

Holocaust Survivor

Oral Histories

Noemi Engel Ebenstein

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Could you tell me please your name? And where you were born?

My name is Noemi Ebenstein. My maiden name is Engel. So Noemi Engel Ebenstein. And I was born in Subotica, uh, which is Yugoslavia. The borders in Europe change. [chuckle] At the time it was under Hungarian occupation, on July 2, 1941.

So you don't have much recollection then of life before the war, I would guess.

No, not really. But...

What do you know about your family before the war? Maybe from your mother or from relatives that you've spoken to.

Well, mostly from my mother and my father, but growing up it was my mother who told the stories and she was a terrific reconnoiter, a good story teller. And she, she told us many, many stories. Um, she came from a family, uh, she grew up in Budapest, was the youngest of four children, the only girl. Her parents came from Munkacs, uh, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, but it also went from hand to hand. Uh, Austro-Hungarian monarchy, I think Czechoslovakia, then the Soviet Union. But, uh, it was a town that, uh, had a very large Jewish population. And, um, her mother came from a big Hasidische family. Her father was not, uh, from a Hasidische family and, um, in fact...

Was he also from Munkacs?

He was also from Munkacs, yes. Um, I'll tell the story. It's a cute story about their, their, my grandparents' marriage. My, uh, grandmother was among the

older kids of eleven children and she went to work in a business to help support the family. Her mother, uh, was very, um, apparently domineering and very intelligent woman and the townspeople called her Reb Charna. Like Rabbi, [chuckle] for a woman. And, uh, anyway, uh, folks were talking about, um, her daughter being seen with this man. Efram Fishel Goldberger. And so Reb Charna called her daughter and said to her, "People are talking that they saw you with Ephraim Fishel walking and holding hands." And she protested and she said, "No, that's not true!" And she said, uh, "It's," Reb Charna said to her daughter, "It's not enough that they are talking, it should be true too!" So they went to the Munkacs rebbe to ask what to do because of the family. So they said, "If this is what people are saying, you might as well get married. Put them under the chuppah right away." So in 1900 they got married. They were both in business and, um, they decided to leave Munkacs. And first they went to Vienna. Tried to establish themselves in business. They did not succeed and then they moved to Budapest and there they succeeded. Uh, they, um, they opened a business where they sold embroidery. Embroidery is even today big in Hungary. And they sold patterns and tablecloths and things like that. They exported. They had four children. And, uh, each one of the children was born in Munkacs because my grandmother went to Munkacs to deliver each one of her children, and then brought them back to Budapest. And they were quite successful. Like my grandmother when she would go to Munkacs to her family she would put on, uh, a sheitel,

a, a wig to cover her hair. But in Budapest she didn't. They were quite modern and somewhat assimilated. And, uh, they had a pretty good life, um.

There must have been quite a readjustment, coming from a very Orthodox religious community to a, into a modern, assimilated one.

Ah, I would imagine so. I don't know much about that. The only thing that I know is that my mother said that when her parents didn't want the kids to understand something they would speak in Ukrainian, or in Yiddish amongst themselves. But at home they spoke Hungarian. Uh, the kids were educated but my mother was not allowed to go, uh, beyond the compulsory education, which was actually only four grades. But she had a lot of tutoring. She took French and, uh, uh, she was involved in sports. So she was, she was, had a modern upbringing on the surface. But when she said that she wanted to go and study medicine, her father said, "Oh no, I'm going to give you enough dowry to last a lifetime." Which was, huh, she lost everything twice. Once in the Depression and then second time with a second husband in the, in the Holocaust. Uh, so she was not allowed to really get formal education and be a liberated woman, if you, if you will. She also became a Zionist with her first husband. Uh, but she was not allowed, she wanted to go to Palestine. And again the family didn't want her to do that. So, all in all they had a modern life, but with some old values and all.

Was the family anti-Zionist?

I don't think anti-Zionist ideologically. My grandfather just didn't want his only daughter, his princess, to leave home and go to the desert, you know. So that was the family background on my mother's side.

But you said your mother had a first husband?

Yes. Uh, she, she married, uh, at the age of 23. By the age of 27 she was widowed. Her husband died in surgery. She was left with a child, uh, my brother. And, uh, she went back home to her mother. By then her father was dead. And in 19... that was, I think, in 1935 that she lost, in one week, her husband and her brother. And [sigh] she was trying to kind of put back, uh, put the life back together. Um, she had all kinds of plans. She was taking English classes. She wanted to go to England. Um, but then, in the summer they always went on vacations and they often went to Yugoslavia, to the Dalmatian coast. There was a kosher pension in Sokirnitsa, which is Croatia today. Um, this brings in my father's background. Maybe I'll just fill you in a little bit about that. My father came from an area, uh, that's called I think today Vojvodina. Subotica is there, it's the largest city there. His, uh, father was an ordained rabbi from, his ordination was from Pressburg, Bratislava. From a famous yeshiva, Hatam Sopher, which was a highly regarded yeshiva, and they also learned German there. Like they translated the Hebrew and the Aramaic to German rather than to Yiddish. Um, he came from a line of rabbis. Um, he was a kind of a strange man who was an intellectual and never really made it in the business world. He had to make a living, he didn't want to be a rabbi because his father was a rabbi and was not very successful, had problems, uh, with the balebatim as they call them in

Hebrew, or in Yiddish. Uh, the, the congregation. So, uh, my grandfather didn't want to enter the politics. So he married a girl who was, uh, came from a fairly well off, um, family of, not educated, but, uh, had, had some land, and had a business. He was, as I said, an intellectual. He read a lot. And actually what was interesting that in the 30's, early 30's he became a Zionist. He was reading the German papers and he, a couple of years ago my aunt was telling me, um, that he kept, he started talking to the Jewish community, the local Jewish community about the disaster that was approaching, that was going to be cataclysmic for the, for the Jewish community and that everybody should just sell everything and go to Palestine. Of course, people thought of him as nuts, crazy. Um, as I said, he read a lot. He, he was an unusual character. For a rabbi from that kind of yeshiva to become a Zionist and to read Freud in German in the late 20's and early 30's was unusual. [chuckle] Um. His wife, my grandmother, my paternal grandmother came from a more traditional home. Very orthodox and, uh, as I said, they were more middle class landowners. Some of them were even like, more like the, not like the peasants, but one of, um, her sisters married a man who was an agricultural expert, worked with the peasants in the area. They were all very religious and very, quite well off. Um, my father was the second child in a family of five. Also only one daughter and the youngest, my aunt. Today only my father and my aunt are living. One brother perished in the Holocaust. Uh, two died in Israel. One of them lost a wife and two daughters in Auschwitz, uh, and remarried later. Um, so that's my father's background. Anyway, this, this, uh, unusual grandfather had this idea that all these Jews who were quite well to do

and could go on vacations, but wanted a kosher place, um, he is going to accommodate them. And it was his idea to open a kosher, what they called pension, uh, on the Dalmatian coast. And actually he died fairly early, uh, when they had that. But, um, my grandmother and my father and my aunt were running it, uh, throughout the summer. And my mother came in 1939—or 1940. 1939, I think, because in 1940 they got married—to vacation there. And that's how she met my father. It's a long explanation, but, uh. So all her plans to go to England were changed. And in 1940 they married and they moved to Belgrade. Um, my father figured that she comes from Budapest, she's uh, sort of a more fancy lad, uh, more cosmopolitan, um, urban. And so they opened the business there in, as I said, in 1940 right after they married. At first my brother did not join them. Later on he did. Um.

Now when was your brother born?

My, my... brother was born in 1932. He's nine years older than me. Um, and he lived part of the time, after my mother married, just for a few months. But my mother when she moved back home after she lost her husband, uh, she had two brothers and her mother. And so my brother had the extended family. So when my mother married my father, she moved to Belgrade, my brother stayed with his grandmother and his two uncles. One of them was married, one of them was not. And, um, she became pregnant with me and in 1941, um, in April if I'm not mistaken, the Germans bombed Yugoslavia. And my mother, I guess she still did not have my brother with her because she was by herself. That I remember. She was seven months pregnant and she fled the bombed city of Belgrade. Um, she

left everything. As she described the apartment that she left there, she had everything in there including all the baby clothes that she was preparing, uh, that later on she found out the German woman who occupied that apartment was selling. Uh, she told me many stories about how she was running between the bombs to the railway station, um, trying to catch the train going back to Budapest. I forgot to say that, uh, before that my father was drafted to the Yugoslav army. That's why he was not with her at the time. I don't know when he was drafted. Maybe months before, maybe longer. I, I don't know the dates. Um.

But this was in 1941, in April?

I think it was April.

That was just a couple months before she was, so it's seven months pregnant maybe?

