

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Brenda Senders
February 22, 1998
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Brenda Senders, conducted by Arwin Donohue on February 22, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Hellendale, Florida and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

**Interview with Brenda Senders
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Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Hur collection. This is an interview with Brenda Senders, conducted by Arwin Donohue, on February 22nd, 1998, at Brenda Senders home in Hellendale, Florida. This is a follow-up interview to a USHMM videotaped interview conducted with Mrs. Senders on June 20th, 1991. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Hur for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. Okay, Mrs. Senders, will you state your full name and the exact date that you were born and where you were born once again for us?

Answer: Yeah, I -- I was born in a small town in eastern part of Europe, it's now the Ukraine, in August 20th, 1925.

Q: And the name of the town, again?

A: The name of the town was Sarnee, that's in the Ukraine. And it was Poland before, up til 1939.

Q: We got a pretty good sense from the first interview about what happened when the Russian occupation of Sarnee began in 1939 and then subsequently the German occupation happened and you mentioned a little bit about your life before all of the horror began. But -- but let's go back even farther than that and I'd like to hear something about your family background, your -- your father's name and his occupation, let's start there.

A: My father's name was Samuel Schier. His occupation, I call it a forester, but actually, in -
- in the direct translation, is -- he was a selector of woods. He used to buy quartels --
quartels, like oh -- of woods and then cut them down in the summer and then ship them
during the winter, into town. And this was seasonal work, like -- seasonal work. And --

Q: So the wood -- go ahead.

A: Yes?

Q: The wood was used locally or did it -- was it shipped all over the place?

A: No, the was -- is shipped to w -- to Sarnee, to the city of Sarnee, the sleds in the winter,
when the snows would start. The p -- the village people, he would arrange so that the village
people would take the woods and take him to Sarnee. And in Sarnee they would cut them, I
don't know how they would cut them, then ship them overseas. Some went even to
Germany, some went to the Baltic and as far as I know, as far as I could understand at that
time.

Q: What was your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was Leah Bourka. And she was born actually in the outskirts of
Sarnee. She was not the -- lived like in a village. My grandmother, my -- my -- and my
mother was born there, as far as I know.

Q: Was your family living in -- in the s -- the area of Sarnee for many generations before
your parents? Had -- were your parents born there and their parents or what -- what was the
history of your family in that area?

A: As far as I know, I can -- I can recall there was -- it's hundreds and hundreds of years.

My parents, my grandparents, there hundreds of years I can tra -- they say maybe 800, who

knows? 800 or more. Many, many years, as far as I know. So my parent, my -- my family did not immigrated from no place. They were living and we were Polish, like I say. We were Polish nationals. Except our religion divided because it was predominantly Catholic in our country and that's what divided us. That's nothing, nothing else.

Q: Was your family very religious?

A: No, my family was not. My mother was more religious than my father. My father was a very modern man. He used to travel in his youth a lot. He spoke a fluent Russian. He went -- they were -- I understand they were well-to-do, way, way back, before the Communists came to power. And -- and they sized a lody of their property and when they bo -- when the -- the Communists took over them, th-they -- the cover -- they took cover in the -- Russia -- they lived right on someplace in Orlefsk, as far as I know, from whatever my family told me. And then they capen -- they came and they settled near -- not far from Sarnee.

Q: What were the names -- you mentioned that you had four siblings, your four brothers and sisters, what were their names and their -- and their ages in relation to you?

A: No, I had -- no, I had one brother, who was I would say five or six and my sister was a year -- a year and a half younger. So he was six, he just started -- maybe started school and my little sister was like three and a half -- three and a half, no more.

Q: Are you talking about when the war started that's -- that's how old they were?

A: Y-Yeah.

Q: In 1939?

A: In now -- in -- no, when -- when the Germans already --

Q: In -- in '41?

A: In '41, I'm talking like in '41. So my little brother was, let's say six -- six, seven, he just started school, so I'm an -- I'm not sure d -- six or seven. My little sister was a few years younger than he. His name was Shawlinkay and her name was Esther.

Q: And he was the young -- he was the youngest, your little brother?

A: No, Estheka was the youngest, my -- my sister was the youngest. Survived from my family was my sister and myself.

Q: But you had -- did you just have one brother and sister or did you have two sisters?

A: Yeah, I have two sisters --

Q: Okay.

A: Two sisters and a brother. One sister survived, escaped the same day I did and my brother and sister perished, including my parents, grandparents and the rest of the family, cousins and whatever.

Q: What was the name of your sister who survived and how old was she?

A: Simma was approximately -- Simma was -- it was in -- in 1941 -- in 1941 -- we are different in -- in seven years. So in 1941, when she escaped, she was a young kid.

Q: In 1941, you would have been about 16?

A: 16, yeah.

Q: So she would have been about nine years old?

A: Maybe 10, let's say 10, something like that. And she's the only one who survived.

Q: Before the Russian occupation, you mentioned in the first interview that you had been attending school and that you had dreams of becoming a professional and -- tell me a little bit more about your -- your educational experience and your hopes before the war began.

A: My hopes -- we were not a well-to-do family, but I went to a private school and I remember it was -- Hebrew was taken and then the Polish language. It was a parochial school. And I went to that school with ock Hebrew, with th-the Polish language like I said, and my -- my vision was -- I already had my dreams. I wanted to go to school, to -- I didn't know how in -- in how I'm -- I'm going to achieve it, but as a young kid I already was thinking -- I even was thinking maybe I'll go to a kibbutz and I'll go to Palestine on that time. It was something -- it was a big movement of Zionist -- a Zionist movement was in our part of the country and in my city. And some of my family went at that time, like my aunt went to Palestine at that time, in her -- thir -- in the 30's. My uncle and another aunt, two aunts, another two aunts on my father's side, they went to -- to Palestine. So I had in my mind said, "Maybe if I will not be able to proceed with my education down there, my parents will not be able to -- to afford it, so I'll go to Palestine and maybe down there I'll proceed, or whatever it is necessary to do." But -- and then -- and then you are asking me about before the war, correct?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah. So this is -- was up til 1939, I went to this school. And then when the Soviets -- when the Soviets came, in 1939, the a -- the war started with us and -- and as we know it from history, my country was divided. Poland was divided. The pact between the Germans and the -- and the Russian was made and I fell under the jurisdiction of the Soviets and I went to school, proceeded school and the Russian, they call it a dishiturletka. This is equivalent to a -- a high school, but maybe in a higher -- something on this nature, in a

different, you know. I went to this Russian school and two years after the war started with -- with the Germans.

Q: So you were -- were you learning Russian at that time --

A: Russian --

Q: Or had you already spoken --

A: Yes, I knew the lang -- I knew Ukrainian a little. But Russian was -- came very fast to me because I -- I heard around me -- a lot of people spoke do -- th-the language, so it was easy for me to -- to get to know the language and I did it very fast -- I did it -- I did it fast. And I spoke the language pretty good.

Q: Did your family -- what language did your family speak at home?

A: Our family spoke Yiddish -- spoke Yiddish amongs -- yeah my father and mother and they spoke to the kids also in Yiddish.

Q: And were you -- did you have a very close family relationship? Were -- were you particularly close?

A: Very. Yes. I think we had a very cr-close relation -- lot of laughing, lot of -- a lot of affection for my parents, for my father, for my mother. And we were a very, very close knit family. And I felt it. And this maybe sa -- maybe this is also -- was a factor for my survival, too. I never regretted something, whatever I saw around me and I saw the people the way they live in their -- in -- in -- I -- I just said, "Let me get over the war." And I wanted to continue and I wanted to do the way I remember was taught in my family. If we told the propaganda what the Germans tried to against the Jews, it did not penetrate to me, it did not.

Because it didn't mean anything, I didn't -- I didn't identify with nothing. I saw it just all -- all -- all created.

Q: You mentioned that your father was an interpreter during World War One and -- and he spoke -- didn't you mention that?

A: Yes.

Q: That he spoke German? Did he have a close relation -- did he think of the Germans as being capable of -- of what they did?

A: No, my father was a interpreter during -- as far as I -- I remember he told us. He was a interpreter during the second World War and he spoke fluent German. He said they are very [indecipherable] --

Q: Do you mean the f -- the -- do you mean the first World War?

A: Yeah, the first World War, yeah. He spoke a fluent German and he was a interpreter and he said the Germans are very civilized people, they are -- it's propoganda. He said he didn't believe in that. And the thing they did, happened what happened. It was horrible.

Q: One more question about the pre-war experience.

A: Yes?

Q: I think from listening to your first interview I get an inkling that -- you had a very strong character as a -- as a very young girl, that you had -- that you had that. People -- you mentioned a couple of times that people told you that you were fast and you were quick and you make it and you could escape. I'd like you to des-describe yourself at that age. What kind of a little -- what kind of a child were you?

A: I would call myself very independent. And it were times when I tr -- when I -- you know, I used to go out from the ghetto on my own risk. I used to take off the piece of junk, the piece of rag from my front and the back, whatever it was and I used to run out from the ghetto and I free -- I have a free spirit, I -- I -- I hated it to being closed in there in the ghet -- I hated it And it's -- the first -- any chance. And I even had the idea -- I was toying with the idea to ran away from the ghetto, to escape. I didn't know where, but I wanted to go away and escape into the woods someplace. But I was afraid because if I would escape, my family would be murdered right there and then. And that's how they kept me down there -- sitting down there. I didn't know for sure if I'll escape I'll survive someplace. Maybe somebody will denounce me in -- in britally Germans. But the other thing, the -- the -- the other thing kept me -- kept me -- they shouldn't take revenge on my family and that's what kept us together.

Q: Will you say something about the town of Sarnee and the relationship between the Jews and -- and non-Jews in the area? Did you perceive any anti-Semitism before the war?

A: There was some, some, but they did not exactly affect it. There's some outburst and some -- from the schools, from the Polish schools, there were -- they were created and they were become Fascists and it was a big influx out already from Germany, I think it was a import from there and it has -- and right away this start, derogatory word against the Jews and this and that but it's not affect us physically or any of this -- of this nature and I went to a Hebrew school predominantly, mostly the m -- the -- the -- the students are Jewi -- of -- of Jewish -- of Jewish faith. So it did not exactly affected me, but some kids who went to Polish schools, I think it affected them more than affected me.

Q: Did you have friends who were -- who were Polish Catholics?

A: Yes, I had friends, I had friends who were Polish Catholics and especially during the Russian, when the Russian came and I went to this -- I'm sorry -- and I went to this Russian school. So I had a lody of my friends were of -- of Greek Orthodox, there is a lot of people who -- down there in my part of the country they Greek or Orthodox or they're of Catholic persuasion. So I had from wode to you know, some of Catholics, something I didn't ask exactly who was what, because it didn't matter. But I had a lot of friends who were non -- who were non-Jews.

Q: Did their attitudes towards you change after the Russian occupation?

A: Not after the Russian occupation, but with the Germans. After the -- when the Russian occupation was -- was you know, equality was then -- then -- you know, you are -- everybody supposedly, you know, the minority, the -- we didn't have no problems at that time. We went to school together, we went and -- and was every -- ev -- it was very, very nice and very, very congenial. But when the Germans came, it changed completely. Some of my friends became not friends. They would see us and they would turn -- oh, I don't know, they were intimidated or they were afraid or they didn't want to get involved, I don't know which way. And we didn't -- we didn't proceed to -- to ask any question, because you know, we were like prisoners in our own city, in our own country. And we were closed in in these ghettos, but absolutely a change. Our neighbors -- our neighbors looked away from us, because when I lived in the ghetto, we had a lody non-Jewish neighbors, they were Christians, who stayed in the ghetto, they didn't had to move out, stayed in the ghetto and before we were friendly neighbors, we said hello, hi, this, that and right when the Germans

came, and the -- and the import of this venom came, right away they changed their attitude. Some of them joined this -- this evil ca -- this evil German, the -- their Fascist groups and -- and it changed their attitude. But this was the lesser tragedies, you know, what had befallen the -- our people in our -- and my people from my town. And that's what I -- I -- I can think of this -- of this -- actually of this -- of this m -- of this minute. We had a lot of friends that -- see a girl who worked for us -- I remember she used to be working, she was a -- some maid, was working, but she's a orphan. And I remember my mother actually married her off. And she used to call my mother 'mother'. She liked my mother because she gave her a dowry and she married her off to a very nice guy and sh-she didn't had nobody. And when the Germans came, her husband came and he warned, actually, my family. He came into the ghetto and he said to my father, "Remember, you know I hear very bad news. I think they are -- they are ready to kill all the Jews." My father had a very tem-temper and he -- he nee -- got so upset and he actually chased him out from the house. He didn't want it to believe. You know sometimes you just don't want it to believe. You think it's just spreading some rumors, some bate in the Germans, because [indecipherable] situation.

Q: Did your mother think differently from your father or did she go along with him?

A: If she -- my mother -- if she thought differently, I --I never heard, she just -- she went through one World -- the first World War. So she thought, "Let us just go through it." It's like, we'll go through it somehow, you know. And she was -- she wanted to. And -- and she was expecting, I guess, to go through it. Maybe she was on a more posit -- I don't -- I -- I don't -- but she did not verbally, actually talk to us. But she was very much worried, very much so. And -- and I used to go out from the ghetto, used to bring some food, on the risk of

my life. And I told once, a little -- I -- I said I know of on the tape. I went out from the ghetto with my sister, we took off our rags, we went and we got some -- some blackberries and some bread, what I ask some of the peasants to give us. And at night when we are coming back to the ghetto, and our house was right -- we were living -- to the end we were living right by the gate -- right by the fence, not by the gate, by the fence. And down there, in a little -- a barn was in the -- in the -- near the house and we made a hole. Through this hole I used to go out to the free -- to be free. And then, when I wanted to go out to th -- come into the ghetto, I had to open again the hole and come in. And come in back to the ghetto. And I remember at night, I came with my sister, we came with -- I came with my sister and my -- my bag, my -- actually my -- fell on the -- on the ground. And a policeman was walking right in front of our house -- a -- a Ukrainian policeman was patrolling at night. And when my package -- I captured a package like I carried on my -- on my shoul -- on my -- on my back. A b -- like a -- not a backpack, but like a package. And I -- and it dropped on the floor. And he start listening and we s -- and we froze, my sister and I froze. And -- because we're -- we -- we thought, that's the end. We were standing down there and he listened attentively and then he went again walking and at that time, you know, my mother was standing in the window and looking and expecting us. If she didn't got a heart attack at that time, it was a miracle. We opened the little hole, we went in. My mother -- I didn't hevewith to knock at the door, my mother opened the door, very quietly and as long as these footsteps of the German -- of the Ukrainian policemen, he couldn't hear the -- the opening or the closing of the -- of the doors. That's how we went in and we brought our food, whatever -- whatever we could acquire during the day. On the outside we were free, on the

inside we have to put again our -- our -- our rags that we are -- that we are branded for something. And I remember a woman, I remember before they put us in the ghetto, was a friend for us, so she came there, cried, actually. They were friends of ours, the -- the Ukrainian, there were some good souls. And they said, "You know -- you know," to my mother, "this is a bad omen. They are -- they are -- they are putting you all in one -- in one -- in one place. This is something -- a bad sign." And my mother yelled at her, said, "We will loov -- live through this too." But she -- she sensed that because they went through already a war before and they knew what's all about.

Q: How long did it take before the Germans put all of the Jews into this ghetto? How long after the German occupation?

A: Months, a few months -- a few months. They ask from all the villages, from all the places, all the Jews must leave their premises and come into the ghetto. And their orders us se -- ordered us in like -- like in -- in -- in five our -- us -- our part of the city was predominantly Jewish, all of the Jews, the rest of the Jews from these small, were crowded. Like I -- I had, for example, I don't know if I said it in the tape, for example in my -- in the house where we lived, I don't know, 12, 14 people were in there. They slept on the floor, slept any place we could sleep. And remember, at night, we used to be frightened to death because we had a curfew, at seven or eight. What the curfew for the Jews, nobody was allowed to go out, anybody was being caught outside strolling around, he would be shot. And it's no less punishment was than that. But at night we used to -- we -- we lived not far our house, was not far from the gate. Actually when you enter the gate in the beginning. So some -- at night, when we used to hear some trucks would be come in to the ghetto and we

didn't know if this is they're coming to grab some people -- to grab them from the ghetto, or te -- or to -- they are people -- actually Christians who are coming back from work. And we -- we heard already the truck passing by the house and going away on the -- on -- on whatever he went, we were quiet down. And in this manner we had to live more than a year. It was an eternity.

Q: Did you work during that time?

A: No.

Q: Outside of the ghetto? No?

A: No, during the time of the Germans? No. A few times they took us, they had to as -- they ask us to -- each family had to give a certain amount of work a week. A few times I went for them, silly things are done there. They take stones and t-take stone from one place to another one. All kind -- and manual work, it didn't mean anything. But I remember working near a bridge and this is also -- I used to get some food, I used to go in -- in the peasant house and ask him sometimes for a piece of bread or something. And there were some good souls who were helping us, too.

Q: Did your parents have to work at that time, outside of the ghetto or inside?

A: N-No, my father had to work as a laborer, you know. Let's say -- they would assigned each houses, they -- as to come to the Unerat. The Unerat is the Jewish, you know, consul. So it's the -- a certain amount of work each week. So, my father used to go down there with -- with a group of people out of the ghetto. And sometimes he would encounter some of his people who knew him, they loved him. He was known in the whole -- the whole region down there as a good man. And he was helping, we were ourself in artridge, he was helping

some actually other -- other people. And when they met him, they used to take their bread and give it to him and he used to bring it to the ghetto. That's how he was, well known. In some of the -- of the -- of the Ukrainian, they were -- and they said, "Oh God, what they are doing to you?" And sometimes they were coming and grabbing some of the belongings of the Jews and some of the good souls in Ukrainian used to say, "Remember," some smart one, they said, "today them, tomorrow us." And it was that way. And I always say, if I am in danger, remember, you are next in line, [indecipherable] if you are not doing the right thing, if you -- they are not -- the right thing.

Q: What about your other daily activities during that time that you were in the ghetto? What else did you do with your time?

A: We used to meet friends, among friends and read, discuss things in -- discuss things, in hope. We still have some hopes that maybe -- we used to hear news penetrated into ghetto, that's -- something about the Americans declaring war on Germany, something I heard in the ghetto, I don't whether they got -- it was in ninetin not yet. But somehow he penetrated news to us. Because we were not allowed and we had no communication with the outside world at all. There was no radios, nothing. And so we did not -- but we penetrated news in this -- in this respect, that the war started. And also we heard about partisans, but that was everything so remote and so away that we did not believe. Here, with the full strength of the German, they were -- they were constantly on our -- on our back, on our things. We did not -- we did not -- we did not know, we just were waiting for a miracle to happen.

Q: What did you hear about the partisans?

A: I heard it after I -- I -- after I read some books, that the first actually dissont was -- was throwing the -- the Soviets -- throwing in the back of my town, Sarnee -- actually the first dissont -- are organize a partisan movement, if you understand what I'm saying. To organize a partisan movement was not far from my city. We heard this, but it did not -- it did not penetrate to us. We knew that there were POW's, they were escaping in the woods, but -- but it still was not clear. In every little thing was a hope for us, maybe, maybe.

Q: How did you -- how did you feel when you heard about that kind of resistance activity? Did you -- did you have a strong response?

A: To me it was, yes, very much. I was ready to escape from the ghetto, I was ready to go and to do some fighting some -- and I saw the brutality and the way they -- the way it's happening around us, for no reason, no rhyme, no reason. Wrong was wrong and right was wrong. In -- in -- in -- in, you know, in anybody who wanted something to d -- to extract from you, a Ukrainian who was your neighbor and want to extract some -- some things and - - and he had the right, with no right for you at all. He can come into your house and say you did so and so and it was not -- it was not done so and so, but he'll say it and he -- you have to gi -- bribe him for it. You have to give him some money and I remember a Ukrainian once walked into the house where I lived. We talked him out of it, but we were scared stiff. We knew we got nothing to do with it, he just came for some -- for something just to -- to get from us either sacks of money or something, I don't know. From the -- because the grown up, they were very worried about it. But we talked him out and he left. And so it was -- was very tough -- was very tough and especially for young -- for young people, but we had our hopes, maybe, maybe. Because a few times -- but three times before to make the

real acts -- aktion, the real killing. There were like a preparatory -- like for instance, all of a sudden there, they said all the Jews from the ghetto must come to an appeal and it was on Yaki -- on Yom Kippur day. And all the Jews came, they came to the marketplace or whatever, they ask us to come to a certain -- to a certain place and then they ask everybody to go back home. Do you understand? They wanted us to prepare, if the real thing will come, we should know the difference -- we shouldn't know the difference, we should just come voluntarily, because they ask us to come. I think twice was an appeal like this and I remember my great uncle and it was Yom Kippur and he wore his shawl, he was praying to God and he said, "I'm not going. If they wanted, they come to get me," but this is what -- just a false appeal.

Q: Describe, if you would, what happened -- there was a night that you went into hiding in the ghetto and you mentioned it in the first interview.

