

This is a recording of an interview with Mrs. Clara Dan in Oak Park, Michigan on July 1. My name is Kay Roth and I'm the interviewer.

Would you tell me something about the town you're from and when you were born?

??? I was born July 19, 1921 in uh, Tg'Mures,

Would you spell that?

Romania. Well, I tell you, in Hungarian it is Marosvasarhely. Okay? It really—if you want me to spell it, it's Tg'Mures. And, in fact, people tease me that I come from the same place where Dracula comes from because Dracula is from Transylvania. [laughs] So anyway, it's a fairly—I really don't know the population of uh, the town where I come from. But uh, it changed hands between the Hungarian and the Romanians. So I have uh, Romanian upbringing, Romanian schooling, all the way. And um, I was born there, raised there.

What year were you born?

Nineteen twenty-one. And uh, I lived there 'til uh, we were taken in the labor camp first in Tg'Mures, which was called, uh... Want me to tell it in Hungarian how it's called?

Sure.

It was Téglá Gyár, it's a factory where they uh, they made a brick. And we stayed there for about a, a few weeks. I really don't remember exactly what—how many weeks. But uh, we got into Auschwitz, May the 27 or 29, '44. I was there with uh, my sister.

At the ca...at the labor camp?

Yes, with my sister. And the rest of my family lived with us as I told you. I lost my father as a fourteen-year-old child and my mother two months before the concentration camp.

They died at home.

Yes.

How many people were in your family, I mean your immediate family?

Taken to camp or at home?

No, at home.

Oh, three kids, had three children and uh, my mother and father.

All girls?

Two girls and one boy.

And what, were you the, what, the oldest?

I was the youngest one.

The youngest.

I was the youngest one. And my brother was taken in the labor camp in 1941 was uh, he was married and live in uh, Kolozsvár, in Cluj. And uh—that's where my husband comes from—and uh, he was taken into labor camp and off to Russia. And uh, he left his wife, two little children at home. And uh, this was in '41 when my brother was taken, all right. And uh, my sister-in-law with her family from Kolozsvár were taken in labor camp after we were taken. But we were not in the same place. So I really didn't know anything what happened with his family. And all I know is that after we were liberated, which was '45 April 15 in Bergen-Belsen...

That was April 15, 1945.

Forty-five. I heard that my brother is still living in Russia. And uh, I was in different concentration camps with my sister from Auschwitz. As I told you the 27 or 29th of May we were taken into Auschwitz. Okay? And uh, I was in Auschwitz, this was '44, and I was in Auschwitz the...

[interruption in interview]

...the last uh, group of people taken from uh, Auschwitz, Birkenau before the Russians came in. And from there I went to... Oh, I went through hell like all the rest.

Well maybe, I can start, we can—I can ask you questions and we'll...

Absolutely.

we'll see if we can follow through. Let me get some more information about your, your home life. Um, what kind of education did you have? I mean, were you in...

I have uh, I majored in music. I'm a piano major. And uh, I had a high school graduation and from high school I went to the conservatory of music. And uh, while I was taking lessons, I tutored young children whom I got from my own teacher. And uh, I was—besides the conservatory I had uh, private lessons because I was getting ready to be accepted to the academy.

Were you um, was all your education in the public schools or did you have Jewish education?

No, no, no. I went—I had private Jewish education. Uh, I had a—I went to public school and my sister went to private schools. And no, I had all over. The music school was private because uh, the conservatory was a state-funded place, but

then I had private uh, lessons because I was getting ready to be accepted to the Franz Liszt Academy but... [inaudible whispering] But then it came the numerous clausus. I'm sure you know ???

The clausus.

exploited that men that uh, I think it was six percent for Jews. So I was rejected. And uh, then I was uh, able to maybe to be accepted to a smaller academy, a private in Budapest. But I never made it because I was taken to the concentration camp. And yes. So. And uh, I had a sister who is still teaching. Lives in Israel.

Also music?

Music.

Was music everybody in your family interested in music?

No, not really. No really, just I had wonder...wonderful parents. [crys]

Were you, was it a religious family? Did you have a...

Absolutely. My father was the president of Orthodox because in Romania you had uh, three different reli...shuls. You had a Sephardic, you had the orthodox and you had the Reform. So we were Orthodox, which meant the men sat downstairs and the women upstairs. And uh, my father was one of the presidents of that shul. And uh, my whole family. And I had private tutor for Jewish education. [telephone rings]

Aside from when you couldn't get into the academy because you were Jewish, was there other, did you have other anti-Semitic problems before?

Yes. Well, anti-Semitic problems, of course we had the star—the Jewish star we had to wear. And uh, the schooling I was already, don't forget, I was already in

the conservatory at that time, okay? Because I was twenty-one when I was taken in the concentration camp. And you graduated eighteen, the high school. And you always heard the, the anti-Semitic remarks. And uh, the Hungarians were anti-Semitic, Romanians it was the Iron Guard which was one of the Romanians. And uh, it wasn't too safe the last oh especially let me see, when uh, mainly when the Hungarian came in. That's when it really was hell. I remember it was the last Pesach and uh, my mother was died—my mother died because uh, we lost her in January. And uh, at that time it started already that you had to darken the rooms at night. No light should...

Blackout.

The blackouts. And uh, we couldn't—my—we usually, after we lost my mother for Shabbos and for holidays we went to my uncle because I had family in the same town and my sister and me went to, to my uncle. My brother was living already in Kolozsvár and was married. So come Pesach we couldn't go because the air was very, very sticky, like this. I mean the Hungarians really made them known that they are there. And uh, we had some friends. One of my uh, little girl I used to tutor or teach piano who had uh, mixed marriage in his family. And he wanted to get Gentile papers for us. But it was called aria paper. It was written aria. This was fake. This would have been fake papers. And uh, they told us we shouldn't worry because uh, we won't get hurt. They will try and get us, my sister and myself, these papers, which meant that uh, we wouldn't be taken in labor camp. Because at that time we heard already that there were labor camps in different parts of Hungary. But uh, we were, we kept telling between us that this

just couldn't happen to us. It's such a beautiful town and people and we grew up here and we were born here and our roots are here. Who would take us out from our homes? It is impossible in the twentieth century just to take people out, that's impossible. So Pesach came and uh, my uncle came down and told us you girls have to stay in tonight with us. We've been hearing rumors that it's getting rough. You have to know that or I have to mention that my uncle and uh, another—two uh, two of my uncles were the liaison between the shul, the Jewish people in our community and the Hungarians...

So they were...

or the Nazis.

they were like the head of the Jewish community?

Well uh, they were head, but they were, they were very well to do people. And they picked these two people that, for instance, in the meantime, they had meetings. We didn't know about this because my uncle didn't tell us. I was a kid, my sister was older, but they didn't tell us that uh, they were talking that for ransom the Jews could be saved in our small city, which was known as a university city really. And by this, I mean uh, money. Jewelry, gold, silver, paintings, Persian rugs. So they started collecting these things because they were promised that if they have enough of this, they might be able to exchange lives. And that by having this connections I had my grandmother living from my mother's side who was an eighty-two-year-old youngster at that, lovable. So, they promised for my grandmother that they would not let them go. If anything

happens to everybody, but my grandmother would be safe, would be put in a house, in a private home and taken care of. For what the family paid a fortune. So.

This was your uncle's and your mothers' brother?

No, my, this—that was, his wife was my mother's sister.

So this grandmother was...

Yes, yes.

from both families.