About, yeah, six, seven months pregnant. And [sigh] I, I don't want to go into, I'm, you see, it's interesting now, all the stories are coming to life. Her stories and the stories she told me in the interview when I interviewed her in 1984 about how, um, she was talking to her dead father in her mind about this unborn child and she was saying to him, "If you want this grandchild to live, you have to put in a good word for me up there so I survive this." Um, she got to the railway station and she found chaotic conditions there. Uh, she was asking, and here they see this woman, you know, running with a big belly. Um, anyway, she got on the train and she found herself with the whole, uh, symphony orchestra of Budapest that was visiting Yugoslavia, you know, on a concert tour. And they were trying to get back as well. And she described in a very, uh, colorful fashion how the

camaraderie developed between her and the musicians, and, uh, her sister-in-law, my aunt was a, was an opera singer, so, the family was musical. So, um, anyway, then she, she asked, “Where is this train going?” And I want to talk about that for a minute because I think that it’s relevant to our survive, survival. She was telling me how she had to make quick calculations and very quick decisions. She had to think on her feet. So she asked, “Where is this train going?” So they said “Osijek.” Now she figured, Osijek was apparently in Croatia. She thought the Croatians were with the Germans. And amongst Jews they were known to be anti-Semitic. And politically they were aligned with the Germans. So she was figuring if that train was going to Osijek, she is not going to Osijek. So she got off the, she rolled off the train and then she went on another train. Uh, make a long story short, she did catch a train that went to Subotica. Actually to Petrovo Selo. Now Petrovo Selo is a big village near Subotica. That’s where my paternal grandmother came from. That’s where her family of origin lived, in Petrovo Selo. And my mother got there. Um, [pause] she stayed, she told me how she slept every night somewhere else because there were many refugees from, uh, Yugoslavia, from Belgrade. And the Germans came in and took away the refugees. So....

In Petrovo Selo?

In Petrovo Selo. So every night she slept at some other relative’s home. Um, I have here another story, I don’t know whether to tell about.

What’s the story?

Um, my mother had this belief that whenever she was in trouble she would, uh, uh, promise, uh, how shall I say, give, to give tzedaka, to give, uh, charity, to a charity box was Rabbi Meir Baal Ha-nes. This is Rabbi Meir, the miracle worker. And, um, she was staying at this aunt and uncle's home, my aunt, my father's aunt and uncle. Uncle Bernard, who was the agricultural expert, and, and Rosika, his wife who my grandmother's younger sister. And this uncle Bernard really loved my mother. Here were two worlds. You know he was very, very firm and he was really more like the peasants. Here is this lady from Budapest, you know, [chuckle] who can quote, uh, Hungarian poetry, who, who, who's very, a woman of the world. But they, they hit if off. They had chemistry. And, so my mother told him about this deal that she was with Rabbi Meir Baal Ha-nes. So, uh, so uncle Bernard said to her, "So Lily,"—my mother's name—"Lily, why don't you promise something? Give Rabbi Meir, the, Rabbi Meir something?" So she said, "You know what Uncle Bernard? If, um, Gezell"—my, her, my father—"comes back by 8 o'clock tonight, then I'll give this, uh, hundred dollar bill that I have,"—or, I don't know, maybe it was a gold coin, I don't know what it was. "Ok, it's a deal!" So she tells the story how quarter to 8 in the evening and Uncle Bernard looks at her and he says, "Lily, I think Rabbi Meir is going to disappoint you this time." So my mother said, "Uncle Bernard, not so fast, we have 15 minutes to go." At five to 8 there was a knock on the door and my mother heard my father's voice. Uh, "Uncle Bernard, Aunt Rosika, is" – she told the story, "Is mama here," his mother. He tells the story, "Is Lily here." But anyway he showed up. How Rabbi Meir came through for my mother. My mother was a woman of great faith.

She was not a very observant, uh, religious woman in the traditional sense of Judaism of, of doing everything. She didn't do everything. But she really had faith and she had a faith and, and total conviction that she would survive. And that was her driving force. She was convinced. Not only that, but she said, "I want to come back and tell the world. Furthermore I want the children to survive so they can tell the world what happened here." And that kept her going, I believe.

Now when this, this happened when your father came back from the war?

Yes. No this is not from, you mean what I just told now?

Right.

This is when the Yugoslav army was disbanded, fell apart.

So he came in back from fighting the Germans?

Yes.

Had you been born yet?

No.

She was still pregnant?

Yeah, she was still, this was just. After she fled, this was maybe a week or two weeks after she fled Belgrade.

So it's April, May?

Yes. So what happened was that now the Germans came into Subotica. No, the Hungarians. Excuse me. The Hungarians occupied Subotica. So my parents went to Subotica and rented an apartment and my mother was a Hungarian citizen. Um, [pause] so [sigh] they signed up even for, uh, to the hospital where I

was supposed to be born, which was actually a Jewish place, a Jewish hospital. My mother tells the story, (there are too many stories), told the story that, uh, when she went there to sign up then the clerk, and she took a little, um, like a mother's helper or housekeeper, a young Gentile girl with her, and the clerk started, said to my mother – I don't know whether it was, I think it was the same incident – he said, [louder] “Why are you signing up to deliver a Jewish child into this world? Don't you know that we are going to finish all of you?” And to the girl he started yelling at her and cursing her and saying, “Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You are a Christian girl and you are working for these dirty, stinking Jews.” Um, so that's how I was being welcomed even before I was born. Um.

Were you born in that hospital?

Yes, yes. And we both almost died. It was a very long and difficult labor. But as I told you, she's stubborn. [chuckle] And, uh, [sigh] I was born [pause] and we both survived [pause] and afterwards they, I don't know when my brother joined us and I don't remember, I think in my notes I have when my father was taken away to labor troops. But I don't know where it is and I, I don't want to look for that.

But he was taken by whom?

Uh, by the Hungarians.

To Russia?

Uh, to the, at first, yes. To the Hungarian, you know, their, later on to Russia, to the front, to the, uh, to battle. Um.

Did he fight the Russians or was he with the labor gang? Do you know?

He was in labor troops.

So he was captured?

Captured by the Russians in, um, as, as part of the labor troops.

Let's follow it. Do you know what happened to him there?

Um, [sigh] [pause] that's, um, he's, [pause] let me just look for one minute here.

[looks through notes] Um, ok this was after he was, I don't, I cannot find it.

Yeah, he was taken, um, to the labor troops and, um, after he was taken to the labor troops, my mother went back to Hungary. She decided what is the, what's she going to do in Subotica. After all, her mother and her brothers, and I think by then she had her son with her, but she wanted to go back home after my father was taken away. Oh yes, I have this. [chuckle] Um, this is actually where it starts, where I transcribed the, uh, the tape. [reads from notes]

“In 1942 they were gathering all the Jewish men from labor troops. They took them first, uh, at least the one unit that my father was in, to the Romanian border. Uh, my father was taken away between Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur, uh, in 1942.”

That means that I was, yeah, she always said I was like a year old when he was taken away. Um, she said that she went to say goodbye to him in Kosice. Kosice, which later on became Czechoslovakia. Um, in the interview with my mother she said that already then she was convinced that he would come back. Um, she related the story about the conversation that she had with a woman whom she knew from Subotica. This woman was saying that she was very scared and had a bad feeling, a foreboding feeling. And my mother said that she told this woman

that was convinced that he would survive and that she would survive. This woman's husband never came back. [quietly] Um, anyway, after my father was taken away we went back to Budapest. So it was 1942. I was a year old, a little over a year old. We went back to Budapest. We joined my maternal grandmother. And we lived there and my mother said that at that time we lived a fairly normal life, you know. We even took a vacation near Budapest in, you know, the following summer.

Let me interrupt you and ask you a question. How large was the family, the extended family? Your grandparents, your mother was one of how many children?

Uh, she was one of four, but she lost one brother to illness. And so she had two brothers. Both of them survived the war. Uh, her father was dead. My grandmother, her mother, was on the same train that we were taken away, 1944. And she was taken to Auschwitz. Now the extended family, um, I don't know if you're familiar with this, with this Hungarian movie *The Revolt of Job*. Have you ever seen that? I highly recommend. I can even loan it to you. I watched it last night, I guess to get in the mood, [chuckle] I don't know. Uh, it's about, it's a very interesting story, I don't know whether it's a true story. But it shows these Hungarian Jewish peasants who lived in different villages. Uh, they were devout Jews, most of them Hasidisch. Um, very religious. But they really intermingled with, uh, the Hungarians and they were spread in all these different villages, small towns. Now my grandparents came from Munkacs. Especially my grandmother came from a very large family. And they were spread all over Hungary. They all

were very religious, had large families. And I think the majority of them perished. That extended family, but...

Aunts and uncles?

Aunts and uncles, no. My, one of my father's brothers was killed in the war, but.

And your father?

Hungarian Jews were deported in '44. We were the lucky ones. [chuckle]

Everything is relative.

Your aunts and uncles, were they also married when the war started?

One uncle was married. He never had children. And he and his wife, the opera singer, they survived. And, um, my other uncle, who was the oldest brother, he actually married towards the end of the war. They were in hiding, uh, in Budapest. And he married and he, he had two, they had two daughters. But in 1945 and 1946, right after the war. So that's on my mother's side. It's a small family. The, not a really wide extended family, but, uh.

So you went back to Budapest

Yes, hmm Hm.

with your mother

Yes.

and your brother? And you lived with your grandparents?

Grandmother,

Grandmother, and who...

yes. And one uncle.

And you have a picture of the business in Budapest?

Yes, yes. From, from much before. The picture.

What did she tell you happened then? I suspect you don't remember much of this.

The, I don't have any recollections, uh, about that time. My recollections begin in labor camp. Just screen memories, a couple of screen memories. And right after liberation. Uh, those are, I have quite a few memories of liberation. But, um.

How long were you in Budapest with her?

So in Budapest we were until, let me just, um, let me read here because it will kind of make it easier. Um, [pause] before we do that, I want to tell you something, um, about a, a wonderful Gentile Hungarian man who, um, was a go-between between my mother and my father in labor troops. Uh, how the relationship was established I don't exactly know. I think it was, he was like a civilian worker for the Hungarians. And he would go back and forth between Budapest and the labor troops of the Hungarian army. Um, his wife went to school, my mother used to say, with Jews. And she had many Jew-, Jewish friends. And so the couple had many Jewish friends in general and he would come to Budapest and contact my mother and my mother would, uh, give him money and, different things. Like she sent my father a down comforter. And he delivered everything. Um, let me, let me read to you this just, um.