A: Yes, we lived in that aseparation, til the day came, our ghetto was surrounded by Ukrainians and German police. A decree right -- there were plac -- placard -- placards, you know, placards? There's a great word, yeah? Was posted on the unerat, on the consul, that the next day all the Jews must come to -- by the gate of the ghetto. And then penetrated most of us, that that night before, they brought a lot of Jews from some small towns and they brought them into Sarnee. Right away a panic struck all the people. And this morning, in the morning, my mother came up, she said, "I want you to go into hiding." I resisted it and I said, "What will be with everybody, will be with me." She said, "No, maybe let's try, maybe one of us will survive." And I remember running with a whole bunch of people -- people with -- women with kids in their arms. And live ammunition they were throwing in -

- into -- s-some of them were killed instantly. And imagine the panic? Again my mother resisted and where did I went into hiding, I went to my uncle's house, who was right by the fence, if you jump over the fence, you were already on the outside, on the free -- on the free world, or whatever, the free side. Outside of the ghetto. In a -- my uncle's -- where my uncle lived, they had a barn and they had cows before the war, they used to sell milk or something. And in that barn, they built a double wall and again, a little opening on the side, they opened this opening and the people walked in and when I walked in they let me in, there were about 12 people already down there. And I always say, because it stands out in my mind horrible, this grandmother, this beautiful old lady was sitting down there, with her cherch if I remember, a fine woman. She was asking us questions, what are we sitting in here, why don't you go out? She did -- was in a raid easily, who knows? And I said we didn't know the -- the answers for ourselves and not for our grandmother. And the night started and we heard it's -- the utifar getauchion, they wanted to burn the ghetto. They said, "If we must go, we'll burn everything, you know, let's go all in fire." And I remember we were sitting behind the wall, we heard some people running right behind in the little alleys, right behind -- by n -- by us. Running back, running forth. Nothing materialize. They got, you know, the German find out about this sheme and more reinforcement came. From the fire department some reinforcement also, with the barrels of water and things. Nothing came of it. In this hold, she had -- that's was the grandmother, her granddaughter, her son and her son's wife was down there, plus other people in this hiding place. In the morning, he was -- it was a Mr. Loudier was his name. Mr. Loudier was a very respectable, res -- respected businessman. He was also in the lumber business, but in another town. And they were

already were -- were -- were chased out from that town, Lunenietz, from that town and they came to our town, in the ghetto, in there where they stayed in this -- the grandmother, this -- this -- this son, and they --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning of Tape One, Side B

A: And in the morning, we wanted to find out what's -- what's goings on, so we send -- we ask this gentlemen -- this Mr. Loudier, the son of this grandmother of ours, we send him, we ask him, "Please go and find out." He went in there to the -- whatever he -- they ask us to gather together. He come running back and he was white to his face and he said, "Everybody must come out from hiding. Anybody who will be caught hiding will be shot on the spot." I heard this and I decided to meet up with my family, but the verdict was the same for the people who stayed behind, for the people who went, the verdict was the same. I decided to meet up with my parents and I came, I met my mother and we c -- we went to the assigned -- I remember my mother was ki -- was having a little something, some food, some blackberries, dried blackberries, whatever she had in the house. A little -- a little package, two little packages, that's all. And I said, walking out from the house, I remember one lady across the -- across from our house, was closing her shutters -- and this will stick out in my mind forever. She closed up the shutters and sa -- and she said, "I hope my hands will open the shutters again." She never saw them back -- she never came back. Because this was the end.

Q: She was in your same house in [inaudible]

A: She was across from our house. But I distinctly remember coming out from our house, I heard her saying so in a loud voice. And a lody were desperate, saying, "We are doomed. It's late for us." And you know, you -- you know even the most desperate times, you just don't want it to believe, you don't want it to believe, you think maybe -- maybe somehow, something will give. And we give into the assigned place and them bastards German, and I said the same thing before and if you want it. This German had a cart table, like a cart it was square table I remember. And he had a list of names. He was red to his face when we walked up too closely, he stunk from alcohol. And he was calling out names, alphabetically. Putting them in groups. And somebody who was not -- was not there at that moment, he used to mark them off. Like you would go someplace for outing or for something -- we didn't know at the time what was going on. Then we find out. Putting us in groups, taken behind the gate and then right we were surrounded to Germans and Ukrainians. And they took away the people someplace in the outskirts of town. As my name is Schier, my maiden's name, so you -- I was almost from the end -- to the end, leaving the ghetto. When our time came, I remember this little kid was sitting down there. His parents are already taken, he was sitting and crying. And instead of the German was ready to take the pistol and kill him, we grabbed this kid and we dragged him along. And we went outside toward the gate. I remember this German walking beside me, he stunk with alcohol too. And he had a armband, I remember, with a skeleton on it, a black armband. And something with a head of some kind of -- and one of the ladies who were older, she ask him, "Where are you taking us?" She said, "To a working camp." He knew exactly where they are taking us.

Q: Do you remember the approximate date that this happened?

A: It was 19 -- 1942. [indecipherable] August, 1942.

Q: And you had been in the ghetto for a year by that point, is that right?

A: Yeah. It [inaudible] more than a year, 1944 in June. Duatse turovio e uda. In July started the war. The Germans occupied and right away we went into ghetto, so it was approximately more than a year.

Q: Okay. Let's pause for a moment. You want to go back a little bit and just -- and just mention something about the contrast o-of your life from when you were in the ghetto to before, your life before the German occupation.

A: Yeah, the life before the German occupation was fun for us kids. It was -- we were not -- we we-were worried -- just worried about our school. We used to get together and in school were the lody -- a lot I remember good times. We had all kind activities and we had the festivities of all kind and we had I remember even lottery. And this was a, you know, s-sticks in your mind. And w -- an-and this was -- and it was a lody -- a lody fun we had at b - - you know. And it was in contrast of course, in contrast whatever it happened later. It was - - it was like a disaster -- it was -- it was completely -- completely the opposite, completely different. And that's -- what can I add more? That's it.

Q: You said you still had hope. Did you spend a lot of time remembering those good times that you had had?

A: I -- in the ghetto, yeah. When I was in the ghetto? Yeah. We used to get together and we used to even -- there was this very s -- very, very -- girl, who went -- she was older than -- than I was and she used to s -- read me poetry, she used to discuss some books with me and I loved it, to listen to her, she was -- she was older and I looked up to her. And we used to

have our hopes. And I remember she was a sick girl, you know, she had some kind of problems. You know, as a kid I did not -- I did not -- not -- I did not question, but I knew she was -- she had all kind of -- but she was very intelligent and very well read and so I used to meet her a lot during and in the ghetto actually, when they took us in and down to this enclosure, I went up to her and I said, "Run with me." She said, "No, I'm not leaving my mother."

Q: What was her name?

A: You know, I don't -- Shanedell? I would say Shanedell or -- I don't remember [indecipherable]. Shanedell, I think it was her name.

Q: It wasn't Zelda?

A: No, Zelda was a girl who lived with me in -- in the same house. Zelda was a distant relative of mine, she was like a cousin and Zelda had a cast on her leg -- mention to you now? A cast on her leg and she said, "Brenda, when something -- when horrible things will happen, we have to run." I said, "You will be able to run, but not me." And she was right.

Q: Was everyone who lived in the house with you in the ghetto, related to you in some way or were there people who weren't related?

A: No, th-there were some related and some non. And in the other room, down there, there were four in a little tiny room -- there were four people who escaped already someplace, from Barcel, from Kraków, they escaped the Germans. And they were shaking in their boots, they knew more about the Germans than we did. And -- and I remember this -- this woman, with the man, they were so scared that they -- it's, you know, they were shaking,

absolute -- plain shaking. And they knew -- they knew this -- that's the horrible things, that's -- that's the disaster is coming.

Q: Did your f-father and your family start to be convinced at that point that --

A: Yeah, my father didn't talk too ready, too much and my mother because it's --nothing was to say. They felt bad, you know, he had to have the kids, he had to have -- and they see that it's -- who knows, maybe it's not tomorrow -- it's no-not a tomorrow, that's -- that's, you know they -- they didn't know exactly, we heard some rumors, they are killing here, killing there, but hear everybody to be murdered, it's -- it's -- it's something -- something we could not comprehend. And I remember when we were growing up already to the -- to the -- in our group, there was a Madame Klace, was a friend of ours, with her daughter and she said to me, "Look at me," she said, "you know? You are so flink, you are so fast on the move," she said. "You are young. You might escape -- you will escapes." Not might, she said, "You will escape." And she said, "When you will escape, remember, I have my belongings. My daughter -- one of my daughters," she said, "went away with the Russians when they retreated. And if you ever see her, and if you'll survive, tell her that my belongings is there and there and there." I said, "Miss Klace, we are going in the same group, we are going in the same thing." And that's [indecipherable]. I survived and I met her daughter. Her daughter came back from Russia. I told her her belongings, her mother told me where the belongings are. I went with her and they gave her back. She could have -- she tooked all those things that belonged to her parents, not all those things, whatever apar they gave her and she used to sell on the market and get some bread, some food for herself and for her little girl who she brought with her. She was married and then divorced, or her

husband was killed, I don't remember exactly the story. But I met her, it's something like a prophecy and it sounded like fiction, if it wouldn't happen to me at that time. And she said to me distinctly, "If you'll survive, tell so and so." And it was to me all so unreal at that time, but here it happen.

Q: And she wasn't the only -- you had mentioned that someone else had said to you, "You're fast, y-you can survive." You must have been very -- y-you must have really had a -- a strong personality, or were you --

A: Maybe I did, I don't know, I cannot tell you, but I must -- I did. I did. And a will to live. And when they ordered us in to this -- to this enclosure, their right penetrated, you know, in this -- this was my first encounter what a -- a camp looked like. You know, we -- in -- the funny part, our own people from our ghetto build that camp. It was double barbed wire from one side, one -- one barbed wire from the other side, because the Germans were sitting on a hill and this was like in a little valley, in a little valley. And on the -- on the far end was a Catholic church. A Catholic church and down there on the left, on the -- on the far left, was the school where I used to go to school. A beautiful school, in my -- you know, I don't know with my eyes, the way I would see it now, but at that time it was m -- you know, a beautiful school. And it was right on the left. And when they -- and when they brought us in to this enclosure, you know ra -- it had the -- all the people from the small towns were already gathered in there, too. We -- I'm telling you, there -- to get a vitass, when they all brought a thing on there. We were between si -- 16,000 people, I can be shy a few hundred, I don't know -- 16, 17, I ca -- I don't know for sure. But they brought in from four or five little towns, they brought them in at night. And when we -- and when they -- when we

walked in to this -- to this enclosure, we saw already dead people. They tried to escape during the night and th-the blood was dried by the barbed wire. They tried to escape at night and they killed them right there and then, they never -- they didn't took away the bodies. And we had witness all those things. We walked in, we saw it already, that's the end.

Q: Had you been allowed to bring any of your belongings into the camp from the ghetto?

A: At -- not belonging, they say to bring food -- food and some of your precious, you know, because they wanted to rob us from all those things. No, my mother -- we di -- were not rich people. My mother took a little bit food and that's it. A little bit what she had and a little to feed three kids down there, I don't know whatever she had, that's all. And there is a electrician was in the camp. Was penetrated right through the camp that we are going to cut the barbed wire. I start running around and -- and down there, this German and also in the -- and I always try to emphasize this too. In this sea of hate, we were surrounded. Was down there, this German was a elderly, was my father's age. They put him down there between the double barbed wire with a gun against us and he -- my friend, who I saw her for the first time, went up to him, he had the right to shoot her right then and then. I was staying behind him. And he looked at her, he looked at me and he said, with tears in his eyes, he said, "You dummy, you lowvensay from here. They -- when they toachlowt they will kill you all." They said, "You dummy, you. Run from here, they will kill you all." And tears was rolling and he looked at me behind and he said, "My God, I have a daughter your age. What they are doing to you?" But we knew our fate is sealed. Then the electrician smuggled in a barbed wire clipper and there were -- the other guy, Migdal, who was also ordered in, he was tall and blonde and always -- always s-say the same thing. Was tall and blonde. And he

looked more Aryan German, like any the Germans that was standing against us. And his only crime was because he was of Jewish faith. Maybe he was from a mixed family, who knows? I don't know. And I always will call him a hero. He was one of the two guys who went and he clipped the barbed wire. But before the clipping of barbed wire, I went up to my mother and -- and -- and I said, "Mother, I will run." She looked at the hill, she looked at me and she said, "Where is the decency of the world?" It was none. And she pointed with her finger and she said, "If you'll remain alive, you should never, never forget." And that's maybe was my promise, if I'll run out in this hell of hells, I'll fight. And if I have to fight and I have to die, I'll die with a gun in my hand. And at least I'll know that I was fighting against my enemy.

Q: How long after you arrived in the camp did this happen, that -- that the barbed wire was clipped and you escaped?

A: Within hours.

Q: Within hours.

A: Within hours. I remember people start running around. I started going around and I said it on the tape before, you know. I start seeing my relatives from the small towns, where they brought them in a night before. And here I came across this pious man, my great uncle was sitting on the ground with his whole family and they called alphabetically. They were prepared, they were organized, the Germans, the killing squads with their organize. And alphabetically they call up their -- their little town was Berishnits. They call up Berishnits must come to the gate. And my uncle was praying down there, sitting. And his daughter sa - - was standing down there and she had something on her hand. My mother and I went up to

her and we ask her, "What is this on your -- on your hand?" She said, "This is my wedding gown, this is my fiancé." And they got up and they left and that's it, that's the last I've seen of them. I went up to my zadee, to my grandfather, who is on the picture and I tell grand -- "Zadee, I'm going to run." He put I remember his hand on my head and he said, "God should bless you and help you." I don't know, maybe he did.

Q: It must have been frightening to make that decision to escape when you had seen all the dead bodies lying around of people who had tried before and who had failed.

A: It was a choice between dying or -- or -- o-or running, that's all. I didn't know that I'll escape. I thought if they have to get me, they have to get me through -- in the back. So I'll will be dead and if I'll escape, I'll do something. So it was my pure luck.

Q: How did you hear about the barbed wire was to -- the -- the barbed wire was to be cut?

A: Well, you know, that's like a -- it's went through the camp, right away through -- through the camp, went through that we are going to try to cut the barbed wire. So there was this Ger -- this German was standing -- there's the good German, right to the exnim left and then the Ukrainian. The Ukrainian had to be bribed. And I call him the lackase of the Germans. They did all the dirty work for them. They were four smarterer than them and they were my -- my countrymen. We had to give him some trinkets and we told him that we need some water, it was a hot day. And I remember the father of my friend who went to school with me, took off his boot -- a boot and he take to the -- to this Ukrainian and we'll tell him, "We'll bribe you, we'll give you some -- some gold." And I remember my mother took off also her ring and put it down there in this little -- in this little packet. And we told him, actually we didn't want him, we didn't care. We want him just the -- for time, we were

-- we were -- we were fighting for time. So then we -- he went away in one -- in the other direction, the barbed wire was cut and then how -- that's how I ran out from there. And people on top of people were laid -- I actually ran over people, all across, because their own people were standing in between, you understand? From the hill they could not cut us down with the -- with machine guns, because their own people they would murder. So, til they cordoned off from around with the -- with the -- with the police and with the -- in b -- their own people, we had time to escape and that's how I did.

Q: How many people --

A: My mother -- my mother saw me running, she threw my sister over and she said, "There is Brenda." And that's how my sister survived.

Q: How many people escaped, apart from you and your sister?

A: I [indecipherable] count how many [indecipherable] maybe in the hun -- a few hundred, but then they were caught. I knew the surroundings, I knew the villages around, so I knew where to run away from the city. But the people who didn't, escaped, but they didn't had where to escape and they were caught. And I remember while being there in the camp, there was my dentist, who was once a refugee already, she was from --

Q: I want you to take me, if you can, inside of that moment when you were saying good-bye to your mother, right before you escaped and describe what your feelings were. Did you know that -- that you wouldn't see her again? Did you have any premonitions of what was to come?

A: I saw disaster. But I did not until -- I didn't know -- I didn't think. I did -- I was so preoccupied with everything that's happening around me, I thought horrible. I didn't -- I

didn't think straight. So my feeling were -- were -- were mixed and all mixed up anyway. And I thought that's the end of humanity. And I remember this doctor, who was a dentist of mine, who I used to go with my pitten there to her during -- before the war. She was already one a refugee, escape from Warsaw, someplace in Mugrafa, I don't know. And her husband was a doctor. And they have a little boy and while we there in this enclosure, they -- they throw her in like a piece of rag, like a piece of garbage they throw her in -- into our midst down there, in through the gate. And she was sitting on the ground I remember and had a little -- a little -- a little doctor's kit -- a little doctor's kit in her hand. She was sitting and telling, in desperation I remember, sitting in this position and talking like she would talk ab -- people surrounded her. She said, "My husband was killed in front of me. My kid was thrown from my hand and throwing against a telephone pole." And she sod -- she said, "I saw his head was smashed." And she was sitting in that position and telling us. She said, "There is not -- that's the end of us." She said, "I have 12 or 13 needles. Now anybody wants to die right away, one I leave for myself and the rest --" And people stood in line. And this is something not to be forgotten. And -- and there is another incident in the ghetto, there was Dr. Coen, because he was in Sarnee. Very fine doctor and a nice family, they had one daughter. And he lived for years and years, as long as I remember -- not like the other one, the other dentist who came, the -- the war, they were down there, local people who lived down there for years and years, is. And when he saw what's happening, the night when we had to come to this place, the gathering place, he decided to take with his family, his own life. And he had a little food, whatever he prepared, he made a little party, like for themselves and they inject-injected some needles and they die. What -- what --when those

Germans and the things ran into the house, they find them all dead. And we were told about it because in the morning right away, we knew what they did. Some of our friends, they said they tried to escape, their name was Korobotchka. You know it's funny, sometimes I remember the names, gets -- gets into my head and sometimes I just Korobotchka and there was this -- they were also such a fine people. There was a husband and wife, there were already growing children. She was wearing a fur coat and trying to escape from the ghetto. And on the -- on the fence, they caught her in the sh -- they killed her right on the fence, him and her. And they were hanging half here and half there. And we knew right away what's happening. My friend's father -- we had our toilet outside -- my friend's father had to go into the bathroom at night. And he went in and one of the police noticed him is moving -- a moving object and he gave him straight to his stomach, a bullet. And they brought him on a stretcher into the gh -- into down there -- to the camp. And he said, "I didn't do nothing," like he would defend himself. "I just went to the toilet." They asks a few people to take him -- take him across and they killed him right there and then. People who were in the hospital and it's sa -- in the hospital, they all brought them on horse and buggy down there and to come across the hill and they took him down there. They said they had a undressing place. After I came -- after the war, after it's -- everything was done -- after I came, I find out all about they made a -- like a tree from -- from a -- like a -- a tree -- like a -- a round -- a tree -- a round thing with one entrance. And in the inside they ask all the people to undress. Some people didn't wanted to undress. Undressed -- I imagine they wanted still to save the -- the -- the clothes from the people to save for themselves. To save or to give away or to whatever they wanted to do. So some people decided no, kill us with our clothes. But this was a

undressing place. Was made out of brick, actually. Like a -- like a -- a -- a round -- a tute -- a round thing and one entrance. And from there they took him by groups and they killed him and they [indecipherable]. Because one of our friend, actually was down there, naked. Th-the bullet -- the bullet didn't got him in between the dead. He ran out, after mart, in the evening or -- or something, in the evening. And he ran out in the -- into our -- into our peasant house and they gave him some clothes. And he was -- he was actually a hero in the woods. He escaped and he was a friend of my -- of my family. Actually, he helped me. Shimone Picov was his name. And so -- and so that's the last moment when I left my family. I remember my -- my aunt was sitting with her daughter. You know, when I saw the Sardis family, I swear to you, I saw -- I saw them. Because my aunt was sitting down there on the ground with her kid, my cousin was standing next to her with some more people and they were standing, I don't think my -- my -- my aunt could understand what I was talking to her. I just observed, I looked at them and I went my way.

Q: Was your father there?

A: I -- we lost my father. Maybe he went because he spoke German, maybe he went, maybe he start a fight with some of the guards, I don't know. We lost him an-and he -- we don't know, maybe he killed him right then and there.

Q: On the way into the camp or when did that happen?

A: You know, I don't -- my father -- we lost my father. Maybe he stayed behind, he le -- he stayed behind, or he went with us. I think -- I know he -- he went and then he disa -- we don't know -- I don't know, he disappeared.

Q: Maybe he never made it to the -- to the camp in the first place?

A: Maybe he never made it to the camp in the first place, I don't know. Or maybe he go -- started a argument with some of a German. Or he ask him some questions and they would kill and they killed him right there and then.

Q: The -- the morning that you came out of hiding, was he there?

A: My father, I remember my father was there. But then -- then I was -- I was surrounded with my mother, my brother, my sisters and I didn't remember, maybe my father was -- was down there someplace. You know, because each one -- it was such a confusion, such a horrible thing, it was a mess. It wa -- it was not -- not something -- something -- we saw it, it -- it's something tragic, something horrible. And I will never forget this son of a gun went with me, this -- S-Sahartski was his name. We went in the same school than I -- than I did. And he had a lot of friends -- of Jewish friends and -- and he was older -- older than us. But always he tried to -- to be friendly and this and that. When the Germans came, he joined this evil cause and he became a policeman and he was standing with a gun. I came up to him and I wanted to go to the bathroom. And he said, "Get away or I'll kill you right there and then, I'll kill you." And this rage I said, "Oh God. If I will get him." So that's were the moment. And my feelings were mixed. You ask me, I don't know. I felt horrible. I felt disillusioned, enchanted, enchant? Disen -- dis --

Q: Disenchanted?

A: Disenchanted. That the whole thing was surrounding us. People we live for centuries all of a sudden became criminals. I'm at 16, was in there. I was a criminal, for what reason, what was my crime? We were decent, nice people, we are beasically to our life's daily life, preoccupied to make a living, to -- to do the right thing and all of a sudden, because of a --

of a distraught man, and he had the power, but the people who helped him and the rest of the world did not makes any -- didn't say a thing. That was the horrible, horrible thing. England was quiet. And they paid a price afterwards. Which one -- we had to -- we had to get in it to war, because between two evils, they were -- they were the biggest. We had to be anyway in the war -- get into the war. And if they would knock down Hitler before he acquired so much power, this catastrophe would never taken place.