From both families. But uh, everything was, came so sudden. This was at night, in the afternoon when my uncle came down and early in the morning we heard knocks on the door. And uh, the Hungarian soldiers were collecting already the Jews. They gave us about half an hour to get together what we can because we were to be taken to this brick factory what I mentioned.

So the Nazis hadn't taken over.

These were Hungarian Nazis.

But they weren't German.

No, no, they were not, they were not Germans. They were Hungarians. But known that is...

They were just as bad.

the Nazis. Absolutely. That's why deep down, deep down I never know whether I hated the Nazis more or these Hungarians. Because these were the ones who took us out, okay? With big feathers.

This was just at Pesach.

This is when it happened just before, before, around Pesach time.

Mm-hm.

in our hometown, okay, because everywhere it happened in a different time. But from all ??? from Saturday. From us there were three places where the really, the Hungarians were taken. This was Kolozsvár, Marosvasarhely and ???, bigger cities, okay? Now each of these cities had their own brick factory where they were taken. So we from Marosvasarhely were taken to the brick factory which belonged to Marosvasarhely, okay? And there when we got there of course half an hour we had to get together what, what we get and what we could. And uh, in brick factory we had tents.

It was, you said before it was a labor camp? Did you...

Well, really and truly this wasn't. I couldn't call it labor camp. No, no.

More like a ghetto?

It—more like a ghetto, yes. But it was called a brick factory. You can call it a ghetto, okay? But no homes or no houses or no bricks. It was just called a brick factory, like a ghetto, but they were tents. And, uh...

[telephone rings—interruption in interview]

Let me just go back a second. We were talking before you were taken to the brick factory. But I just wanted to ask you...

Yeah.

what you remember about when the war began. Do you remember anything about hearing about the war? When it started...

[telephone rings—interruption in interview]

War beginning.

Clara Dan Interview

Yes, sure we heard. We heard about what the Germans were doing, but we always felt it couldn't happen to us. So we really and truly never believed in it. We know about Poland, oh absolutely. But you see, I grew up already the whole world. I mean in Romania they were anti-Semitic people, in Hungary was anti-Semitic people. But at that time, we Jews in Romania, I can talk for my own city, as I told you I was a child okay? It was such a long time ago that it's hard to believe I was a youngster once upon a time. But uh, really and truly when it hit me was when I realized that I can't finish my education because I'm a Jew. That's when it hit me. When the bicycles were taken away because I was a Jew. I had my yellow star. I had to wear my yellow star. And uh, I had to be careful at night because I was a Jew. So, absolutely hit me, sure. And we knew about it. The only thing is that you personally are not in this, in the shoe yourself, you don't have the shoe on, you really live a fairly normal life. Because after, after a certain time you get used to your own source. You know that this is what you have to do. For instance uh, my sister taught already privately piano and in the conservatory. And she had many, many Gentile friends in the conservatory who were teachers. And I was one of the pupils of an old lady whom I adored and I loved. In fact...

[telephone rings—interruption in interview]

Yes, so she was Gentile. And she kept telling us, don't worry, nothing is going to happen to you because you, we are professional people and it cannot happen. You, your, your sister, told me, your sister has a contract with the school. They just can't do that, and she was a Gentile from work. And uh, our neighbors, please don't worry, nothing will happen to you. It can't happen. And, because we started

hearing already stories from Poland, from Germany. Okay, but the German Jews were always the most assimilated Jews. And then, in fact, one of our neighbor told us to get out for her to sew because my sister had a trousseau—hope chest, what you call it here okay? It was a good thing, she had it and I had ????. You know in Europe they took embroidery and my grandmother, may she rest in peace, she put all her grandchildren, the girls. So they told us come on, get your hope chest, board up yours and get the Persians rugs. And uh, we will save it for you. So my sister went and gave the hope chest to these neighbor of ours and the Persian rugs. And uh, the jewelry was given to this couple who promised us papers. Because he and his family had already mixed marriages. Which if they would get into a ghetto would have white, they would have to wear a white uh, ribbon because that was the sign of a mixed married couple.

Both people had to?

No, no, no.

Just the non-Jew.

Just the, the non-Jew had to wear—I don't know whether you heard it or not sometime.

No.

So even the soldiers who went into labor camp were taken, were half-Jews or who converted and they had to have a—the white, white ribbon.

So converted Jews...

Were taken. But then some of them were lucky and were taken out. And the rest of them they were called uh, white, white ribbon soldiers. And uh, these people

told me, don't worry. Just bring your jewelry. So sure enough, our jewelry went to them and the hope chests and the Persian rugs went to our neighbor. So when ??? when we went back, after, I'm talking after, okay? The neighbor became pretty anti-Semitic. We didn't get nothing back from them. But from the other couple we got the jewelry back.

The ones that were going to try getting you papers.

Yes, yes. We got the jewelry back. So, we still—after we got back from the concentration camp, we still wanted to believe that the world changed.

For the better?

For the better. And really and truly, we are such liberal minded people, that's how I was brought up. There was no difference as far as my mother was concerned. The only thing I wasn't allowed to eat pork. That was, okay? But for instance we were invited to this neighbor or ours Christmas tree trimming, helping. They were in our house for Hanukah, for the latkes.

Similar to here.

Okay. But you know what, I really don't think that the American people are so liberal minded, okay, as we were. Because here you have neighborhoods. Jewish neighborhood. Okay?

And you didn't live in like...

We didn't, we didn't have that. I didn't know what that is until I didn't come here. Really.

Mm-hm. So everybody, the Jews...

Mixed. All together. We had the Jewish school like the Hillel, which was a private school. But we had um, we had private schools and we had state funded schools. We had boys schools and girls schools. I for instance went to a girls school, okay?

But it was a secular, school.

It was mixed.

Mm-hm.

It was natural. We didn't, we didn't make an issue. Come the holiday, come Shabbos, it was a natural thing that the store was closed. That's how I grew up. My own daughter had Gentile friends. Shirley went to help Janice trim the Christmas tree, Janice—they exchanged gifts. Shirley gave her a gift on Christmas, she got her gift on Hanukah.

So your lifestyle wasn't...

Entirely—no, no. Absolutely. That's why, when we were already in the concentration camp, we were such cowards. So afraid that I learned over there that I just can't speak my mind, because I'm a Jew. This is when it started after the Hungarians came into my hometown. I can't. Because if I speak I will be taken to the police station, interrogated, beaten up. My uncle, my two uncles who were really the liaison, as a mentioned to you, when we got in the ghetto they were beaten because they didn't believe them that they told them the truth.

What were, what were their names, your two uncles who the leaders?

Weiss and Abraham. His son and his daughter are out in Israel, my two cousins.

And uh, you know, it was an entirely different mood for me. That's why after the

concentration camp, after the liberation, I thought that the world is mine, the world is ours because we went through hell. Who is going to, who is going to make an issue about my religion? What difference does it make? The first sign what we saw that it stuck to our mind, I was married to my husband, okay, and, and we went back to Romania.

This was after.

After, because I had an aunt who came back from the concentration... This Mrs. Weiss, the old lady came back from the concentration camp.

Her, the husband of the, of the leader.

Of the husband, the husband's wife.

Mm-hm.