“My mother had a dream. In January, um – I’m, I’m reading now – My mother had a dream. In the dream she is in a farmhouse, in a room, where the ground is, the ground, like dirt, is, is the floor. Like it’s like a barn, you know, it’s not, uh, paved over, the floor. Um, and my grandfather in the dream emerges with a big backpack saying, um, ‘May God be with you.’

It's a Hungarian expression of farewell. Um, 'Who knows whether we will ever meet again in life.' And my grandmother in the dream responds, 'Why shouldn't we meet again? Don't you even kiss me?' And my grandfather began to cry. And the tears were running down his cheeks, all the way to his neck. To a black turtleneck sweater that he was wearing. And she said again, 'Won't you kiss me?' So he responded. 'Why should I? So you catch the million lice that is on me?' And after that they said goodbye. When she woke up, uh, she went to the calendar and marked the date, marked the date. She wrote down that dream, that's how she knew all the details of the dream. And it was January 16, 1944. She decided that if she hears from my grandfather after this date, she will give charity to Rabbi Meir Baal Ha-nes."

This is your grandmother or your mother?

This is my mother. And this is about, the dream was about my father.

Your father, not your grandfather?

No, no, no.

No, ok.

"And the next day, she heard the news on the radio from the BBC, they would listen, that there was a big battle near Voronezh in the Ukraine and many, many were captured by the Russians as POWs. And months later my grandmother - my mother - got the word."

The reason it is confusing is because I wrote this for my grandchildren, for my children and I kept on writing grandma. So it's, it's a confusion. But this is all about my mother.

“So, eh, months later my mother got the word from the Red Cross that her husband disappeared near Voronezh [choked up] on January 16, 1944. [weeping] This man whose name was Petrovich, who was the go-between – and that’s why I told you the story now – he came back to Budapest and reported that my father was relatively in good condition when he was captured. He had boots and he had a black turtleneck sweater, which my mother never saw in life. Or, in real life. I mean it was only in a dream. And that he, that he traded that sweater for a loaf of bread. Petrovich on the other hand went back to the front and never came back. [pause] [whispers] He perished.”

So there were good people. There were many good people. [pause] [sigh] The Germans entered Hungary on March 19, 1944. And my mother was visiting friends who advised her to place valuables with Gentiles. The Hungarian Jews did not quite know what happened in Poland or Czechoslovakia. My mother said that the leaders of the community erred in not telling the Jews to run for their lives. Every night there were air raids. My grandmother was ill. She had a stroke previously. And it was hard to carry her to the shelter every night. So my mother decided that since she had an empty apartment shut down in Subotica, she might as well go back there. Um, an employee, an employee’s husband, I guess from their business, from my grandmother’s business, worked at the police. So he

arranged for her for false papers, for them to travel to Subotica without wearing the yellow stars. And we got on the train. Um, suddenly there was an air raid and my mother asked permission to remain on the train. She figured whatever happens, happens. And anyway, make a long story short – I could go on with stories and we would never finish this interview. But when she got to Subotica, and here they are on false papers, um, and they were trying to get off the train. My grandmother got frightened and she said “Yiddisher Kinderlach! Help me!” She went to Yiddish and she was [chuckle] speaking Yiddish. But by then it was too late anyway. Uh, as they got off the train that’s when the Jews were being put in the ghetto. And [sigh] we were put in the ghetto. So we went from the air raids and the bombings in Budapest right into the, um, deportations in Subotica.

This was 1944?

This was 1944.

So it was a ghetto in Subotica.

There was a ghetto [pause – takes a drink] in a place called Bacsalmas. Now I have to explain to you something and this is really about me, finally we are getting there. Um, I never thought of these places as places. They were stories. So once I asked, actually not so long ago, maybe when I was doing these interviews, uh, I asked my father, because we always spoke about the Bacsalmas ghetto. I don’t know about Bacsalmas, so I said to my father. “Where was the Bacsalmas ghetto?” So my father says, “in Bacsalmas!” For him it was a place. For me it was a name of something that happened to us. So the whole concept in

terms of viewing it as a child was so different. These places had no, uh, reality outside of my subjective reality of what happened to us.

Where is Bacsalmas, do you know?

It is near Subotica somewhere. You know, it's like they, they pick these different, uh, where were we when we went to Europe, um, in Czechoslovakia? Um, what's the name of that famous, um camp? I can't remember.

Theresienstadt?

Theresienstadt. In Terezin. You know, I, I, I knew it as Theresienstadt. I did not think of that there was a town Terezin. So, [chuckle] um, so we were. Bacsalmas was some sort of insignificant little town. And they, they gathered all the Jews of the region and, uh, put them in a ghetto there. Now when we arrived there we were put right into the ghetto and we had nothing. Uh, my mother said that everybody else was preparing and gathering their belongings and preparing food. And we had nothing. And some relatives and friends gave us some, some things. Um, and that's where we were deported from. I think in May, if I'm not mistaken. I'm pretty sure that my mother said that we were in the ghetto for two months. And after, uh, after two months they started the transports. Um, and we were put on the train to Austria. Of course we did not know where we were going. But, um, my mother was looking at the places, you know, from the cattle car. And in fact she wrote a postcard. She wrote two postcards from the train. Um, one was mailed by, by somebody, uh, I don't know who he was. There were two different people who she asked to mail the postcards that were outside the train, when the train was standing. And each one of them did mail the postcard.

Uh, and each one arrived at destination. One went to my uncle in Budapest and one went to a Gentile girlfriend that she had in Budapest. And that postcard was written in German and I have it with me. Um, she wrote to her brother, um, [sigh] um, where we were crossing the border, I can't find it here. And, um, she wrote to him, "We are crossing at such and such place," I think it's Hagesh Hollom, "and that means that we are going to Austria."

You were in a box car?

Hm hmm.

Your grandmother and your mother?

No. I skipped a whole big part. In the ghetto [whispers: let me drink some] [long pause, takes a drink] I'm looking for a tissue here. Um, they established old age homes, nurseries, children's homes. And my mother was in a dilemma. [sigh] My grandmother was quite sick. And really disabled and helpless. So she could, she had to put her, my grandmother in an old age home, like a nursing home. And she was debating whether to volunteer as a nurse or as a helper in the old age home and put us in a children's home. Or to put her mother there and stay with us as a family. And at first she wanted to put, um, to put my mother, uh, to put her mother there and also go as a, as a helper. And my brother, who was at the time nine years old, no.

Twelve years old?

Twelve years old. [sigh] Same mistake. He said to my mother that she had no right to do that. That grandmother was old and sick and she had a long life behind her and she was going to die. And we were young. And that, he said about

himself, “And I wanted, I want to live life too. I want a life and experiences. And if you go and volunteer there we are going to lose you. And your obligation and loyalty is to us.” And she listened to him. And that’s why I’m here to tell the story. Um, so that’s what happened. Now the old age home, the nursery, the children’s home, all of those institutions were put on one side of the train. And all the rest were put on the other side of the train. [pause] We were in the train I don’t know how long. But there was at one point that we, the train stood still for 24 hours. And the train was divided. Half went one direction and another went another direction. And the old age home, the nursery and all that, they went to Auschwitz. That we found out later. And we went to labor camp. Now on this side of the train there were many families. We were not the only ones. And the selection process was not done like in Poland. They did not have time. This was 1944. Um, so everybody, and, and you probably know the details, the objective details, much more than I do, but we just all landed in one big selection camp.

Now on this trip, how old were you then?

Three years old.

Just.

Just three years old. I, it was a debate. My mother and I couldn’t figure out when my birthday was. Whether it was in the ghetto or whether it was in Strasshof.

Um, but somebody gave me some, she, she always told the story how I was given a little, um, can of chopped liver, of... Everybody gave me some food item for my birthday. And that I used to call those food items, “birthday,” you know, when I was little because I did not know what they were. Um, and when I was

interviewing my mother she, we were, we were trying to figure out, was my birthday July 2, was it in the ghetto or was it in Strasshof? I think it was in Strasshof actually. Because I think we were, we were deported in May. I mean, that's, I don't know the historical accuracy of any of this. Um, so I was three years old. Just turned three years old. Um, so...

What do you know about Strasshof. I mean, apart from... it was a labor camp where your mother presumably did

Worked.

various kinds of industrial labor.

Yes. I know that she worked in two different camps. And, uh, the, the, the work itself, the labor itself was different in nature. Uh, in one camp she worked and I think that was Strasshof, um, she worked in camouflaging airplanes. So, like I don't know whether the material that they put on it, I don't know. In another camp where she talked about it in the interview much more, she was laying telephone cables. And I presume that was in Moosbierbaum. Um, let me read to you, I, I think that I, uh, summarized here. I wrote this down from, you know, because my mother and I were just chatting, just like you and I when we did the audiotape. Uh, and we, we reminisced and we gossiped. We did all kinds, it was a fun experience interviewing my mother, which was all my daughter Ruti's idea, who at the time was 16 and an aspiring journalist and she kept on saying to me, "You must interview Safta, Grandma. Because it has to be done in Hungarian and if you don't do it nobody else will do it and she will die with her stories, and I want to know the stories." And so she, one of the visits, and we go frequently to

Israel. One of the stories she, uh, one of the visits she told me to interview her. She arranged the whole thing. And, and, uh, I sat down and I interviewed my mother. Should we stop now?