Q: That moment that you -- that you were escaping and you were running away, you -- you mentioned in the first interview that you -- that you got separated from your sister and then you found her again a little bit later. You had -- you wanted --

A: I ran out -- I ran out each for only sil -- I remember with a -- with a group of t -- of two boys and girls. I ran out, I stepped over people and some -- some the blood went out -- was on me. And I ran to -- my first instinct, to go in this church, in this Catholic church. But I ran up and I said, "We are -- they can see us. Where can we hide down there?" And I proceeded to run. I proceeded to run, my mother saw me, she pushed my sister, she threw her over the barbed wire, she said, "There's Brenda." And she was running behind me and she was all bloody. Her little shirt -- it was a hot day there and you know my instinct, I was so -- I was so, you know, mixed up. My instinct first -- we said, "They will recognize." She was all bloody, I said, "She'll recognize she's Jewish because her blood is on the shirt." And I took off the shirt and I throw away in a -- in a yard and I ran. And I ran to our friendly family, where they are, our good friends, they are Polish people and we did a lot of good things for them. Actually my mother was instrumental for them not to go to Siberia. And they said -- they used to call my mother their daughter. So the fir -- instinct, the first thing I

would run to them, they were not far from down there. I run up to the house and the lady, I ask her, "Please give us some water." Simma was behind me, my sister Simma. She gave us some water -- said, "Hide us." She said, "I'm afraid." I couldn't understand. And down there was -- I think I said it in the interview too, if you want, I'll repeat it. But that -- that fenced-in little yard and I opened th-the -- the door and I walked in and then her husband, with a whole bunch of his friends, some Poles, some Ukrainians, standing in a half circle and telling jokes. And it struck me horrible. They saw -- do you understand they could hear the -- the shots? I don't know that was -- they knew right or mairment or they didn't know, but when they saw us, this -- this husband of this -- this and of lat -- some of the people I knew too. They scow when I dis -- th-they stac -- they stopped in their tracks and they looked at us because we looked like -- like wild animals. Like -- like something escape, wounded animals. I was barefooted, my sister were -- was barefooted, half naked.

Q: Were they -- they weren't telling jokes about j --

A: I don't know what the jokes were all about. When they saw us they stopped the jokes at once. I looked at them, they looked at us and I we -- I went out from down there.

Q: How did you -- so they turned you away?

A: They turned -- I could understand they were afraid because they could as -- they could have killed them and us together. So my sister was right behind me. I ran in the direction what I knew where they used to go to my grandparents and we lived also, not far from town, where we had a grocery, my father worked as a -- as a selector of woods. And so I knew and my sister was behind me, you know, wussup, and I lost my sister. I lost her. I didn't had the time, I was birf, I was all alone. I didn't had the time to look for her, I lost her and I said,

“She will come somehow.” And I went all by myself. I was afraid to go through the bridge, down there was a bridge. We had a little -- a river sloop. I was afraid to go over the bridge because maybe some patrol or maybe some policeman with guns, they are standing and they will kill me right there and then. So I went through the water and down there a shepherd boys was standing, so I ask him, because we had some -- some -- some -- some -- what -- the water, you know, the water -- what do we call it, you know, the -- like -- they -- they had some things in the -- in the water that can grab you in. Kettle? Water kettle?

Q: Oh, like a --

A: Like a whirlpool. Like a whirlpool?

Q: Yeah.

A: Like a whirlpool. And you have to know because down there it's -- there were places where there is those whirlpools and they suck you in. So I ask the --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning of Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape number two, side A.

A: Well, how do you spell it? Okay, so I went -- I was afraid to go on the bridge, I went through -- the shepherds guys told me where to go through because down there are these whirlpools, so I went by and I went on the other side, I was all alone. And I went and I was waiting up til dark. Dark, I proceeded my journey and I remember some Ukrainians were coming from -- from the city and I heard them talking about what they are doing, they are killing all -- all of the Jewish people and they were a little bit with sorrow in there, I could hear by their voices. But they were the -- but they were about their own business. I went into the village where my grandparents lived and I knew the -- her neighbor was a very good friend of them, so I went in and I knew I had to go in through the back yard, nobody should see me. I tapped on the -- on the -- on the window and he opened the door. On the door actually I tapped, he opened the door, I went in and who did I find? My sister and my uncle. It was like fiction.

Q: Had your uncle escaped from the camp?

A: My uncle escaped the same time I did. And he ran also to the same, because we knew this -- this man was a very decent and nice Christian man. Nice, fine man and a good friend of ours. My sister, when I lost her, she met up with my cousin and another distant cousin what I lived in the ghetto, with a group of men who escaped and were going in the same direction. And she came right across the dam and they took her along. And when they brought her to the village, they said, "This man is a nice man, go into him -- go into his

house.” And that’s how we met, all three of us. And the rest of the people, they went -- they went -- my grandfather had a -- a mill, a windmill, what you use to make flours, in the outskirts of the village. So my cousin -- you know, I don’t know how many there were, but four or five men, they went to this windmill and they were hiding down there for days and then they went into the woods. Mostly of the people survived from this little group what escaped. My sister survived, I survived and my uncle survived. And from that point --

Q: Tell me the name of your uncle who survived.

A: Uncle Usher.

Q: And what were the name of the -- the family who -- who helped you and who -- who you -- the friends of your grandparents?

A: I’ll tell you, Austop [inaudible] -- Austop was his name, Austop. His last name I don’t know. But Austop was his name, a fine man. He had a grandmother also, who was like a angel. She was a real good human being. I lived in that village for a little while. And there was some good people down there, too. But there was some nasty ones too, you know. Went along the easy way and they thought they’ll have a paradise, they didn’t. The promises Hitler will gave them, were never delivered to them. He just exploitated them to do the dirty job and then he went about his business. He made them his policemen, he promised them the Ukraine to give them, he never delivered them. He never gave it, he never -- when he felt it that they are -- were a little bit stronger, he took away the ammunition from them. And then a lot of them went -- went also into the underground.

Q: How long did you stay in that village?

A: In that village, a short while. I was working a few months, I would say. Maybe not even that long. And I decided to go deep into the woods. I heard that Shimone Picov was -- who escaped from the graves like I told you. From the graves, actually, he was wounded very slightly. In it -- in the evening he got out from under the dead people and he escape and people -- peasant people gave him some clothes. And I decided to go into the dup-deep woods [indecipherable] Russia. They have a lot of swamps and deep woods. And we had a inkling already that's partisans. They're and here, we didn't know where and what, but we knew that they are organizing and they are -- they are -- they are grouping themselves in groups. So I decided I'll go down there or I'll meet up with some other people like myself. And -- but in this village I worked for a woman who used to make sweaters, I remember. She was so nice to me. And she could not understand the politics and all this nonsense. And she said, "Why they wanted to kill you?" I said, "I don't know mys -- I don't know." She said, "Why -- if they will come to kill you, they will have to kill me too." I said, "No, I don't want you to be killed on account of me." But she was a good soul. Sh -- I used to make sweaters, knit for them sweaters and work and be in hiding. And I looked like a peasant girl. I spoke the language well, so -- an-and she was -- and she used to tell them that I'm from another village, whatever.

Q: Was your sister there throughout those months that you were there too?

A: My sister was there, yes. Yes.

Q: And your uncle?

A: And my uncle I separated myself from him because he said it's too dangerous, a man -- for women was easier and I -- I decided to separate from him, not to endanger him and a

prea group. And then we decided one night to go to -- into the deep woods and to meet up with this Shimone -- Shimone Picov and whatever group he is. And it's easier now to tell than it happened.

Q: Tell me first, did -- who was that escaped to join up with -- with Shimone. Was it -- was your sister with you?

A: My sister was with me, yes, but we heard that Shimone escaped and he was from a village, he knew the village people and he was something -- some -- some -- I wanted to meet him because he knew our family. Why, I cannot explain, but I knew our family -- I knew he knew the village people and I thought maybe he'll be some kind of protector and I was right in some ways. So one evening we decided we are going at night, dark at night we decided we are going to that village. And this was like 10 kilometers from that destination. And I start going by a little creek, a little creek I went. At night it was dark, dark at night and at night you don't d -- I hear the barking of the -- of the -- of the -- the dogs all around me and they are -- they're on -- then there, you know, like farmhouses. A farmhouse surrounded with the -- with the field -- what they -- what they harvest, potatoes and all those things. And each farmhouse had around, you know -- doe each separated from the other, like in here, too, separate farms. And I heard the dogs sunna -- in -- in -- at night. I -- we went around in circle, twice. And I saw it, now we have to take the creek. The creek will take us out someplace. And my sister and myself started walking by the creek and I heard, at night, in the dark night, I heard some people washing their hands on the other side. Washing their hands and I almost woke -- start blabbling out, "Who are you?" And then I said, "Let me be quiet -- let me -- let me think. Let me hear more words, what they are saying." They

were thieves, coming from the other village, who were tilling out honey from the hives, tilling out honey and some other stuff they were -- they were, you know, they were stealing from the village people, but actually, my family lived down there -- and they were coming back home. I don't know -- and one said to the other one, after washing their hands, "Let's get up and let's go because it's daybreak, is going to be and somebody will see us." I don't know if I would talk to them, maybe they would let us go because we were almost on the same level like with them, they were -- we were criminal. You understand, they knew that we wouldn't talk against them. I don't know, but that's the chance I didn't wanted to take. They washed their hands, they took this -- the -- the -- the -- grabbed their things and they went back where they -- where their homes were, before daybreak.

Q: So you and your sister are on your way to the deep woods to find this group of partisans. How did you know where to go? Did you have any idea?

A: I knew Karasin, I knew that I'm going the direction of Karasin. And when I'll go out and the creek took me out. You know, you learn fast. He says, "How did you learn to fight?" You learn fast. You -- the creek took us out to this -- to this highway, a little highway, it's not a highway like we -- anything here -- to this highway and we knew this will take me to Karasin. During the day we -- I remember we went in -- into the woods, we hide ourselves for some pe -- people who are coming or going somep -- they shouldn't spotted us. And at night we proceeded. It took us two days til we arrived in Karasin. And I remember the first house we walked in, the woman cried when she saw us. She said, "Oh my God." My feet were bloody, you know from -- from the scratching in the field with -- I was running around and it was already August, late August. And -- and she was crying actually, the woman. She

gave us some -- some shoes from leek, like in the Roman times. What we make the shoes from leek, she gave us some shoes from leek to me and my sister and she showed me how to wear them. You put -- you put string in them and you wear them like -- in the Roman time, like the sandals, but this is -- the Romans was fancier, but this was very primitive. But you wear them in the winter, with some rags and then you put us -- those shoes and she taught us how to -- this is my first experience too, at that time. So --

Q: So you didn't -- that time that you were in the village, you didn't get any shoes during that time, or did you lose them?

A: I lost them on the way, yeah. So this is the leek, what she told me, it was torn up, you know, the man actually, from the village gave me, from Cartpelufka, the good man what let us in, he gave me also, but then I didn't know how to do it and this, the woman who actually taught me, this is the way you do it, this the way you do it. And that -- she taught me how to -- to wear them properly. So, and I used to wear them during, you know -- til I went in -- into the -- into the partisans.

Q: How long were you on your journey?

A: Yeah, on the journey, I -- took me a few days. And I remember going into that village and asked right away Shimone, ou said, "Oy, Shimone is in the woods someplace." And I said, "Where in the woods, the woods are big, where in the woods?" "Someplace." So I slapped over to this woman, who actually taught me how to wear the leek shoes and she said, "Go across this swamp and down there into -- in the woods, you'll find him someplace." And in the swamp, you have to know what you're doing, if not you can sink down there in a -- in a quicks -- in -- in a quicksand? In quick -- quicks -- you know, it's not

sand, but that's the -- the swamp actually grabs you in. You have to know what you are doing, you have to go just by the path, not to stroll right, not to stroll left. And she told us, the woman told us. We went -- it took us about three kilometers, we went into the woods and when we came right in the outskirts of the woods, with all like teepee. Teepeetel, like the Indians. From straw, but in our -- in our country was made from straw. And we saw right away and then there were barns. We saw them -- there's shepherd guys, must be shepherd guys. Because there were bottles, there were the teepeetel, the teepee from -- from straw. And I walked in with my sister and I said, "Let's see," it was daytime. I saw and I -- and I felt the ashes and they were warm. "Way," I say, "there are people here." I gots -- you know it was -- made me feel good. You know, it was -- it was -- it was in the woods. And I said, "Oh, it's some people in here." So I, "Let's wait." But let's wait, we were hungry and we had nothing to drink, nothing to eat. I said, "Let's go to a village man and maybe he'll give us some food." And we strolled away a little bit farther and there was a guy who had his farm right in -- deep in the woods. And he was putting up a stack of hay, him and his two sons, with -- with -- with some, you know, with some tools. We went up and I said to my sister, "You stay." You know, we were af-afraid of the -- of the light, we were. You know, I said, "You stay here in case something happen, I want you to know. I'll go in, I'll talk to them." I came up not -- not too close, I came within a distance, also I should be able to ran if they will have some bad intention against me. And I start asking him if there is Shimone Picov. He said, "Oh yeah, he's someplace in the woods, with a lody more Jews," he said. I said, "We are hungry and I would like you to give us some food." And he start giving me a lecturing, why don't I go back to the city, why don't I give myself up to the

Germans? I got so -- I got so upset. You know as -- as young as I was, I understood and I looked at this specimen of a human being and I said, "I didn't come here for advice, I'm hungry and I want some food, if you can help us with that." I said, "If you bore to church, if you do something," I said, "you don't know about your tomorrow." And I said it to him. And he -- "I'll -- I'll send you some food," but we didn't trust him. I said, "Who knows, maybe he'll come out with a gun, he'll try to sh -- to kill us both." We stayed in -- within a distance and there a guy came out, a guy who was a forester -- was watching over the forest. And he was friendly to us, he brought us the food, he gave us and we ate and at night we came back to this teepee. Why'd we came back -- so I still had very, very, very carefully - - before I went in I said, "Simma," to my sister, "let me listen who are the ke -- who are the guys and who are the --" I looked in through the -- through down there a little hole -- peephole -- and I see there are two shepherd guys laying and down there a guy with a sweater with a little boy laying next to him. And I said, "This must be a Jewish man. Also escaped like we did. But if," I said, "if he's Jewish he'll say something, avort from his sleep or something." We were listening -- we're standing there for hours and then actually it happened. He said something to the little boy and I right away I ran in and I got him by surprise and I said to him -- and I knew the family -- I knew the family, they also were used to -- friends of my parents. I said, "Where is Shimone Picov?" And I told him who I was. He said, "Oh, Shimone Picov, he doesn't want kids, he doesn't want nobody else, we are a big group and it's very dangerous." I said, "No, I'm going. You take us to Shimone Picov, and Shimone Picov will say we should not come, we should be away, we'll go." But in meantime I wanted to go and see Shimone Picov. He wanted to get out of the w -- you

know, the dealy task, but I insisted and I went alone -- and I went and I said, "I'll go and I'll find him anyway." So he said, "Okay." He took me with my sister, we came to this camp, there were about 30 -- 30 Jews o-or something, 30 or maybe 35, I don't know. Also escaped the same -- the same day of the same -- from different part of the -- of the -- of the -- of the country. And they wind up down there in -- in this -- in the woods. Where is Shimone? Shimone is going out, he's like scouting out. And he's trying to get a -- a gun. At night Shimone came, he had already a gun and I came up to him with my sister and I said, "I'm the daughter of so and so." Tears are rolling from my -- from his eyes and he said, "They are like my children and they are going to stay here." And he was -- when he said it was -- it was the law. He was the leader of the group. He used to take us and then he used to watch over us. Let's say he would stay two days in this destination, he would take us to another -- to another destination. We should not sit in the same place, we should not be surrounded by some enemy and be s -- and be massacred. And while I was down there, I used to go to the village and work for the people in the fields and get some potatoes and bring some potatoes in the -- in the -- in the -- in the woods. And I was no obstacle, the opposite, I was a help. So I went to the village, I used to work and at night I used to bring him potatoes and he will feed -- give to some food to some other people. And one day -- and this is -- I -- amashamont -- one day arrived down there a teacher, supposedly. From the city of Sarnee, where I came from. The teacher came and he announced down there to the -- to the -- to the head of the village, that he -- he was sent by the government to organize a school. Do you imagine the killing was going on, the war was -- was -- was going on and all of a sudden the Germans are preoccupied to open a school in this particular village? The

news penetrated to us, we find out very fast and we knew that something is fishy about it.

We have to watch this stranger, what his intentions and what he's going to do. Within a few days he was asking all kind of questions and everyb -- and everything was -- was brought to our -- to our attention, because the -- the guy who -- the man -- the village man where he stayed with them, he was a friend of ours. And he went back to the -- to Sarnee, it was like 15 kilometers from that place on. And came back -- at that time it was unheard, because the Germans would have killed him, because they would think that he is a -- a spy for the -- for the -- for the partisans and all of a sudden he's going free there and back. And we knew right away that the Germans are send -- send him in to -- to find out if there are some Jews there or some partisans and what the movement and what's going on down there. And we knew we have to get rid of this -- this -- the German. Picov was instrumental. At night he walked in with another guy and they got rid of him. And he couldn't go no more there and back. Then --

Q: I have a -- a few questions before you go forward. Do you -- was your sister still with you at this time?

A: My sister was with me at this time, yes.

Q: Okay. And this group that you met up with, that you said Shimone was the leader?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: And there were about 35 or so --

A: 35, maybe 40, I -- I don't even count how many -- but I remember a group.

Q: Okay. And all -- all the members of the group at this point were Jewish?

A: Yeah, definitely.

Q: So this is a jus --, yeah -- yeah. So this is -- this is before you had joined up with --

A: With the big partisans

Q: N-Now I -- now I -- nowmosco?

A: [indecipherable] nothing to do with -- this is [indecipherable] thing.

Q: Okay, okay, okay, I see. That wasn't clear to me from the first interview, so now that's clearer. And sec -- then -- then, okay I have a question about your response to the -- the German spy that -- who supposedly was a teacher who came in?

A: Yeah.

Q: Obviously this -- this is -- this was a -- a very extreme situation and -- and nobody -- you ca -- you -- you have to question everything before you trust anyone.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Was it difficult for you to -- to accept that? Did -- were -- was there any hesitation or fear that maybe you were wrong, or --

A: No.

Q: It was -- did you feel --

A: No w -- no way.

Q: That conviction?

A: No way. No way we felt wrong. No way we felt we are wrong at all. After we saw and we saw what they -- what some of their allies -- some of the lackase I call them. My -- my -- my countrymen were doing for -- for -- for silly thing -- for some trinkets. The Germans would give them a watch to kill somebody. Was no -- not at all. We knew he was a spy and who knew he was doing some bad things. And he was not jus-just a danger to the Jewish

people, but for the whole village people. They would come and they would -- they would make a parking out -- a nothing out of the village. They would massacre with no hesitation at all, the Germans. You understand? So there was no buts and no doubts. But this was not enough for me, I wanted to join up a big group and I wanted actually to go and fight. And while I was down there in the woods, my sister was a shepherd girl, down there working and I was looking for somebody and all of a sudden, they say a big group of partisans are passing by and I went for curiosity to see, I said maybe, you know, maybe. They did -- just don't take you in just because you -- you say -- you are there. You know, you have to want it, they question you, they ask you. And while we are standing down there, a big group of partisan on horses, with guns, with machine guns. With this they are coming -- coming -- I liked it -- I said, "Oh this is -- this is something great -- this is something to fight with." And right away there is this officer, I saw he's an officer, because people were wearing nothing -- not uniform, they were partisans, they were all a potpourri, with all kind of clothes, civilian clothes, not civilian clothes, anybody -- whatever you had, they had it. But this -- this -- this command -- this officer had a -- had a uniform. And we saw by his -- by his coming across to us, that he is some kind of ranking officer. So he came up to us and I was standing there with another girl and we exchanged some niceties and I said to him -- I was the brave one, I said, "I wanted to go in and fight with you." I said, "Would you fight?" I said, "Oh, yes. You'll teach me, I'll fight." He said, "I'm not in authority tell you yes and no." He went back to his general -- and he was actually the -- next to the general, the commissar they call him. Political-Political advisor at that time. Commissar -- it was a political advisor. He went to the general, he came back and he said, "If you wanted to come,

if you'll fight." I said, "Yes." "Now or never." I decided right there and then I'm going. But I had to let words to my sister. That's how I went. I said to some of the peasants, I wasn't sure they'll tell her or not tell her, she'll think that's it, that's the end of me. Anyway, I went with some -- a few more Jewish girls, we went and we -- we stationed by 10 kilometers from that destination where I started, where it was like my home state on there. Where it started it, it was like 10 or maybe 50, I don't know exactly, but this is the distance. Down there we stopped, in that village, for at night and I was assigned to a group. I went right away to my commanding officer, I told him that I left a sister. And I told him she doesn't know where I am and she -- she'll think that I am already killed. "What is your advice?" I ask him, "What do you s -- what do you think?" He says to me -- he thought for awhile and he says to me, "You know what? Maybe we can solve the problem. I'll give you my horse." Something -- he liked something about me -- a very fine man. "I'll give you my adjutant. Go back to your sister and tell her that you are in a fighting unit now." I went back with this adjutant and he was sumpalese attatar -- attatar. And he told me some stories that was fascinating to me at that time. We exchanged slice, the -- we exchanged jokes and these and I told him about my life. And it was such a camaraderie right away. And -- and he said, there's four barriers, you know, he said that they were -- they were, you know, sculpcatters or something, four barriers, [indecipherable] on their back, you know, he said -- and it was so -- you know, it was funny. And we came to the destination where my sister was, to the house where actually I lived in the deep woods, I walked up -- I got off now -- he gave me his horse, he showed me the first time -- showed me how to mount the horse and that's was my first encounter. I mounted the horse, I went with him and we proceeded til we came to

the -- the house. I walked up to the vil -- to the woman -- to the -- to the housekeeper -- to the -- to the hostess of the house where my sister and I lived. My sister was someplace with the cattles, sh -- as a shepherd girl. I walked up to her and [indecipherable] "She's the only one," I said to her. "Now you are responsible for her, I'm going to fight. Now you're responsible. If something will happen to her, remember, I'll come for revenge." I didn't have to say nothing more. I said, "I'll burn your house with no hesitation and I'll take your life." And -- and it was straight to the point. She knew it exactly because she knew it. And they were anyway on our side -- on our side. I left there and I came back to my -- to my unit.