Came back the husband's wife and two children, came back from the concentration camp and we found out about this and uh, well that type is a rather long story and uh, we went back. We got married. I wanted my aunt she be it, give me away. And we went back and we went on our honeymoon to Bucharest. And my husband had a car. And going up in the mountains, which is a beautiful, beautiful place, some Russian soldiers stopped us. And my husband from Romania, "Now why do they stop us? They are Russians, non-Jews." Whatever difference does it make? And uh, they stopped us and my husband had a watch and I had a watch and had a ring. And they told him in Russian to "Give me, give me your watch, yours and your wife and whatever you have." So my husband that we are in Romania, "What do you want? I'm a Jew, I just got out from the labor camp. My wife just got out from the concentration camp. What do you want from

us?” And then he said, “Well you give me your jewelry or I kill you, you goddamned Jew!” Okay? That was the first sign that oh my God, come on. There it goes again? So, and they kept telling that freedom of speech and so on and so forth, okay? But then left something in our minds. But still not enough. So we shouldn’t go live there, okay? But then my husband having uh, two brothers here, we wanted to come to America. And for that we had to go to Germany, back to Germany. We went back to Germany and we signed up for the Romanian quota, which was very, very small. And uh, we lived there for four years.

In a, a camp?

No, no...

Or just in a private facility?

it’s private, it’s private, it’s private.

Um, let’s go back to when you said you were taken to the brick factory...

Yeah.

so we can do this chrono...chronologically. How long were you there in that place?

In the brick factory?

Yeah.

I think we were there a few weeks. I couldn’t tell you. I don’t remember exactly how many weeks.

But you didn’t—they didn’t have you doing anything, were you doing...

Oh no, oh no. The men were interrogated and the families stayed together.

You were with your aunts and uncles?

Yes, yes, and my sister. The men were interrogated and beaten.

By the Hungarians.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Because uh, they didn't believe 'em. They wanted money and jewelry and whatever they could get at, because by that time we didn't have anything. We left, we left the house. Nothing absolutely. And uh, we had a store in front of the house, okay? And we had a man who managed the store, a couple. And they used to bring us food.

To the brick factory?

To the brick factory. And uh, they told us not to worry because they are going to watch for the house. And uh, whenever they came they would come and bring us food. But uh, they don't like to see Gentile getting mixed up or helping Jews.

The government doesn't.

The gov...yes. So that was the end of it.

So they didn't come back again?

Uh, we were taken away just as suddenly...

From...

From the ghetto as suddenly as we were brought in. And we were already in the train, in the train. And we were told that we are going to ??? to labor camp, not concentration camp. And we were already in the train and we still didn't believe what happened. We couldn't, seeing that mess what was in the train, the hysteria. And uh, no water, no nothing. And uh, we still didn't believe it. But then, we were already under the Nazis, okay? The Germans.

The trains were under the Germans.

The train, yes, yes, yes. And you know, all that you heard was verfluchte Juden. And uh, we had no idea where we were going. Absolutely no idea 'til one morning we got to a place and we saw "Arbeit Macht Freiheit." And you know the funniest thing is that some of those darn Germans, Polish, you know, because by this time the Polish people were already, some of them, in uh, Auschwitz. And I'll never forget a short little old man kept yelling, "Leave the little ones, leave the little one! Don't drag with you, don't drag with you, the young mothers, but to leave the little ones, don't drag with you. You drag the kids, the kids will be put in the gas chamber just like you. Leave the little one."

He was saying this?

Yes, but we still didn't know what that meant or what.

He was a Kapo or a...

No, no, no, we was just a Polish prisoner working with the transports guy. And you know, you had to get undressed and you could see mountains and mountains of eyeglasses and shoes and clothes, because you—when you got there, you know, you were lined up to be taken in the left and right, and uh, to be taken in uh, to take a bath. And you got that striped uniform and your hair was shaved and you came out from there and nobody was there, you were on your own. I was lucky. I found my sister.

Were you on the train together?

Yes, yes. We were on the train together, but not on the train together after taking—getting the uniform, okay? Our coming out from ??? I think it was called the Entlausung, if I remember the expression of that bath or shower. I found my

sister, but her hair was shaved and mine was shaved. So—and found my two aunts, my three aunts and my cousins. And um, it was a very painful sight. I don't have to tell you. It was very, very, very painful. And uh, there was this one girl from my hometown, a very beautiful young girl, a Jewish girl, who used to work for uh, a drugstore. And I'll never forget it as long as I live. Standing on the line to be selected, Mengele and a doctor came and a German Aufseher whose name was Grazen, I'm sure you heard about that. Started selecting and he recognized this girl. So it ended that this doctor was a top salesman or somebody from the Bayer factory, Bayer aspirin. And he put this girl out and she left with the German, with the German Aufseher. And she became the rottenest person. At the end she wouldn't even go back to her hometown because she would have gotten killed the way she behaved.

Her whole personality changed from her treatment...

And we kept carrying, one of her cousins was a friend of my sister. And uh, one day I went to her, this was already in Auschwitz, I was in C Lager, which was called a Vernichtungslager.

What does that mean?

Uh, from where they were taken for a crematorium. We called it filling for the crematorium. Okay? And one day her cousin was very, very sick and we needed a couple of aspirin. So I went to Eva, that was her name. And uh, somehow you know she was dressed to a tee. So spotless, burgundy boots, pleated skirt, white blouse, you know. She was a very pretty girl. And I went to her and I told her—that her cousin's name was ????. She had been very sick and we need at least two

aspirin to try and bring her fever down. We haven't got anything and if you please, just for your own cousin, give us a few aspirin so she'll have some. She said um, "Let her die. I will not jeopardize my well being." And she wouldn't give her. And as time went on, she was a very sick girl, so we went again to her for some medication. So she made again that same remark and by that time, you know, I was so furious at her. I told her, "I just wish your mother or father"—her father was a lawyer—"your mother or father would see that you go to bed with their murderer, with the killer. I hope when you are in bed with him, you think what he did, what he did to your mother and father and what they are doing to us. I hope you drop dead."

[interruption in interview]

???

Yes, yes. But she was taken to Sweden after. That was where she developed lung...

Tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis. Yes. And she married a French doctor, but she could never, never step foot in our hometown or close.

This girl who became a prostitute married the doctor?

Yeah.

Uh, what, what did they do with you while you were in...

In Lager? In, in uh, Auschwitz?

Yeah. Did, did you just uh, did they have you do any work or any routine, or...

No, no. We were just sitting. And uh, trying... Well, I tell you what. I shouldn't say no. You see I really, I really don't, don't like talking about it. But I was never, never 'til long after we came to this country to start talking about the concentration camp, because I couldn't have taken the remark, "Oh poor thing. How she suffered." And once somebody made a remark, maybe that left a, a bitter taste, when somebody said to me, "Hitler didn't do a good job. They really shouldn't have left, he shouldn't have killed just the six million." Okay? And that left a very bitter taste. And then a very big part of the Jewish immigrants, when they came out to this country they thought that America owes them something. Like America owes them a living or something, you know.

So they were bitter and...

They were, they were bitter and my golly, I don't get any compensation from Lager, because my papers were late six days. I couldn't find my lawyer, he died. And for sickness, okay? And there were tons and tons of people who were never in the concentration camp and get money. So somehow I felt that what was, was. Okay? And that is my sorrow inside. Why talk about it? What good does it do to talk about it? And right now, it started the Holocaust memorial. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing and a beautiful memory memorial, okay? It's a beautiful. But the anti-Semitism is planted so deep, so deep that it opens just old wounds. Because if they would have brought it in as a curriculum in school right after. Beautiful thing, beautiful thing. I hope that, I hope that you youngsters, I told many times to my own daughter. I could never live to know—to see happening what happened

and knowing that children, grandchildren are hurt. I hope you youngsters will have the courage to fight back and know from, from, from what happened.

That's why we need...

But honey, it is how many years after?

It's too long, it's too long.