No, what's the part you're going to read now?

Oh I just wanted to summarize, um, the sequence of events.

Ok.

We were in the ghetto, the Bacsalmas ghetto, for about two months. From there we walked to the train. We were put on one side of the train. My, my grandmother with the sick and the old was put on the other part of the train. It was the same train. We—see this is where the direction—we went toward Miskolc, Hungary. In other words, I forgot. We were in Northern Yugoslavia. So the train was traveling first towards Hungary. Towards Miskolc. There the train stopped in Hungary proper. For 24 hours. Ah, ok. Here it, it says:

“mothers and children were put on the ‘good’ side of the train, which we later figured out was a good side. [sigh] And I write here. “It later turned out, L’chaim—to” [speaks slowly, deliberately, sadly]

To life.

To life. [Pause]

“We were on that side of the train. Now I’m able to, to write this to you, my children. Ruti, Dani, Yael and Avi. So you will remember and not forget. The other side, [sigh] the hospital, old age home, etc. all went directly to Auschwitz. The train was separated and went a different direction. Um, we went to Strasshof, another large gathering lager, camp. The reason for the

24 hours delay and for going to the side that went to the labor camp was due to the negotiations with Kastner, which of course we did not know about it, but later on it, um, historically we know. Uh, again we stood there for 24 hours. Half the – yeah, that’s repetition. When we arrive to Strasshof, Strasshof, they were throwing out the corpses, those who died on the train.”

Um, [long pause] [sigh] Ok. Um, my memories. I don’t remember the train. [pause] Um, but I do remember, or I know this about myself, that every time I watched a documentary or a movie or anything like that, [pause] showing the trains, just like the barbed wires, I would have like an anxiety attack. Not a full blown. But even now, like I feel like my heart pounding, and getting teary and upset, really upset. I assumed I did not remember anything. It is so strange. I, I think I said that to you in a previous interview that I’m a psychologist, but when it came to myself I sort of blocked it all out. Uh, it had this tremendous impact and I always thought that it was like pretend or it’s just because I know the stories. I did not take into account that children can actually remember, screen memories and an emotion or reconnect with the emotion. Just about from age two, [sigh] or earlier if it’s just the emotional connection. So I would have these reactions. When I was in Washington and, and at the Holocaust Museum and I entered that, that, what is it called, box car, how did you call it?

Cattle car.

Cattle car. You said something.

Box car.

Box car. I was amazed to see how small it was and how I thought of it as huge.

But I was a little three year old. It was huge for a three year old.

Maybe this is a good place to stop for a moment.

Ok, thank you.

[Tape continues in a few moments]

Let's start with Strasshof, Strasshof bei Wien.

Yes.

Not very far outside of Vienna.

Vienna. Twenty, 30 kilometers outside of Vienna. Northeast, I think.

Northeast. You mentioned the Kastner negotiations. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

Well, I, I did not know anything about it and even when there was a Kastner trial in Israel I was too young, um, to be, it was in the '50s, I think. Um, but my mother was very much aware and connected. I mean, we did not know what was going on when we were in the, in the cattle cars. Um, but, um, anyway, I guess that's why we were not sent to Auschwitz straight. But we ended up in this, um, place called, um, Strasshof bei Wien, which was a larger gathering camp, "*From which people*"—and I'm reading, uh, from my interview with my mother—uh, "*People were sent to other smaller camps.*" Um, for awhile we were in this camp but, um, I don't know how long. I have no idea.

This was in

...in the

June '44.

It was, about, yeah.

And probably as a result of negotiations between Kastner and Eichmann.

Yes.

It seemed Eichmann at one point said, “Put some Jews on ice” to keep them as bargaining chips.

Uh, huh. I guess we were the

And you were the ones.

Ones.

Yeah. Was there another camp that your, that you and/or your mother

Yes.

went to? What was that?

Uh, the name of that camp, uh, was Moosbierbaum. And after the selection in Strasshof, which I don't know how long it took, uh, we were sent to Moosbierbaum. And in Moosbierbaum, Moosbierbaum the camp, the labor camp was next to a POW camp, which had, uh, my mother said 30,000, uh, French POWs. Can it, I don't know whether it's a realistic number. But, um, these French POWs, um, were, uh, helpful in a way to the Jewish prisoners because, um, there was a trade of, uh, sex for food between the Jewish women of the camp. Now I want to read to you this, uh, little, uh, segment about my mother, um.

“My mother traded her silk dress for a kilo sugar. Um, some, some women from the camp got together with the French, French POWs. Sex for food.

My mother was unwilling to do that, but she was willing to be the interpreter since she knew French. Um, and she got a percentage of the deal.”

I used to have arguments with my mother about that. About her, her strict morality, uh. [sigh]

“The woman who traded the sugar for the dress was in the camp with her mother, father, mother-in-law and son. Every night she would disappear and showed up in the morning with goodies. There was another woman, a woman whom my mother knew from Subotica, um, who said to my mother, ‘you love yourself more than you love your children.’”

Meaning, like, if you loved your children enough, you would do the same thing. Let alone you speak French. Um, but my mother had her own set of moral code. And I, I want to tell you another story that reflects that.

Let me ask you a question about this one.

Yes.

There’s an idea that one author has about something called, something he calls “choiceless choices.”

Yeah.

That the choices that were given to people at places like Auschwitz or in Moosbierbaum were essentially “choiceless.” Where there was no good choice to make.

Hm hmm. But yet, uh, I think this is a Victor Frankl, uh, idea. Some choices—granted we were not in a place like Auschwitz, but I guess there are still—people have a subjective view of what keeps them alive. And I guess for my mother it was important to keep her own human, uh, humanness, in terms of her value

system. That was very important to her. Uh, I guess for her that these kinds of choices that were no choices were still making her the person that she was.

Do you think that what the woman said to her ever affected her?

She remembered it to tell me.

So she dreyed over it.

I, I think she, she thought about it and maybe she needed to justify it to herself.

Because we would then argue about it later on when I was growing up, and...

What did you argue?

[chuckle] I said to her the woman was right. [chuckle] Leave it to cruelty of children. [chuckle] I said of course she was right, who cares, you know? Um, but she, she stood her ground even with the arguments with me. She said, "You have to understand. We could not [pause] get down or stoop to their level. I couldn't. I had to maintain my own dignity." And she was a very dignified person. And she did. So I think that part of the, her determination to survive physically, she wanted to survive spiritually and mentally. And this was one way to survive. I am not going to be the animal you want to make me. I guess that's how I see it.

So you've changed your opinion since.

I'm getting older too. [chuckle]

Let me just for a moment go back to something you said a little earlier. You mentioned that just the sight of trains has a very powerful effect on you.

Upsetting, yes, hmm, hm.

And barbed wire.

Yes.

So you have a memory then?

I guess so.

Is there anything else that does that?

The barbed wire story is the, the strangest part of it all. I, I used to say, “But we did not have barbed wire.” I mean, we were not like in Auschwitz and most of the films which show Auschwitz with the barbed wire. And, and so why am I reacting to this? And this, in 1984 when I interviewed my mother, she said to me there was a barbed wire around the camp. I had no recollection of it. All I knew was that I would have this arguments with myself, like why are you reacting—saying to myself—why are you reacting to these pictures? After all, you were not in an extermination camp and, and I knew from my mother’s stories that the camp was fairly open. We would walk, or my mother would walk to her, to, to her work, you know, certain kilometers they walked to, to, to the place of, of work. So what, what’s the big deal? But apparently there was a barbed wire. And even after I interviewed her I forgot, I repressed it again. It’s, it’s like the repression is incredible how we just don’t want to deal with some painful things and we just kind of put it out of our minds. And, and the barbed wire apparently was one of them that I put out of my mind.

Are there other images that, have you... Did you watch the Holocaust series in 1978?

Yes I have, I did, I did. And I had a tremendous reaction to it. I, I said to my husband, my children were still young. Um, my oldest at the time, it was 1977?

1978, I think.

1978. So my oldest was, Ruthie was 10. And I just had a baby, I think, or I was pregnant with my last child. And, um, I've looked, I still remember the first segment of it with Kristallnacht. And I looked around and I said to my husband, "Well, it can happen here too." And I had such a strong feeling that it really indeed could happen in Southfield, Michigan. It's like nobody can change my mind, and you know what? I still believe it. [pause] I'm totally convinced that it can happen anywhere. So...

What about *Schindler's List*? Did you watch that? Did you see it? You saw that film?

Yeah.

And your reaction to that?

My reaction to *Schindler's List*, this was already at the time when I said, I, um. My, for a few years my husband put a ban on Holocaust movies. Uh, we have a very egalitarian relationship and he does not "allow me or not allow me" to do certain things. That's not a concept that we use. But here he, he said, "I'm not going to allow you to watch these movies." I wanted to see *Schindler's List*... And by then I was already, I went to see *Europa, Europa* and *The Last Metro*, several movies that were, um, upsetting. And I, and I said to him, "You know, so I'll cry. So what's the big deal? I'll cry, I'll get upset. But I want to see it." Anyway, when we went to see *Schindler's List* we went with, um, it was actually a benefit showing and I think the whole audience was Jewish. It was for some charity. And we went with our Russian friends. And when they started showing

the children early on in the movie, I, I'm so, I was very aware that I had to make a decision. I had to put a barrier between me and the movie, so I'm going to just kind of watch it and not immerse myself in it because I could not bear it. And, um, actually when the movie ended and we left the theater, my husband and the friends were much more under the influence of the movie than I was because I was so shielded. Like any trauma victim would tell you that they shield themselves from the trauma, uh, by numbing themselves. And I was numb. But if that's the price then it's ok, I want to see these movies. And, um, [sigh] I always have reactions to visual effects. And I don't know whether the reaction to children is because I was a child; just knowing that. Or because I have some sort of a projection of myself. I cannot analyze that. But I, I really have a tremendous reaction. I just [pause and sigh] I, I become, I'm overcome with anxiety and, and upset, just... [pause]

But in, it's in particular with the children the most?