Q: I have a few questions about -- about that -- that whole time period.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You -- yo-you -- was your sister still involved with Shimone's partisan group at all?

A: No. Shimone -- Shimone -- each was already on his own, you know. There were already groups there, groups here. This was in the beginning, but then start bigger partisan groups down there go -- coming in, so each one was already on his own. Yeah, this is a good -- I -- I -- I -- yeah, this is very -- to clarify this. Was only so on, so I with my sister, my cousin and my uncle was someplace else. But we used to see once in awhile each other, sometimes by coincidence, sometimes -- a coincidence more -- more than -- than anything.

Q: So your sister was just -- had -- had been taken in even before you joined this --

A: Yeah.

Q: Large fighting unit. She had been taking in -- taken in by a f -- a farming family?

A: A farm -- and not taken, we -- we were down there, we lived down there with this farm woman, we stayed in their hou -- we used to sleep, it was deep, deep in the woods. I used to help her out in the fields in -- and there she would give us a little bit of food -- little food down there, that's all. And my sister was a s-shepherd girl. It was a help for her and she -- I don't -- she didn't had a husband. I don't know where her husband was -- or died or in the war, I don't know what happened.

Q: How long had you and your sister actually been with Shimone's group then?

A: Maybe a few months, that's all. Maybe not that -- very short.

Q: And then you -- you decided or -- how did that happen that -- that you -- you separated from Shimone's group and started living with this woman?

A: Shimone had already -- his agenda -- a Zion, you understand? His agenda. He wanted also to join. He went away, he wa -- he was with another man and he went to some kind of group, I don't know exactly, but we were separated from him and he couldn't take responsibi -- [indecipherable] with the woman and children because, you know, each one of the -- on his own. And that's what we separate -- it's a little bit you know, you know, now it's cla -- clear to you more -- clearer to you, the way I describe?

Q: Yes, it's clearer and -- but I also want to know what Shimone's group's objective was.

Were they involved in acts of sabotage or did they fight at all or --

A: No, they were just still -- they went in in a partisan group. They just were watching over us and -- and then they were looking also for a -- for a partisan group to join them - to join. And they joined some other partisan group. Actually, the friend of his, Onshineski, I will

never forget -- he died in fighting by putting mines on the -- the railroad. He was -- he was -
- he died.

Q: So there were -- there were no women and children in -- in Shimone's group then, is that right?

A: In Shimone's -- in Shimone's group before he went to the partisans. When he went to the partisan, that's it. The -- if there were children, they were not such a thing and there were children and women there, they stayed separately or they had a place for them. For instance, in our unit, we didn't had such a thing, because we were a moving -- a moving partisan unit. We constantly moved, so we didn't had no place. If there is some children or something -- some airplanes sometimes used to land in the woods for us. So they used to take the very wounded one, the very important partisan, they used to take him back to Moscow, then to a hospital or something, but on rare occasion. But in mostly of the occasion, we stayed in -- down there.

Q: Okay, that's much clearer. And --

A: Yeah, okay -- it's -- it's good because you know when I -- when I -- it's my story, so I don't know.

Q: And you're -- the -- the larger group that you joined up with, tell me the name, if you remember the name of your commanding officer.

A: The commanding officer was Major General Naomoff. I don't know his first name, but Naomoff was his -- his -- and that's the way he went by. General Naomoff. And he started something, I -- I don't know the history of his thing he started with five or six hundred and then they grow up of proportion. After 15 or 16 hundred. And there were also a

mixture of people, I say that potpourri of people. There were POW's, you'll ask me, "Who were those people?" They were POW's, who their fate was as bad as -- as the Jewish fate. They -- they used to kill them off like -- like -- like nothing and a lody escapees from the ghetto. And some who were belonging -- used to belong to the Communist party -- of the -- maybe they went down there, I don't know who were -- the enemies of the Germans and they're afraid the Germans is going to kill them.

Q: And you mentioned in the first interview that --

A: Yes?

Q: That your unit was getting orders from Moscow.

A: Yes.

Q: Of -- of what -- what actions you were to take. Were they affiliated with the Russian army then?

A: No, we had our headquarters, our partisan headquarters in Moscow. They -- we had a radio station in one of -- one -- the girl, Varla. There were three people in the radio, working constantly. Transmitting, receiving telegrams, telling us how the movement, where to go. We used to know the news from the -- from actually from the front. We used to -- they used to get us, the partisans and tell us every good news. It was a big rejoicing for us, you understand, every knock, every hell for the Germans was a good -- good music for us. And so we -- we -- they were working constantly and we had assignment. Like for instance, we started from White Russia, I can show you on the map. We went from White Russia, via the woods, we went -- we had our assign -- our -- our orders to go via -- via -- up to the Carpathian mountains. Tee inflict hell on the Germans as much as we could. And then when

we came to the Carpathian mountains, the front was already advancing very fast, they ask us to come back and then they took -- then they disformed us, they took the ammunition and ev-everybody was, you know, could select what he is going to do with his life and then he is going to doing what.

Q: Were there many Jews in this partisan unit?

A: A fair maybe -- some percentage, I know you di-didn't went around to survey who is a Jew, who is not a Jew. But somehow we used to sense, we used to know, among us. There was some Russian Jews, there were some officers, who didn't go advertising themselves I'm a Jew, not a Jew, their faith was the same, and the hell we were fighting the -- the same enemy at that time.

Q: So there wasn't -- you didn't sense any discrimination then, for being Jewish?

A: There was some discrimination, but I did not -- you know, I used to tell them back, you know with me they couldn't go too far. You know, I used to g-go tell them, go to hell, any time and they knew it, that I -- I was not, you know. I was down there to fight just like they are there. You should tell me some funny jokes, why -- why are you here -- why are you not in the ashcan in the -- in the back? Why are you have to fight? I said, "None of your business." And all those things, I used to give them straight hell, right from the beginning. So they didn't had too far to go as far I'm concerned. And I -- I didn't feel, not exactly. Because the assignments were the same, the fights were the same, we went in the same thing -- same -- same places, same things. So I did not, this is no.

Q: It sounds like you were --

A: And I didn't look for -- I -- maybe I didn't -- I don't know, I did not.

Q: You -- it sounds like you were a very self-confident young woman.

A: Maybe, I don't know, maybe. I -- I felt that I didn't see no other -- no -- no other ways.

Q: So you didn't -- you didn't doubt.

A: I didn't -- I didn't get out -- I didn't went around with a -- with a placard over -- you understand? I did not. What -- if they ask me, I said it. I lost my family, I used to -- I'd tell them the way -- the way it happened. And of course the officers and that -- he knew that. A for instance, I -- when we -- we had an order coming from White Russia. We had to go into miciedis army. My general knew that I'm from down there someplace. And I was in the group. It was quite a honorary thing -- assignment. I was in the group the cult commandantskits wart. Actually, who --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning of Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape number two, side B.

A: So I was in this commandantskits wart, this is a -- a honorary, you know, actually to -- you are responsible for the -- for the general, for your commanding officer. And -- and it was -- it was -- I felt good about it. And we had to pass by my city and somehow the orders, I didn't know about it, the orders came that we are going to go and my general came up to me, he said, "Brenaslava," he used to call me Brenaslava. He used to call me Brenaslava, you know, in Russian. "Brenaslava, we are going -- maybe we'll go into your city. Do you have some accounts to pay?" I said, "Yes, I have a few of them." And -- but we never walked -- we never. We had to surv pass -- we had to g -- pass by the city of Sarnee.

We never went in, we went in on our destination because you know, it's not written in stone during the war, it changes from minute to minute and the orders and everything because the strategic point and thing and the fights and the retreating of the army and all those things.

One thing I know, we gave them hell. Whatever m-my human mind could -- could ever think about it. That's what we inflicted on the Germans.

Q: I'm trying to decide between two questions. Okay, what -- how many other women were there in the group?

A: I would say 10 percent.

Q: 10 percent?

A: Maybe so, maybe more. I don't -- something. I had always my friend Taska, she was like a tomboy. She -- I always have a good feeling about her. Taska, I used to go right all -- always with her. And the guys, oh they would not bu-budge with her. She used to give them hell, straight. From start to the end. But we had about 10 percent and her sister -- she was married, oh -- that's why her fiancé -- she fell in alive to the German hands. And this was a tragedy. Because alive -- or maybe she killed herself because every partisan was encouraged -- they have a grenade with him, in case he fell ins the Germans, he should kill himself.

Because we knew that they will ki -- cu -- not just they will -- they will torture you to death, they will want extract some information. But you didn't know and if you knew -- if you know the information, you wouldn't give them. Do you understand? There was a -- a very vicious circle. So every partisan knew there is -- we can not give ourselves alive to the Germans.

Q: You must have gone through some kind of training.

A: We did. Very fast ones. We used to stop in the village -- I remember we had a major who used to take us out to show us, you know, to ride -- riding the horse -- but this is what -- not important. Other time -- but anyway, he was showing us how to ride or take a lower part, to go fast or to go slow, whatever. And then we used to have targets, what we used to -- shooting targets, actually we sh -- came down there and we used to -- we used to train ourselves. It was not too long, but it's -- it's not a big theory, you know soon, but you have to do it, you do it fast. If your life -- if your life is at stake, you understand? You do it. Or you do it or you die, one of those two things. There was no -- nothing -- nothing in between. And because I choose life, maybe I'm here still. And maybe, I don't know, sometimes I think maybe I -- I was braver than my brains [inaudible]. But here still I am utathi. Against all the odds, I survived. So there is rhyme or reason, I don't know. Maybe you can tell me, I don't know.

Q: You were am -- one among relatively few women and you were -- you -- it sounds as if -- correct me if I'm wrong, that you had the same role to play as the men. That you were fighting and you were involved -- I gather from your first interview -- in acts of sabotage --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And was there -- was that unusual? Were women given -- were women generally given these -- these roles within the group?

A: No, no. It depends in the group where I stood on watch or I stood on watch or I had to pull the trigger or whatever it is, it was nothing. That was -- you know -- the guys there were more -- more -- knew -- knew more, so they went ahead, where they were already experienced in this particular thing, they were went ahead. If I had to go, I went with him.

Let's say if you had to put the -- we used to call TNT on the -- the railroad, like little squares, TNT? This is -- you know -- and then were a detonator or we used to make -- very primitive, with a long string and then you put a -- a -- you put a -- a match and then it's goes and it's explodes. But we used to do it in three, four places, because the Germans would -- would put it back -- the rails -- in one, two, three, you understand? If it was in one place, but in three places, they would derail and then we had time to make our -- a hell out of them.

Q: Who was responsible for domestic chores like laundry and cooking and so forth?

A: Each one. Each one was his own, okay? We went -- in the woods for instance, I used to come in the woods -- I think that's funny -- I used to come in the woods and I use -- I -- I -- I'm a c -- I'm a clean person by then, so I used to take another girl and I used to put a little - - a little like whatever I had, around me and take a little water and wash myself, you know, wash mys -- cold as it was, you know -- below zero, how much we had snow down there and it's -- it's -- it's -- it's cold as -- as hell down there in my country that I come from, in the winter. And anyway, in maybe this I was not sick, you know, because I haven myself. Because we did not -- you know, and I used to wash my body usadine and then when we go into a village, we occupy a village or we stationed in a house and in the house there were water, I used to get water from the well and --

Q: How did you get food?

A: By acquiring, by going -- you are people with guns. You go in, nobody would say no to you.

Q: So you would never -- you would never cook in the woods or --

A: Yeah, there is some instances what we did, but mostly no, because there are --sometimes we used to go parallel with the Germans and this was a no-no, we're not allowed. The Germans used to go on the highway, we used to go straight to them, to inflict on them damage, whenever we -- it's a possibility, whenever we ne -- we had to. We used to go parallel, they would go on the -- on the highway, we would go parallel in the woods. And I know for a fact and I said it in -- down there I think on the tape. I know it. The Germans were afraid they went to go in to relieve themselves in the woods. Because they knew that something is awaiting them. They used to be scared of the eastern front like hell, because they knew the damage they were -- they had done to the people and what kind of hatred we had against them. So, this is what my -- my reward against them.

Q: Did you have -- so -- so there are hundreds of -- of people in this group and everyone -- am I right to -- it sounds like everyone shared everything, nobody had a real special job -- a special task that they were responsible for? What kind of organization was there?

A: Well for instance -- a for instance, yeah, the radio operator, they had three -- they had three people were working constantly radio. There were demolition, you know, what you go into -- then -- they were sending each time another group or another people or sometimes the same, it depends, because we were moving constantly. A -- for an instance, we were in the -- we occupied a village -- let me give you a s -- a example so you -- you understand the magnitude. We occupied a village. I was in the group at that time, who -- we occupy a certain destination. You put in a -- you put it in a -- on the entrance of the village and the exit of the village or -- or both entrances of the village, you put it in like a machine gun, a guns, a few -- a few sentries, a machine gun and you allowed people to walk -- to get into

the village, but nobody's allowed to get out from the village. And I remember we occupied one village in -- it was on the -- on -- on the eastern -- not far from Shitoma. Someplace not far from -- in that direction. And we walked in -- it was -- our village was in the valley and - - and it was surrounded with little hills. And somebody must -- if the Germans find out -- in the morning we were surrounded from the hills by the Germans and they have the better position on us, because we were in the valley, we were in the -- on the -- on the bottom. As I was at -- razvere -- no -- right, yeah. So I -- we needed some ammunition to get. The surplus of ammunition was down there, like three or four houses away. We used to get it in the horse and buggy, on wagons, you understand? It was not suffish to get at now. This on horse and buggy, it was on wagons. So the -- we needed, for the machine gun, we needed some bullets. And -- and our commanding officer said, "I need the bullets." You know, we saw it already, surrounded by the Germans. And I said, "I know exactly how to go the back way and I'll go." And I went the back way, I went out down there to the horse and buggy, I got the ammunition, I got the -- the -- the -- a whole big bag of ammunition, of the bullets for the -- for the -- for the machine gun and by coming back, already the houses, where I had to go to hide myself -- to -- to crawl under them, was already burning. The -- the -- because we have straw in our country, that's straw on the -- on the -- on the -- on the thing. So right away they put it in, they -- they throw in some bullets, it starts a fire. In the straw it started right there and then. So when I was coming back with the bullets, already each house was on fire. I ran in and I remember I tumbled under the -- the house with my -- with my bullets trawling behind -- grabbing, schlepping like with me. And I walked up and I had to go from one -- from one house -- to another one. I tumbled again, I went in and down there I saw my

partisan friend. Ivania was his name. I yelled to him, he was laying -- because I recognized him by his -- by his -- by his -- by his dress, by his red jacket, a shepherd jacket -- in sh-sheepskin jacket. So I recognize -- I said, "Ivania, cover me, it's me, we should start shooting and I can go by." He didn't responded to me and I got mad and I start yelling at him because I thought he's -- he's -- he's co -- y-you know, a coward there -- he -- he's -- he's scared. But Ivania was dead. A sniper got straight to his head, because the next day was the funeral. Anyway, I tumbled through it, I went down through a well. You know the wells, you know, like a l -- during Lincoln times and everything here, I [indecipherable] the well and I came to my unit and I gave them -- handed them the -- the bullet. They said it also. He sighted ee, my -- my -- my officer -- when he -- when I came in, I brought them in there. And one time my general told me, "Brenda, you'll live a long life." And I say always, maybe he predicted right.

Q: And why did he say that?

A: Because I came from another -- from another -- I left my bullet -- my bullet belt and I went also to the -- I di -- I told them the thing in the --

Q: Yeah, that story is in the -- is in the [indecipherable], yeah.

A: So when I came back, he said it, you will live a long life. Wesided because I pinched myself and I ran into the woods. And then we had to retreat. We had to -- we had to deceive the Germans too, in any way we could. So we came, the fight ended a few hours and then a plane came. We used to call it the Rama and this is like a -- a frame plane. And this -- the frame plane used to take -- used to take pictures of the terrain and of us and of moving things and we knew it -- this -- this plane will go away within a f -- an hour or two, we'll

have bombs on our heads. So we have to skedoodle, we have to get out from there very fast. So we left some old rags, I remember at that time, some old horses, some old things what they could not be taking with us, to pretend that we are still down there and we moved out. And I remember there was big opening, a big clearing in the woods. They asked the partisans to go backwards, like -- like to step backwards. They should -- when he comes with the plane to -- to take a look, so they see these people get in, but not out. But actually we -- this was our deceiving them. And we went around the clearing. And after -- and after in a few hours, the bombs came. We asked the people of the village -- we told them -- we warned them, everybody run for your life, because they will be on your backs. And it was that way, within a few hours. The planes were there and they made a mess out of the village and the people who were -- who were down there left over, they were all dead. And we were behind them. We were spectators. We were standing in the woods far away and we were seeing the whole -- the whole thing, the whole happening, what's happened. I remember standing next to Taska, you must remember Taska -- Taska. I was standing down there and was still -- was a happening. There was this -- Varla was her name, one from the radio station. She used to write a daily -- dai -- a -- a nievnik we call it, you know, a -- a diary. And -- and it struck me at one point very funny because here we are fighting anee. I used to ask her -- Varla -- we -- we liked each other and I said, "Varla, do you think we will read -- we will live through to see it?" She said, "Okay, I'm -- I'm -- I think we will." I said, "I have hopes we will." And she did. And I did [inaudible] here.

Q: Were you limited in any way, being a -- being a girl -- a -- a young woman in this situation?

A: That was not a easy task, but I stood my ground. I said it's not the time, not for romance, it's not the thing, I didn't want none of those. There were boys and you know, I was attractive, I would say. I tried, you know, to be. I pushed away. I said it's not the time, it's not the place to get involved in what's then.

Q: Did anyone question your ability as a fighter? Being a young woman, were you limited in that way?

A: No. They didn't question my ability. We were learning how to shoot -- how to -- to throw a grenade, that's not a big theory. You -- you want it, you -- you know, you -- you wanted to do it. So questioning was not or you didn't do the job, so they -- you had to.

Q: So they didn't reserve certain jobs for men and other jobs for women?

A: I don't know, maybe there were some. I -- I -- on assignments, I remember the first time the general -- I was -- was riding in the -- in this group and he send me -- I didn't know even it was such a dangerous -- a mission. He send me to another village, then th -- he told me a name, so and so and so. He gave me some -- a piece of paper, then I -- I had to bring him some information from down there. Even I came back, I was so shy in dahell, I was shy. I had to report to him. I was standing behind the door, I remember, til I walked in and I said, "You know, my mission's accomplish in this." And it was a dangerous mission because, you know, I was all alone and somebody could ambush me, it could be the end of me. But, you know, you don't think in the moment when you are involved in it. You wanted to live, but -- and you're always on the watch, you're always, you know -- that nobody should get you. I remember once standing in the woods, all by myself and -- and any -- I was so -- I

was so hyper. Any -- you know, there were birds, there were thing, it was cold, it was already in -- in -- in har -- in -- you know, not spring, but --

Q: Fall?

A: Fall. And, you know, some birds, some snakes, some little animals in there. And I was standing in there by myself and it's away from the company, away from the group, from the partisans. I had to be like a warning shot, if somebody comes in, I should give a warning shot to them. And I stood on there for a few hours and it was, you know, I get chills in my back. You understand? Because I was afraid it's not just so -- that somebody from a tree should jump on me, you understand? Bu -- sh -- ch -- somebody from a tree should jump on me and overpower me. Not because -- because I was ready with my gun, I was ready to s -- to -- to take my position -- to do whatever I had to. But you understand, it was -- because I was alone and I felt a little bit uneasy at that time. So this was every day there happened and it's a constant, constant. And there were guys, they are brave -- they are -- they were fighters -- they were -- they -- I know we paved the way to liberation. We paved the way. And in the eyes of the military, we looked like heroes to them. I didn't know even, at that time. We looked -- be-because they knew we were volunteers, we went to fight -- fight them to the end. And we did and they're af -- they're afraid of us like -- they used to send divisions to get the partisan -- to find the partisans. They never did. Of course we had a lody of -- of -- on our side too, a lody -- a lody, y-you know, whatever you say -- of fallen soldiers, some were -- were without legs, some without -- hand. And I remember penicillin came into our midst, you know, the Americans send us penicillin, a lot of our partisans were helped by the penicillin.

Q: Did you have doctors or n-nurses among you?

A: We had a bath surgeon, yeah -- I'm sorry -- we had a surgeon and assistant and a doctor.

Valentina was her name and she was also very friendly with me. But the surgeon used to perform surgery right on the spot. Sometimes he could not succeed, because the winter and the hind and the infection and the limited of -- of -- of medication. But the penicillin helped some of them because the gangrene wouldn't -- wouldn't set it. The -- the infection would fight off. And we had always nice words, you know, I never -- they ask me how, many times. They had the [indecipherable] words against the Americans, no. The nicest [indecipherable]. And don't forget, they were allies of ours. Then, of course, politically.

Q: Okay. Why don't you tell me how the -- how you learned that the war ended. Were you - - were you with the partisans at that time? Which happened first? The Jew -- did the partisans disband or did the war end first?

A: Partisan disband because the front was advancing so fast, this -- the partisans we didn't had no -- no more -- they were -- they were chased out from Poland and they were going such an afr -- in a very fast pace. That's -- we -- that says our job was accomplished. So we - - we were asked to come and we -- we disbanded. And take away our ammunition and then we came to the city of Rovno and then there, we gave our ammunition and each one -- they ask what -- our whole commission of people, they ask who wants to do what. I thought for a strangid idea to go in to take some languages and to go to college, where they would -- to go to the university, but they would have helped me at that time.

Q: Who would have helped you?