It's too... that is my only heartache. Otherwise I would give my heart and soul to work with you, to help you. And I hope to God that Israel will survive. But anti-Semitism is on the ??? different religion. Yes? Because remember how liberal thinker you are, that will always be. Because, I don't know, I guess, I guess I'm just... I just want to hope that the time will come.

The Meshiach will come. I don't know.

I don't know. Help yourself and God helps you too.

Yeah. But even in the case... You—there was no way to resist.

We really couldn't. Like uh, you know, the Warsaw ghetto, we couldn't do that. First of all... I'm talking about the Hungarian Jews now, okay?. In the ghetto, we were so few people. And the Polish people had so many years at this time. For instance when we got, I forgot to tell you that when we got in the, in the, the concentration camp to Birkenau—to Auschwitz, the Polish girls were there already, okay? I was in uh, twenty-seven barrack twenty-seven. And uh, our uh, Blockowa was a girl from—a Czech girl. Her name was Fanny. She had a young girl as a protractor, as a helper. Her name was Dora. She was an eighteen-year-old girl. She was on the firing line for the Polish soldiers, for their rest, for their entertainment. As an eighteen-year-old girl. This is—she was, she was taken and

uh, had to learn life like a war the time she was fourteen. So she remembered those people had a hatred toward us because they used to call us verfluchte. While they were in camp, we were still home having water and soap, and they didn't. So that's why we could never have done what they did. Never. Never. This is my personal opinion. ???

Right. So you didn't have the years and years of struggle.

That's why. That's why, okay? So.

So you, do you remember the date you were taken from Auschwitz to, to leave there when the Russians were coming?

I don't remember exactly, but uh, I know that for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we were still there because we got candles. And uh, of course none of us ate the food on Yom Kippur, but they had to go and bring the food so the Polish people, the Polish girls ate the food because they were already so hungry. And they had those wooden shoes and they put the food in those wooden shoes, in those ??? and they ate it. And you had to—you couldn't take the food back. So you had it.

So you fasted on Yom Kippur...

Oh absolute...

even though...

Oh, oh absolutely, oh absolutely. But we had to take the bread portion. Oh absolutely. In fact, I have to tell you an incident because this happens once in a million. We were in C Lager and uh, a couple of my friends from back home were in B Lager. And B Lager was a working Lager. Girls went to work there. A Lager

was a working Lager. B was a, a working Lager and C was a Vernichtungslager where they took from the selection, where they took you and you knew that you are going to go to the crematorium from there. So one day these girls worked in the kitchen. And these two girls' mother was in our... Let me remember exactly. The mother was with us, okay, in the C Lager. And the two girls were in B Lager, which was a working Lager. The girls were taken for work more than in, in C Lager, okay? And that they had checked people, oh all sorts of people in that. It was known as a ??? Lager, for Czechoslovakian. And one day these two girls—I grew up with these two girls, okay? And my sister was there as I told you in, in Auschwitz. And uh, by that time I had just one aunt left because the other ones died of diarrhea. They couldn't keep the food. And one day these two girls came, they were bringing the food. How do you call those? ??? in what they brought the food. You know, my mind is so blocked now. I'm in another world.

Like a big kettle or some...

Kettle. Kettle. And they told us that my sister and me, that it's our lives for their mother. They have to do it. They are going after everybody finishes the food, they are going to put their mother in one of the kettle.

And take her out?

And take her out to the C Lager, which was one of the ??? Lager. And we just have to take the consequences. They had to tell somebody because I had my aunt there. She was an elderly lady, a sick person. And being friends from home they said that they can trust us. So they said that they don't know how or when, but when something drastic will happen, we should know that the mother is safe in

the other Lager. So and how many times we talk about it now and they all remember this incident. But nobody knew why, what happened. So one day, we went out for Zählappell for the counting. And ho belo the steady excitement. She has one number minus and we had one number plus. And everything was—it was thrown out from the barracks. You know, the barracks had actually ??? and, you know, there were three, uh...

Bunks.

bunks, okay? Everything was thrown out. And uh, they took us to... No, no, no. That was afterward. Uh, they counted and counted and counted and nothing happened. It was one minus and one plus. Then this Jewish girl I told you about in that C Lager, okay, she started walking up and down with ??? and telling the Hungarian that what happened. That there is some trouble. There is one minus here, one plus there. And whoever is found that is dead or the person. If nobody comes forward and tell them what happened, everybody will be thrown against the wire fences. You know the fences were electrically wired. And uh, didn't work. Then we had to kneel on our knees for hours and hours because they checked and rechecked both Lagers and raining. We were out for twenty-four hours and they didn't find. By this time, you know there were already women with weak nerves. You know, there is just so much you can take. Then uh, there were a couple of women who ran against the wiring and uh, and they got electrocuted. So by that time, you know, it was more or less from the same barracks. But we never talked to these girls personally after that to show. So we should stay together just the four of us, okay? And it turned out okay. Something

must have happened. We don't know what. And we were in Bergen-Belsen. And that's, that's where I was liberated. And my sister had a typhoid fever and I had typhoid fever. And we were very sick. And how do you find us? These two girls with their mother found us. And that old lady nursed us back to health because they could never, never forget what happened.

You saved her life.

What how—it wasn't us, it was the two daughters really.

But you could have told. I mean, you knew. You could have told, I suppose.

And uh, my sister, when you asked me what I did in C Lager...

[telephone rings—interruption in interview]

Actually it was the two girls that saved their mother, not us, really. So they were the ones who found us...

And helped you out then.

...and nursed us back because both of us had typhoid fever. And uh, we didn't have food. And there they brought every single day, not once and not twice and stayed with us, to feed us. And uh, we pulled through. In fact, the lady lives in Florida now.

The mother?

The mother lives in Florida and the two girls, one uh, one is in Sweden, the other one is in Montreal became a very famous ???...

[telephone rings—interruption in interview]

Why don't you tell me how you got from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen?

Clara Dan Interview

How do I get it? Now listen, there was a group of five of us. We met an elderly lady, with her daughter from Miskolc, this was in Auschwitz okay? And we got, we got very close friend. So this lady became like one of our organizers. She had a daughter my age. It was my sister, her girlfriend, Zita, the one I told you about who had a cousin who didn't want to give her aspirins and myself. And a loaf of bread was divided in five. So this old lady decided we would take the bread whole, a whole bread, not cut up, okay? And she's going to manage it so we should have a little bit of food all day long. And uh, she had a cousin who was the Lagerschreiberin of C Lager. She was from ????. And who worked was the Lager Kapo and with the Germans. She just was lucky girl. The Lager Kapo was a rotten Polish girl. But when I say rotten, she was rotten. I get back to you, this was another chapter. And I don't remember her name already. You know, ??? cousin. This lady's name was ????. And this cousin, I think was Eva or Eve, I don't remember. So she was a niece of this old lady. So when she found out that her aunt is here, she came to look her up. And she said, "Now don't worry, when I know that a group of people will be going directly to a factory, I'm going to let you know and push you in somehow and I want you and Agnes," that was her cousin's name, "I want you in that group." So ??? told us that when this, told us what happened. And uh, from then on the five of us stood in one line in back of each other because there were five lines, five rows where you stood in Zählappell. So one day ??? came that this girl—Lili, I guess it was Lili. I don't, don't, don't quote me exactly for her name because I don't remember. But she was a Lagerschreiberin of C Lager.

Like a clerk.