Yes, clearly. Yeah. And you know, emotionally what overcomes me more than anything is fear. I'm just petrified. I have one memory from, from, uh, the camps. I don't know whether it was in Moosbierbaum or in Strasshof. That I was in my underwear. See I was left in the barrack all day long, um, when my mother went to work. And my mother worked a shift and a half so she would get more food to give to my brother and I. And I asked her at the interview, uh, "Where was I? What did you do with me?" You know, I, I used to, when I, I raised four children, I would look at them at the age of three and think to myself, my God, how did I survive? And so she told me that, [sigh] uh, there was an old lady, and

and, a grandmother who was there with her family and she was in our barrack and she would watch me. Anyway one time apparently, um, one of the guards came in—and I know there was snow on the ground—and he kicked me out in the snow. I was in my underwear. And I remember that. [pause] When we went to Theresienstadt, I, uh, in 1985, when, that was my idea to take my whole family back to Europe, and we went to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. We couldn't get into Yugoslavia because of visa problems. Uh, and we, we went to Theresienstadt and I saw the shelves. Again I had that reaction. Um, it was scary. I was very scared. [pause] So that was, that was a, actually that is a screen memory, of being thrown out in the snow.

Do you remember what happened after that?

No. No, not at all. I, I don't remember chronologically anything until liberation. From liberation on, I was almost four years old, I have clear memories. So, um. Before we go on I would like to share with you this one story because I think it's a heartwarming story. [chuckle] Um, I'm going to read this to you from what I wrote with, uh, from the interview with my mother.

“During Christmas, uh, my mother told my brother to go to the next town, which was Deutsch Wagram.”

I found it on the map. Of course, when we were in '85 in Europe, I did not look up Strasshof or Moosbierbaum or Deutsch Wagram. None of them had a reality. It did not even dawn on me to look up these places. But I looked the map later on. I think, uh, yeah, when I was transcribing the tapes for my daughter, that's

when I looked up these places. And lo and behold, [chuckle] they exist in reality. That was a big shock. Anyway...

“So we were near Deutsch Wagram, which is a small town. And my mother, uh, told my brother to go and beg for food. She said before Christmas people get into themselves. This, she said it in Hungarian. And you should go and tell people that we are here. That your sister has outgrown her shoes and cannot get off the bed. And in general, beg. Dury, my brother, said he did not want to go begging. He’d rather steal. Finally my mother and Dr. Wilhelm, a family friend, convinced Dury to go. He came back with a pair of shoes. And my shoes went to the youngest child of a woman who, who was in the lager with her eight children. They all survived, but her husband never came back.”

Um, Dury told the story that he, he went to this, this farmhouse in the outskirts of, uh, Deutsch Wagram. There was a woman there with her children. And she asked him, um, who was there with you? And he told her. And she sent a pair of shoes for me and she told him to come back a couple of days later and knitted some wool socks for me and sent some other things. Food, I think, and some other items of clothing. After liberation I walked back in those shoes. This was, ah, Austrian [pause] Gentile woman [choked up] There were people like that too. [Long pause, weeps, deep sigh] Ok. What else? I need a little help now. Uh, here I wrote much more about, uh, um, [pause] about the details, about life in the camp [sigh] and little, different anecdotes. My mother told the story about, uh, that there was a Passover Seder in camp. How on earth? She said they even had

parsley! Like, where did they get that?! Or matza, [unleavened bread] you know, like unbelievable. I said, I asked her when I interviewed her, I said, “Where did they get these things?”--(I’m looking for a tissue). And she said, “I had no idea, I never figured that out.” But she said, “I still remember,” she was telling me “how we were lying on the shelves and there was one person conducting the Seder.”

Can you imagine? There was one...

So,

I’m sorry.

you slept in the barracks with shelves, like in Theresienstadt?

Yes, yes.

You remember that?

I did not remember. But I remembered reacting in Theresienstadt. It was like, oh my God, you know. So, um, I think that’s what it was.

And had you heard anything about your father?

No. Nothing.

Did you talk?

Until liberation. That came much later.

Later.

Um, there was one other, I would like to share with you another incident that, that left a mark and, and even touched me deeply when I was interviewing my mother. Um, the prisoners, the, the inmates, we, uh, organized different things in the camp and one time there was, they were singing Zionist songs. There was a girl from Debrecen, my mother told me, a, a city in Hungary. And my brother and my

mother, and there were probably others. And there was a Hungarian song, which was, in Hungarian, but the scene was about the land of Israel and the Maccabees who fought for freedom. [pause] And when she was talking about it in the interview she and I started singing it, I remembered the song. [pause and sigh] And the guard came and asked my mother, who spoke German, “What are you singing?” And she said, “We are singing our national anthem.” And she said even he was touched by the fervor in their, [sigh] what they put into singing that song. The reason I want to tell you this is because my parents were Zionists. And after the war there was a decision to go to Israel. In fact, we tried to go to Palestine illegally and we were captured and my parents were in communist, um, prison in Yugoslavia afterwards. But then they let us go and in December 1948 we arrived on the shores of Haifa. But the Zionism was so important, it was like survival. Like another one of the components of what kept my mother going is that there was this homeland, there was this place where [pause and choking up, weeps] we would be free. [pause]

Do you remember the song?

Yeah, it would be too hard to sing.

Okay.

I would just cry. [teary, crying] It’s, it’s playing in my head. [soft chuckle]

You sang such songs with your mother in the camps then?

Yes. We were a musical family. We sang then and afterwards too. We were a singing family. Uh, yeah, but...

And did that keep you going? Keep your mother going, do you think?

I think so. And my brother. Um, again that spiritual survival was extremely important. And it affected us. It, it, it kept us going I think.

Do you think that this was widespread in Strasshof? That many saved?

I don't know. I really have no idea. But I know that it was so central to my family's survival, spiritual survival. Because when we were in Yugoslavia as I said, you know, then it was prison and then finally when we got to Israel, um, we had nothing. We were extremely poor, just all other survival, survivors. And there was something of spiritual faith, emuna in Hebrew, that kept us going and kept us, [pause] eased the hardship, the struggle. My parents had to eke out a living in Israel. It was extremely difficult. We really had nothing and they had no skills. And, um, and nobody had anything, so it was not like it stood out. The poverty did not stand out. But it was still, never, never for a moment, there were people who left, uh, in the '50s left Israel, went to Canada, went to Australia, came to the U.S. It never entered my parents' mind. Uh, actually after the war I had an aunt, a quite wealthy aunt in Uruguay, South America. Through her we had relatives in the United States. And we could have gone to either one of those places. But it was, it was not even considered. I mean it was considered not to go there because never again are we going to go to a place which would be not our country, now that we have our own. How I ended up here is another story.

[chuckle]

When you were in Strasshof or in Moosbierbaum, do you recollect or did your mother tell you about any other time that your life as a child was in even more

serious danger than it was as a rule? Like the time the guard threw you out in the cold.

Um, she said many times when I was growing up that when we came back from the camps, people would point at us because my father came back as well. That's a whole different part, of how he survived. Um, but he came back the first night of Hanukkah in 1945. Um, and then later on we went back to Yugoslavia. And she, she said that people used to point at us in Europe. Here is a family that survived. Like we were unusual because a mother and a father and children came back. Um, so I was made to feel special in that way. A child survivor of my age was something unusual. And I was a very sickly child in Israel. And my, and, and she used to constantly worry about me. When we got to Israel I had rheumatic fever and all the childhood illnesses that you can think of and she, she was always worried about me and my health. Um, my brother later on went to Aliyyah tanor, he came to Israel separately. Um, and he being nine years older later on, while we were in prison. That's a long story.

You were also in prison?

Eight days. Both of us were. Just eight days. Let me, let me go, maybe should we do a little chronological?

Yeah, let's, tell me about liberation. What you remember and what your mother told you about liberation. You were liberated by the Russians?