A: From the partisan headquarters. They would have helped me because I was fighting during the war. They would give me maybe even a tutor to prepare me. But then I had my sister and somehow it -- everything it changed. And then start the movement of leaving in the Soviet Union. People start leaving the Soviet Union and going up west. And I decided I had it enough. I didn't had nobody. I lost everybody and I don't want to be on the bloody heart any more. It was too painful. I looked in everybody's eyes and I was ashamed of myself. I said, "Maybe they were helping the Germans to find little kids, little Jewish children." They were kids, they were adorable as I remember them. So I decided to leave. And I remember when the war -- the war ended and they announced on the radio. So they came to the municipality. And there were rockets and there were big festivities and people were rejoicing and I rejoiced of course with them, because the evil was conquered, it was down to earth, was -- was -- was beaten to -- to the ground. But I -- I looked left and I looked right and I did not laugh or to -- or to cry, because I lost everybody. And I'm -- it was among those people living for centuries.

Q: Had you had any chance to grieve, up until that point, for your family?

A: You know, it's funny, no, you know, I didn't. You know what struck me very much, though? When I gave my ammunition back and I came up to Dubnow, was a city, Dubnow and I came right away, I asked some Jewish people alive, so they used to point it out, this house, that house. And I came to one house and I -- we were like a novelty, I and I have a friend of mine. A novelty when we told them we were partisans, we were fighting, we were healthy looking. And they came out, they were all, you know, white face, they were hiding, they were doing whatever, I don't remember, even. And there was some kind of rabbi, all

was hut in there amongst them who survived. And I told him -- he asked me, I said, "My parents." And he said kaddish and that's what struck me, right then and then, you understand? Because I was busy constantly, with fighting, with doing the things I was doing. But that's -- that's when it struck me really hard. And I -- and I saw the reality of the whole thing. And that's -- that's -- I -- I -- and another thing. When I came -- we erected -- the survivors -- there survived a few survivors from my town. We decided to erect on the place where they murdered the -- the -- the thousand and thousands of people, we decided to put on there a monument. When I came down there after the place, because I escaped from that enclosure -- we cut the barbed wire, we ran out. The rest of the people were taken over the hills, were taken a kilometer or two in the woods and down there -- ditches were prepared and they did it -- what they did in every other place. The same thing, I understand. I was not there because I wouldn't be here. And so -- so when I came down there and we came down there and we were standing down there, over the place actually, you know, where my parents, my little sister, my little brother maybe down there lay. You know I couldn't -- I couldn't put a tear out of my eyes. I stood down there like a -- like a stone. I -- in -- and it made me angry, you understand? It made me mad like hell. Because something is in -- I feel the pain and here I couldn't. I couldn't express it outside. Then of course, you know, little by little, the start pouring out -- out of me. But it was very sad. Very sad and very unjust, what I was looking the unjustnessty. Th-The terrible thing was down -- my family was a beautiful family. We were not rich materially, but my father was, I think, you know -- I look at the pictures sometimes, the kids say he looks like Prince Philips. I says, "He was a prince in his own right." He was a -- he was a great man. He was a good man. He

was helping his fellow citizen, he was helping his fellow -- whatever he could. He was in the forest, if somebody needed some wood for the house to build, he used help him out. Because the -- he knew their -- their struggle. You understand, he knew their strugg -- and he was good by heart. Our son is just like it -- like -- like his grandfather. So this is -- this is all the -- the things what -- what has struck me very, very badly. If you didn't have time to grieve, where do you -- how -- how do you? We were all the same, we used to talk and we used to reminisce and we used to tell how and what and that's about that. We -- we -- had no -- to go to psychiatrist or to do those things, we just in our own heads, in our own thing, we made -- and at least we accomplished something. When I saw -- when I saw the crushing of their army -- the big superman, they were not supermen. Hitler taught them mean they are supermen. Of course they were supermen against women and children. Against women and children, was supermen. Because they had the guns, we were not prepared for them. But they were not supermen after they start getting a beating. The partisan gave them from one side and then the army, they retreat and under Stalingrad. I think that was the beginning of the defeat. In the winters in Russia. And he -- he paid a price. It's not enough, the way I see it, but that's -- at least.

Q: Did you learn about the -- what was going on in the concentration camps while you were with the partisans?

A: No [inaudible] not at all. We didn't know. And the funny part, when I was in Treblinka, that's what got the guts out of me. Treblinka sits in the woods and when I -- we went in -- in Treblinka was one -- one -- one rail -- one -- one train what take you in and it struck me so bad because that's the end, you understand? Like this line, this is it. And most of the people

were murdered down there, except for some cleaning up, whatever. But ever the people were brought down there, that was the end, that was a massacre. And this has struck me and the funny part, I looked right and I used to look left, at the homes of the Poles who lived down there and whenever I saw a old house, I said, "Dammit, those people were being down there when those people were bringing in the thousands. And they didn't raise their voices, they didn't say nothing to nobody." On this I -- I felt very -- and in the woods, was the whole camp situated, with the birds singing in the quietness of that place, in the woods surrounding, I said, "If we partisans would have come down there, you don't know what we would have done to those Germans."

Q: When were you there, in Treblinka?

A: Two years ago, with the march of the living. That's my first reason back, I never was in a concentration camp. After the war, we find out the tragedy, but during the war, we didn't know the magnitude of building factories and killing people, they didn't know. He deceived a lot of people, but they -- and I'll repeat --

Q: I'd like to know how you -- how you responded to the news about the camps when you learned about what had happened?

A: Terribly, it's behind -- it's behind understanding, behind. It was -- I don't know, it was such a -- a struck like a ton of it stroke you -- strike you. You know, we knew, we -- I saw it -- we escaped from -- from the execution of my town, I escaped. So I knew already it was -- it was whatever it was. But in the big cities, with million of people -- with millions of people, to build factories and to massacre those people -- and half he did clandestine and half he did -- he did you know it, for the -- for the not to arouse any suspicion, like in -- in

Treblinka the same thing, they said airplanes were not allowed to -- to -- to go over Treblinka, because they didn't wanted to find out the real -- the real thing, what's going on down there. Because it was in a wooded area, the crematorium and all and the things. And some people say some of the local people used to stand and ask the -- the Jewish people, give us your belonging, they are going to kill you anyway. Give us -- give us, we need it. You don't need it any more. And this was sad and this was very hard to digest. So --and I'll -- and I'll repeat what a survivor said, Lowrate, Elie Wiesel, by the opening of the museum. He said, "How come that the silence of man was matched by the silence of God?" And starting from Moscow, Lisbon, London, Washington, they all knew what was going on, except the victims didn't know. How they could permit this and why the railroads were not bombed. And this is a question. And a answer we must find, each one in us.

Q: Tell me how you were reunited with your sister.

A: I came from the partisans and I came straight to my town, to Sarnee. And of course I find my sister in the house of those people who they were our friends. In the house -- the first people where I left when I ran out and I ran to their house, they took her in and they just -- the -- the -- the sad part of it, they made a maid out of her, instead of accepting her like a part of the family, they made a maid out of her, like they would exploitate the situation because she was a orphan and she didn't had nobody. And when I came down there, they even -- they -- they -- they -- the big lore, they were sitting in the dining room and my sister was sitting in the kitchen like a -- like a little servant and a orphan. And that's what struck me and I told them. Very -- I was very, very touched -- very, very hurt. And they were our friends. And so anyway, what the -- the main -- the main thing, she survived. And it's sels --

or it's her story to tell how did she. She was -- she was plenty times almost killed by the national Ukrainians. At one point she escaped from that woman, because they were after her to kill her. And somebody tipped her off and she ran a -- she ran away from -- from that house and they -- and -- and she survived. So it was one -- one miracle, I don't know. I don't believe in miracles, but somehow. I guess miracle a people are making, miracles happen. That's how I find my sister after-after I came from the war. At this -- at those people who were our friends. And there were -- I said, I was very hurt by that. It's not a easy task that I'm doing now, but I wanted -- I don't call the museum a museum, I call it a learning center. I call it -- it's all human beings. And it's not a Jewish problem, it's a human problem. I feel on that we will -- or we will live in peace or we'll perish like fools. It's a big liga said so.

Q: Do you remember the moment you were reunited with Simma?

A: Yeah. We already, you know, we already trials and tribulation went through. She went one way and she was, you know, harassed by the shepherds, by the Ukrainian. You know how, you know, people can take advantage if they know you don't have nobody, no protection or nothing. They used to harass her, they used to call her names and all kind of thing. But this is all things, you know, you can live with, but she lived through and that's the main thing. And she has her own story to tell. She was in the orphanage. She -- I put her to school, right when we came out from the woods, she went to school. I did not proceeded, I wanted to proceed in school, but I never proceeded.

Q: Did Sarnee look very different than it had looked before the war?

A: Absolutely. It was bombed. It was destroyed a half. There were holes sinking because that's a very strategic point, was Sarnee. There was this railroad, what a lody trains used to come. It was Laviastand, it's a central station. But from all parts of the thing used to come, from Kiev, from this all and were -- somehow they were -- they were -- they were cross -- criss-cross down there in Sarnee. And -- and the fights were very fierce right around Sarnee. There were some of our people who survived --

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning of Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape number three, side A.

A: A mess. And it was -- it looked like a city deserted. Not the same people. It used to be always a lot of fun to got out in the street and see people strolling, going -- going about their business, going home, coming from home, young people -- young. And this was like -- like -- like not the same. A lot of the homes were destroyed, not kept right and -- and a lot of the bombs destroyed -- a lot of the bombs destroyed because it was a strategic point, like I explained to you. And so it was not the same. It was a sad city. And --

Q: When was this?

A: This was in 1945 -- in 1945, almost the end in June, that's almost the end.

Q: Before -- before the VE day or a -- or after?

A: You know, I cannot -- no, I don't remember. The V day -- the -- the VE day was --

Q: May. May eighth.

A: M-May -- in '45?

Q: Yeah. I'm just wondering if you remember the -- if the war was still going on or --

A: Yeah, the war was still -- I don't think Berlin -- I don't remember exactly the dates. No, I don't remember exactly the dates that's this is -- and it was not of important at that time.

Q: But it was -- it was close to that time?

A: It was close, yeah -- yeah. Because they are advancing, we knew they are already -- they are dead. But -- because they -- they had to still to clean out some pockets of Germans, who

these are -- still were fighting with these up til the end. But we knew that's the end, that's it. Germany is -- is under.

Q: Did you meet with people you knew in Sarnee, people you had known before the war?

A: I was with them in the woods, but then some of them -- you see when the Soviets -- when the Soviets start retreating, a lot the people went along with them, because they heard some of them, they were scared and they would have just -- they be behind the German -- that they went with them. They retreated and then they came back after the war ended. They came back, they thought they'll find some of the family, some of the thing, they didn't. So some of the people returned back to -- to Sarnee. Very few I knew. And the funny part -- I don't know if I said in the -- in the original -- when the Soviets came, they start also arresting people and taking them to Siberia. At this was -- I'm talking about 1939, when they marched in -- into our country. And there were Capitalists they arrested, umtee, Communists, whatever -- any, any -- some slogan, whatever they can atthat. They were arresting them and calling them yenna -- yenna joshnie element. It's mean untrustworthy -- unfor --trustworthy people. And -- and they took him away to Siberia. The tragedy was so terrible, everybody -- they thought that's the end of those people. Everybody cried, it was terrible. Little did we knew that their fate was not sealed. A lot of them died of s -- maybe down there of heavy -- of hard work -- of the climate, malnutrition, whatever it is. But the bulk of them survived. We the lucky ones, we all perished, except the exception, including me. But I sur -- I -- I escaped by a miracle or whatever. And the bullet didn't strike me, that's all -- plain as it is.

Q: How was your health at that point? Had you gotten enough to eat through the war? Did you feel -- were you fairly strong?

A: When I was escaped, I was among the -- the peasants. I didn't -- I didn't miss any and except salt, I didn't miss any, you know, it was nothing gourmet food, but potatoes and whatever, not -- it was -- it was enough to eat and enough to survive. Potatoes and a piece of bread and -- except salt was scarce. I used to sometimes beg the peasant for a little salt, because without this I think the feet start falling on -- there's something -- it's something not -- not -- thing happening. But otherwise -- otherwise it was okay. Not exactly we're starving. In the ghetto was more harsh than after I escaped. If not I used to go and get myself potatoes in the field and -- and bring in the woods -- get myself, help myself. And get in the fields and -- and whatever -- whose field it was I didn't care. A few potatoes it wouldn't -- wouldn't bother nobody. So that's was the situation during -- during my escape.

Q: Were y-you -- did you feel any hope at that point? The war is over and -- and maybe it's -- maybe there was a feeling that it's time to start a new life or -- but at the same time, you've got this burden of knowing what had happened to your family and to your people. What was your -- m -- can you describe your emotions?

A: I had -- I-I had -- I was very sad, I didn't know, I was trying de -- ge -- where, but my -- my first thought was to go to Palestine on that time. And then I joined a group, a kibbutz, you know and to go to a kibbutz and to go to Palestine. But then of course the plans changed. My husband was a fighter, I was a fighter and we were plain -- were tired of fighting and I knew I have to start all over again coming to the -- to Palestine on that time. They were -- they were fighting for their independent. And I said, "I'll -- I'll need a rest," I

needed to go to the United States. And of course, I'm not regretting, not at all. I love this country.

Q: How did you -- I-let's find out -- you -- you're in Sarnee and you are still with your sister. Y -- I think you mentioned in the first interview that you met up with some members of your family who had survived. How did you decide what to do next?

A: Some members of my fam -- my uncle came in of course, to Sarnee, then my cousin and then we left the Soviet Union and we went -- we left the Soviet actually and anybody who was a citizen of Poland, had the right to leave the Soviet Union -- Russia at that time and to emigrated to Poland. My intention was that I'll go on the western side, on the American side, on the English side and from there I can go better than while being in the Soviet Union because it was a dic -- a dictatorship. And I -- Zionism was taboo. Zionism was taboo, you could not even mention the word Zionism, because this is nationalism and this is already has a con-notation with you know, the -- so it was taboo at that time. So I wanted to go into the western side and from there I would go to Palestine. Of course the struggle in Palestine, we know it. So we decided -- my aunt send us an affidavit. I had an aunt here in Washington, who was my mother's sister, who left Russia that time. We are talking about -- I don't remember what she said, 1914, 19 -- way, way before the war or before the -- the revolution was. She left and she came to the States. So I knew we had a -- we had a -- I have an aunt down here, my mother's sister. And the funny part, the way I found her. I ask my uncle, because I didn't know -- I know that someplace I had a aunt, my grandmother -- my Bubba, I used to call her -- used to show pictures and used to kiss -- "These are my grandchildren from the United States," and all kind of stuff like that. So I knew they had --

they had these and these names and they were living someplace in Detroit, so I asked my uncle where did my aunt lived, what city? He said, "In Detroit, Michigan." He remembered that. So I went -- so how do you find in Detroit, Michigan? I didn't know the language, I didn't know. But there was a student, a Jewish student who took English and he was -- and he knew English and I went up to him and I told him my story and I tell, "How do I find my -- my -- my relatives? This and that much I know." He said, "Let me try something." And I said, "I'll pay you for it, if you find them." He sent into the police department in Detroit, Michigan, a letter that said these and these people are looking f -- they are sur -- they survived the war and they are looking for their relatives in the States and within a week or two weeks, I received a -- a response, they are not in Detroit, Michigan, but they are in Washington.

Q: Wh -- You sent this letter from -- from where? From --

A: From Poland, Beetun. Beetun --

Q: Is this after you had left Sarnee?

A: After I have left Sarnee, yeah. After I have left Sarnee, I came on the western side and this -- we had there -- this is also another story, the way we had to go through the mountains. We had to leave Russia not -- not legally, it was half legal. We had to leave through -- cross the borders and come on the western side because they would right away, they would arrest you -- they would whatever. But there was already a movement start going because we survivors didn't wanted to go on the bloody earth any more and we decided to go up to the west. To the west I mean England, the States and whatever not. So we left, we actually went through the border, the Czechoslovakian -- the Czechoslovakian

bor -- the -- the -- on the border police, they were very sympathetic to us. They didn't ask us too many questions either. We tell them we are ref -- we are political refugees and that's it, they knew it.

Q: So th-th -- you had to -- the difficult crossing was from Sarnee, the eastern part of Poland to the western part?

A: We [indecipherable] yeah. But I -- no, we had -- we -- we made our papers -- you know, I -- as a -- as a -- as a Polish citizen up til 1939, had the right to go up to -- to leave the Soviet Union and to go on the western side. So I made out my paper with a shalome of the lody -- a lot of people who left Poland, I went on the Polish side, because Poland was -- at that time a half of Poland was -- the Germans divided. They gave it back to the Soviets and a piece of Germany, they gave it to the Poles. The geography changed at that time. You follow me? Yeah. So the geography changed. So my part remained in the Soviet Union, but I had the right to leave the Soviet Union because I was a citizen of Poland, I was a Pole by nationality. And to go on the western side. So I wind up in Beetun -- in Poland, Beetun and from --

Q: How did you get there?

A: I -- we went down there, we had -- we went -- we went -- just we settled down there, because I don't know how did that happen. My uncle was down there, he settled down there and I went down there, my cousin and we stayed in Beetun.

Q: And your sister too, was she with you?

A: And -- and my sister -- my sister happened like this. She was in Poland, in an orphanage home, because I couldn't keep her with me. I was myself doing things, I had to make, you

know, just to feed myself, I had the -- the -- you know ways to sell, buy, whatever I could just to make some food. So my sister, it was no future. I had -- my sister had to go to school at that time. So I gave her -- she went -- I put her in a orphanage home with a lot the other from different cities. And I remember it was in Ludwigsdorf, I think, Ludwigsdorf, on the Polish side. It was right on the -- on the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia. And she stayed down there and I used to visit her every week. And all of a sudden, I come one week, my sister is not there. They said it is mun, they don't have the kibbutz any more and I ask how and w-why and they told me they -- they went over on the other side. And I knew exactly what they were talking about. They went over the border, they went via -- through Czechoslovakia and they went on the American zone. So I lost my sister at that time. I went to Poland. My sister, with the -- with the all group of kids, wind up on the exodus, going to Palestine at that time. And then they turned them back, back to Hamburg, they disembarked them, there when I met my sister and I brought her to Italy. I came -- I came from Italy to meet her. It's a little complicated, but that's the way it was.

Q: Okay -- okay, so let me make sure I have this straight. You were in western Poland, in Beetun -- Beetun?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And your sister ha -- w-was she with you at that time when you were in Beetun or had she already --

A: At Beetun, yeah, she was in a orphanage, but an hour from Beetun by train.

Q: Okay. How --

A: An hour, an hour and something.

Q: How long did you remain in Beetun?

A: Not too long, I don't know approximate, months, that's all. Til the start of the movement and we wanted to go on the western side, to leave Poland, to get out of there.

Q: And you had in mind to get to --

A: I had in mind to go to Palestine on that time.

Q: And did your si -- had your sister want to go there?

A: And my sister, I lost contact with her, because she completely went in another direction, I was asking around, asking here, asking there. It was, you know -- it was still all mish -- mish-mash, it was all -- all -- all things. And then eventually I find out that she was on the exodus. At that time we didn't know exodus will get so famous. On the exodus -- on the exodus boat, the -- the ship, they brought them to Haifa, they brought them to Cyprus and then they brought them to Marseilles. They disembarked them in -- near Hamburg, there I decided -- I find out everything in the thier, I decided I'll make a passport, I'll go and I'll get my sister and I'll bring her to Italy. And that's the way it was.

Q: Had you been hearing about the story of the exodus in the news as it was happening that time?

A: We knew about it. I knew it -- I knew it, I don't think about the other people, but I knew it because my sister was on it. I didn't know about the other people. I guess we -- it was news at that time. They were brought into Hamburg and I remember there are frogmen actually went under it and they told the English that we are going to go to pieces to get every the -- with the ship, if you will not. And they were afraid at that time for public opinion and they let it go and they made a deal at that time I think, with the Hagannah, I

don't know exactly the deal they made with the Hagannah, so the people, they -- they ask the people to disembark and they put them in a camp in -- near Hamburg. Near Hamburg. And I went all across Germany, I went to Hamburg, picked up my sister and it was another story by itself, so this will not go in. But this is the main thing, I picked up my sister and I brought her to Italy and from Italy she came to the States, we came afterwards.

Q: I want to hear, still in -- about the details of your -- how you -- how you -- what you tra -- how you traveled from -- from Poland and what you did and I know you were in a displaced persons camp in Germany and --

A: Yeah.

Q: And so let's get that era in between Italy and Poland, after the war.

A: Between Italy, between Poland and Italy --

Q: Between Poland and Italy.

A: Poland we left one night, we knew it, we have to leave. We're -- there was the Hagannah that time was working that's aleah bet, if you know what I'm talking about. Aleah bet and all those thing, they were working together with us and we wanted to leave, that's it -- it's enough. The -- the earth was bloody, it didn't felt -- there -- no attachment, nothing. There's nothing down there but givas. So we decided to leave -- to leave again Poland and to come on the western side. And on the western side, it's where we wind up in Beetun and -- and from Beetun, one day, they decided to close the Czechoslovakian border, was also organized. And they let us through, they were very, very friendly and very sympathetic, whatever it was happening, they knew what we suffered and the Czechs were -- a lot of people were very good people.

Q: Who were you with at the time?

A: I, my uncle and my cousin.

Q: W-Will you tell us their names?

A: That's Usher. Usher was his name and my cousin is Dolph. Dolph Burkow. Dolph Burkow and Usher Burkow. My uncle is Usher Burkow, my cousin is Dolph Burkow.

Q: So they were your -- your mother's relations?

A: Yes. My mother's brother's child, my mother brother, it was. Something now, it -- yes?

Q: So you crossed the Czechoslovakian border with your uncle and your cousin.

A: Yes, we were -- went in -- we were assigned first civilian liens in some kind of kind of camp, I don't even -- bindermisen, binder -- something of this type. And then we were assigned to runshaven, branameen. And there were the place where Hitler actually was born and there was a kibbutz. And in a small town. And we wind up down there, being. I got married there, I met my husband there. And from there we went to Italy via the Alps, we went over to -- on the Italian side. We wind up in Milan.

Q: Tell me about how you met your husband.