Well, that's. Yes. But she kept. She knew more or less what went on—she was in the office, okay? And she came for the Zählappell with ??? who was the German SS Auf...Aufseheren ???, with the Lager Kapo who was a Polish girl and this lady because she had a paper, the numbers, which barrack, how many people. But she was a very nice girl. You know, and it was very hard over there to stay a human being, not to become an animal. And uh, one day Lili comes that uh, there is this group of people. Tomorrow morning there will be the lineup, which is going to Hundsfeld, okay? This was a factory place.

In Poland?

In Poland. And I want you in that group of people. So ??? told us. She said, I'm going to go and somehow come and get the two of you. So ??? said "Oh no, we are five." So she give herself the argument that she can't take five people. So ??? said, "Well if you can't do it, then we are not going. I made a promise to myself and I'm going to see these kids through." So Lili said, "All I can do is look sideways and not see and the rest is up to you then, okay?" So sure enough how we made it, but we made it. ??? pushed us through. And we were happy that we are going to a factory and we will get out from there and we... Every group before it got out from Auschwitz had to go through bathing, new clothes, okay? And we say that now we are out from C Lager, we are on the way to A Lager for a bath and clothes to get out. And ho belo, we found ourselves in front of the crematorium. Something happened and we were rerouted from A Lager to the crematorium. And we knew where we are going because uh, you know, we saw

the smoke and everything. And we got there. And in front of the crematorium we were to—we were still lined up, we were told to get undressed and go for a bath. And after we take our bath, we come out and get the clothes. Well, we knew where we were, why that is. But everybody was so... We were like a piece of, like a piece of iron. Really. Nobody was hysterical. Nobody. I think we were about 250 people. And everybody started getting undressed and uh, this is it. And ??? said, apologized that she really meant good and ???. And she still doesn't believe, believe it because she was all her life, she was a religious woman and she just can't believe it that after waiting until to Auschwitz and going through so many selections by Mengele that this will be her destination. And all of us were undressed and all of—and getting ready to go in and all of a sudden an SS comes said, "Stop. Everybody get dressed and go back." So we were taken back. And her niece came back and apologized. But it changed, had a change of uh, destiny for the group of people. But there is a saying that in two days Hundsfeld still needs the people. So about a couple or three days after it was uh, through the microphone the people who were in the group three days ago to line up. And we figured, well this is it, we are going to the crematorium and there is nothing to talk about it so. So we got ready and we were taken in the A Lager, and gave us shoes and food and taken to Hundsfeld.

By train?

Uh...

By trucks or something?

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I think it was by train. I think it was by train. I think so. So in Hundsfeld this was—this was already I think the last or the last before there was another group of people left in Auschwitz. In, in C Lager, let me put it that way, okay? In C Lager. So we got to Hundsfeld. It was winter already and we went to the factory and worked.

What kind of a factory was it?

What kind of a factory... We made um, how do you the call the ??? for the ???.

Bullets?

Bullets. We made them bullets. But in the meantime, we lived in uh, like uh, on, on a soldier, in brick homes. Okay? Like apartments.

Mm-hm.

But the hall had a bathroom and a regular toilet. So we could already keep ourselves clean. And uh, it was a tremendous brick—it was like a military camp, like an army camp.

Were there soldiers there?

No.

They were gone.

No, no they weren't. Just us prisoners.

All women?

Yes. Displaced persons. Just women. That factory was a tremendous huge factory and it was under the SS because we were counted every morning when we went out and count, were counted when we came back. So after we came back so many times the girls tried to go in the cellar to steal potatoes so we should have a little

baked potato or something. And whenever they sent me they always caught me because I couldn't steal. So my sister said "Oh my God you can't even do this much. So you better..." but if they left me home watching the potato for sure that that's when we had a check up by the Nazis and they caught me with the potatoes. So anyway. And after the Russians started getting close to Hundsfeld.

Do you know where it was near? The, was it near any big city or anything?

Uh, no I don't, I really don't. I don't know. All I know is that after the Russians started getting closer and we started seeing the Stalin uh, uh, what you ma call it? They used to call it Stalin candles thrown.

The artillery?

Yes, something. We knew that they are going to move us. So sure enough, they lined us up and from then on we went by feet. We went from Hundsfeld to Gross Rosen. Stayed in Gross Rosen for that... Whenever the Russians got close or closer we were taken. It was Gross Rosen, Mauthausen. This was done by, by foot and it was winter. It was cold and we begged this old lady to leave us alone. We want to die. We just can't take it.

This was the older woman who contacted...

Yes, yes, we stay there together the five of us. And I'll never forget it, one night I had a dream that my mother, I dreamt with my mother and my mother made the remark, I shouldn't worry, she is with us and we will make it, we will survive the camp. Just we have to be strong, both of us. And I woke up and I told my sister what a dream I had and my sister said I had always very strong faith. My belief was always very, very, very strong. And uh, I told my sister... I always had more

feeling towards religion than my sister. My sister was uh, well I was a Zionist too, but she, she climbed more toward the leftist liberal part of Zionism. And me being the youngest somehow I was just, by my faith you couldn't, you couldn't do anything because this is what I believe in. And uh, we loved dearly, dearly our parents. And uh, I figured that I'm a good Jew and I just—it just can't happen to us. It just... We are the Chosen People and it just has to something. And from then on, my belief was so strong that we will make it. And uh, my sister started crying. It was somewhere outside on a, on a top of a mountain and the SS guys were in the tavern drinking and we were left outside. And uh, my sister was older, eight and a half years than I am. And uh, she kept begging ??? to please leave me here, let me die. I just can't go on. I haven't got the will, I just can't take it anymore. So this old lady bought her out that she's a few years older than she is and if she can make it, you will make it and we will be liberated and you'll come to my place and I nurse you back and... So anyway, we made it.

To Bergen-Belsen.

To Bergen, to Bergen-Belsen, which was hell. It was. The Germans were treating us, because by that time, you know, they were getting weaker and weaker. And we got the typhoid fever.

While you were there you got sick.

Yes. And I was there... It affected my ear. And my sister. And we spoke English from home. We learned English English.

British.

Clara Dan Interview

British English. And that was an entirely, a different English than the American English. And the girls—the group of people who we were together noticed and we noticed that something is going on because the food didn't come on time. And the loudspeakers were talking in English. So a few girls from my hometown came to us and I—they said, "Clara and Irene you understand English, go and listen because they keep saying something over the microphone," and it was food and we don't know what. We were so deaf, I just couldn't make it out. So my sister and ??? decided that it must be the food. We're not going to touch the food. By this time her daughter was so weak already, had diarrhea and ??? was so sick from diarrhea that ??? just one person were crazy. Absolutely crazy. She lost her mind. But so bad that the Germans took her way. So we lost. We lost her daughter. And it had a terrible effect on us. But we were sick, okay? And these—we got a hold of these girls. I told you about, okay. They brought us food and we didn't know what happened with ??? because ??? was put in another barrack. And we went looking for ??? with the food to come to our place because by that time the girls found us and they started bringing us food. And we were still weak, very weak, but I went looking for them. And I couldn't find ???. By the time I found Agi was gone—her daughter was gone. So we dragged ??? with us to come to our barrack and have some food but she couldn't stay there for the night because we were still counted, you know. So during the day and uh, we lost ???. She couldn't take it anymore so she died. And the day, the next day, the English came. ??? died the day before. And the English people came in and started announcing that no food,

no food, no food. So when the girls told us what they say in English, no food.

That we could, okay, fine, don't touch the food because the food was poisoned.

The Germans poisoned it...

Yes...

before they left?

yes. The German poisoned the food. And all of a sudden we saw that the German SS women were cleaning the toilets instead of us Jews. So we knew that we are...