Yes, we were liberated by the Russians. Um, one day there were no guards and, um, [sigh] and my mother, how on earth she had those two wheelbarrows I don't know, but she had two wheelbarrows that I remember and there was prior to that,

uh, a German supply train was bombed and it was, had all kinds of food items. And, uh, uh, apparently all the inmates of the Lager went and, and gathered, you know, they there was sugar there and oil and, and stuff like that. So whatever we, we got from there, uh, we put in those wheelbarrows and [pause] my mother said, “Let’s go home.” And we started walking. And the first recollection that I have from that time was—and this I can actually see—there was a gray picket fence around, like a farm. And in the corner there was like a gate, a gate to open for a carriage or for a tractor or something. In the corner there were eggs. Several broken and a few intact. There were nine eggs. She told me there were nine, but I knew there was eggs. And my mother and my brother drank the broken ones. I mean they just gathered and ate them and I refused. I did not know what they were and I didn’t want to be bothered. [chuckle] But I still remember that gray fence and the eggs underneath. What, what is interesting is that my mother in the interview said that there was also a, a dead German soldier, which I blocked out of my mind. I did not re-, I don’t remember that. But the eggs and the fence I remember. I also remember walking back. And I remember saying to my mother, I remember walking and walking and being tired. I was not four years old yet. And I said to her something like “I am not tired yet. But when I, when I will be tired, could we rest?” Something like that. And she kept on telling us that we had to get to the next town before dark. And meanwhile there were bo-, there were bombings. The Allies were bombing. And every time there was like a [pause] bombs, we would go in a ditch. And she would put us under her, like my brother on one side and me on the other and she would lay on us. And then we

would say Shma Yisrael, [pause and choked up] and pray. And when it cleared, we continued to walk. I think it took us two days or three days, I don't know how long, to get to Bratislava. And in Bratislava, by then they already had these, uh, the Jewish agency, the Joint [Joint Distribution Committee] established these soup kitchens and different, distribution agency was giving out food to the survivors. And one day we stood in line for food. And it, they did not open yet and there was a woman there saying, "I wish they opened already because I have to get back to Stomfa [Stupava] tonight." Stomfa apparently was a suburb of Bratislava. So my mother said to her, "You are from Stomfa, maybe you know the Stern family." And she says, "Yes, of course I know the Stern family, they just came back the other day from the bunker, shelter." They were hiding. So my mother asked her, "Would you be so kind to take a little, uh, note to them?" So they took out a, a little newspaper and a pencil and she wrote there, um, "I, this, this is Lily Engel, that's Goldberg, nee Goldberger. I'm here with my two children. [choking up, weeping] I need nothing. Only somebody who will recognize me, who knew me before." [pause] Anyway, the Stern family, when Czechoslovakia was taken over by the Germans, um, since Bratislava is so close, uh, the Jewish families sent up their youngsters to, to Hungary, to Budapest and the Jewish families of Budapest hired them so they would not be, uh, deported. So my mother hired a young girl from the Stern family, Ilonka was her name, uh, to be a mother's helper.

Who are the Sterns?

Just a Jewish family from Bratislava.

That your mother knew?

That my, yeah, I don't know how she found this girl, but she was like an 18 year old girl. And as long as we were in Budapest she took care of me. The only condition was that she was not allowed to speak German to me, you know, because in Bratislava, ah, all the Jews spoke German, Slovak and Hungarian. Anyway that was the connection. How much contact was, there was contact between the families because what happened later shows that. Anyway. [deep sigh] So my mother gave this note and the next day a Russian jeep stopped at that line, again they were standing in line for food, um, and a woman came and said, "I am looking for a Mrs. Engel." So my mother identified herself. And so she looked at my mother and she said, [choking up] "Riboyne shel o'lem," [weeps] which is like "oh my God." My mother was, my mother is, was a very small woman, petite. But she was like all survivors looked. Anyway, [sigh] it's a long story, she, my mother, my, she couldn't find my brother, she might, she did not want to go that day. In fact, my mother said to her, "Helga" this was Ilonka's sister, she says, "Helga, you are so religious, It's Shabbos" it's the Sabbath. She said, "We cannot worry now about the Sabbath, we have to save lives." They took us in, they fed us, they gave my mother medicine. By then my mother was very, very ill with dysentery. And I don't think she would have survived at that point without what, without this family. Uh, my mother said they gave her morphine. [sigh] They did everything. They cleaned her, they washed her. They did everything. [sigh] She traveled to Budapest and came back and told my mother that both her brothers were alive, living. And after awhile we went back

there. [pause] Now this was in the summer of 1945. We did not know whether, what was going on with my father. And we got word from the Red Cross. I have a piece of paper from the newspaper how my father put an ad looking, and there were all these long ads, long lists of people, survivors looking for each other. [this whole piece was spoken very slowly]

You have the ad?

Yeah. And, um, [sigh] anyway, um, so there was word from my father and then later on somebody came back and brought a note from my father, and I have the note as well. [pause] And the first night of Hanukkah—this I remember—there was like a very wide street, like a boulevard, you know, in Budapest.

Wilmastrasse route. I remember we were crossing it and we ran into my mother's cousin and my, he said to her, "Lily" my mother's name "you, at your brother's there is a surprise for you." So she said, "A surprise for me? Maybe my brother bought Hanukkah presents for the kids." So he said, "No, it's for you." And she said, "Did Gezal come back?" my father. And we went there and I remember how we got up the stairs and the door was open and there was this tall Russian soldier. My father was in Russian uniform. [pause] He was a stranger. He was taken away when I was 11 months old and I was four and a half years old. I did not know him. And, in fact, sometime, a day or two later, or I don't know when, I said to him to go back to Russia because he took away my mother. I was extremely attached to my mother. Um, I think that what remained with me, what I mentioned before, the fear, is an incredible abandonment anxiety that I worked on in, um, my own psychotherapy. Um, being left in the barracks all day long, all

the time. I don't know what it is. But then I saw, I see some of it in my daughter Yael and I used to say, "the concentration camp in Southfield?" [chuckle] You know! But I was, I was really extremely attached to my mother. There was a summer camp that we were sent to. Um, all the surviving children, on, on the Dalmatian coast. And [sigh] it was to put some life back into us, you know. That was in summer of 1946. And I missed my mother something terrible. That remained with me even when I was 12 years old in Israel. I went to a overnight camp for the first time, and I couldn't bear it. Physically each time these summer camps were very good for me in terms of the fresh air and the sun and, uh, the food. But emotionally they were excruciatingly painful, being separated from my mother.

Do you think the roots of that are in your Holocaust experience?

Definitely. Definitely. That's, uh, the fear, the abandonment anxiety, separation anxiety. That will be with me for the rest of my life. Uh, not feeling safe. Um, I remember when, when we went back to Yugoslavia in '46, the spring of '46, and then later on we tried to cross the border back to Hungary to joining the illegal, uh, immigration to Palestine and we were caught and we were in prison and I was separated from my mother. And I was shuffled from relative to relative. And during that time my brother left. He crossed the border himself and he was not caught. And he went to his uncle's and later on he, he emigrated to Israel through the Aliyyah tanor, the youth Aliyyah. Uh, but I still remember, I have a vivid recollection when he came to say goodbye to me. Again there was another separation from somebody who I was extremely attached to. So these multiple

separations as a child were, were very traumatic. My daughter, my oldest, Ruthie, says she looks at pictures of me following the war. And some of them I look, she says I look traumatized. And they are actually the ones after this experience of going from relative to relative and when my brother left. That's when I was like, and I look at the pictures, it's a sad looking child. Worse than right after the war. The picture that I have here with me from 1946 where we went to Sokirnitsa, the same place where my father had the pension. We went back there as a family. And there I look pretty happy. You know, I, I look pretty good. But I think that it was, [sigh] um, the frosting on the cake, if you will, in terms of the whole ordeal of being captured by the communists and being separated from my mother. Uh, my mother spending five minutes–five minutes, I wish five minutes–five months in prison.

And you stayed with?

Relatives. Different relatives. I, I remember three different place where I was during that time.

And your father, was he also arrested?

Yes, my father was sentenced to a year and a half hard labor.

For trying to emigrate to Palestine?

Palestine. And actually it was the, the official, you know when, in the sentencing it said, "Illegal emigration to Palestine," so they were not regular criminals or anything. In fact, when the Soviet bloc, um, voted for the creation of the State of Israel in the United Nations, after that, my mother was already, uh, released from prison, she started going from ministry to ministry to get, uh, the, the acquittal or

the release, early release of my father, which was successful. He was released and we left Yugoslavia on the second legal boat [choking up] going to Israel. My mother [chuckle] told the story how she went to these different, uh, offices and talked to these officials and said, “You were fighting for your freedom as partisans in Yugoslavia. Now let me go and I want to fight for my own country.” So, oh she was an ardent Zionist, she had a lot of fire in her and...

Do you remember the vote?

Yes. [long pause and crying] I don't know why I cry more [chuckle] when there were good things. But that's a psychologically, that's a known phenomenon. My father was, I think, in prison, yes, and my mother was sitting in this room. We had an awful apartment. [chuckle] Post-war. We were sitting around this old telefunken, radio, you know, those old radios. I remember my mother being here and I remember myself, I, I know there were other people, I don't know who. And we were counting [choking up] as the vote was going on. [last few words here whispered] [long pause] And then [pause, still crying] it was [pause] unbelievable. Now that I think back of what we went through and suddenly you hear the United Nations voting to have a country for Jews, [pause] I, I don't think that today we can really grasp the meaning of it. [pause] It was just something that, that people in their wildest dreams in the camps could not fathom or imagine. Today we take all these things for granted. But then it was something else.

You, your parents were determined to go?

Yes, very much so. My mother more than my father, I think, but both of them were really determined to go to, first to Palestine and then to Israel.

Do you think the vote helped get your Father out of prison?

Oh definitely. Definitely. Because basically the communist countries vo-, voted togeth-, along with the Soviet Union for the establishment of the State of Israel and, uh, you know. They really, uh, were after people who were trying to smuggle, uh, money out and jewelry or whatever. But, um, those who were caught were beaten to death. One relative of mine was, in a communist prison. But the others, by and large, were let go. And, and my father was not an exception. There were quite a few who, who actually came from prison straight to the boat. My father did not come, come from the, uh, prison to the boat. Uh, there was a time that he stayed with us. I remember when he came back. They released him, uh, unexpectedly. We did not know. And it was a summer night. So this was like, uh, maybe five, six months before we went. Uh, and the window was open to the street, the window of the bedroom. And, uh, he climbed in through the window. And my mother woke up startled and she said, “Who is it?” and he said, “So who can it be?” [chuckle] Uh, so and right then and there we started, uh, preparing for departure. And, in fact, we took our furniture, we took things with us.

