

Picture number 10: That's my husband Morris and my grandson Ghilad. And they really have a love affair going – grandfather and grandson. They were always very close. They loved each other.

Picture number 11: The picture is of my husband Morris, my daughter Francis, my son Sheldon and myself. We just dressed to show off.

Picture number 12: This picture was taken right after my daughter's wedding ceremony. Most of the family members are in it. There is Abraham Shavit and there is Fela Freund and my sister Sarah and my mother and most of the relatives.