Liberated.

we got rid of 'em. How safe or what we still didn't know. And then uh, we just noticed that uh, big posters were posted, "Do not touch food." Twenty-four hours no food, no food, no water. We will bring you everything. And then they started bringing the food, the carrots, potato, meat and gravy. And uh, my sister wouldn't let me eat anything. She picked up—out a couple of potatoes and mashed it because she was afraid of the diarrhea for not eating for so many days, you know. And we were between the very, very few people who didn't have diarrhea. Because, you know, they were—and they started bringing ham and jelly and bread and, and can of spam. Golly. I'll never forget that. And we just had to look at it, I had to look at it. And my sister wouldn't let me open one can of food.

'Til you started.

'Til we started eating. And we were saved by the English, everybody took by the English. And then they started taking us to ??? which is a little town not too far from Han...Hannover. And, but before we got to—we were liberated already. So then they went us and took us to ????. And in ??? I—it was English people. It was

Clara Dan Interview

like an army camp. It uh, must have been a stable for horses before because it still smelled when we went in, but it was clean. And the place had a hospital so they—we people could get into the hospital and what, they were taking care of the English people. In fact, this English girl, I think she was the daughter of the, of General Montgomery. And uh, they were very strict. Very strict but very nice people. So we were already in good hands. And at that time I still spoke French. And the camp had a French as a director, a French guy. And they were looking for somebody who can speak French and can translate it. So I went and uh, told them that I still speak French and I worked with him as a translator. And uh, the food was very good. And we were safe. And one day I was in a—while I was uh, when the director wasn't in—on the premise I had in the hospital kitchen to make sandwiches because at four o'clock it was teatime, so they had to get some food. Uh, one day while I was in the kitchen, an old woman comes in, in rags begging for food. And something on her eye was so fa...on her face was so familiar to me. The sight was so familiar. But I didn't pay any attention. And, of course when she spoke German we didn't give her any food. We just let her go out. And in the afternoon—and somehow the woman looked so sneaky, you know. Like she was afraid. But listen we were so happy it was after in a clean place and food and clean clothes and everything. Didn't pay too much attention. And in the afternoon the French—the director comes back and my God there is, there is a news bulletin out that the, the German SS Aufseherin ??? is hiding somewhere around here in rags, hungry, torn, no shoes, no nothing. And I thought in my head, oh my God

she was in here and something was so, so familiar that I didn't know what it was.

And the camp was searched and searched and searched and they didn't find her.

[interruption in interview]

Okay?

Okay? So after she was caught and she was taken in jail. In fact, they were already in the United States when my brother-in-law showed me in an article in the paper that Ilse Koch, that she was her name, was caught and ????. She was ????. And when I told him—that was the very few time that I spoke about the Lager—and I told him what happened with Ilse Koch and me. So and then a couple of—we were in Celle, okay?

Can you spell that?

Yes. C-e-l-l-e.

It's in Germany, right?

Celle, I think it's German.

Near Hannover?

CR: Yes.

Okay?

CR: It's—wait a minute. Hannover or Hamburg? I'm not good at remembering this.

Well, the name is...

CR: Oh God. I think it was near Hannover. I think it was Hannover. So one day we were in Celle and, uh... Now, that day I went back to Bergen-Belsen but they were already liberated. And this was—no it was Celle, yes. Uh, there was a group

Clara Dan Interview

of people are coming from Prague, Czechoslovakia looking for Czech people, Czech Jews from Prague because they wanted to come home. And we started inquiring and we heard that there is a group of Romanian guys who were sent by the Romanian government to look for the displaced persons. But we didn't—we never inquired about it. So a few guys from my hometown got together and organized a group to be taken home through Prague, to go back. And they found out we were the two of us here in Poland. So they came and got us. And that morning one of the guys, two lawyers got together and organized this group, two lawyers from back home from Romania, from my hometown. And, in fact, the morning when they came to pick us up, one of the guys says, "You know there is a rumor going that in Prague there are a few guys from Kolozsvár who are sent by the Romanian government to protect the displaced persons. So when we get to Prague we will try and look them up. And uh, they came to pick us up and we were about eighty or a hundred people that we are going home. And we start at Prague uh, railroad station, which is a tremendous, tremendous ????. But these two guys organized it. We had everything. Uh, what you ma call it, one of the train uh, part of the train just for us, nobody else. And we get into Prague railway station and it was oh, about getting dark already. And my sister, you know by that time we had a few pieces of clothing, and we found blankets and uh, shoes and golly I thought I'm the best dressed girl. Clean clothes. So we fixed each other on the floor for the night. And all of a sudden I hear my—our name. Because my maiden name was ????. And I hear somebody calling ??? Clara and Irene. And I said to my sister, "Somebody's calling our name." And my sister said, "You and your

dreams.” I said, “???. And I still hear our name.” But it was dark already. And all of a sudden the door opens to the wagon and there stands my husband who was my fiancée before and another guy and he says, “Clara! Irene! ??? here.” And when I heard his name I pass out. And all I know is that I woke up. When I woke up I was already in their place—in his place, which was the Czech consulate, which the Romanian—these Romanian guys lived in sent by the Romanian government. And they were the guys who were supposed to come to Celle to look for Displaced Persons.

Your husband was one of them.

One of them. But he would have never found my name, because he looked between the Romanians. But my sister put us between the Czechs because they were the first ones to get out and she really didn’t care where she put our name as long as we can get out. So the rest of the group went further and we stayed with uh, with my husband. And then we went home and then I found out that my aunt is home and my two cousins and we went home and we got married and we came back to Munich, Germany because my husband wanted to come out to the States.

So you came back to Germany right after you went home.

We stayed home six weeks.

So in ’45 you were already back...

Forty-six.

Forty-six.

Forty-six. Forty-six. Forty-six uh, was my wedding, ’45 December. And ’46 January we came to Prague, back to Prague because we left the guys there. And

from—these friends. And from Prague we went over to Munich because we wanted to emigrate and we couldn't do it from Prague. So we stayed in uh, Munich for four years.

And you came here. So that would be almost...

Forty-nine.

Forty-nine you came here.

Forty-nine May.

To Detroit?

To Detroit.

And he had brothers here already?

Yes, he had two brothers here and uh, we came to Boston to see a friend of ours. One of the guy's he was working with uh, went to Boston and uh, the other one went to Hawaii. And the fourth one died.

Do—now you said before at the very beginning that you heard your brother was still alive in Siberia?

Yeah, in labor camp.

What happened?

In Russia.

Did he ever get out?

Yes. See my husband was—after he was—my husband was in labor camp too. And uh, after he got out, I really don't know exactly when he got out. I am sorry he isn't home.

He would like to be interviewed also, I understand.

Of course, he doesn't mind. In fact, he gave some very valuable pictures from the concentration camps to what's her name, Mark, Mark Eichman's wife.

Margaret Eichman. Margaret.

Do you two work together?

I know her very well.

Well, he gave her an album and I wonder that, I don't want it forgotten. And those are original pictures from camp, from concentration camp.

That's very valuable.

So. My husband was very, very active at this. And uh, I think there were three or four guys working together. They came—they were—became the first ones to come home and be liberated. Or I think, wait a minute, yes, but then I think that they run away from the Russians.

Mm-hm.

And a, a few of them got together and with their own money guess what they did? They were in Poland getting people out. They were Auschwitz getting people out. In fact, some of the pictures you will see the wagons, the trains. And uh, he was—he always worked—he worked for quite a few years.

So he's the one that knew that your brother was still alive?