While you were living in

Subotica?

Subotica. You, did you, you went to school?

Yes. Hmm. That’s an interesting story. I, in the communist countries they sent kids to school, first grade was at the age of seven rather than the age of six. My parents did not want me to go to a Hungarian school. See in Subotica, uh... I

don't know what the percentage of Hungarians versus Serbians. What was the, you know, the ratio. But there were Hungarian schools and there were Serbian schools. Well, the Serbians were not known as anti-Semitic. The Hungarians were known as anti-Semitic. So I was sent to the Hungarian school—to the Serbian school, I'm sorry. Um. They did not care about anything. Whether, I, I spoke Hungarian, that was my only language. But they did not want, and then they send me to the Serbian school, like, who cares if you, if you can understand the language or, or any of that. It was very important. The Serbians were not anti-Semitic, therefore you go to the Serbian school. Meanwhile I was instructed in Hebrew. I had a private tutor. Uh, private, I don't know, I think my cousin and I. A Melamed, you know. And, uh, he taught us the aleph-bet and reading, and, and writing I don't remember. I remember reading lessons. So when we go to Israel, uh, when we finally settled it was 19-, April of 1948, 1949 and, um, I was tested whether I could read and write in Hebrew and I could. So they placed me in second grade and I graduated—I finished, not graduated—finished second grade with my age group. And from then on I went to regular education in Israel.

But were there any instances in Subotica of anti-Semitism when you were a child in school?

Yeah, when, one Shabbat afternoon, one, um, time we were, I was going to a friend and there were these kids who were, were harassing me, nothing different than any other place, um, and one kid was pointing at me to the other, to the older child, like this is the girl that we see, or whatever. And later he looked at me and in a loud voice he said, “Oh she is a stinky Jew” and he spat on the ground. Um,

[pause] yeah, so that stayed with me [chuckle] There were some Hungarian peasants actually when we got to Subotica, the, the parents were Hungarian peasants, the younger people they rented an apartment to my parents before the war and they saved some of our things. They were very good to us and they fed us. And the older, the Haggadushnani, the older peasant, Hungarian peasant lady said to my mother once, “Lillica” like an endearing, “Lilly, you are so nice as if you weren’t Jewish.” That was the big compliment, you know. And she meant it from the bottom of her heart. But that was ingrained. Anti-Semitism was ingrained. It was part of their thoughts and feelings.

Even in the Serbian school?

Yeah.

Ok, let’s stop here for minute.

Ok. Thank you.

[New tape]

Tell me something about what it meant to change your identity to an Israeli.

Hmm. Um, my identity as a Jew was never ever questioned or, um, that was a given. That was very strongly part of me. My mother used to tell the story how when I was born and she gave me the name Noemi, that’s the Hebrew pronunciation of the biblical Naomi, and the Noemi, the way it is spelled is the Hungarian spelling. Her brother said to her, “How can you give such a name to a girl?” This was, like, too biblical, too Jewish in 1941. Uh, and I was not given any other name. When we got off the boat in Haifa in December, the first night of Hanukkah, um, in 1948, I still remember how, um, there were these clerks with

desks, um, greeting the, the, the newcomers and they were giving them what's called te'oodat oleh, which is like a ID card, an immigrant ID card, the first identification card. And, um, they were asking them for Jewish names and some had, some didn't, whatever. Anyway, I don't remember the details, I remember how I experienced it. They asked me what my name was and I said Noemi. And the clerk was thrilled. Here is this Jewish child with a Hebrew name. And there was no other name. And it was like I was legitimized. I have finally arrived where I belong, where even my name is accepted and it's part of the majority culture, if you win – will. Um, win. Freudian slip. I won. [chuckle]

But you weren't—to coin a phrase—you weren't Hungarians anymore.

No. Oh, that's right! Oh, that's a wonderful story. I might as well tell that story. We were, um, uh, we were put on big trucks. They were taking us to this, uh, you know, absorption center and those, it's, it's, it was a mass Aliyyah. I mean, in the next three years there were so many people coming in. But we were amongst the first ones to come, following the, um, War of Independence. And so we were on these big trucks going from Haifa to Be'er Ya'aqov, which is south of Tel Aviv. So it's like a, it was a couple of hours, actually longer in those days. Uh, on the road there were workers on the sides and, uh, one of the workers heard the Hungarian, everybody was speaking Hungarian. So a man shouts up, "Hungarians, Hungarians! Magyarok, Magyarok!" So my mother shouts down "Nam Magyarok! Not Hungarian! Zsidos! Jews!" And I guess that's what I got, you know, with my, as they say my mother's milk, you know, that kind of an identity, that, that strong identity. Uh, and it just became, the, the, the Jewish

was, um, the foundation and then the Israeli was, became, uh, integrated into it. I don't know exactly. I mean, I still see myself as primarily Jewish and then Israeli. But the two are really part and parcel. One. They are together.

What was the reaction post-war in Israel to the Holocaust? Was there a lot of talk about it, did...

Hm mm. [no] I lived a double life. It was very interesting. I think that, you know, since then I left, I, I, uh, I read about it and I, uh, processed it differently as an adult, and now with all the literature that's coming out. But in elementary school I went to a religious, um, elementary school and actually most of the Europeans who came were secular, so they went to a general public school; I went to the religious branch of the public school. They were all public schools. And there were more, uh, kids from, um, North Africa and the Middle East, which that was also a problem because I was so European and, and we were from very different cultures. Um, so that was one culture there, which was totally, um, different from mine. Then at home everybody was survivors. All my parents' friends. Everybody around me were Holocaust survivors. But officially, I mean, informally everybody spoke about it all the time. That was part of your life experience. Uh, there, there were all kinds of expressions from, like, before and after. You know, who was what before and where was he or she during, and uh, second marriages. Very common, very common. So, um, that was a whole ... world. Now when I got to high school, which was an excellent Israeli high school, uh, most of the kids there were Israeli born, and, uh, native Israeli sabras. And I was integrated into that school very well. I, I loved that school and to this

day I have some friends in Israel who are from my high school. Um, but there was no talk about the Holocaust. There was almost like a conspiracy of silence. And the little that was talked about was—and I voiced it to my mother—is like “sheep to slaughter.” How could we have gone like sheep to slaughter? The passivity. Here we are in our own country, defending ourselves, fighting. We are not going to be like “you guys.” You know, of course I identified, immediately I moved on to being the Israeli and I wanted to blend in. Um, but really there was, if there was any talk about the Holocaust it was about how we do not want to be the way we were then, we never ever want to repeat again. Um, but most of the time there was no official talk of the Holocaust. My mother used to go every year to Yom ha-Shoah [Holocaust Remembrance Day], a ceremony. She would go. And certainly in our day to day, kitchen talk, if you will, that was part of our lives. And the stories that I was, was telling you and what went into the interview with my mother was just a part of all the stories that I heard all the time. I do not come from a family where my parents would not talk. My father did not talk as much as my mother. He really was much, uh, he held back much more. By the way, I interviewed him in 1988, uh, so I have three cassette tapes about his experiences. But, uh, he would not talk very much except that he had nightmares. He always had nightmares.

While we’re on your father, could you tell me what the cigarette case is about? Why don’t we, hold it up and we’ll show it.

Oh yes. This is a very interesting, um, item. I don’t know how to call it. It’s a cigarette case. And it was made by a German artist who was a POW in the same

camp as my father. (Um, should I show it like this?) You can see here, um, it's it's very good work, but it's the Soviet Union, the symbol of the Soviet Union. And in the back there is a star of David, Magen David, uh, and in Cyrillic letters is the date of when, the date when my father was captured by the Russians. And the date, I don't know what the significance of May 1 is because he was not released May 1. Uh, but anyway, this is, and it was done by a German for a Jew in the Soviet POW camp. So I think it's very interesting.

Can you read the writing on the back?

I don't know to read Cyrillic. See I was in the Serbian school only for two months. And in Serbia they teach the Latin alphabet as well as the Cyrillic alphabet. But we left for Israel before we got to the Cyrillic alphabet, so.

This split between talking about it and not talking about it in Israel, or how it was discussed in Israel.

Yes.

Did you ever confront any of your contemporaries with a different view?