A: He was in one -- I came to branameen and down there, there were a lot of boys so they told me they are from Vilnau, so just for curiosity, we -- I went out to meet them and then I met -- I met Leon. And I guess maybe our backgrounds maybe was -- you know, he was in the fighting unit, I was -- I don't know, something -- something got us together and we wanted a family, we wanted, you know and he was ready for it, I was ready and then how we got together and -- and we got married in Austria. And my uncle was present, he was -- I have still some pictures, but it was not exactly a wedding, a wedding because all from the

camp participated in that wedding. So, you know, it was like a family. This one baked a cake and this one thing and we're brought it together like for a poor bride. But that's the way it was at that time and it was fine.

Q: Was he your first love, your first romance?

A: Yeah, I had some romance, but they were not, you know, in the woods there and here, you know, it was, but most yes -- most serious it was, yes, my first one.

Q: That must have been -- was that a hopeful time then, did you feel -- did you feel more of a sense of hope for the future after all of the devastation you had experienced?

A: All the devastation -- I never gave up hoped, for some reason. My positive outlook towards life, it's funny. And I never thought that's all the people are evil. I never lost that torch. And I saw -- and I saw because the people actually were -- mostly attributed my crave to the Seven Day Adventists in my -- in my -- in my personal experience. They endangered for them like a mission impossible, they endanger this -- endanger the life to -- to save our lives. And they knew what's awaiting them, you understand? They knew if we were caught in their homes, we will be -- we'll die together. But for them they said maybe ga -- you know, whatever their interpretation was, they were very helpful at that time. [inaudible]

Q: You're talking about the people who helped your family in Poland were Seventh Day Adventists?

A: Yeah, Seven Day Adventists, yeah, in Poland where -- yeah, when we escaped from the -- I call it the Dante's inferno -- from the massacre, from the carnage, I don't know. And this should be -- never be forgotten. Forgiven, have to, if not you can consume, but never to be forgotten.

Q: Were you a -- I mean did -- were you able to even -- you mentioned that you were very angry.

A: Very.

Q: Were you ab -- able to even imagine forgiving at that time?

A: Not at that time. Little by little, I see that you cannot leave -- that's -- you have to -- that's the world we live in. But we must learn what the yesterday was. Live today and see that tomorrow will be a secure one. And that's what -- it's a big responsibility the survivors have. It's not to -- to tell everybody a horror story, but to learn what people are capable of doing things and there were people with faces with two eyes in them and they were capable of doing those horrible things. And then coming back to their families. How could they do this, I don't know. And be loving parents, I don't [inaudible] how. Maybe they have their problems.

Q: Did you have thoughts of revenge or desire for revenge?

A: Very much so. Even when I was escaped here.

Q: What did you do with those feelings?

A: I fought. I fought. I didn't want to die. This would be a -- not [indecipherable] I want -- didn't want to die.

Q: What about after the war was over? I mean, did you still have those feelings of wanting revenge?

A: I had for awhile, yes. No, I had for awhile, I see revenge, I see -- I started looking at the -
- maybe some Germans were -- took part, a lot of them. Ordinary people did unordinary things. They were ordinary people. And I -- I told you, they were drunk, they were -- they

smelled with alcohol. Because they -- because they could not, even with all the teaching, with all this -- this -- what hate led, the propaganda and all those things, something they could not do it. They couldn't, they had to get drunk and numb to do this horrible thing.

And this is -- the pain stays with, you know and it's why again and why again and we must answer it. And that's what -- we go out and do our -- our job. And people should learn from our experience. Skulls, the titles -- they were people with titles and they are [inaudible] that did horrible things so they -- let's learn to do the right thing -- if not, I can't -- like I says, [inaudible] or we live in peace or we'll all die as fools.

Q: Tell me about the life on this kibbutz that you joined in Austria -- it was in Austria, right? Or was it in Germany?

A: It -- it was -- I was actually private -- my husband was in that kibbutz and was a kibbutz, I was more like private, but I used to meet with them -- with him. And in there where we got married. But it was actually I was not attached to a kibbutz per se so. I just -- just for a little while, when I crossed the border I was with a group and they called the kibbutz, but actually, per se s -- I was not down there constant with them, you understand? I was with my uncle, with my cousin. And then in Brownamine, I wind up also to be with them together. In there when I met Leon, my husband, who was in a kibbutz, down there in Brownamine, in there where we -- we met and we got married.

Q: Okay, so you were -- when you were living in Brownamine --

A: Yes.

Q: Wh-Where did you live?

A: In a house we're assigned, I don't know, it must be assigned by the joint distribution committee or by the -- I don't know how it was, but was assigned. You know lot of the survivor used to live -- we lived with another family or two families, it didn't matter we were a little bit tight, or who cares. But we were -- lived together down there and there were officers barracks, I don't know what was it before or -- or during -- before Hit -- you know, during Hitler's time, I don't know. But this was the place, his workplace in there. Used to pass by his house whenever we walked in.

Q: But was it a displaced person's camp?

A: Yeah.

Q: It was?

A: It was a displaced person camps and there was some kibbutzim. It's like a transit for people who -- wherever they'll decide, whenever they'll decide to go over to Palestine or to United States, it was in meantime you have to be concentrate in a place. So this was like a concentrate. Some were in kibbutzim and some were -- were on their own, like private. Not exact -- well, you know, on their own. So I lived with my uncle, with my cousin. Not attached to a kibbutz.

Q: So, do you remember the moment or the day --

A: Yes.

Q: That you met your husband and how that happened?

A: Yeah, I came out -- yes, I met him and I introduced -- introduced ourselves, I told him that -- and he went to the swimming pool and he asked me also to come. I said, "Oh, I will come." I came to the swimming pool and there was no -- nothing to sit on and I said, "No, I

ma -- don't have my -- I don't have swimming trunk -- I don't have no -- on the swim -- swimming suit. I'm not -- I'm not going to sit here." So while he went for his -- down there to put something to sit down and to -- and to join the -- the crowd down, I had some things to do and I left. But then we met again and somehow it started with our courting and then we got married within -- within months. I don't remember how long we went out, about three or four months.

Q: Did you tell each other about your experiences during the war?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. We knew what was -- our experience was known to each other, definitely. He was also in the underground, but his fight was a little different than mine, but we knew definitely what each other had did. So --

Q: So di -- I'm -- I'm just interested in -- in --

A: Yeah?

Q: Getting a sense of how you -- how you really felt about the -- about your life at that time. You -- you meet your husband, you fall in love but is -- was there the -- I mean, w-we associate feelings of lightheartedness with falling in love or w -- or feelings of sort of being dizzy or young, but did you feel like a young woman just falling in love for the first time or did it feel -- were you more -- were you --

A: I'm more [indecipherable]

Q: Grieving or was it sad? Did you feel -- was it difficult?

A: Not sadn -- sadness was with us. It was a normal -- a normal every day -- the sadness was there. But we were young and I -- I had hopes for the -- for the future, I had hopes. If -- otherwise, it would be disastrous. I had hopes. And I was mostly a positive thinker.

Q: What were your hopes and dreams at that time?

A: I want to have a home, a nice family and I had children too. I had our little problems here and there, like normal. But I had this beautiful family, we have three kids and each -- I'm proud of each one in his own way. They understand. I respect them, they respect us, so -- it's looks like -- it's al-also an achievement, I -- I think so. I taught them the right way, what's right, what's wrong. And I explained to them what hate, they know exactly what hate can do, how dangerous hate can be. And this, we must start it when they're young, to teach them. And so they -- so this is -- this is I think it's my achievement -- it's our, my husband and I.

Q: Did you always make a point of talking to your children about the Holocaust? Did you tell them what was -- what your history was?

A: I spoke -- it was -- yeah, they know it. My son -- let's see, I spoke once, he didn't hear exactly, but I spoke and I explained the tales. I went through how and our little grandson, who's 10, he was nine at the time, after I talk -- and I did not even understood if this kid would understand and I didn't -- I -- you understand, it's nine years old. But after I spoke, he said, "Grandma Bobby, c -- would you speak to my school, come to my school and tell your story?" I said, "If your teacher will invite me, I'll come." [inaudible] tell him, you understand? So I made something -- in -- impression or something on he may understand. He said, "I know you fought the Germans." And this is -- I wanted my kids to know that I was not sitting idly and was waiting to be killed. I went out to fight and there were many Jewish boys and girls who did it. Actually I was the first one in Washington who spoke about it. The first -- the first about the partisans, about the fighters. And I know girls who

never lived to see the day of liberation. They died fighting. I was the lucky one to tell my story. And there were one on top of the other, I know, but every day was a constant -- a constant moving, a constant going, a constant doing something. Or we were ambushed them, they ambushed us. And it's a constant or we be there on their back, constant. And you were tired. You were tired very much. I remember almost I -- I paid with my life. I came four o'clock, my worst time, my worst time of the day is -- is daybreak, between like four or three o'clock, three o'clock at night til -- til six, three til six. We came to a certain destination and -- and I felt -- my commanding officer came up and he said I have to stand on -- on patrol. And I begged him -- we were -- we were -- we were traveling on horses, they're almost old than I. I begged him, I'll give you two times, I'll give you four hours later, but let me rest. I know my weakness. He insisted, I don't know what was the reason, I had -- I went down there and actually I didn't fell asleep, but actually I -- I dozed off. And there were -- the guy who was -- was checking on the sentries, he grabbed on my -- on my -- on my gun -- he -- he -- he grabbed the gun and you know, he had the right to kill me right there and then because this is -- this is a war, it's not -- it's not no -- no nonsense. And the next day I was called to the headquarters and I thought that they're going to put me at firing squad. I came -- I -- I was a little bit, you know, inside -- a little bit afraid, I don't know, you know. I said, you know, they'll put me as a example. But somehow they gave me a warning that time. And I know I'll been watched and after a month or so, they already praised me there. I done good and they said they -- but this happened.

Q: So there was a certain amount of -- you also described in the first interview that -- that there were instances of torture, that the partisans occasionally were involved in torturing and that you had said you don't want to be involved in something like that.

A: Yeah [indecipherable].

Q: And -- and -- and you just mentioned now that, you know, you weren't sure that you were completely safe. So the partisans were not -- I mean, if we romanticized the situation, we might think --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning of Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of an interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape three, side B.

Okay, so my question is that -- I think the picture that you're painting of life with this partisan group, is very complex. It doesn't seem that -- that, I mean you -- you couldn't be sure that if you didn't -- if you made a mistake you would be beyond being punished and if -- if an enemy were captured, it wasn't -- it wasn't just a matter of killing the enemy right away, sometimes those enemies were tortured and you were witnessing human suffering on the other side as well. How did that make you feel?

A: I -- I didn't, that's what I, you know the -- this -- some of the guys, you know, they were -- they were -- they're very bitter, you know. They expressed it more. And they -- they got a hold of any of the enemy on the other side and -- he was a big shot. He was one of the engineers who build the pantom planes -- the pantom bridges, what they -- you -- during the war the -- the -- the -- the tanks are going over and the -- the tanks. You know the -- fast -- you have to come to a -- to a river and you have to build them right there and then. And he

fell in-into our hands with his chauffeur, with his car, with all those things. And decide to have -- I -- I said I'm not for it -- kill him and over with. And I remember I saw him face to face. He said he had a child. I said, "I had a mother an-and a father too. And I had a brother and a sister." And I said, "And I had a grandfather and a grandmother." But they -- I don't know. I said, "It's not my game, I'm not involved in it." I said, "Kill him and over with."

Q: Were there other instances of torture among the group?

A: Not necessary, no. No.

Q: But --

A: No, because -- because he was a bigshot, because he was a important man, I don't know, this is something I don't know. It came to me and I -- I -- I -- I said no. I said, "You know, he's a enemy, we don't have no place to keep him as a thing, just --." But some guys say I cannot, you understand? You can not be responsible, but, you know, that's the way it happened on that time. We didn't have no prisoners of war, we didn't have no prison camps, we didn't have no places to keep him. I remember from Moscow, a student, a -- a medical student came to us, they dropped him -- parachuted him into our midst. And I don't know what they told him in Moscow, I don't know what they told him. So when he -- when he came to our midst and he was walking with me -- next to me, he asked, "Where is the second -- where is the next hospital we are taking all our wounded?" So we start laughing. You understand, it was a joke for us all. You know, we are already the veterans, the old people who went on there for -- for a few years, or this. A hospital, I said, "You see this b -- horse and buggy? This is our hospitals. And this is our surgeon and this is assistant, we are doing it right here -- in here, we're in -- the -- right here, in the open field." And it was cold,

we used to make a bonfire if it's -- we could. And a -- many times -- many -- sometimes we were not allowed, because the enemy would sniff us out -- would find us out, where we are. And we were a might -- 1500 to 1600 people, full equipped. But this big -- a big unit, a lot of thing. And I think the partisan fought -- I think very gallantly and I think I'm proud to be a part of this movement at that time, with no reservation.

Q: Does it make you angry when you hear people say that the Jews went like lambs to the slaughter?

A: Maybe some did. Like in any people. I would ask them how many countries resisted the Germans. The Jews were not ready. They were civilians. This was a government. A government with all the institution, with all the propagandas, with all their might, was -- were planning a execution of a people. And they have the surroundings. They already prepared the hostile surroundings. They made them Fascist, them made them national whatever they call themselves. And they helped them out in this -- in this horrible task, to murder and some of them their own citizen, their own friends. And then the Germans saw what they are doing, that they use for instance, people from my town -- if he become -- if he became a Fascist, they would take him and take him to another city and from the other city, bring him in my city, there should be no -- no personal connection, you understand? There should be no -- no -- that's how he could do his -- his -- his -- his dirty job, his -- his terrible thing. Does it make sense?

Q: We were talking a little while ago and I want to get back to where you -- you were -- a- after the war had ended and you were in Germany at this displaced person's camp, you met

your m -- husband, you had gotten married. A little before that you had mentioned that you had been trying to get in touch with your aunt in Detroit.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And that was while you were still in Poland. What happened? Did you get in touch with her by the time you had gotten to Germany?

A: Oh yes, I got -- y-y-yes, yes, I got back a response that she moved from Detroit, Michigan, came to Washington with her address. And then my uncle, you know, was her brother, start corresponding with her. And then we followed. We -- she send us affidavit and how -- that how we came, in 1951, in the end of 1951, all -- almost Christmastime, we were on this sh-ship, on the Constitution, coming to the United States. On the 100,000 refugees, what Truman at that time, allowed to come to the States, we came on this -- on this quota. Plus affidavit my aunt send me and that's what we wind up to be in Washington.

Q: Okay, before you tell about that, tell me about how you -- you made the decision to go from Germany to Italy and when that happened and who was with you?

A: From Germany to Italy, my -- my husband had some kind assignment to work some -- somethings -- to help out with some kind of -- some kind of job. So we decided to go to Italy and that's what the decision was made there and there and we left -- and this was like a transit, like Austria, Italy and then we'll go to Palestine. Then, being in Italy, we changed our mind and we said, "We are tired of fighting, we'll go to the States and if we don't like it, then --."

Q: Was your husband working with an organization and was he working with

[indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable] the kibbutz, yeah, he was with that organization.

Q: So that was who sent him to -- on assignment to Italy.

A: To Italy he had to go, yeah. To Italy and anyway it was our way of going there anyway and he was send there, so it -- both things match together and we were -- and we -- and we came down there. You know also, the day when we got married, yes, I forgot to mention, he got a telegram that his sister survived from a concentration camp and she lives in Italy. So all together, like camil -- like kenna -- like all together. And right after we got married, we went to Italy, we met his sister and from there of course -- then afterwards we came to the States. And some people went to Palestine. Legally, illegally, illegal, whatever it was at that time. If you know from exodus, you know it.

Q: What w -- y -- what was the name of the organization that your husband was working for?

A: It was a beetar organization, they call it, yeah. The beetar.

Q: So it -- you arrived in Italy in 1946?

A: 1946 we got married.

Q: In Germany?

A: Yeah, in 1946, yeah, we a -- we arrived in Italy and actually yeah, that's correct, 1946.

[indecipherable]

Q: But first tell me about your -- your wedding.

A: Oh, it was a -- a wedding, you know, it's like the whole camp participated and it was like a -- a big -- a big excitement for everybody here, we got married. First of all I didn't want it, I said, "Let's go, we'll go to Italy and down there we'll see what's what," but my uncle

insisted -- my uncle insisted, said, "You don't have nobody, he doesn't have nobody, why -- make it legal." And I said, "Okay, let's make it legal." You know, I was reluctant, yes, marriage, you know, we go over the borders and all those thing. So we decided to get married and it was a big excitement, we were the only one, bride and groom, to get married and this and that. So it was the excitement of the whole -- of the whole camp. Like they -- they -- one woman baked a cake, the other one it was -- they brought a dean in the kibbutz. In the kibbutz was the -- the -- the wedding. We had the -- we had attendant -- attendant with two rabbis. Rabbis were attending our wedding. So it was -- it was interesting. I -- I felt a little bit jitter I remember, it was so funny, it's like a commitment, it's like something, you know. But y-you know, it was -- it was okay, it was a lot of excitement at that time.

Q: Who married you?

A: The -- the rabbi, you mean?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: There -- there were two rabbis, I think. One was a Hungarian and both -- one from Czechoslovakia. How did they survived, I don't know up til now. I don't remember their story. But they were also -- they were something -- they were in the camp. One is a Hungarian I think and one Czechoslovakian or so. So we had two rabbis to our wedding. I have some pictures someplace, I -- I did not refer them -- I don't -- not thinking about it. They are in black and white. Yes, I think this should be sufficient, whatever -- how they're interested.

Q: Mm-hm. I'm th -- also curious about --

A: Yes.

Q: That your displaced person's camp --

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And -- was it -- was it well organized, did you think?

A: It was organized, I don't know well. Of course, for improvement it's always. But it's was organized and each -- let's say there were a few kibbutzim, a few groups, what they -- each one cared for them, you know, there were separate entities, like. And I would say they were well organized and we u -- we used to get some kind of provision, I don't know how, from the highers, from the joint distribution committee. I don't know exactly. But we used to get some provisions somep -- some -- some breve -- some ri -- assigned to us. I don't remember exactly. My uncle, I think used to get it. We used to be all involved.

Q: And you were -- you were free to come and go as you pleased? Was there -- were there any restrictions?

A: Not exactly, not -- not exactly free and go, we had to have a little thing to go out from the camp to stroll around. For instance, once I was arrested by the MP. I was going out. Maybe they liked the MP's, I don't know, we were young girls and they were young boys. You know, it's something that they do -- they stopped us and you know, what -- they let us, you know. But it was funny, because we were not allowed perfacia to go down there, we had to have a permission or something. But we used to go out. It was not so bad. We used to go out and we used to s -- to -- to, but one occasion it was that way. We were arrested by the MP, but this is -- was -- maybe, I don't know, we were young girls and they were young boys, so, you know.

Q: It was because you'd gone out without a pass, is that why?

A: I think without a pass, or something. They were asking us for a pass and I said and we don't have it and all kind of things. So that's, I --

Q: What did they do to you?

A: No, nothing. They said they'll arrest us and -- but it's -- nothing happened. No, it was a little bit of excitement in the -- in the town down there and I think we needed some kind of -- if we go to the city, I -- but I don't remember. But people used to move around, we used to go, we used to even go up to Lind's, we used to go there and here with them -- we're some -- I don't remember this is exactly, the restrictions had a ba -- but we used to move, we used to go up to Lind's and there and here and somehow we used to find our way, how to go about. And so this --

Q: Do you remember dealing with a civilian, Austrian population, non-Jews after -- after the war while you were there and were there any incidents?

A: Yeah, because they're all, you know the tone was already different, you know. He said -- they were ti -- for instance, the town where he was born, they said he was a nasty and he was a bad guy when he was young, but you know during his last time, maybe they talked, they -- they spoke differently about him, you understand? But in our time he came down there, listen the shoemaker, this one, I used to take my shoes, he used to say he was nasty, he was -- he was beating up everybody and this and that. But we had connection, yes, definitely, with the Austrian. Not go bosom buddies, you know, we were separate from them.

Q: Did you feel resentment in any way towards the Austrians?

A: I felt a resentment to all those things when it happened, but not in a personal, you know, when you meet a person, the person, then they meet you. Of course when you find out he was a Nazi or involved with the thing, you right away felt a revolt too much then. Felt a resentment, felt a finkanee -- finekinay you understand? Because I knew what they -- what they were all -- what they were all about, what their aim was.

Q: So you did meet -- you actually met people who had been Nazis?

A: Not -- they would not tell me. If they were, they would not tell me. Sometimes they would say a word here and there, I used to make a puzzle and find out that's they were involved somewhat with the Nazis. I already had my way. I knew that they were something involved with them. They were -- later on they knew it was not a big honor, to be from the Hitler youth, or from the Nazi movement. And I don't know how many Germans -- a lot of Germans knew what was going on. But the propaganda was so harsh and they -- about the Jews, they portrayed the Jews with the -- with the -- with the noses, with the things. Hitler himself, if he take off his hair, he looked more like a caricature he would make of the Jews, he would be one. But that's -- that's another thing. But put him in -- in the uniform of our concentration camp, let's see how he'd lever look. And if he would be alive out there, they put him -- well they put him in -- in a cage. To look at the specimen.

Q: Tell me about your time in Italy and what you -- you -- you spent f -- about five years there?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Ta -- Tell me about what you were doing.

A: I love the Italian people. In the beginning I felt a funny feeling about Fascism and Mussolini, but after I -- I find out he was also -- he was also like a victim, he went with Hitler and then he was in his game already. He -- with all this -- like he blackmailed him intel -- in a lot of things, because Mussolini was in the begin -- after we met the Italian people, I -- I didn't feel bad about it, because we knew that they tricked him in, also -- in a lot of ca -- of cases and a lot of ways. And with this patachi, whatever he was involved in, it's, you know -- all sorts -- it's a work of the -- I think of the Nazis, of the Germans, they pushed on him. And so I didn't felt resentment. I liked my -- my neighbors. I became even very friendly with them. Our daughter was born -- re-really was born in Italy, she had friend, a friend next door, used to go out. They were very nice and very interesting people. Most of them liked opera, like singing, you know, they used to sing arias in the -- a bu -- a guy on a bicycle used to go -- ride on the bicycle and sing arias from the opera. And it was - - it was a nice -- a nice time spend in Italy. I have good memories, very good memories.