Yes, he found out that my brother and one of his brother-in-law were in some kind of a jail or labor camp, and he went through different channels and bribery, he took—he was always a step late. And he could met to talk to my brother, he met my brother. I really didn't—wouldn't like to talk about it because I am not sure so I don't want to contradict his story with my story. I remember we were

already in Germany and getting ready to come to wait and my sister was left in Romania because we went back together when we heard that my brother is alive, okay? And we begged my sister to come to Germany to immigrate with us. But my sister wrote that she couldn't do that because my brother when he left was taken into forced labor camp, left my mother home. Left his family home, wife, the little boy. He didn't even know his second child because my sister-in-law, may she rest in peace, was pregnant—I think in her seventh month with her second child. So she felt that it would just—he wouldn't be able to cope with the situation on being left alone. Coming home and not finding anybody. So that's why I'm not with my sister because she stayed home. And then she got married. And in the meantime my brother came back and uh, he remarried a second time and they went on to Israel. My brother lived in Israel when it was Palestine.

Mm-hm. Before '48.

Oh yes. He lived in Israel when uh, between '34 or '33 and '37.

How old when he came home?

And then he came home because my father was very sick and this was his only son. That's when my father died. When my brother came home he brought uh, little bags, they call it some kind of sand what religious people put on the hair. And my brother brought this ??? and put on my father's head. And uh, my brother remarried. And then my sister and brother-in-law with their daughter went out to Israel when the situation started really getting, when... They just had to get out because both of them were music teachers, my brother-in-law too while he lived. And they, they taught in school and privately. But uh, they situa... They wanted

to force them in the communist party and they didn't want it. So things got real rough.

Mm-hm.

And they were able. Of course, they had to leave everything there. All they could take out, I think, no, I don't—I think they took out, they shipped out I think one of two of their Steinways, piano. But really nothing to talk about, the rest of them.

And uh, my brother went out there. And uh, in the meantime I lost my brother and my sister lost her husband. That was the first thing when they got there.

And you have one daughter?

Yes.

And she's called.

Shirley is thirty. She's married, she has two children.

And they're how old?

Lela is four and Amy is twenty now. And uh, she, she went a few times to the survivor, Holocaust survivor of children, how do you call it?

Children of the Holocaust.

She had a friend who went too—her name was Shali. ??? and this girlfriend went.

But then she found that, I don't know, she, she just didn't find what she was looking.

Does she—have you told her about your experiences?

Oh absolutely. But to make an issue about it, never.

Just in—just telling her.

Telling her. I have that book *Mila 18*, and uh, I never give books about this. And we talk and we made up in our mind when we came out that we can't close the past because that will be always. But, but uh, uh, whenever Shirley—I just didn't like the attitude at the beginning you know, when they told us not once and not twice because you are—you were in the concentration camp uh, America doesn't owe you a living. And then uh, when they used to call me greenhorns, okay? And uh, I just...

Are you talking about American Jews?

Yes.

Or just Americans in general.

No, no, no, no, no. American Jews. American Jews.

You felt that they...

Uh, I just felt that I don't want their, I don't want their pity and I don't want their snobbishness.

I've heard that before.

And, uh...

So most of your friends—do you stay mostly with your friends from...

We have mixed crowd.

You don't just have friends from Europe.

Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no. In fact uh, I always—we always try to mix. But not so much now, okay? But at the beginning I still say that the biggest part, you know, when they give me—made us the remark “What do you want, you have everything. You have relatives to come with us but when we came out to this

Clara Dan Interview

country we had to work for everything.” Okay? And uh, once I got so angry that I told somebody, I asked them if they really came out with the Mayflower by any chances. And uh, that’s why we were really very hesitant on talking about it. And uh, Shirley knew everything and we had open discussions. But to make an issue not to tell Shirley, “Now listen you sit down and I’m going to tell you and because uh, I am a newcomer and I’ve suffered. The suffering how much I suffered and how easy it is for you kids but I suffered.” Never, never. In fact, I always told Shirley that I hope that you, you will get from your father and your mother just a little bit of the love and understanding and level headedness as much as we got from our parents. All I can tell you that. I was told so many times, “You went to a concentration camp, you haven’t got kosher kitchen. How come?” I said, “Because in my eyes, if they did what they did to my husband’s family, my husband’s mother who was so deeply religious and a good soul and all his sisters and my parents were so good.” Okay, I didn’t lose my parents in the concentration camp. But I felt, I was engaged to my husband before and he was very religious and it would have been a normal thing for me to have a kosher house. Not to put a light on, on Shabbos, not to cook on Shabbos. Because that was a natural thing back home. But here I feel that I am just as good of a Jew because I don’t have kosher kitchen as the one who has and beats her head against the wall so to say. And my own daughter has a kosher house. But on a Holiday she wants to—she went to shul since she was three years old. In fact I was one of the organizers of the PT, of the PTO in shul. I was very active in shul. And uh, I feel that uh,

Shirley knows enough about the Holocaust and everything that happened without uh, making her sit down and listen to this or listen to that.

When you think back on everything, do you have any feeling or thoughts why you survived? Was it fate or wa...was there some reason you survived?

Reason? Fate. I was—I consider myself most of the time, sometimes when, when I see so many injustice done and again anti-Semitism and again the corruption and again Jews can't get here or there, I really wonder if it was worth the whole thing. I just hope and pray that the gener...younger generation, and I'm not talking about your generation, I'm considering you between my, my Shirley's generation.

Our children.

Your children. Your kids will have the strength and... The strength and uh, what word should I use... To recognize, to recognize when the evil, before the evil really gets to you. Because right now, if they be in hell, but they're going ??? Israel. But I still believe as long as religion is a problem, it will always be anti-Semitism. Always, always will be. Just this. This is me personally, okay? I'm a very, very strong faith. I do believe in God. I will do to anything for humanity. I'll do anything for anybody. It can be, it can be any religion, to me it wouldn't matter. I really—we had for instance going back to Germany, we had in Munich a dear friend. We lived together with a friend of ours who was a doctor, Jewish guy. And uh, he worked in a hospital. He was a graduate of German medical school. He had a Jewish wife and he had German friend's doctors. We had them. They were very nice people. We were—we celebrated Christmas at their house. We were invited to their house for Christmas dinner. And in fact this doctor—this

Clara Dan Interview

German doctor, his name was ??? used to tell us that sometimes when he would get called in the country, people don't have money to pay. So they bring eggs or whatever they had from the farm. So my husband told him, "How can you make a living? Do you sell the eggs or chicken or what, how do you make a living?" So he says, Well uh, why don't you come out when I make my housecall with me." And this was a German, a German Munich born guy, okay? And um, my husband went with him on a housecall and in the country. And they started talking and one of the young girl, my husband wanted to know whether—how her, how her thinking is. Now this goes back thirty-two, yeah year thirty-two, yes. So probably must be '34 here, okay? This girl from the country uh, my husband asked me that, asked the girl if she likes her place and she said sure. And uh, if she goes into Munich sometimes or remembered that city. She said really and truly she would love to go but she understands that there are Jewish people there. So my husband said, "What do you mean?" They didn't know that's he's Jewish. And ??? was there, my friend was there. And uh, my husband said, "What do you mean Jewish people? What do you think that they are or how?" So she said, "Well you know, I heard that they are really bad people, ugly people, monsters, mean and very dangerous. So my husband looked at her and uh, he was very handsome guy, my husband. He looked at her and he told her, "Would you be surprised if I would tell you that I am Jewish?" The girl started running and the rest of the family stayed there and they called her, "Greta, come on back, come on back." So she came back and the mother looked at my husband and she said, "You mean to tell me that they are human beings." So my husband said, "Well you see I have two

hands, two feet. I didn't even touch you, I didn't bite you. I'm a friend of your doctor." That's how uneducated, stupid that were the Nazism and the anti-Semitism, that's what they say.