Well, [sigh] uh, not in high school. But the day arrived when I served in the Israeli Army. Now this is connected to my father. Uh, my father, we, I come from a modern Orthodox background. And in those days, and even today, a religious girl is not, uh, does not have to go, uh, and serve in the Army. All the others do, the secular ones. So my father said to me—this was 1959—um, “Since you are religious you don't have to go and serve in the Army.” Well, you know. I, I was my mother's daughter in many ways and I had my own ideology and my own convictions and I said, “No way! I am going to go. We are not that

religious. And I want to serve my country.” And I went, and, uh, the first year I was just like, most girls in those days worked in offices, uh, doing various jobs. But I wanted to do more, so I volunteered. Um, I even changed my medical, uh, I don’t know if they had like a profile of, uh, health, how healthy you were, you had to be in perfect health to be even asked to go to, um, uh, officer’s training or to be tested for officer’s training. So I did, I went throughout the whole thing to change that. Make a long story short, I went to officer’s training. Um, and in officer’s training it was interesting. Most of the girls there were native Israelis. A lot of them from kibbutzim. And that was the time when Eichmann was captured. Now the way a girl served in the Army, they did, as I said, mostly office jobs or like social work type or education. Uh, in the training, we had the basic training, with guns and stuff. But that was really not the, the, the most important. Most important was the academic part, and also we had to be well versed in, in current events. So we had to read the paper everyday and we had discussions about current events. Um, and Eichmann was captured and the papers were full of details about his capture and, and some of the, of the editorials in the paper, uh, discussed whether the state of Israel had the right to try Eichmann. [pause] And that evening in our, uh, discussion in officer’s training, that was discussed. Does Israel have the right to try Eichmann for his war crimes? And the debate was going on. And the more I listened, the more upset I got. Finally I couldn’t take it anymore and I got up and I said, [pause] uh, how did I, I don’t remember how I started, but I said something like, “I’m a survivor.” That was the first time I came out publicly, in a public forum, and said, “I am a Holocaust survivor.” “I’m a

survivor and when we were put on the trains and deported nobody asked us whether we wanted to go or whether they had the right to do that to us.” And again, I don’t remember the words, but I remember how upset I was and how, it was not upset, it was like there was something in me from the, from my guts, uh, came in terms of stating my identity and my convictions and our right to try Eichmann. Not our right, our obligation, our duty to the Jewish people, to the six million who perished, and to the survivors. [sigh] Anyway, I remember how quiet it was when I spoke. I mean, I gave this, this fiery speech. And it made a big impression. It really did. And that was, I think, the first time I really came out with who I was and what I went through. Um, when we finished officer’s training, my, the parents were invited for the ceremony. And it was a military ceremony as all, you know, parade, etc. Um, and my father cried. Here’s my father who didn’t want me to even go and serve in the Army. And he said to me, when he congratulated me after the ceremony, he said, “I was the dirty Jew, I was the stinky Jew that they wanted to kill. And here is my daughter, an officer in the Israeli Army.” That was a moment of triumph for him. And later on, when the trial was going on, I went to, one day to the trial, I went in my uniform, as an officer. And I remember seeing him in the glass booth. Eichmann. And I was thinking to myself, “He’s being tried and they are representing me, on my behalf.” So I carried this and on and off, you know, throughout my life it comes and goes. I cannot say that the Holocaust governs my life because it does not. My Jewishness does. My Israeliness does. But it translates into it. It, it is like part and parcel of being Jewish of this generation. And I think my fervor as a, as a

Jew and as an Israeli is partly because of my experiences. My belief system and my wish for my people and for my children. Like my son served in the Israeli Army and now my, my baby is nagging about the same thing. And I said, "First graduate from college, then we'll talk." But I brainwashed them. I, clearly I brainwashed them because their father is American born, even though his father, um, left on just about the last boat. He came here from Vienna. And from birth he was a, a Galizianer. A Jew from Galicia who went to Vienna during World War I and then came to this country. His mother was already American born, from Duluth, Minnesota. That's where my husband was born and raised. Uh, but certainly I, I brainwashed the kids with this, um, fervor, conviction, belief. I don't know what to call it.

Did you tell them the stories that your mother told you? Did you tell them about your experiences during the War, your own children?

Um, I told them some stories, but I did not have it in an organized fashion until I interviewed my mother. But see it was my daughter's idea to interview my mother. She was the one who was putting pressure on me. So somehow she got the idea. And when I finally, when my child number three, my second daughter was going on "March of the Living" in Poland, that's when I transcribed the tapes and translated them, written, uh, written it out, what I had here, and made copies for each one of my children and they told me that the moment they got it they read it. They kind of like read the whole thing in one sitting. Um, it's very much part of their legacy. In fact, my most cynical child is my youngest and he's the one who made the connection between you and me. When he went to

Washington and you came to speak to, to this, uh, youth group, um, I don't know, I think he was about 15 or 16, he approached you and told you. And I would have never guessed that of all my kids he would take it upon himself. And then when he came back from Washington he brought me the forms to sign up as a survivor. Um, in 1985, (I don't know whether you want me to talk about that a little bit), um, I decided to go to Europe. Take my whole family. It was a costly trip. It was very important to me. We rented a car, a van, a very bad one. They gave us a jalopy. Uh, and my oldest was 17, it was 17, 15, 10 and 7. My baby, my Avi, the one who contacted, who talked to you, was only 7 years old. We rented this van and we drove from Holland through Germany to Czechoslovakia to Hungary to Austria, uh, and back. You know, like we made, in fact, I brought a map of how the, this whole tour took place. And, of course, you cannot see anything in depth. But the kids remember that trip vividly. Uh, it really whetted their appetite. Not just in terms of the Jewish aspect and the survivor aspect, which I will talk about in a minute. But culturally I wanted them to be exposed. On some level I'm, I, I have the European background. And I wanted them to be exposed to it. Anyway, [sigh] when [sigh] we entered Germany, second day, we arrived in Holland Friday so we spent Shabbat in Amsterdam. And we rented the van Sunday morning and we started driving. And you know how, how big Holland is. It didn't take much, much time, [chuckle] I think in an hour or two we were in Germany. Uh, the moment we entered German soil I became anxious and [sigh] I was, I was afraid. I was regressed. And we spoke all day long about the Holocaust. Then we got to this hotel. I said to my husband, with my own

prejudiced, I said to him, "You'll see it will be very clean." And sure enough. It was in a small town. Uh, and we did not, they had, this was like an inn, you know, and, kind of, almost like a country inn. Bed and breakfast. So we had to take three rooms. So my husband and I in one room, the two boys in one room and the two girls in one room. And [sigh] at night I had nightmares all night. I, I, my, I was very restless. In the morning, Dani my older son comes in that Avi my younger son couldn't fall asleep. He kept on saying to his brother, "What if the Germans change their mind?" Because we said when he got all scared, we said, "No, this is peaceful times and so on and so forth, this was a long time ago." Um, he had a hard time falling asleep, and I thought, like, "Oh my God, I traumatized my child," you know. But he was scared to be in Germany. He picked up my fears. Um, the interesting thing about that trip was that we went to Theresienstadt in, in Czechoslovakia. And then after Hungary, it was very interesting in Hungary because I went back to where my mother's apartment was. We went to the Orthodox shul, um, where my grandfather had a, a life seat. I don't know how it's called when you buy a seat that is for you. Um, [sigh] we saw, you know, in the courtyard of the Orthodox shul there is a frame of a chuppa and that's where my mother got married the first time. And then I called my parents from Budapest to Israel and I told them. It's interesting, my mother didn't want us to go to Budapest. She said, "I never ever want to go back there, ever." And I said to her, "But I want to go back there because for me it's associated with you." Um, anyway, when we got to Austria, I wanted to go to Mauthausen. See I did

not know that Moosbierbaum was near Mauthausen. And you have to take the exit off Linz, I think. Is that correct?

Hm hmm.

My husband always drives and I navigate. Be it in Europe, be it in the United States and we are avid travelers and we go camping. By and large I navigate. We missed the exit, [pause] and I said, "Oh my God, I did not pay attention." So my husband, this was already awhile, you know, I mean we passed Linz exit. So we were debating should we go back. And then my husband said, "You wanted to miss it. You had enough." So we did not go back to Mauthausen. [pause and sigh] Anyway...

Let me ask you one more thing. It sounds like there are associations that you make regularly.

Yes.

Whether it's trains or barbed wire or...

Yes.

You mentioned this being part of your children's legacy.

Hm hmm.

But what you said before was that the dominant feeling that you remember from the Holocaust is fear.

Yes.

Is that the legacy?

Yes, it is. Um, I'm afraid of it happening again. [pause] I believe it can happen anywhere. And, as a matter of fact, genocide is not rare in human history. Um, I

don't believe we were, we traveled to China, about a year and a half ago. That was, that was not a pleasant trip. And I wrote a collective letter to my kids, just about our travel experiences. We went all the way to Tibet. We flew inside China like eight times. It was interesting, but I felt very uncomfortable in China. And in that collective letter I write something, "Never in my life did I feel so depersonalized as in China." A friend of mine wanted to read the letter. So she read it. She's a social worker. And she stumbled upon this line, which was totally my unconscious. So she said to me, "Noemi, do you, do you make the connection?" I said, "not until you pointed it out to me." I felt depersonalized, dehumanized, um, in China and I guess it, their suffering in their history and what they do to each other within China in terms of oppression. But each time it, it resonates with me. It, it is, it puts fear in my heart, or rather revives the fear that is in my heart. Um, in fact, you know even politically how I am in Israel, um, how I align myself? I see the Palestinians plight, you know, I feel for them. It's hard for me not to. Now my father will tell you they want to kill us, you know. Like he, for him, for all of us it evokes the Holocaust. It's impossible not to. But the question is how it evokes it for you. So, quite a few, like my father or my brother, they say, "The Arabs are trying to wipe us out. We have to be strong this time, not let them." And I somehow see the Palestinians as being the victims and I see myself as victimized. So I don't want to victimize others. I, I just, I have a hard time with it. Even though, even though I realize, you know, the security issues and so on and so forth. And I'm convinced that if they would have won the War of Independence, they would have wiped us out. Or any other war for that

matter. But it's, yeah, for me it is the fear. And, and the belief that it can happen again. To the Jewish people as well as other people. But you know what, there is another legacy. The legacy is also of those stories that I insisted on telling here today, of these anonymous people who rose to the occasion. Who, who, who did for people they did not even know. I think that's, that's hopeful. We, we are, I don't know when I am going to be asked to rise to the occasion. And these were simple people who rose to the occasion.

Maybe that's a good place to stop. Somewhere between fear and hope.

Yes.

Ok.

Thank you, Sid.