Q: Wh-Where were you living?

A: In Milano, mm-hm. And there were some -- a concentration of Jewish people down there and til the time came we get our visa and in 19 -- in the end, almost -- almost our visa went out on the international border. So we were coming to the States, you understand, just almost like to the day we were living Italy and coming -- and coming to the United States.

Q: And she's -- did you speak English at the time?

A: Not at all. And I -- it was so difficult for me, I remember Christmas, I could not even pronounce it. It was Christmastime and -- and my Rita spoke Italian very well and she met another Italian lit-little kid and they used to play together. And what worried me very much,

I remember being on the Constitution, they told me in Italy that everything is -- is conser -- conserved, everything is conserved there in the United -- everything comes in boxes and in -- in package. And I liked fresh foods. And -- and I said, God, she sa -- even chicken, you -- you get it in a -- you know, it's so all -- all -- all creative things for some people. And this -- I met this Italian woman and start talking to her, she said, "I knew -- I live in the United States. You can get as much fresh food as you want to. Just if you wanted to do this, it's fine. Of course we have -- we have -- we have --." I was so happy, I remember. I just came running and I said, "Oh my God, look at that." It was a false -- a false information before. And so we came and I got very sick on the -- coming in here on the -- on the ship. I got seasick and I thought maybe I will never see the Statue of Liberty.

Q: Did you study English at all while you were in Italy or did you come to the United States without learning any?

A: We didn't - I wanted to go to berlitz, they have berlitz schools down there, where they teach English. And I started maybe one or two lessons and then, you know, you ge -- you get busy, whatever you are doing, with the kid I already had and whatever you are doing and I said, "When I'll come to the States, I'll do it." And so we didn't. We did very limited -- we didn't know English at all. But little by little, somehow I can converse and I -- and I'm fine. I read a li -- goo -- I read and I -- I-I'm fine. I think so, at least.

Q: Oh very, you're very fine. And -- okay, so you're -- you're on the -- the ship, coming to the United States. You get --

A: I wanted here in to go to school and yet I proceeded to go into college. That's, you know, maybe I was not too ambitious about it, otherwise I would have done it. But I had the -- I

was trying [indecipherable] there, because I was a teacher, I taught in the camps. When I was in the camps, I taught first graders and things and I loved children and children loved me very much, too.

Q: Which camps?

A: In -- in Italy, we were in a camp, Hadriatica, they call it. That's in the outskirts of Milan.

Q: A displaced persons --

A: That was a camp for -- displaced person camp, yeah. Oh, you forgot to mention this here.

Q: Yeah. H -- Is that where you lived th-the entire time that you were in Italy?

A: Not the entire. For a-awhile and then we went privately -- to live privately and from our private home, we came to the States. We left the camp. They disbanded the camp or they moved the camp, I don't know exactly, but they disbanded the camp and a lot of people left for Palestine, a lot of people left there, here and -- and -- and we went private and being private, we went -- we came to the States. But we were in that camp with a lot of more refugees like ourselves.

Q: So you're on the ship and you -- were you ill the entire trip?

A: I was ill the entire trip. No, the -- not the entire -- up til we came to the Gabriel tart. The Gabriel tart are the deep waters already, Africa and there -- down there in the -- on the horn. When we came down there, right away I got like somebody would -- there I got right away sick. I couldn't -- I couldn't even go near the -- the -- the dining room, that's how darn sick I was. And I thought, "God almighty, I will never see here, I went through all these things, the war and everything, I'll never see." I was so sick to my stomach. When they told me the Statue of Liberty, I came out -- crawl out from down there, from the -- my cabin and I

looked and it was a sight to see, I remember. I remember it in the early morning, the Statue of Liberty, with the thing and it was -- it was very fine. Then we came to the harbor of New York. There was a cousin of ours, were waiting for us. I expected my aunt to come from Washington, she didn't, but she gave some words to my -- our cousin in New York and she sent her son and he -- and he was waiting for us -- for our arrival. Then we -- when we came, he greeted us, so it was -- it was a little bit -- it w -- you know, very -- it was pleasant for us. And -- and I remember on a Sunday we arrived on the harbor and -- and New York. And then another one, she was a distant relative of some kind and she was married and she came also to greet us. And something I didn't had a good feeling about her, I don't know exactly, but something about. Whatever -- she was standing, I don't know, something I didn't had a good feeling about her. And maybe I thought she did the -- looked down, I don't know, something -- I didn't had a good feeling about her. And then he took us to his house, this Dave, who came to -- to greet us on the thing. And when we came out from that - - from the harbor, I didn't like it. I said, "This is America? This is the United States?" Everything -- you know Sunday, it was deserted and those big factories down there, right down there in the -- it was something -- I did not, it made a funny impression on me. Something -- I expected in my head the United States to be something, something. And here I see this empty and the big, big, huge, huge buildings. And then he took us to his house and when I walked in, it was like in the movies I see. It was a s -- a small, little apart -- a nice apartment. It was a two story, with -- with the steps going up and it was -- and I said to Leon, "Lookit, it's like in the movies we saw, American movies, it's like in the movies." And there was a television and -- and I remember and also this has struck me very funny at

that time. It was a Milton Berle show at that time, very, very, very, very popular, everybody was watching, it was such an excitement like who knows what was going on. And I came the first night -- instead of talking to us, she left us and she went to watch Milton Berle and -- and I felt so funny about it, because I said, "It wouldn't happen this -- in Europe, I wouldn't do it." But this is, you know, maybe it was no harm was done. You understand, but I was so touched by every little thing that I -- I -- I -- I just felt it's, you know, it was not right. But this was the first impression about the United States. And they had their daughter -- and then I walked in and a -- and upstairs they had her bedroom and she had so many shoes and I ask her, "Why do you have so many shoes?" It was everything something new for me, something different, than I'm used to down there. But anyway it was -- it was okay. I was a little bit angry at my aunt, she didn't come, but she was not a rich woman herself, she was a hard working woman. So then -- and then when we came to the -- to Washington, I could understand. She couldn't leave at that time her husband or whatever. So we stayed. I had a little bit also f-feelings about my cousins because maybe I expected from them more than they could give me. You know, I was -- I was wounded, like a wounded animal and here -- you understand, a little compassion, a little understanding, a little asking about their family. It's not you and us. It's not, yet -- it's the same.

Q: You felt like they were trying to create a -- a division between --

A: It's something like a division, like -- ignorant about that what was going on down there. It's like they talk about -- they talked about Europe, let's say, there would be like it's another planet. And this is something that struck me very un-understanding. They never -- they never asked me, you're some -- you know this is a little bit -- was, you know. But then

their children were more -- were more sub-subceptive, more -- more understanding, more think towards -- they used to ask me some question and some of them were vrot some and they ask me some question about what happening in Europe. They were already start to being more aware of that. But their parents, no. Once in awhile we used to be invited, but not -- but not close- close like. But that's the way it was.

Q: So they didn't ask you about what had happened to you during the war?

A: Very little. And I didn't volunteer to -- to -- to -- to push on them. The int -- didn't volunteer and they didn't ask so I didn't tell them, you understand?

Q: Was that difficult?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Not to talk to -- to people who were your family and -- about -- about this immense tragedy.

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And I thought I singled them out, I thought maybe they are not aware, because I'm -- okay, whatever -- I ne -- wanted to say. But that was hurting very much. Our children should have been more together with them. We used to get together, but not at real family, you know, because they were my immediate family, that's all that I had. And so this is -- this is the way the [indecipherable] remain on our own. We stood on our own two feet, we made it. And made it pretty okay, made a nice living. We raised our kids, like I said, we are very proud of each one of them. One is in advertising, one is a free lance writer in Los Angeles and we have a son who is doing very well, he is a nice human being, that's the -- very important. Very sensitive and sensible person. And this is two important things in life.

Q: Tell me the names of your children and when they were born.

A: Rita. Rita was born in '49.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Yes, Rita, my -- our oldest daughter was born in 1949, October the second. Sherry was born June 12th, 1954 and Stanley was born August 29th, 1956.

Q: And what are the -- why don't you go ahead and tell me the names of your -- of all your grandchildren?

A: I have Rochelle. Rochelle Leah. I have La-Laura Michelle, that's Sherry's daughter.

Then I have Justin, who is our son's son and then I have two kids from my -- from our older daughter, two grandchildren, Nick and Lucy Kate. They were adopted and they're adorable kids.

Q: All right, great. Okay. So you -- you -- did you come to Washington right away after arriving in New York?

A: Yeah. After arriving in New York, we were down there for a week, rested up a little bit because I was very weak coming down from the ship and I was -- I was still going around like being dizzy after I already came on the ground. So I was dizzy and I was -- I was weak. I didn't eat nothing. I had to come back to myself. And so for a -- a -- something like a week, we stayed in New York with our relatives and -- and from New York, we came to Washington. And on the station -- on -- we came by train at that time I remember. On the station we were greeted by my aunt, uncle and a cousin, a survivor, I remember, who came before I had a fass, and my cousin who -- her grandparents I described down there when I left them, right, in Sarnee, before I escaped from the -- from the execution, the Pomerantz family.

Q: What did you do, how did you start out?

A: My aunt -- yeah, this was -- I had -- my aunt prepared for us an apartment. And -- so this was, but my husband didn't have a job yet, so he went around til he find himself a job. We brought a little bit money with us. We were doing a little business in Italy, so we were not completely, you know, penniless. So we brought a little bit money with us and -- and then he start looking for a job, he find a -- a job in the United Typewriter Company, was at that time. And he was working down there for a few years, til he went in business for himself. And I -- I was home taking care of the kids, they were little. I wanted to go also in the teaching, to be like a Sunday and I had to leave the kids on Sundays and I decided against it, I said, "It's more important for me to be with the children than to leave them on Sundays, unsupervised." And maybe I did a good choice, I don't know.

Q: Were you learning English?

A: Yeah, Hebrew. I wanted to go in Hebrew and then I -- i-it was not a lot of English to know that, you know, in the school, in the Hebrew school, cause I want to teach in Hebrew. Was Hebrew and some other and that was a parochial Hebrew school in Washington. I had to go trum a little with a few courses, because I was already aware of being -- in the camp, I was teaching first graders and kindergarten. So I -- I had to go through a course and then I didn't -- I decided against it. I said it was more important for the kids -- sometimes we used to go out skating o-or skiing even, we went away for the weekends. And we were together with the family, so I think this was -- it was not a bad choice at that time.

Q: What a -- what about your other experiences in adjusting to this new society? Was there anything notable about it, that -- that stood out as being very different from where you -- wh-what you had come from or what you ex -- anything different than what you expected?

A: It was different. Some people were preoccupied with things that did not -- there a lot of emphasis money, money, money -- and something that sometimes used to rub me the wrong way. But you know, and I thought maybe because we didn't feel strongly, that I could not figure out what it is sometimes used to rub me [inaudible] the wrong way. And -- but little by little we adjusted. We were different, I would say. You know, but I did not blame, because I went through my journey, life was a completely different one from the people who were born in here, that didn't experience no hardship, nothing. They were spoiled in my estimation, in my eyes. Sometimes I used to call them the spoiled America. But maybe if everything would be in target down there in my family and my things, I don't know how would it be.

Q: Did you form fre -- did you form friendships with Americans?

A: Yes. I formed friendship with Americans, but mostly we were involved with the survivors. But af -- we did, we had very good fre --

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning of Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of an interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape four, side A.

Okay, your friendships -- your friendships with -- some of them were with survivors and some with non-survivors?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you feel a gap, in a way, that you were -- when you were with survivors, you were with people of your own kind and when you weren't, you were with a different kind of person? Was there that kind of division?

A: Something, maybe if I would find the chemistry would work, maybe it would be okay, on the -- not -- but with some I felt closer, with Americans, but more closer with -- I -- I used to feel with -- with survivors, because our journey in life is almost, you know -- each one is different, but similar I think. Whatever we went through, we could converse, you could understand more each other. But we had a lot of friends that were not survivors.

Q: Did you feel that they could re -- that those friends who were non-survivors could really understand what you had been through?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so. And I s -- and I always said I am not -- I don't want you to feel sorry for me, that's -- it's not because, you know, some understanding, not exactly to feel, you know, they see the war, that's [inaudible] to me. But it was behind their understanding. The first time, when I came out to speak to those people about my partisan activities, about being -- I'm telling you, I made a impression on people. They went through that time, difficult, difficult, difficult times. One became a lawyer and the other one I met, about si -- about eight or nine years later, in Washington. And she looked very much, you

know, very blonde and very, you know, she looks like a Swedish girl. And there she tells a story, she was -- she heard all kinds of stories about the Jews and here she heard me telling all these thing -- all these things. And I met her and I said, "Are you're Gilbert? Are you're not the girl who was at the first meeting when I spoke?" And I told her where and on Willard Avenue, down there on the UJA? "Oh," she said, "yes, are you Brenda?" Och, she started telling all her friends, you know, because I recognized her, her face was so -- so -- they -- told her friends, what -- and then -- then I said -- I invited her to our business and she said to my son, "You don't know what impression your mother made on me. She made me - - she made me do things. I forced myself." So my son made, again a remark, he said, "She made a impression on me, too," you know, my son. And so it's -- it's did something, you know, it's -- I think my story, it made a difference, I don't know what words I can choose for.

Q: When did you start speaking about your experiences?

A: It was in the late 60's, I don't remember exactly, but something in the late 60's, 70, before -- they start already talking about the museum and then -- and then I came and one girl who was a friend of mine, I start telling her, said, "Brenda, toil, tell them the story." I said, "If you hold my hands, I'll tell the story." And I came about and I start telling them and I start telling them, little by little, I was nervous like a kid. And -- and -- and they accepted it very nicely. And after I explained to them, who were the partisans, where the partisans, how did I wind up down there and what our journey was, what we did. And it was a eye opener for them all.

Q: Who was this group that -- who was this first group that you were speaking to?

A: It was a UJA group. But I think it was still -- there were some professional people, I don't know exactly.

Q: UJ --

A: We were adults.

Q: United Jewish Appeal?

A: Yeah. We were adults and it was a full, full, big room, we were three girls with -- my story somehow, at that time, was okay.

Q: How did the -- how did the UJA get in touch with you to do this or did you get in touch with them?

A: We were in a group, a survivors group and in the survivors group, they knew that I'm one of the survivors and I was very much involved, yeah, in Washington with bonds in the organization Nahamat, that used to call Golda Meir, you know, the pioneer of women -- it's a Golda Meir club that's -- and now they call it Nahamat. So I was down there as a member. And then I belonged to the -- to the survivors group. In the UJA, some time they wanted to know more about the survivors and I was the one of us invited. And I came -- I was working down there in business a little bit -- I came and I told them a little bit about my story, they said they wanted to hear more. So I came in a -- a evening, we were three -- thr -- two of us -- three of us, so each one was telling a story. I was different because I wasn't down there, I went on to the partisans. But I was one of the first one, actually, who came out to speak about it. And this is a fact.

Q: And --

A: For the opening of the museum

Q: Did it seem to you at the time that these people you were speaking to really didn't know about what you were telling them? Was it new to them?

A: I used to ask him, after a -- I went through a little bit, "Do you follow my thoughts? Do you -- if not, please ask me later on, questions." Because I went through a little bit and you know, it's my story, but it's -- if they will comprehend this. They said, "Yes, yes," and then, afterwards, they ask me some questions. But I think they did res -- was receptive to my story. I think -- I think so. And this was my first and then I used to go out to schools and then I worked with the children -- to schools a lody and speak to the students. And then I walked in the children's museum, if you remember -- 'Remember the Children', before opening of the museum in Washington, I used to go down there sometimes three or four times a week. It was in northeast, down there on Eighth Street or something.

Q: L -- L Street, I -- probably?

A: A -- lin -- there is a children's museum down there with all international -- there is mec -- there is all kind of -- you know, on top used to be 'Remember the Children'. It was Mrs. Yates, it was the congresswoman was instrumental of -- of telling the story about the children, she shed -- s-she owns and it was a very -- a very wise choice at that time. I used to go down there as a survivor to tell my story to the children. They were not allow children below six. And they had to be accompanied by their parents. Because it was, you know, it was a sad story. And -- and then, after w-we were finished, that was -- the entrance was a movie, then it was a whole wall of children, pre-war children, Jewish kids. Then it was a house in Germany, a Jewish family, the aroma even of the food you can smell and the singing of the classical music. A -- a regular house, a middle -- middle class, or maybe -- I

don't know what kind of, but they're Jewish, nice home and then it used to be the resistant and then the family Voss, who saved a lot the Jewish children in Holland, I think, Mrs. Voss comes. I -- I think she comes from Holland. She made a tunnel and I think they saved some -- I -- I met her. She came -- she be -- was honored in Washington. Her husband and her. So there were the Voss family, the story about them and then used to be a la -- a little like library with the Anne Frank's books, with all the books and these and the kids used to go all this way and there was a book with they write their names and after they listen to whatever the eyewitness was. They used to come back and write their impression or their feelings or whatever they wanted. And I had a lot of nice -- nice little notes for me, you know. It's still someplace in the museum, must be. And -- and I used to explain to them and after we used to give them tiles. And on the tiles we used to ask them after I told them my little story, you know, in the children's version, I could not go in in this and I told them, you have the Hitler and your orders, explain to them he was a bad man and all the thing explained in their own -- in their own level, for them to understand. And then we used to give them those tiles, they used to paint on the tiles and then they put it down, whatever their feelings in their heart. And the best tiles are now in -- on the wall in Washington. Down there where you go down on the -- on the left hand after a whole wall. This is the tiles where I used to go down there and work with the kids. Now they minimized this one, 'Remember the Children', they made it Daniel's story -- out of it. So this is the Daniel's story, next -- you know, coming after 'Remember the Children'.

Q: You continued to speak to -- have you continued to speak to civic groups and youth groups up until the present day?

A: I did. I did -- I didn't do for awhile and I'm afraid if I'm not rusty already, I have to write it down. Sometimes I say it just from my remembering, but I -- I think I have to -- I didn't do it for awhile but I -- I like to. I used to do it a lot of m-more in Washington. And here I go also. Once in awhile here, once in awhile there to -- to tell my story. Yes, this is a letter I received from a student after I shared my story with them and I thought -- I was very touched and I thought I should read it -- I should read it here today. First he addressed to me, giving to his teacher because I didn't give out my -- my address. And he said to me, "Thank you for giving that remarkable, tragic story of your youth experience. I know no one that wasn't there could understand the pain and toro -- and torment or could give you enough apologies or forgiveness. But I'll try to understand and feel what you have felt. I also know -- I also know that there are those trails to be dealt with. I want to convert in being a Jew, with your help, I would like to be one. Please get in contact with me." And he signed his name, Isaac.

Q: And you said something about -- tell me something about this school or the background of this young man. Where he -- do you know anything about him?

A: It -- it was -- later I find out it was -- it was in a poor section, it was a lody infested with drugs. I didn't know at that time. But after I went and I spoke to this group and there were this girl -- after my -- after my addressing and after my telling my story, the teacher came to me, she said, "Mrs. Senders you know, you don't know how much good you did." I said, "What did I do, I just told my story." He said, "This girl had ta -- she was a drug addict and she had to had the fix at the certain time and time when you spoke. And she didn't went to

take her fix, she was so interested and so absorbed and so in -- in your story, that she stayed through all this time.” And it touched me very, very much.

Q: What happened with this young man, did he convert to Judaism?

A: I don't know. I called him up, he gave me his telephone through the teacher and I said, “This is not my mission, to convert nobody. If you want to convert to Judaism, you have to find your own way, how to do it, through some other channels, but this is just me telling and sharing my story, what I went through and this should never happen to no one.” And there was another student in this same -- in this same school and he was a student from a mixed marriage. His mother was German, his father was American. And he -- and he said he's going to Germany to see his grandparents. So I said, “You heard my story,” I said, “can you give me a promise?” I said to talk to your grandparents and to tell them. And I think this was my reward that day for speaking to those kids. I said, “Tell them exactly in the words I told you.”

Q: Did he say that he would?

A: And he promised he would.

Q: Did you ever hear what the results of that were?

A: No. I did not -- I did not follow up on -- on things, you know, I didn't follow up. But this was a very, very impressive -- I touched -- I was touched by it. Because the kids listened, the kids understood and this is something.

Q: And it was not only that they listened and understood, but this young man was so moved --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: By what you said, that he wanted to become a Jew --

A: That he want actually to convert to Judaism.

Q: That's great.

A: That's -- yeah, I thought so very much. It was very -- and I -- I said to him, "Do you want all this trouble?" You know, I made a little joke with him, that's all. But I never followed up. Maybe I should, or don't, I don't know, but I never did.

Q: When did you -- was there a point where you started to feel that you were an American, that you were at home here?

A: You know, when I was very frightened was the McCarthy era? Was very, very -- to us survivor, it was -- it was very unpleasant. But then, whatever we went through, I said, "This our home." This -- I felt more comfortable each year as I -- the kids are growing up, going to school and I felt more comfortable each year. This is my country -- there where I live and I am a part of it. But my story should go, I think, from generation to generation. People should learn from our experience. It's a big responsibility, but we'll do it.

Q: Tell me more about that -- the M-McCarthy era and what -- what you experienced.

A: It's a frightening thing, was it. With all the accusation, with all the -- the Communist, not Communist, the thing -- all this -- this thing, it was mixed up and it -- and we went -- we were there -- we came here and it didn't -- some of the things didn't even make sense to us. T-Turn around people upside down to make labels on them, to -- and it was -- it's like a reverse, like coming back. And it was -- to me it was a very -- a very -- a very frightful thing and a very worrisome -- not fright -- a worrisome thing. I said, "God almighty, we went through a war and -- what you see, we're living through that, too."