???

But uh, regrets, I hope and pray that nothing happens to my children and my grandchildren, and to, to you young people. And I hope that if something like this would ever, ever, ever happen again, if I'm still alive, I could have the guts to take a gun, because I couldn't because I really couldn't. I have to tell you one more remark. There are very many newcomers like me who want to play the big shots, okay? Like they don't—they are bigger Americans than the American people themselves. They play the big humanitarian American better than the American people themselves. I don't know whether you understand this.

I can think of a few people you might be referring to.

Pardon?

I can think of some people like that.

Okay? You will find very few people come from Europe who'll tell you that they were poor or working people, or just lower class people. Or for that matter, some of them are really educated people. And those people when they get in touch with the old comers, you know, I'm talking about forty—fifty when they left Poland, and all the places and they used the buggy, the horse and buggy, cannot imagine that as much as America changed and advanced, that's how much those places changed. For instance, when we got here, somebody told me, "Now listen, we

have to take you across the border to Canada. You have to see that uh, what you ma call it? Under the bri...

The tunnel?

The tunnel. You have to see how a tunnel looks. And somebody told me, oh we have to take you down to see the Fox Theater because it's so beautiful. But never in your life just in America can you see this. So we went and saw the Fox Theater and by that time, you know, we used to travel in our day. And we told this people, "Now listen, the Fox Theater is really beautiful, absolutely beautiful. But you have to go and see in Germany Salzburg. Then you will see, even though that they are German, but that you have to give them credit, because what they can show you, the beauty. Fox Theater is a beautiful, but go and see that." You will find out, you will find a theater over there too. Maybe in your time they didn't have anything like that, but golly, America didn't have at that time either what they have. So it was very hard the beginning to make a new life. Oh God, we wanted to go back so many times. And it was really, really very, very hard. But a few people tell us that we are more Americanized than some of them. Really I'm not more Americanized if you understand or if know what I mean by it. We just knew that this is our new life. This is where we have to get used to it, and we have to assimilate ourselves and get used to the way American life is. [pause] And uh, really, that's when Shirley said, "Oh you will move to Florida." It's really not so easy to, to make again—like my family wanted us to go to Israel. Or when my sister got out of Israel it was so natural. We wrote them and asked them for the date we should an affidavit. And my sister wrote us—they have an only child—

wrote us that this is our home and nobody is going to call my daughter a dirty Jew. You are not home. That is not your land. And the day will come when you will be called a dirty Jew again. And we cope. We will cope with the Arabs either—easier and better than you will cope with the black problem—than America will cope with the Black problem. So I don't know. Maybe, maybe Israel would have been the place, who knows?

You make your choices at the time when you have to decide at the time.

Absolutely. Absolutely.

And later it doesn't matter.

I love Israel. But I will have to be forced out from here, okay? To make a move. And I love Israel. My family is there. So this is my home, and uh, no place on earth people have the opportunity to live ????. It's not easy and it wasn't easy. But uh, you take good with bad.

Yeah.

What other questions you have?

[interruption in interview]

Somebody asked me

If you want...

if I want to kiss the America earth when I got here and uh, I told them no, I didn't. But when I went to Israel I felt like ????. And uh, they didn't like it because they said that we are very ungrateful, we displaced persons because if not for Truman we would have had rotted in Germany.

This was an American born Jew?

Yes. So the American Jew has to be educated before the generation—before the new generation can cope with this problem. Those people—the parents have to be educated too because between their remarks that, “You mean the concentration camp was suffering? Have you got any idea what the Depression was?” I say, “No I really don’t know what the Depression was.” She said, “Well then don’t complain about the, the concentration camp was because you don’t know how bad the Depression was.” I wanted this to be understood.

The American Jews think more like Americans than Jews sometimes. Is that what you think?

Well, it hap...

They forget about—I mean, they don’t want to be so patriotic.

The, the uh, American Jews, as I told you, they will never let you forget that Israel is living with their money. Okay? They support to bring you over. They support because the Depression was. So I don’t say all, all of them, okay? But they are very big percentage uneducated, stupid and they think that with their money they can rule the whole world and everybody. Because they have money, you don’t. So there are, there are so many Jews without money. I was much more than those that were over here. But they don’t have that. They don’t have the opportunity.

Okay.

[interruption in interview]

That’s why the children, Gentile Polish guy, somehow I got befriended with him.

That, and garlic.

This was in Auschwitz.

Clara Dan Interview

Yes, fresh garlic. And I had my, my friend and poor old woman, you know. She really was so wanted at home and every comfort and everything and here she was a sick person and we couldn't give her anything, just to make her a little comfortable. So this old man brought me a piece of fresh garlic. And I said to him, "Oh my God, I am so grateful. At least we will have a delicious supper tonight because on the bread is smear some garlic. But you know there are five of us and my aunt is here with her daughter and uh, we will just have to delight in a few from ??? that one garlic will have to be enough for ten slices of bread, because one loaf was divided in five. And uh, I said to this man, "And my portion and my sister's. My sister even though she isn't here but I'm talking for her, it will go to our friend so she really should feel the taste of the garlic." So the old man said, "Well how late will you be here?" Because uh, my sister and myself used to be doorwatchers." I didn't even tell you that, in our barrack. And it was up to us who went to the bathroom and who didn't. So we used to get beaten up so often because most of our barracks were from our hometown. My hometown, my husband's hometown and another one I mentioned ???. So go people with diarrhea, tell them you can't go out. And whoever was called by the SS people was asked which block are you from, so there we came, there they came and uh, we got a few good lickings. So I told the man, "I don't know, after the Zählappell. I don't know what time it is." So he says, "You know what? If I don't get back today, I will be back tomorrow." And uh, I told her, I told the man that, "I really can't even believe it, you're a Gentile, I'm a Jew. Now why would you come back?" But this guy put a lot, a lot, and he was a gentile, okay? So he says, "Just

don't you worry. I'll be back. If you don't eat garlic today, you will be eating garlic tomorrow." And ho belo we didn't see the old man for a few days. And what a big feast was for my aunt. But of course everybody had a little. But it was divided for ten slices of bread. And about a week after, we didn't know what, what time was that, it was about a week or so, the old man shows up I says, "What did I tell you? That I am a Jew, you are a Gentile." He said, "Like hell Roosevelt died." So the president was Roosevelt that year. What month did Roosevelt die?

May I think? It was in the Spring.

Comes back, "Roosevelt died." And I started crying, I said, "Oh my God, that's the end of us. Where did you hear it?" Said, "We saw a newspaper." And they knew about it the concentration camp and Roosevelt was a big Jew hater, a big anti-Semitic person.

The man said this?

Yeah! Yeah! And oh my Lord...

[interruption in interview]

Okay?

Kennedy. What did I know about this? I didn't know about this. All I know is I knew Roosevelt. All our hopes was in Roosevelt that he's going to do something. But he didn't do nothing. So they knew. They knew very, very well what went on, okay? It was years after in one of the *Time* magazine, I get a hold of the Kennedy family's history. That the old man was an English ambassador or something.

Ambassador to England.

Clara Dan Interview

Okay, and he really didn't like Jews. And nothing the old man and his son was already a very liberal minded person, so. Well I guess, you know, if you start talking you can talk 'til Wednesday.

I could...

No that's okay.

[interview ends]