Q: Were people -- did people discriminate against you for being from this -- from what they considered the Soviet block? I know there was a lot of paranoia, so you -- did you experience?

A: A lot of paranoia, it was -- didn't had no ground for it. It didn't had -- they portray all these -- the Russian like they would be stupid til the Sputnik come into being. And here I came from down there and I know the people were very smart and I remember Mrs. Roosevelt in the 50's, went to the Soviet Union, she came back and she said, "There are certain things we can learn from them. Their educational system," I remember distinctly the way she said it, "we can learn from them certain things." And it's -- and -- and I agreed at that time because you know -- you know, if you want, like I think Eisenhower said it, if you want to fight the enemy, you have to know your enemy. And there are certain traits, good traits you have to learn from. And -- so this was -- this was a s-struck me a little bit f-funny. But then, little by little, I -- I said, "We are a part of this universe and we are here to stay. And the choice'll be ours."

Q: It must have been, I mean, that -- that -- that -- the Cold War going on for -- for decades with -- with the -- the -- the Soviet Union.

A: This -- yeah.

Q: And was that in some way difficult for you, because you were supported by the Soviets through the war in some way and -- and --

A: When I came out to speak, I -- I explained to the kids, "Listen, Japan was our enemies yesterday, today they our friends." To make sense out of the whole -- the whole thing. So I said, "They're -- they were our enemies. They were arch enemies. What they did in -- in --

in Pearl -- in Pearl Harbor. And here," I said, "the Soviets, don't forget, they were our allies. It was a choice between two evils and Hitler was the master of evils."

Q: Did it seem strange to the -- to you that the United States took such a friendly relationship with Germany?

A: Somewhat, yet. I feel like when, who said it, I'm a Berliner? Something that struck me little bit in the funny way. Me, [inaudible]. I think some -- all survivors felt the same. And they have to still repent. And I understand what revolution right now in Germany is the book by the author -- the author's name is Daniel John Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners." Made a big like -- revelation in Germany. The youth at the third generation are as -- are asking question their grandparents. "What did you do, why did it happen?" They find out the real -- the real thing about the past behind. So this is something is turning around, slowly, but maybe in the right direction.

Q: Do you remember that -- the moment that was all over the news that the Berlin wall was coming down and -- and that -- that Communist era was -- of the Soviet Block was coming to an end and -- and there was c -- there was suddenly this freedom among those nations. Do you remember what you felt?

A: I felt sort of resentment about the Germans and -- and the Berlin wall I thought maybe was the price they had to pay, maybe more so. But this Berlin wall was maybe a price they had to pay for the atrocities and the horrible things they have done to other human beings. They're other human beings, that's all.

Q: Did it seem that -- I think for many Americans, there was the sense that suddenly this whole world that was closed before, suddenly became open and it was possible to go visit

and it was possible to -- you know, if you wanted to go to Poland or if you wanted to go to -
- it was going to be easier and there -- there was going to be access in some way. Did you
have that feeling, did you start to think about the possibility of -- of returning to your
hometown and seeing what it -- ha-had become of it?

A: For a long time, no, but now later I wanted just for a visit. I would never return to live
there, never. There is nothing except the cemetery and I am not about to go. They did to
their own people and it's not worth it to go and be among -- be amongst them -- to their own
citizen and as I said, I was a national Pole. That's all. If I went out from the country, it's
nobody's business was religion I -- I accept -- if I don't eat this type of food or something,
but this is nobody's business. But I was a Polish national. And here we became criminals.
And this is, yes the resentment I had. They help didn't -- the people gave us very, very little
help. They paid a price too, afterwards. The revolt in -- in Warsaw ghetto, the -- in the war -
- after the Warsaw ghetto, the revolt in -- in Warsaw. They start doing to the Poles, to the --
to the -- to the Catholics, little by little the same thing. But they were already -- they already
cut out -- they minimized already the Jews. They would have a bigger force to get together
and fight their enemy, but they didn't use their heads. So I -- they betrayed us and I felt very
much betrayed by my own countrymen. And that's the thing I have to deal with.

Q: Tell me about how you -- how you educated your children, what your goals were of -- of
what to teach them. What -- what was important to you that you conveyed to them about --
from your own life experiences about what they should -- what they should know for their
own -- for their own lives.

A: To stand on their feet and take no -- no nonsense, you know, play with the kids, not to let nobody to abuse them. Tell them in a nice way once, twice and the third time give it back to the kid who bothers you. I told them I will not fight your fight. You have to stand on your own two feet and fight them. I told them to be decent, to be understanding to other people, but never to be intimidated by nobody and nothing. We are a part of this universe and we'll stay here forever and the choice will be ours, whatever religion each one of us will choose. If we choose to be Jews, we will be that.

Q: Did they ask you about your experiences during the Holocaust and -- and your husband's experiences?

A: They know. My Sherry went -- my Sherry was in -- in -- well, she went actually when I spoke down there at the United Jewish Appeal, she was present and she was in support, you know, she was sitting in the audience and she listening and I said, "You [indecipherable] or something bore to listen." And she said it was okay. So they know all about it.

Q: When they were children, did they? Did they know?

A: No. When they were very young, if they ask me I s -- I told them. I didn't -- for hiding, in my case. I'm not speaking for the other ones, in my case. They comes once, was a Catholic kid teased, they tel-telling the stories and I said it, "Just tell them off, just go and tell them off." They give me some -- I said, "I'm not mixing any your fights, you'll have to fight your own fight. With grown-ups I will not ask you to fight for me, nor with the kids." And I remember one of my neighbor, ones that -- she was like a referee, she used to go out and fight for the kids and this and then, til all of a sudden sh -- come and tell me stories, this, that, this one fight thats one and the other one fight the other one. And I said, "Evelyn,

you wanted to be a referee, it's your business. I'm not mixing in." I said, "You know the kids, they will fight and in two minutes they will play together. Me and you," I said, "we will have a fight and a good one and we will not talk any more. So I am not about, so --." You know she start laughing and that's it and that was the end of it. I -- you know you have to, in everything it's -- there is I think, logic. To understand life the way it is, not to find any -- all the -- the -- the junk in life. To find something good. And to convey to the next -- first of all in your family, it's where the nucleus, where the -- where it starts, all those things. And actually, practice what you preach or don't say nothing. Actually do practice what you -- what you say. And I think of families, they're okay. Maybe I'm li -- but lucky also, you know, there was a period with the drugs and things, it was a little bit uneasy, but everything is all right. So I don't know what we knew, but that's the way it is. I did what I thought it's right and I think eventually it comes out right, if you do what's right. It's not what you say to the kids, what you do -- what you do. That's my understanding.

Q: What did you teach them about Judaism?

A: About Judaism, I told them -- we were not exactly a religious, more traditional Jews. They know how much I've -- we suffered being -- being of that faith. Our -- our -- both daughters are not religious. They observe the holidays when they come, they know it, but they are not [inaudible]. I myself -- our son more would go -- like to go to synagogue, to pray. The holidays he takes his son. And also we tass, we go -- we belong to a synagogue and we go down there, it's Conservative. And it's more tradition with me. And I say there is a Hebrew saying, "I have a dintata with God." I have a grievance, I have a dispute with

God. Why did it happen to our people? And there is God, why was there silence? And that's the answer, I guess you have all was [inaudible].

Q: Do you ever question your belief in God?

A: Not -- I question. I don't know, I go to synagogue and I do my -- it's -- it's more -- it's pleasant, it's nice. When I came to the swartzva, I-I question it. How come? How did it happen?

Q: You were raising your children -- well, in the post-war era there were so many changes in the culture here and some of them happened very quickly, particularly in the 60's, when -- when there was the -- the -- the landing on the moon and the -- the Vietnam War, late 60's and -- and then the Feminist movement and the Civil Rights movement and then there was the Free Love and you mentioned dru -- your fear of -- of your kids getting involved in drugs, but wh -- did you feel like all of the -- did you feel any identification with these movements that were happening, or interest in -- in these movements or did you sort of want to protect your family from -- from all of these changes? I don't know if you can speak that generally, but --

A: It was -- it was changes happening and it was certainly interesting. You know, the -- the women -- equally -- what do we call it?

Q: Equal Rights --

A: The Equal Rights --

Q: Am-Amend-Amendment?

A: Yeah. Yeah, because it was interesting and it was okay. Sometimes they started asking me -- as soon as we are liberated? "I don't know," I said, "I didn't -- I -- we not -- we did

not use at that time the word.” I guess I was. I was in my action. So I -- you understand? It was interesting, because after I see the abuse in families and all those things with th -- husband and wife. We -- I never saw in our family, I never saw in my surrounding, where I was in my little, in -- in my family down there, but then I start, you know, I heard it’s all this abuse and all this -- this -- this -- this -- this bad things. So it was -- it was interesting. It was something moving, something going. It came a little bit mo -- to a lot of extremes, but it’s comes to the extremes and then it’s levels off. And -- and in the 60’s, we did drugs, I was a little bit concerned. I said, “This is bad.” I used to tell my kids, you know, “I don’t need drugs, just touch me. I’m full of life, without drugs.” I don’t need it. You don’t need to -- to -- to get -- to get the drugs to numb yourself. Why? Do you think this is something? It’s a drug in your body. I use to explain, but this was like -- like in style, like it comes like a -- like a yo-yo, it’s comes like a thing and it’s -- you know, the kids get involved and the pressure in schools and all those things. And I used to watch my kids. I remember my middle daughter was a little bit a revolutionary. You know, more in -- in Los Angeles. And she came when Woodstock came about. Woodstock. She came to me and she said she wants to go to Woodstock. I didn’t know Woodstock from another city. Did I know Woodstock? I said, “Who is going to Woodstock? What is Woodstock? Where is it?” She start telling me some -- it is in New York and kids are going. It’s who is going and how many kids are going, some of your friend? I start asking all those questions and right away she start telling me a lot of kids, Woodstock, where is that? I said, “No, let them go, you are not going. No way, over my dead body, you are not going,” I said. She was a -- a kid on -- a kid -- not -- n -- I don’t remember how -- how old was she at that time when Woodstock was. I said, “No

way.” It’s something I felt -- I sensed intuitively. There is a danger down there. And you see what happened. They almost -- it almost tump, you know, the stampeded. There was not the facilities, not even water -- drinking water down there for the kids. So I -- I sensed it, maybe from my experience, or just I sensed it -- it’s something wrong in that situation. Oh, she started wearing those, I remember some kind of -- from a rag she made something. You know, the Arab and the kids are all doing all those things. And it’s also struck me funny, we had beggars who used to go around with those things. And she thought she will talk me into some nonsense, I said, “No way.” But I let it, you know, freedom, I did not constantly, I said, “Let her see it their own way. Let her see it’s not the right thing.” And somehow they grow up, all of them, from --

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning of Tape Four, Side B

Q: Yeah. That’s the way it works, statistically.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: This is a continuation of an interview with Brenda Senders. This is tape four, side B. You were -- you were in the middle of saying something, I’ll wait my question.

A: What is?

Q: I’ll go ahead and ask a question unless you -- were you in the middle of saying something? No?

A: No.

Q: Okay. You mentioned the -- the Feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment and the -- the -- that that was sort of interesting to you. You ha-had obviously had an

experience during the war of -- of doing something that many of us might consider being stereotypically male. You were fighting with a partisan group. You -- you learned how to ride a horse and ho -- shoot a gun. So -- so in some ways, th -- would you say those divisions didn't exist in your mind, of the male role and the female role?

A: Not re -- I said it's another human being, I -- I saw it. And some -- and some girls did, some attached themselves down there to some man. It didn't work out anyway. But they attached themselves and it -- and it went from the office and it did not -- it did not work, it didn't make sense. They thought maybe they'll get her e-easy, I don't know what -- what made them, what motivated them. You understand? But for my part, I saw it -- it was wrong. I'm doing anyway, so what I have to -- if I don't want to, I don't want to. I saw them as another human being. And it was difficult. You know, it was still, you know -- but somehow we didn't sense -- it's funny we didn't sense at that time, because the girls and the boys, we were -- we were fighting, like, the same fight. Maybe in other groups, in other -- I don't know, but that's the way I was surrounding and I was.

Q: So when -- when women were fighting for Equal Rights in the United States, in the 1960's and 70's, could you relate to their -- to their struggle?

A: Yeah. After I heard, you know, the -- the -- what happened and what -- what they are fighting, you understand, you cannot just fight for something that's not in existence, but it's -- it [indecipherable] were abusing, where a man, you know this macho man, they thought they are -- who knows, they are almighty. And -- and the woman had to stay home and -- and -- and be like, you know, a little slave girl or whatever. And if they wanted, at will, they

would run around an-and she -- you know it was not a equal, it was not the right, the right partnership. It was not the right -- and this -- that I thought this is -- I agreed with that.

Q: In the 19 -- starting in the mid-1950's and then especially in the 1960's, were you following the events of the Civil Rights movement and did that -- did that have any sort of resonance for you, that -- that here's this minority struggling for -- for equal rights?

A: For equal rights, yeah. I thought people -- people are people, they should have, definitely. They were oppressed. We used to see them oversea in Europe and we don't like it. And especially this [indecipherable] serve -- the way they beat them, the way they -- they kill them, the way they lynch them. And we were -- a lody -- a lody of the movies we saw in Europe. And this is -- it was re-revolting to me. I said, "They are people. They are struggling, this their right." You know, they were not asked to be brought here into the States. They were brought for the convenience at that time, for the white. Now they're -- they -- they're emancipated, they're -- they're free. So we should have -- I don't know, if have respect for ourselves, we should have respect for the next person, if he wants to better himself, if he wants to go out [indecipherable]. Not to keep him enslaved.

Q: You mentioned that when you lived in Washington, DC, you would go and s-speak in schools in poor areas of town and a lot of the kid --

A: [indecipherable] yes.

Q: A lot of the kids were black kids that you were speaking to. How did -- h -- di -- do you - - did you find that they could really relate to your story because of their similar experiences as far as being -- being oppressed and discriminated against?

A: Maybe some did. Some did. You know, n -- you cannot generalize things. Some did, a lot that did identified. I remember some -- this black kid went through and I felt this respect, plain. You understand, after I -- his respect, like -- like I feel the energy of that towards me, like he touched me. And I felt it. And some other kids responded to me, but also white kids.

Q: Did you mention that the kid who wrote the letter that you read earlier was black?

A: Yes. I -- I know -- I don't know if I mentioned, but he was a black guy, yes and a very fine man. So, wherever I was asked to speak, I went to share my story with that. And I think I made a difference, I would say so, I think so. If I did anything good, so I'm glad.

Q: Your sister also moved to Washington.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: W-Were y -- was your relationship with her especially close, seeing as y-you had both gone through these experiences?

A: [indecipherable] friction amongst, you know, we're different -- different completely. It's like rivalry sometimes, but, you know, deep down there, we do. You know, we went through the war. There were times where she almost gave up and I dragged her out, I pulled her out from a mess. But deep down there -- but there is some rivalry, something she would tell me and she doesn't mean it, and then I overlook things, I don't pay attention to her. Or maybe I would criticize her more than I should and I shouldn't. Then later I find out. But on deep down there, of course. She's now in Washington, so she -- my son, she's like second mother, you know and she's single now. She was married, divorced and she didn't want it, to be married any more. So we see each other when I come to Washington.

Q: Did you foll -- I'm sure you -- you did, you -- you mentioned you had worked with the Israel Bond and the Golda Meir group.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Were you following closely the events that -- that were happening and have been happening in Israel over the years?

A: Yeah. Very much. The '67 war [indecipherable] it was very much, very much. I almost was ready to go and to go down there and stay with my people. It was very hurtful and I looked at the United Nation and we went away from the -- from the television, it was like a circus on there. Like everybody would gang up on this little country and it's people, who went through such a horrible time. And mostly a lot of people are composed from people like me, survivors. And why again? Because of their oil? And this was very, very hard to digest. But thanks God, I followed warias.

Q: And what about the position of Israel in the wor -- in the world today and the -- the situation there now? How does that -- what's your position on that?

A: I think the Israelis have to decide on that -- they are doing a pretty good job on that. I can -- I want it to be a nation that's -- historically it belongs to the Jewish people. From way, way, it's not from Pharaoh's time. And nobody can take away from that.

Q: You think that there's a solution to the -- to the problems that are -- or do you think that that's possible?

A: That's possible? I think so. And they'll make the enemy to understand and not to give in. In my books, appeasement doesn't work. Giving in to the enemies doesn't work. As more as you give, the more they want, too.

Q: So you don't think compromise is the right word?

A: Compromise is, yes. If -- if they are logical, compromise is yes. But what are we talking?

It's a little country, you understand? The logic'll fit. Let's say we are talking about iron

prayer. The -- if we talk about, you know, I'm not going in politics, I'm not -- I'm an

American, but this is a small country, surrounded all by the enemies. And they wanted

peace. But let looks the other side, you have to be objective and look at it. And they, you

know, like -- this is a little bit, you know, not frightened -- Israel will be here forever. It's

here to stay. But it is a concern, yeah. It's a wonderful little country and it's democracy in

the Middle East and it's the only democracy and they're our friends. And you know, I

would talk about -- I always show a map, take a look on that teensy weensy Israel and

thanks God for they're round me and they are strong. And my -- my thing, you see, during

my second World War, the experience, the way it were, if he would have been stopped, if

Hitler would have been stopped after he crossed Austria, the Anschluss and then you see?

The appetite came, in the Anschluss and then he started harassing Czechoslovakia. I

remember we had a friend, a Czechoslovakian friend, she cried. I remember I stood next to

my mother, she cried with tears, poor thing, she was adorable lady. They had a -- a wursh

store, you know, from salamis? And they were such a neat people, grade -- we used to come

down there and buy for our grocery. And when they -- when they -- when they invaded

Czechoslovakia, she cried with tears in her eyes. And you see what happened? They gave

him a free hand and what happened? So if he would have been stopped, he wouldn't have

the guts to do it -- what he did to a lot of people. And then he started harassing and we know

it from history, what the next step was. So that's the way I see.

Q: Tell a little bit more a-about your work with Israel Bond and -- and what was your role with him?

A: First I was working for different organization, anything that was help out our people. That's in Washington, doing the job. Israel Bond's, then I created a - a rummage store, it was making money for the organization. I was working for years in there and then I got involved with your museum and the survivors group and the Bond's I guess too, they were involved. So this was my involvement in the organizations. I think B'nai Brith I was once honored with something, gave me some kind of plaque or whatever, way, way back. I don't remember what year it was. End of May -- argolot or something, I don't remember. And whenever I was cold, I used to go out and tell my stories, especially at the schools. What?

Q: Well, we never mentioned how you moved to Florida, I guess that -- that happened after your husband retired, is that right?

A: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Q: That's -- and that was how many years ago?

A: It was eight years ago, eight and ni -- '89, that's eight years ago. So -- yeah -- no, not eight.

Q: Nine?

A: Mm-hm, nine years ago, we moved to Florida and yeah, my husband retired, our son took over the business and we had a little setback down there and he didn't wanted to be involved any more, it was too hard for him and so he decided not to mix in any more in the business, our son took over and -- and he wanted very much to go to Florida, I was not prepared for it. Somehow, not mentally, not -- I thought all old people and I was not young,

but I was not mentally old -- in something, in my mind I thought that old people are going to Florida. And it's not so. Then I find out it's not the -- the situation, because we -- we meet people from all kind, they're good friends and -- and I -- I like it in here. Lifestyle, i-it's nice, it's very simple and it's -- it's nice. So --

Q: Have you -- did the -- I'm just -- I -- I've mentioned to you since I've been here that you're -- you have such a beautiful home and of course, anyone listening to this tape can't -- can't see it, but it's full of art and paintings and -- and everything's very artfully arranged. Is this something that you arranged yourself or did you have somebody in for th --

A: I had -- the paintings I arranged myself, I had -- I had a professional help, she helped me out the -- to put together things, but the paintings, I take full credit for them. I put them out there all the way I saw it, the way I like it and the way they should be. And I think they -- they are in good order, the way I like it, I don't know, may -- how somebody would see it differently. But I -- I like it the way it is. [indecipherable]

Q: And I'd say that this -- that your home has an -- a feeling of peacefulness in it and tranquility, which is maybe notable since you've -- you've gone through such turbulence --

A: Turbulence.

Q: D-Do you feel -- do you feel a sense of peace now in your life?

A: Yes. More so. I'm constantly in demand of myself. Brenda, you have to -- you have to do more, you have to -- you have to -- to go -- you have to do something. Something in me demands out of me. I should more for the museum, more for this. I was invited maybe to come, to speak to a group of young people. I'll go and do it. I -- but this is -- this is the thing, I said, maybe it's very important. I feel it's very important. And that's the demand on

me. But are -- are -- are there ways? Yes, we live a peaceful life now. Of course, the every day worries, sometimes -- he worry about this, worry about thing, but this is normal -- normal -- normal occurrence, normal happenings in life.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to say, any mess -- I mean you can -- you can say a message that you'd like to leave for future generations or -- and anything at all that you'd like to say.

A: Be brave in any situation. We used to say in the partisan. Smele ova pulon nedbeerot. It's means a brave person, the bullet doesn't get him. You can die standing up or you can die laying down. Not to be intimidated and nobody -- don't think that somebody -- we're all human beings and not to let yourself be intimidated by nothing and nobody. And stand and fight for the right, if you feel it right. That's my understanding of life. And we as survivor will do our job. Never again will happen to my people, first, and to no people. What the else can I say? For my children will have to have their own life and their own choices and I think their choices are right ones. They're good human beings and each one knows what's right, understands what's right is. I think -- I don't know, I didn't teach them, you know, what -- you know, my experience. Somehow -- how do we say, I don't know how to put in words. We say example, that's all. Stand on your two feet and be counted, whatever nat and that's it.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Brenda Senders.

End of Tape Four, Side B

Conclusion of Interview

